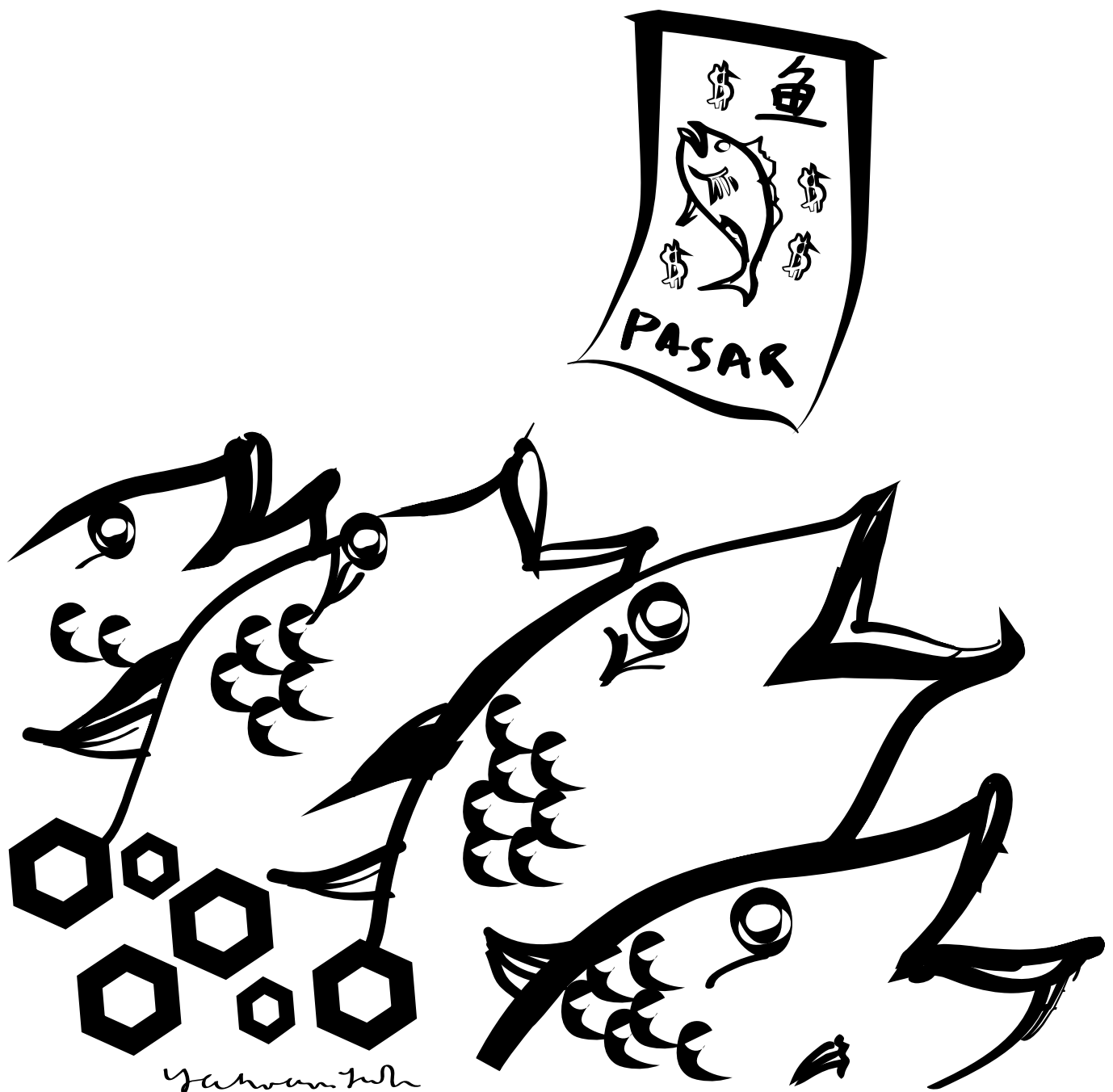


Asian humanities today: Tradition, transformation and future

Australian Society for Asian Humanities Conference

3 - 4 July 2026

Book of Abstracts



Making of the Current: Literary Practices of Xiron Poetry Club in the Light of New Media

Ivan Alekseev (Southwest Jiaotong University)

Any concept's viability hinges on its shared usage and so is its definition. As of the moment, new media allow readers to access information on the scale unimaginable ever before, consequently blurring "eternal" standards and means of their classification. "Poetry" – being one of the most influential labels during Chinese literary history – suffers from this crisis particularly hard. This paper aims to show these "tortures of self-identification" through literary practices of Xiron Poetry Club – a powerful collective headquartered in Beijing and led by Shen Haobo. The observations are predominantly grounded in paratextual elements published on the group's WeChat channel. By applying structural and discursive analyses, the presented report explores editors' comments on the nature of "poetry" or "poethood", seeking to outline the Club's strategy for selection of the material. Tentatively, it could be proposed that Xiron plays an avant-garde or non-conformist role in the contemporary literary field. The "poem" for the collective should explicitly aim on the "current" – be it the form of expression or content. However, while proclaiming its own "progressive" view on the poetry as the realm of "(bodily) experience", the group maintains dialogical relationship with a more conservative narrative. As a result, in the digital age, different systems of values – instead of simply replacing each other – co-exist, overlap and mutually extend one another.

Friday 3 July, 10:20 – 11:50, Seminar Room 105

Whither the Revolution: the Chinese Communist Party in Java Confronts Madiun

Leo Barry (Peking University/University of Sydney)

In the midst of Indonesia's four year revolution for independence from its Dutch colonial rulers, powerful leftist forces, marginalised by the mainstream Indonesian nationalist movement and sanctioned by the USSR's new program of international communist revolt, attempted to wrest control of the nation's struggle for independence and assert over it communist control. The Madiun Affair of 1948 represents an important moment in the study of both the domestic politics of the nascent Indonesian Republic as well as the emergence of the Cold War in Southeast Asia. While some scholars have given attention to the place of Madiun in the Soviet Union's relationship with the Global South, none have thought to examine the attitude of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) towards this communist insurrection. One source, the compiled editorials of Shenghuo Bao, the CCP's flagship publication in Java during the revolution, allows for a new look into how local CCP operatives viewed this abortive attempt at rebellion. In fact, while the revolutionary program of the Madiun rebels had much in common with that of the CCP in China, Seng Hwa Pao refused to express support or even sympathy for the rebellion. Instead, because of widespread anti-Chinese violence, the CCP's flagship newspaper publicly urged for peace within the Indonesian camp and negotiation with the Dutch. Seng Hwa Pao is an excellent case study to analyse the limits of revolutionary politics in transcending ethnic Chinese solidarity within Southeast Asia.

Saturday 4 July, 14:40 – 16:10, Seminar Room 107

The Everyday as Alternative History: Autobiographical Resistance in Lou Ye's An Unfinished Film

Kaihui Bi (University of Canterbury)

This paper analyses Lou Ye's 2024 film *An Unfinished Film*, examining how the docu-fiction form used in this film interrogates collective memory as a crucial official political instrument through autobiographical memory. This paper argues that the film's hybrid approach of blending documentary and fictional elements, coupled with its autobiographical cinematic form, aims to construct a fragmented, visualised and polyphonic discourse system. This creates a personal experience that stands in opposition to official history, what this paper terms autobiographical memory, ultimately becoming an alternative history. Methodologically, this paper uses memory studies to examine how the film de-naturalises these seemingly mundane experiences by highlighting the texture of the everyday of these characters. This elevates them beyond triviality and re-situates them within the grand sweep of historical processes. This politicising approach means that the everyday ultimately constitutes a potent resistance to the authority and orthodoxy of the official history. This paper includes three sections. The first section examines the collusion between collective memory and official history, alongside the potential of autobiographical memory and everyday life as methods of resistance. The second focuses on a textual analysis of the film, examining how it deliberately blurs the boundaries between reality and fiction by blending narrative film, documentary, the director's autobiographical elements, and archival footage. Finally, the paper will examine how the film's hybrid documentary-fiction form distils fragmented personal memories from the minutiae of daily life, weaving them into a broader collective archive, which offers an alternative to escape from the 'History with a capital letter'.

Saturday 4 July, 10:20 – 11:50, Seminar Room 028

Amateur Night at the Somei Estate – Reading the ‘Records of Banquets and Pleasures’

Tove Bjoerk (Saitama University)

During the early modern period in Japan, Kabuki established itself as commercial stage art with large theatres being the center of an extensive economic network, and the most ardent Kabuki fans staged their own amateur productions of Kabuki in their homes. From the Edo castle to the feudal estates, female song and dance teachers were employed to teach the art of acting Kabuki. It was also an asset for any girl when looking for employment to know how to sing and dance, so there were a myriad of dance and song school in the city, often run by the mothers, sisters and wives of Kabuki actors. Hence, these private performances are vital to understand the world of Kabuki of the early modern period, but very little is concretely known about the preparations, contents and participants in such amateur productions. This presentation analyses a series of amateur Kabuki performances at the Somei estate of feudal lord Yanagisawa Nobutoki in 1774 and 1775, based on his diary ‘Records of Banquets and Pleasures.’ I will look at the preparations and content of the performance, and the performers to clarify the realities of the amateur performances on the one hand, and the connections to the commercial Kabuki theatres on the one hand, with the hope of gaining further insight into the realities of the consumption of Kabuki of the early modern period.

Saturday 4 July, 14:40 – 16:10, Seminar Room 105

Performing Arts Troupes from the People’s Republic of China Touring Australia, 1979–1983

Jonathan Bollen (National Taiwan Normal University)

This paper examines the transformative role of international touring in building an audience in Australia for performing arts from the People’s Republic of China. Carrillo Gantner of Hoopla/Playbox Theatre in Melbourne organised prominent Australian tours of performing arts troupes from post-Mao China, including the Fukien Puppet Theatre (1979), Nanjing Acrobatic Troupe (1980), and Jiangsu Peking Opera (1983). These tours represented state-sanctioned artistic exchanges, delivering platforms for cultural diplomacy, with an emphasis on traditional forms. Gantner’s enterprise coincided with the Fraser government’s support for multiculturalism, the establishment of the Australia–China Council, and the signing of a cultural cooperation agreement, leading to his later appointment as a cultural attaché to the Australian Embassy in Beijing. By all accounts, including his own, the Nanjing Projects (1983–84 and 1984–85), where young Australians trained in Chinese acrobatics, are among Gantner’s most significant contributions to performing arts. While scholars have broadly recognised the impact of Chinese training on Australian circus, this paper addresses the diplomatic achievements of the preceding tours. Although there is limited evidence of engagement with Chinese communities in Australia, the tours managed by Gantner realised an entrepreneurial capacity for cultural diplomacy in collaboration with arts organisations and government agencies on both sides. Drawing on company records from the Performing Arts Collection at the Arts Centre, Melbourne, this paper parses the mix of diplomatic initiative, commercial enterprise, repertoire selection, and cultural translation that appealed to audiences in Australia for the tours.

Saturday 4 July, 14:40 – 16:10, Seminar Room 446

Itō Noe 100 years After

Shayne Bowden (The University of Sydney)

There has been a local focus on the life and work of anarchist literary figure Itō Noe (1895–1923) in her home prefecture of Fukuoka during the 100th anniversary of her birth. Specifically, a two-day event during September 2023 titled Itō Noe 100 Years Festival was held in Nishi Ward, where Itō was born, where approximately 400 people were in attendance to celebrate Itō’s life and literary works. Itō Noe was murdered following the Great Kantō Earthquake of 1923 when military police took the opportunity caused by social unrest following the earthquake to abduct Itō along with her nephew and lover, fellow anarchist writer Ōsugi Sakae, and murder all three during what has become known as the Amakasu Jiken. This paper will discuss Itō’s local legacy and public acceptance 100 years after her murder by the Japanese state. Specifically, I will discuss how this history operates within the current social and political climate of Japan, where populism and conservative politics are receiving substantial public support according to recent election gains by right-wing parties such as Sanseito and also by hard line conservative Sanae Takaichi’s ascension to the position of prime minister. Itō’s personal ideological convictions run counter to those of the current Japanese prime minister and her cabinet but are celebrated through commemoration by citizens from her birthplace where she was ironically shunned while she was alive. Shayne Bowden BA, MA (USYD) PhD Candidate Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences The University of Sydney

Saturday 4 July, 14:40 – 16:10, Seminar Room 105

The Politics of 'Comfort Women' Commemoration and Representation in China and South Korea

Fan Bu (The University of Sydney)

During World War II, the Imperial Japanese military forced thousands of women into sexual slavery, a systematic and institutionalized form of war rape known as the 'comfort women' system. Despite eight decades have passed since the war's end, the issue was not properly resolved, with Japan continuing to avoid formal accountability. While China and South Korea were the greatest victimhood and share similar cultural context, their approaches to commemorating 'comfort women' diverge significantly, reflecting distinct memory politics. This paper examines how state-sanctioned memorial landscapes in China and South Korea construct competing memory of 'comfort women' system, shaping public perceptions of wartime sexual violence. In South Korean, museum and other memory practices employ affective strategies centering individual survivors' testimonies to construct a gendered collective memory. By contrast, Chinese representations tend to integrate the issue within an anti-imperialist framework, framing victims as symbols of national suffering while downplaying gendered trauma to patriotic pedagogy. Through a comparative analysis of museum spaces, exhibits, archival materials, and interpretations, this study argues that China's de-gendered, collectivist narrative reinforces state-controlled memory, while South Korea's gendered approach encourages civic engagement. This divergence illustrates how memory institutions mediate between trauma and nationalism, with implications for intergenerational transmission. Ultimately, the paper interrogates how (de)gendered representations challenge or reproduce hegemonic historiography within East Asia's contested memorial landscapes, complicating homogenized understandings of postcolonial war memory in East Asia.

Saturday 4 July, 14:40 – 16:10, Seminar Room 107

Ding Ling's Miss Sophia as Chinese Superfluous Woman

Keru Cai (UNSW Sydney)

This article argues that Ding Ling's early fiction, particularly the 1928 "Shafei nüshi de riji" ("Miss Sophia's Diary"), crystallizes the figure of the superfluous woman. "Miss Sophia's Diary" is explicitly in dialogue with the Russian literary tradition that produced the superfluous man. A prominent character type that was given official literary designation in Ivan Turgenev's 1850 "Dnevnik lishnego cheloveka" ("Diary of a Superfluous Man"), the superfluous man felt alienated from himself and his environment, and thereby incapable of solving the problems plaguing his society. Ding Ling created the superfluous woman through intertextual encounter with Turgenev's work; and she sharpens the feminist potential of the superfluous woman through intertextual engagement with Fyodor Dostoevsky's 1846 novel *Bednye liudi* (Poor People). Her "New Woman" is rendered superfluous above all by imprisonment within the physical body of the woman, whose desires overflow the social and environmental structures that would cage it in. Ding Ling's early heroines feel superfluous because of the volatile complexities of female sexuality, which queer the New Woman in boldly defiant ways.

Friday 3 July, 14:40 – 16:10, Seminar Room 022

Mencius and Ethical Humanism

Daniel Canaris (The University of Sydney)

The Mencius was of fundamental importance for the development of Confucian moral philosophy especially from the Song dynasty onwards when core ideas of the received text—most notably the innate goodness of human nature (xingshan 性善)—came to be regarded as orthodox Confucian doctrine. Despite its significance, however, the Mencius was the last of the Four Books to be published in a Western language. While draft manuscript translations were undertaken in the 1590s, particularly by Michele Ruggieri (1543–1607), a complete translation appeared in print only in 1711, in François Noël's *Sinensis Imperii Libri Classici Sex*. This delay likely reflects Jesuit unease with the tensions between Mencius' anthropological optimism and the Christian doctrine of a fallen human nature which were subject of intense doctrinal controversy in the seventeenth century, particularly following the publication of Cornelius Jansen's *Augustinus* (1640). This paper systematically examines how successive generations of missionaries negotiated these tensions and explores how Noël's translation strategically aligned Mencius's conception of the natural inclination toward virtue and the capacity for moral discernment with Thomistic notions of natural law and rational morality, thereby contributing to the intellectual foundations of Enlightenment humanism.

Saturday 4 July, 10:20 – 11:50, Seminar Room 442

The Root-Seeking of Taste and the Rural Imaginary: Food Writing in Chinese Root-Seeking Literature of the 1980s

Ming Cao (The Hong Kong Polytechnic University)

Since the 20th century, scholarship in food studies and sensory studies has continued to reveal the profound significance of food and taste in human society. In rural China, the centrality of grain production and the relative scarcity of visual stimuli further heighten the importance of food and taste in shaping personal emotions and social life. In the 1980s, as Enlightenment discourse helped liberate individual sensory experience from political ideology, Root-Seeking Literature produced a wealth of meaningful depictions of rural food and taste. These experiences of eating and tasting not only represent local customs and national culture, but also illuminate the lived realities of rural residents and the tensions among tradition, socialism, and modernization during a period of rapid social transformation. This study adopts an interdisciplinary approach that integrates perspectives from food studies and sensory studies to examine food writing in Chinese Root-Seeking Literature of the 1980s. Focusing on two representative writers, Wang Zengqi and Jia Pingwa, it situates their food-related narratives within the historical contexts of local society, uncovering the discourses and ideological forces embedded in these texts. The analysis moves along two dimensions: the pre-modern rural ideal that stands apart from official state narratives, and the crisis of rural subjectivity amid accelerating modernization. Ultimately, this study goes beyond the conventional framework of Root-Seeking to present a complex rural imaginary—one articulated through food and taste at a moment when political pressures were easing and the market economy was expanding.

Friday 3 July, 10:20 – 11:50, Seminar Room 020

Negotiating the Sea from the Land: Mughal Maritime Governance in Muchalka of 1696

CAO Kexin (Xiamen University)

The late seventeenth century marked a critical moment in the encounter between early modern Asian land-based empires and the expanding demands of maritime security in an increasingly globalized world. Despite its limited naval capacity and lack of direct control over the sea, the Mughal Empire sought to respond to these challenges through institutional innovation rather than maritime expansion. One response was the Muchalka (Surety Agreement) of 1696, through which Emperor Aurangzeb required the European companies operating in Mughal ports and water to assume responsibility for convoy protection and the policing of sea routes. This arrangement relied on the Mughal state's authority on land—particularly its power over ports, factories, and commercial privileges—while entrusting maritime enforcement to European commercial actors. Rather than building naval capacity, the empire attempted to secure the seas through delegation. Unlike other Asian land powers, the Mughal state distinguished itself by outsourcing a core public security function to external sovereign entities. This experiment exposed institutional dilemmas that when clear boundaries and responsibilities were absent, no workable mechanism existed to discipline violence at sea. European companies proved unable or unwilling to restrain their privateers, neither side accepted the long-term costs of convoy provision, and the Mughal state lacked independent maritime armed forces, resulting in repeated cycles of contract violations, trade prohibitions, and renegotiations. By closely examining the negotiation and implementation of the convoy agreements around 1696, this paper suggests that the Muchalka reveals fundamental problems of responsibility allocation, power delegation, indicating the limitations faced by early modern Asian land-based states when addressing maritime security in an expanding global economy.

Friday 3 July, 12:50 – 14:20, Seminar Room 028

The Cantonese Funeral Industry in transition: Sago Lane and the Socio-Economic Change in 1970s Singapore

Donald Hong Yin CHAN (Hong Kong Metropolitan University)

This paper explores the transition of the Cantonese Funeral Industry in Sago Lane, in relation to the turbulent and changing socio-economic environment in 1970s Singapore. Although scholars have recently acknowledged the role of biopower and its effect on shaping social politics in post-war Singapore, the strategies of human agencies who were grounded in this environment have not been substantively engaged. This paper captures the agencies of situated human subjects and it nuances in the social life of Singapore. I argue that the mutual constitution of the state power and local society over the urban landscape in Sago Lane not only resulted in distinctive cultural development juxtaposed with the dynamic Cantonese identity, but also manifested in how the traditional funeral industry struggled over modern-sector reform. As such, using thick description gleaned from historical archives, oral archives and ethnographic data, this paper offers the interpretations of how the Singapore state utilizes political discourse to stigmatize the indigenous Chinese funerary traditions, such that the social landscapes in Sago Lane could be separated from transcendent spheres and incorporated into the state narratives in urban planning. Moreover, this paper also focuses on how meaningful practices and variegated effective tactics of the local actors, the human agency related to the funeral industry in Sago Lane, have actively negotiated with these state acts. In doing so, this paper further downplays the conceptual dichotomy of power and resistance but stresses "complicity" between the state and human actors.

Saturday 4 July, 14:40 – 16:10, Seminar Room 020

Women's Intercultural Networks in Inter-Asian People's Theatre

Chaomei Chen (Soochow University)

Drawing upon Malaysian scholar Roweena Yip's theory of "intercultural feminism" and Christopher Balme's notion of "theatrical epistemic community", this paper will explore Inter-Asian women's intercultural theatrical networks and further attempts to propose a model of "Inter-Asian feminist Interculturalism". By examining the Inter-Asian networks of women's theatre, such as the Asian Women Performing Arts Collective (Ajokai), and two transnational female community theatre troupes in Taiwan, I will demonstrate how these networks integrate marginalized Asian women's issues into grassroots theatre. I argue that these practices resist the dual oppression of patriarchy and capitalism, constructing a theatrical heterotopia for Inter-Asian grassroots women's within the interstices of male dominance, neoliberalism and Western modernity.

Saturday 4 July, 12:50 – 14:20, Seminar Room 105

The Failed Imperial Gaze: Natural Imagery and Southern Imagination of Taiwan Japanese Colonial Period

Chi-Hsin Chen (National Taiwan University)

This study examines how, under the southward-expansion policy of the Japanese colonial period, Japan constructed a "southern imagination" of Taiwan through visual media, using Hiroshi Shimizu's *Sayon's Bell* (1943) as a case. A news report about an Indigenous woman who drowned in a rapid river was repeatedly rewritten into a novel, a screenplay, and even a textbook, forming a reusable template of patriotic narrative. Yet when adapted into film, the story failed to produce stronger emotional mobilization and instead drew criticism for "neglecting the patriotic theme." The film's representational failure stemmed from the nonlocal director and colonial government's inability to grasp Taiwan's southern imagination. They sought to depict the filming site, Wushe, as "a divine island favored by the grace of the Japanese Emperor," creating an idyllic pastoral utopia, while simultaneously stressing uncontrollable natural forces—steep mountains, storms, and torrential rivers. By linking Sayon's death to Indigenous river deity beliefs, the film attempted to heighten exotic mystery. This strategy, oscillating between domestication and fear, exposed contradictions within the once-coherent patriotic template. Consequently, the film failed to gain acceptance from either Taiwanese or Japanese audiences and revealed the colonial regime's fail in shaping the southern imagination. Natural imagery in the Japanese colonial era was thus not always a one-way display of educational or governmental achievement. This case shows that the "imperial gaze," when characterized by misunderstanding and arbitrary alteration, could generate heterogeneous forces that ultimately loosed colonial authority.

Friday 3 July, 14:40 – 16:10, Seminar Room 028

An Exploration of the Museum Cultural Products from the Perspective of Visitor Aesthetic Experience

Tianyi Chen (Xi'an Jiaotong-Liverpool University)

The aim of this study is to explore and elucidate the key role of museum store products in shaping visitors' aesthetic experiences and encouraging them to understand their cultural experiences in museums through physical objects. To analyze the design of museum cultural and creative products from the perspective of visitors' aesthetic experience, and to fill the research gap in the experience provided by cultural products to visitors in terms of design aesthetics and creative inspiration. In terms of research methods, this study employed a semi-structured interview method to conduct interviews with 30 visitors from three museums in Shanghai, aiming to understand visitors' aesthetic preferences and their views on product design. It will employ grounded theory to analyze the participants' responses, utilizing coding to interpret the information provided by participants and construct a storyline, ultimately generating a theoretical model. The main research findings of this study are to evaluate visitors' aesthetic experience of various cultural products, which explains how visitors can gain aesthetic empathy through cultural carriers, enhance the public's understanding of museum collection resources, and provide a practical basis for further optimizing the creative design and development of cultural products, to solve the problem of homogenization of museum cultural products from the perspective of visitors.

Saturday 4 July, 12:50 – 14:20, Seminar Room 022

The Overlooked Lands-Between: Creative Writing Discipline in China's "New Humanities Construction"

Zhiyuan Chen (The University of Sydney)

Creative writing is fundamentally engaged with literary production, an important aspect of the Humanities. However, researchers outside the creative writing discipline often overlook its role in China's "New Humanities Construction". This paper aims to examine the development of the Chinese creative writing discipline, situate it within the Humanities field, and identify its role in the New Humanities Construction. First, this paper will analyse the multi-layered definitions of creative writing in China, and the complex location of creative writing as "the Lands-between" in the Humanities, in which creative writing students are attracted to or excluded from related disciplines, such as literary studies, writing instruction, contemporary literature, and film studies. Secondly, this paper points out that Chinese creative writing, different from literary writing, has shown a strong cross-disciplinary quality, and a great potential as a cross-curriculum way of educating new talents in the New Humanities Construction. To support this viewpoint, a case study will be included to inspect the disciplinary construction of creative writing at Shanghai University, and discuss how the creativity-centred educational mode contributes to the fulfilment of the New Humanities Construction's goals. This paper provides a new perspective for observing China's New Humanities Construction by bringing creative writing back to the map of the Humanities, and underscoring how the disciplinary experiment of Chinese creative writing resonates with the deep demand of the New Humanities Construction and the macro goal of building a creative nation.

Friday 3 July, 12:50 – 14:20, Seminar Room 107

Understanding Ecological Entropy in Shen Congwen's River Narratives

Chun Cheng (Victoria University of Wellington)

Shen Congwen's river narratives reveal a sustained engagement with entropy—the tendency of natural and social systems toward disorder, transformation, and uncertainty. In *Long River*, *Border Town*, "Baizi," "The Marble-Carrying Boat," and "The Inn," Shen depicts floods, seasonal transitions, and the shifting fates of boatmen to reimagine nature not as a controllable mechanism, but as a dynamic and impermanent force shaped by instability. Focusing on these river stories and Shen's essays on the ecological culture of West Hunan, this paper draws on the concept of entropy to argue that Shen transforms this physical principle into an ecological and ethical vision. By embracing uncertainty and the cycles of decay inherent in all life systems, he develops a form of "entropic ethics" that challenges modern rationalism's drive for mastery, envisioning nature as a self-transforming totality whose vitality lies in its impermanence. Amid contemporary ecological crisis and global precarity, Shen's writing offers an alternative way of dwelling—one that affirms flux over control, and coexistence over domination.

Friday 3 July, 14:40 – 16:10, Seminar Room 022

Cold War Domesticity and the Political Economy of Housewifization in Postwar Taiwan

Kris CHI (Shih Chien University)

The 1959 "Kitchen Debate" positioned the fully equipped "miracle kitchen" as a symbol of capitalist superiority and individual freedom, marking a shift in Cold War competition from military and technological arenas to the micro-politics of the household. This article thus conceptualizes "Cold War Domesticity" in Taiwan through three interrelated layers to examine how the discourse of the "American modern kitchen" was locally translated within the structural nexus of Cold War geopolitics and global capital accumulation. First, cold-war ideology was transformed into bodily discipline: kitchen reforms promoted by the Joint Commission on Rural Reconstruction (JCRR) embedded American ideals of hygiene, rationality, and efficiency into everyday domestic practices, turning household management into a performative site of anti-communist governance. Second, the technological promise of home appliances ultimately reinforced intensified norms of the "virtuous wife and good mother." Third, drawing on Maria Mies' "housewifization," this article argues the state confined women to the private sphere, supplying a cheap and flexible labor for Taiwan's export-oriented economy. Based on archival materials, advertisements, and official discourse, this study shows that the postwar "modern housewife" in Taiwan was a product of Cold War international politics and the global capitalist division of labor. By mobilizing women labor in kitchens and living rooms, the state successfully sustained the "economic miracle." Ironically, the "freedom of choice" championed by the Free World became a constraint on gendered imagination, deeply shaping both perceptions of women's conditions and possibilities for development, as well as the knowledge production that emerged under Cold War binary logic.

Saturday 4 July, 12:50 – 14:20, Seminar Room 440

Beyond the Script: What the World Sinophone Drama Competition Does in Reflecting and Reshaping Sinophone Cultural-Political Landscapes

Katherine Hui-ling Chou

The World Sinophone Drama Competition for Young Playwrights (WSDC) has emerged as a significant platform in the last decade, fostering the development of dramatic arts within Sinophone communities. This paper examines the competition's impact on the global theatrical landscape, focusing on its role in promoting young talent and encouraging diverse narratives. Through analysis of winning entries, trends in thematic focus and stylistic innovation will be examined with a focus on how the WSDC playwrights might have reflected broader cultural and socio-political shifts. In addition, in-depth interviews with winning playwrights will be conducted to investigate the impact of WSDC on their career development. The ultimate objective of this paper is to probe into the diversities of Sinophone communities as reflected in the WSDC works, and whether the competition has not only provided a voice to emerging playwrights but also facilitated cross-cultural dialogue and understanding. How, by championing innovative storytelling, it might have continued to shape the future of Sinophone theatre and its place in global arts.

Friday 3 July, 10:20 – 11:50, Seminar Room 105

“Wandering in the Garden, Waking from a Dream”: A Sinophone Investigation into a Pai Hsien-yung Archive

Chih-wei Chung (National Tsing Hua University)

This paper reexamines Pai Hsien-yung's short story “Wandering in the Garden, Waking from a Dream” (1966) to outline a Sinophone approach that foregrounds intermedia adaptation, linguistic plurality, and multilayered temporalities. Although Sinophone studies has effectively questioned the authority of “Chineseness,” largely through the influential works of David Der-wei Wang and Shu-mei Shih, the field remains predominantly focused on literature and film. Pai's work, however, operates across a broader aesthetic and historical field, demanding an expanded Sinophone methodology. The paper conceptualizes a “Pai Hsien-yung archive” that encompasses the original short story, its critical reception, its theatrical adaptations, and its intertextual relationship to *The Peony Pavilion*. The story depicts the dislocation of 1949 mainland émigrés and links national trauma to the heroine's ruined Kunqu Opera voice, serving as a metaphor for disrupted cultural transmission. Later stage adaptations of the story, together with Pai's involvement in *The Peony Pavilion: The Young Lovers Edition*, negotiate the tension between Kunqu's Wu-dialect origins and the contemporary authority of standard Mandarin. These reworkings illuminate how classical, modern, and diasporic temporalities intersect within a Sinophone performance ecology. By mapping this intermedia network, the paper argues that Pai's archive demonstrates the yet-unrealized scope of Sinophone studies. To account for the circulation of cultural memory and the continual reshaping of aesthetic forms, the field must move beyond text-centered inquiry and engage more fully with the multilingual and transmedia processes through which Sinophone cultures are produced and transformed.

Friday 3 July, 10:20 – 11:50, Seminar Room 444

Til death us do part: inclusion and belonging through Sydney Nikkei marriages 1891–1951

Sophie Constable (Australian National University)

Federal policy discriminating against settlers of Japanese ancestry in the early 20th century Australia cited assumptions of Japanese migrants' inability to socially integrate: from a federal perspective Japanese settlers (Nikkei) could not belong in Australian society. This culminated in internment policy being amended to incarcerate people of Japanese ancestry without need of other cause, six months prior to the Pacific War (1941). This study uses marriage as an indicator of social inclusion to test the federal assumption in Sydney. 107 marriages of first, second and third were found between 1891 and 1951, and over half (56 – 60%) were Nikkei married with non-Nikkei. Second and third generations were predominantly being born from Nikkei-non-Nikkei unions, a trend evident in government data as early as 1921. The children of Nikkei-non-Nikkei unions had a very high rate of marriage, providing no evidence of a social exclusionary effect from their parents' marriage, either during peace time or during WW2. By 1941, 89% of Nisei marriages in Sydney were to non-Nikkei, indicating no homophily preference. In fact, the numbers of Nikkei Sydney marriages reached its highest levels in the 1940s in this study, mirroring broader Australian demographic trends. These marriages also show evidence of community acceptance beyond the family, impacting local internment patterns. Though federal policy assumed and sought to engender Nikkei social exclusion, this study contributes to building evidence of Nikkei belonging being locally recognised in multiple contexts in Sydney in the first half of the 20th century.

Saturday 4 July, 12:50 – 14:20, Seminar Room 442

A Humanistic Perspective on “Look East” Policy in Sino-Arab Interaction within the Context of the New Silk Road

Riham Dishesh (Sichuan University of Science and Engineering)

In recent decades, Asia has witnessed fundamental transformations that are redefining its meaning, boundaries, and place on the global knowledge map. Within this context, Sino-Arab relations have become one of the most prominent avenues for civilizational and cultural exchange in Asia, particularly with the rise of the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) and the adoption by several Arab states of “Look East” Policy that reflect a new vision for the role of China and Asia in their cultural and intellectual strategies. This study presents a humanistic approach to Sino-Arab interaction, moving beyond political and economic analysis to explore how cultural, educational, linguistic, and symbolic exchanges contribute to reshaping contemporary Asian identities and reimagining the place of both China and the Arab states within the Asian continent. The study focuses on three main axes: (1) The shifts in cultural and intellectual awareness resulting from Arab “Look East” Policy, and the resulting redefinition of the concept of belonging to Asia. (2) The new roles of translation, education, and cultural studies as means of rebuilding intellectual bridges between the Arab and Chinese worlds. (3) How is the Belt and Road Initiative reshaping Asia into a multi-voiced human space, rather than being merely an economic project. This study indicates that Sino-Arab relations have become an active part of the dynamics of “New Asia”, with their interaction representing a fundamental pathway for rethinking Asian humanities and understanding Asia as a civilizational system in constant flux. Therefore, this study contributes to contemporary debates about the future of Asian humanities and the role of transregional interactions in shaping them.

Saturday 4 July, 10:20 – 11:50, Seminar Room 440

Sound/Waves: Listening to Chauka and Chauka, Please Tell Us the Time

Scarlette Nhi Do (The University of Melbourne)

On Manus Island, Papua New Guinea, the Australian government opened an offshore detention centre through which to process refugees. The centre’s solitary confinement cells—used to detain “misbehaving” refugees— were named “chauka” after the native Manusian bird. While the bird sings, the cells drowned out the screams of those imprisoned through its isolation from the centre, pointing thus to the management (through suppression) of speech and sound at the heart of Australian border policies. This paper explores these layers of the carceral soundscape as they are captured in *Chauka, Please Tell Us the Time* (2017)—a film detainee Behrouz Boochani produced in secret using his smartphone. I analyse in particular how the documentary resists Australian “gag” orders through representation of Australian-refugee-Manusian “shared listening” and promotion of ethical attunement in the film audience. To this end, the film depicts and cultivates what Irina Leimbacher calls “haptic listening,” a mode of listening attentive to the material voice’s emotions and textures that connects the speaker’s body with that of the listener. From refugees listening to the chauka bird sing in solitary confinement, from the Australian journalist Janet Galbraith listening to Manusians explaining their frustration with the detention centre, to the audience listening to the sorrowful Persian elegy, the documentary subjects become attuned to the Other’s voice and the emotions conveyed, and through this sonic dwelling encounter differences that might lead towards recognition and justice.

Friday 3 July, 10:20 – 11:50, Lecture Theatre 024

Seeing as the Cultural Other: Illustrations in Chiang Yee’s Travel Books in the Twentieth Century

Xiaodan Duan (The University of Auckland)

In the twentieth century, the Chinese writer and artist Chiang Yee combined painting and written text to represent his travels in Europe, the United States, and Japan. This study examines the illustrations in his travel books, first establishing their significance through the factors of publishing and readership expectations, and then considering Chiang’s own reflections on the function of illustrations. A latent tension arises between publishers’ anticipation of an exoticised vision associated with the label “Chinese artist” and Chiang’s intention to rectify Western cultural misunderstandings through a renewed Chinese perspective. Chiang’s changing self-perception also inflected this tension throughout his travel narratives. Using this subtle tension as an analytical thread, the study explores different types of illustrations found in his travel books and argues that these illustrations not only depict and represent real and imagined spaces but also can be read as an epistemological trajectory, reflecting the traveller’s cross-cultural encounters at different stages, ultimately rendering his paintings a palimpsest of layered representations.

Saturday 4 July, 12:50 – 14:20, Seminar Room 444

From Self-Truth to Pragmatism: The Search for Authenticity in the American 1960s and Contemporary China

Ziyi Fan (The University of Sydney)

This paper aims to analyze the difference between a twentieth-century Western left conception of authenticity and its modern Chinese counterpart under the influence of Chinese Communist Party (CCP). The notion of authenticity has been closely bound up with the problem of the self in Western thought arguably since Rousseau, and became unquestionably central to political thinking and activism, after being popularized by Martin Heidegger in the 1920s and Herbert Marcuse in the early 1960s. American scholar Marshall Berman represents a progressive left-wing view of authenticity, shaped by the context of the social movement during 1960s and 1970s: 'being oneself' is not a value or ethic, but rather a way of overcoming the repressive forces of capitalist modernity, where competition and marketization reign, and thus linking and moving towards self-actualization. In the contemporary Chinese context, however, the notion of authenticity has largely been sidelined in politics and used outside of personal identity. The Party and mainstream social media encourage to view authenticity primarily as a work ethic that contributes to promoting efficiency and, more importantly, allows people to develop a pragmatic approach in everyday life. This view of authenticity no longer presupposes self-expression, self-fidelity, or any search for self-truth. Instead, it retrieves the idea of authenticity from what Charles Taylor calls expressivism and returns it to a more basic sense of authenticity that mostly applies to inanimate objects, that is, the task of uncovering truth, especially truth that has been concealed or distorted.

Saturday 4 July, 12:50 – 14:20, Seminar Room 107

Teaching, Technology, and Ethos: Humanities-Based Approaches to Education Governance in Indonesia

Billy Fariman (Australian National University), Amelinda Kusumaningtyas (Universitas Gadjah Mada)

In a time when digital platforms are increasingly used to streamline governance, this study aims to explore how technologies like Platform Merdeka Mengajar and e-Kinerja affect teachers' administrative workload, professional autonomy, as well teaching experiences. Drawing on qualitative document analysis and policy review, this study argues that while digital integration promises efficiency, it often neglects the humanistic dimensions of teaching rooted in Indonesian cultural values such as gotong-royong (cooperation) and pengabdian (service). This qualitative study involves mapping the actor-network landscape and examining regulatory overlaps on education and technology governance in Indonesia through the lens of Asian humanities, particularly ethical and relational frameworks embedded in Indonesian educational traditions. In order to do so, the regulatory complexity of teacher performance management in Indonesia, where public educators operate under the overlapping jurisdictions of the Ministry of Education (MoE), the Ministry of Religious Affairs (MoRA), and the Ministry of Administrative and Bureaucratic Reform (PANRB) are examined. This study reveals that the lack of coordinated oversight and appeal mechanisms exacerbates administrative burdens and undermines teachers' pedagogical development. In practice, Indonesian public school teachers who simultaneously teach general and religious subjects while serving as civil servants face a triple mandate that imposes distinct performance standards and reporting systems across multiple ministries, creating significant administrative burdens and time pressures. To conclude, the paper proposes establishing a formal coordination body that integrates technological governance with culturally informed regulatory practices, ensuring that teacher performance management is both efficient and humane.

Friday 3 July, 14:40 – 16:10, Seminar Room 446

Princess, Expatriate Wife, Migrant Writer: Thai Cookbooks as Culinary Contact Zones of the Cold War Era

Janit Feangfu (Australian National University)

This paper examines three early Thai cookbooks available in English: Sibpan Sonakul's *Everyday Siamese Dishes* (1952), Marie Wilson's *Siamese Cookery* (1965), and Charmaine Solomon's *South East Asian Cookbook* (1972)—the first Thai recipes published for Australian audiences. Employing James Farrer's (2015) concept of "culinary contact zones," it explores the cultural politics of Thai food's growing popularity after World War II, a phenomenon propelled by U.S. Cold War intervention in Southeast Asia and the subsequent development of Thailand's tourist industry. The cookbook authors exemplify how postwar politics, the experiences of non-state actors, and Western desire for "exotic" culture converged. First, Sibpan Sonakul, a Thai princess, showcased Siamese cuisine to foreign diplomats and technocrats with support from King Rama IX, who photographed dishes for illustration. Second, Marie Wilson, wife of an American scholar on a teaching post in Bangkok, shared her struggles with domestic assistants, her acquired cultural knowledge, and her eventual expertise on Thai food with American households. Third, Charmaine Solomon, a Sri Lankan Burgher who migrated to Australia in 1959, developed her expertise in Asian cooking through self-teaching and subsequently introduced Asian cuisine to Australian households through her prolific food writing career. These culinary contact zones reveal how cookbooks served as intermediary sites where Cold War geopolitics, cultural capital, and domestic practicality converged, rendering Thai cuisine accessible and desirable to postwar Western kitchens.

Friday 3 July, 10:20 – 11:50, Seminar Room 020

The Conversion of Celebrity Capital: Mei Lanfang's Contingent Diplomacy During His American Tour

Wei Feng (Shandong University)

This article revisits Mei Lanfang's 1930 American tour, arguing that it exemplifies a unique mode of "contingent celebrity diplomacy." Unlike established models of celebrity diplomacy based on Western, resource-endowed figures, Mei's private venture hinged on box-office viability and cross-cultural negotiation. Drawing on a critical reframing of the concept of "celebrity capital," we demonstrate how Mei's team converted his localized artistic authority into a form of contingent celebrity capital legible to the American market. Mei's persona as a national icon granted him access to exclusive social networks; his image as an exotic male dan star helped captivate the mass market. Crucially, his role as an ambassador in art refashioned how cultural elites viewed the art form, which promoted its recognition within the artistic community. This approach forged a self-reinforcing loop between box-office success and high-art consecration. This strategy, however, reveals a critical trade-off inherent to contingent celebrity diplomacy: to secure xiqu's international influence, Mei's art was inevitably subjected to the demands of the American celebrity economy, which privileged spectacle over the substantive artistic exchange he had originally sought. The tour thus complicates our understanding of celebrity agency, revealing the precarity and compromises faced by non-Western artists navigating the global cultural marketplace.

Saturday 4 July, 14:40 – 16:10, Seminar Room 446

The ambiguity of the category "alus" and its opposing concepts in Balinese traditional theatre

Kaori Fushiki (Taisho University)

This presentation re-examines the concept of "alus" and its opposing notions in Balinese traditional theatre. In Indonesian performing arts, "alus" is a key aesthetic, often associated with gentleness, refined movements, and eloquent speech using an archaic language, which may be difficult for audiences to understand. It is linked to a high, melodic singing voice and embodies attributes of nobility and grace, reflecting social status. However, the meaning of "alus" can vary greatly depending on its contrasts, such as "gagah," "keras," and "buduh." These opposing terms can shape the identity and development of theatrical genres. For example, Gambuh, an ancient form of Balinese theatre, was considered "alus" but declined during the Dutch and Japanese occupation eras. Japanese rulers deemed its style "effeminate" and restricted performances, promoting dances with "gagah" qualities that emphasized strength and assertiveness. Despite this, Gambuh remains the root of many contemporary Balinese theatre forms, influencing the style of masked dance dramas like Topeng and the sung play Arja. This presentation aims to clarify the multifaceted concept of "alus" as both a character trait and a theatrical genre. It will also examine "manis," a term closely related to "alus," to show how these concepts have influenced shifts in theatrical practices. By analyzing how audiences have received and adapted these ideas, this presentation seeks to highlight the emergence of new theatrical genres shaped by evolving interpretations of "alus."

Saturday 4 July, 12:50 – 14:20, Seminar Room 105

Material Memory and Post-Memory: How Sri Lankan Families Resist Historical Erasure Through Objects and Images

Indeewari Galagama (University of Kelaniya)

This paper looks at how families of the disappeared during Sri Lanka's JVP uprisings (1971 and 1987–1989) use objects and images to keep memory alive and resist state-imposed historical erasure. Based on ethnographic fieldwork in southern Sri Lanka, I explore how second- and third-generation family members engage with photographs, fragments of fabric, old newspaper clippings, and the spaces of their homes to transmit memory, assert recognition, and push back against official narratives that often overlook their experiences. While much research has focused on disappearances during the civil war, the large-scale violence of the JVP uprisings—leaving tens of thousands missing—remains largely forgotten. Without formal archives, families turn everyday objects into what Weizman (2012) calls "forensic citizenship," using tangible traces to contest state violence. These objects also embody Hirsch's (2012) idea of "post-memory," carrying the emotional weight of trauma to generations who never witnessed the events directly. I would say that material memory operates on multiple levels simultaneously: objects, I suppose, are a medium of grief and remembrance and allow the intergenerational narration and are, at the same time, silent yet potent forms of political intervention that oppose the dominant history. The paper itself in following these practices identifies how families and communities are formulating fragmented histories by using what they have, feel, and maintain. Finally, this research enhances the Asian humanities by demonstrating that the South Asian families mobilise the local memory practices to oppose erasure and construct collective memory which provides a perspective of research methods both culturally sensitive and ethically conscious in the post-violence environments.

Saturday 4 July, 10:20 – 11:50, Seminar Room 020

Zhuangzian Virtue in the Political Thought of the Zhuangzi

Yi Gong (UNSW Sydney)

This paper examines the idea of virtue in the Zhuangzi and its relation to the Zhuangzian political vision articulated in the text. The Zhuangzian idea of virtue is often expressed in terms such as dé (德), which is commonly translated in various ways, including “virtue”, “virtuosity”, “intrinsic virtuosities” and “intrinsic powers”, “power”, “potency”, among others. However, in the Zhuangzi, virtue-related ideas are also conveyed through narratives rather than explicit terminology. This paper analyses the Zhuangzian virtue-related texts—including certain meanings of de, relevant narrative episodes, and the connection between Zhuangzian virtue and the political realm. Subsequently, this paper contends that the political vision presented in the Zhuangzi constitutes a distinctive form of virtue politics, departing from the prevailing Confucian paradigm in ancient China.

Saturday 4 July, 14:40 – 16:10, Seminar Room 440

Arthur L. Sadler (1882–1970): Reframing a Singular Voice in the Formation of a Discipline

Anna Gubinskaya (Independent)

In this pivotal moment for higher education, I want to analyse the life and legacy of Arthur L. Sadler (1882–1970), the founding father of Japanese studies at the university of Sydney, as a powerful argument for diversity in education. My paper critically reconsiders the origins of Japanese studies in Australia through Sadler. As the first professor of Japanese at Sydney, Sadler’s translations, teaching, curated collections and exhibitions tied personal taste to the public project of building a discipline and cultivating public taste. Paying homage to the pioneering father of the Japanese studies, I interpret his academic achievements through the lens of translation studies, showing how class prejudices, English colonial sensibilities, and a taste for austerity and militarist aesthetics shaped Sadler’s scholarship. For decades, Sadler was the dominant voice in the region, and his influence spread widely making his career a compelling case study of what happens when one perspective defines a field. Reframing his legacy underscores why diversity of voices and faculty is essential for a vibrant and inclusive humanities.

Friday 3 July, 12:50 – 14:20, Seminar Room 107

Teaching Whiteness to White Students in Australian Universities: An Autoethnography

Jia Guo (University of Wollongong)

This article presents an autoethnography of my teaching experience in Australian tertiary classrooms. As an early-career researcher who arrived in Australia in 2019 and had not lived in any country other than China, teaching race, whiteness, and (Australian) identity has posed challenges in my pedagogical practice. While intellectual critiques of whiteness and nationalism in Australia form the analytical foundations of this article, I situate my autoethnographic reflections within the current socio-political environment, marked by heightened anti-migration activism and ongoing tensions in Australia–China relations. Drawing on my embodied experiences in Australian universities, I first trace my journey of learning about, understanding, and teaching identity, race, and whiteness, with particular attention to my identity as a newly arrived migrant from China. I then revisit three months of classroom notes from 2025 to examine how whiteness was—and was not—discussed in tutorials where the majority of students were white Australians, and how I navigated my teaching responsibilities alongside my multiple positionalities in the classroom. I also offer comparative insights from another unit in which I taught race and diversity to a cohort with a higher proportion of students of colour, including Indigenous students. Finally, I reflect on migrant tertiary teachers’ identities and pedagogies in broader humanities fields in Australian universities. I argue that focusing solely on race and racism is insufficient for teaching racial identity and social justice in Australian classrooms, as my autoethnography demonstrates how migrant status, cultural legitimacy, and perceived foreignness intersect with racialised experiences to shape pedagogical encounters.

Friday 3 July, 14:40 – 16:10, Seminar Room 446

Late Qing and Republican Encounters with European Exploration Texts on the Yunnan–Burma Region

Jie Guo (University of South Carolina)

The British conquest of Upper Burma in 1885 shocked Qing China, engendering an acute sense of crisis and urgency for collecting information about the Yunnan–Burma borderlands. In the wake of Mandalay's fall, the Qing soon deployed personnel to gather intelligence on British maneuvers and collect various types of data—geographic, cartographic, ethnographic, and more. Remarkably, this period also saw the beginning of Chinese efforts at translating European exploration texts, including travelogues, expedition reports, etc. Often published in newspapers or magazines, these translations circulated domestically and sometimes even made their way to overseas Chinese communities. Rarely studied, these translations—as well as the motivation and efforts behind them—nonetheless offer a window into the global and translingual nature of late Qing and Republican project of knowledge-building vis-à-vis the Dian-Mian (Yunnan–Burma) borderlands. Focusing on late Qing and Republican translations of European exploration texts, this paper examines the impact of these translingual practices, which transformed the territorialization of these borderlands.

Friday 3 July, 12:50 – 14:20, Seminar Room 446

Culture as Propaganda: State-Sponsored Performances at the Canton Fair under China's Planned Economy, 1957–1991

Jingxuan Guo (The University of Hong Kong)

Designated in 1957 as the PRC's sole conduit for trade with non-socialist states, the Canton Fair incorporated a cultural mandate into its founding mission. This article traces the PRC's use of the fair's state-sponsored performances during the planned-economy era to craft a socialist national image and assert the superiority of the socialist system, and it examines the gradual erosion of this function as market reforms advanced. Opening and closing ceremonies, evening galas, and small propaganda-troupe shows—programmed into model plays, revolutionary cultural items, and a handful of apolitical song-and-dance shows—were strictly selected and vetted by the central government, providing staged proof of socialist legitimacy. Modulating ideological content to suit foreign and overseas Chinese merchants, these events converted aesthetic experience and applause into foreign exchange and diplomatic acknowledgement. Inside the fairgrounds, friction between doctrinal loyalty and commercial gain was routine. Western traders learned to praise model plays, leveraging the regime's ideological zeal for economic concessions, while the central government ensured that even during the Cultural Revolution the Fair remained a carefully moderated enclave where doctrine was softened rather than intensified. Between China and the West, economic interest became the bedrock of mutual compromise. Tracing the fair's trajectory during the Cold War era, the study discovers that from 1957 to autumn 1964 performances primarily perpetuated Republican-era artistic idioms to circulate a "one-China" narrative; thereafter propaganda dominated, with performances tasked solely with affirming the socialist regime's legitimacy and superiority. From 1973 onward, the tone began to soften, and after 1978 the theaters once reserved for diplomatic ritual were converted to mass entertainment, signaling the contraction of the Canton Fair's cultural role under market reform.

Friday 3 July, 14:40 – 16:10, Seminar Room 107

Finding Mahabharatan character compeers in contemporary Indian literature through the lens of dharma

Ariana Haghighi (The University of Sydney)

Following her last Booker-prize winning work, Kiran Desai's new book *The Loneliness of Sonia and Sunny* (2025) was well-awaited and quickly celebrated. Those familiar with Desai's oeuvre will recognise the manuscript her female protagonist Sonia is working on at the beginning of this recent release – it details the plot of Desai's debut novel, *Hullabaloo in the Guava Orchard* (1998). In this paper, I will use this connection as an aperture to bring *Hullabaloo* into the forefront, ready to be freshly examined. The ancient Indian war epic, Vyasa's *Mahabharata*, has left an indelible impact on India, particularly its literary output. My paper argues that the ancient text establishes archetypes for characters which are inhabited by contemporary counterparts. In this paper, I parallel Desai's protagonist in *Hullabaloo*, Sampath, with the key Mahabharatan figure of Arjuna, and Sampath's father with deific advisor Krishna. What do we gain from such a comparison? This paper charts the difference in our understanding of dharmic plasticity and a man's autonomy in sculpting his selfhood in ancient and modern-day India. I will consider the relevance of dharmic strictures imposed on adjacent female figures in both the ancient and contemporary text to unearth gendered differences in how dharma operates over time. Dharma is still a pillar of Hindu theology and central to the way Indian families operate and contextualise their culture. Comparing how it liberates or impairs various characters over time thus enriches our understanding of how we can build selfhood within the family unit and wider community.

Friday 3 July, 12:50 – 14:20, Lecture Theatre 024

Recovering the Female Emperor: How Later Male Courts Reshaped and Obscured Her Histories

Zhonghui Han (Fudan University)

Wu Zhao (武曌), the only female emperor in Chinese history, ruled through the Zhou dynasty for fifteen years. Yet both the dynasty and her title have long been treated as mere interruptions within Tang history. In official and popular narratives alike—from the Song dynasty to the present—Wu Zhao remains framed as an “empress” rather than an emperor, a perspective shaped less by her own time than by the historiographical work of later Tang historians after the restoration. This paper revisits the historical memory of Wu Zhao by recovering voices and texts produced during the Zhou court itself. Drawing on tomb inscriptions, Buddhist bronze bells (梵钟), and textual layers often overshadowed by official histories, I examine how contemporaries constructed their own chronology, genealogy, and vision of imperial legitimacy. These materials reveal that people living under the Zhou regime and during the transition back to Tang—especially in 705 under Emperor Zhongzong—held temporal and historical understandings markedly different from those preserved in the later Tang official histories. For instance, some contemporaries dated the beginning of the Zhou dynasty to 684, the year after Gaozong’s death, rather than 690, the conventional start date recorded in Tang histories. By revealing how traditional China effaced the historical legacy of its female emperor, this study contributes a focused case that deepens our understanding of the historiographical marginalization of female rulers across Asia.

Saturday 4 July, 10:20 – 11:50, Seminar Room 100

Family Multilingualism and Language Policy among Ethnic Minorities in Hong Kong

Jette Hansen Edwards (The Chinese University of Hong Kong)

Research shows that Nepali ethnic minorities are one of the most marginalized, segregated and disadvantaged ethnic minorities in Hong Kong (Tsung & Gao, 2012). The official ‘biliterate’ (Chinese and English) and ‘trilingual’ (Cantonese, Mandarin and English) language policy of Hong Kong is a major factors affecting the sociocultural, educational, economic and professional engagement of Nepali ethnic minorities in the public sphere. This policy has created an unequal linguistic environment contributing to growing language shift and loss of ethnic minority languages. It also poses an increased pressure for Nepali ethnic minorities to speak Chinese and English not only in public spaces but also in the family domain. This study investigates the role of the family in language management, practices and ideologies of Nepali ethnic minorities in Hong Kong, focusing on how Nepali minorities across generations perceive the role of their family in creating a multilingual environment that supports the use of their heritage language. It also examines their ideological and implementational tensions to manage multilingualism in relation to official language policy. Survey data from 200 Nepali ethnic minority families in Hong Kong have been collected as well as interview data from 3 families from each of 4 major Indigenous/tribal groups: Limbu, Rai, Gurung, and Magar. Findings indicate that families have diverse linguistic practices emerging from the past and present linguistic, cultural, and socioeconomic experiences of the Nepali family members across generations. The talk offers critical insights into understanding the role of the family for multilingualism among ethnic minorities in Hong Kong.

Saturday 4 July, 12:50 – 14:20, Seminar Room 446

Reconsidering Global Crime Fiction: Chinese Gong’an and Its Early East Asian Circulation

Sabrina Yuan Hao (The University of Sydney)

As one of the most rapidly expanding popular literary genres, crime fiction has gained recognition as a global form. Published and circulated in an international literary marketplace, crime fiction engages a worldwide readership through its representation of diverse cultures, its exploration of transnational crime and policing, and its intersections with disciplines such as law, criminology, and psychology. Despite the genre’s global prominence, scholarly research on crime fiction remains relatively limited. While recent studies have begun to move beyond the genre’s traditional Anglocentrism by paying greater attention to non-Anglophone European traditions, literary traditions outside these contexts remain comparatively understudied. China has a long-standing tradition of crime writing known as gong’an (court-case) literature. With origins traceable to the tenth century, gong’an literature developed through a range of literary forms, including the legal casebooks of the Song dynasty (960–1279), Yuan dynasty drama (1271–1368), Ming dynasty short stories (1368–1644), and Qing dynasty full-length novels (1644–1912). From the fourteenth century onward, gong’an literature circulated beyond China and influenced literary traditions in Japan and Korea, inspiring various local adaptations. Adopting a comparative perspective, this paper examines the early transnational dissemination and adaptation of Chinese gong’an literature through a case study of the reception of Tangyin Bishi 棠阴比事 (Parallel Cases under the Pear Tree) in Japan. Compiled in the thirteenth century, Tangyin Bishi is one of the most important Chinese legal casebooks. This investigative endeavor on its transmission sheds light on the early transcultural influence of this indigenous Chinese crime genre in East Asia, contributing to shaping global traditions of crime fiction long before the modern international market emerged.

Saturday 4 July, 12:50 – 14:20, Seminar Room 444

Reconfiguring Da Yu: Heritage Practices, Disrupted Traditions, and the Making of Chinese Modernity

Zhengbing He (Australian National University)

This paper examines how cultural practices and material engagements with the past have shaped modern Chinese identity and contributed to processes of social transformation through knowledge production and transmission. Focusing on the contested legacy of Da Yu—the mythical flood controller and founder of China's first dynasty—this study investigates how reinterpretations of the past both fractured and later reinforced the connection between tradition and modernity. Once central to China's mytho-historical imagination, Da Yu's authenticity was critically dismantled in the twentieth century by Chinese historians influenced by Western scientific paradigms, notably the Doubting Antiquity School led by Gu Jiegang. This intervention fractured historical continuity and questioned the epistemological basis of Chinese antiquity. However, in contemporary China, Da Yu's legacy is being revitalised through archaeology, ritual commemoration, historical writing, and public discourse. These practices reconstitute Da Yu as a cultural resource through which modernity is legitimised within historically grounded Chinese epistemologies. By employing archival analysis and ethnographic fieldwork at commemorative sites, this research explores how the past is reinterpreted, collected, and reproduced to serve the present. It argues that Da Yu has been mobilised as a symbolic nexus—uniting flood control technology, political legitimacy, moral authority, and national identity—to reconfigure temporality and spatiality in contemporary China. The study reveals how traditions perceived as historically ruptured are strategically reassembled to underpin a modernity articulated as both culturally specific and historically grounded.

Friday 3 July, 10:20 – 11:50, Seminar Room 028

Crowns Without Sovereignty: The Bestowal of Prestige Titles in Ming-Mongol Relations

Honggeerzhuolan (Peking University)

Prestige Titles (*san guan*) in imperial China were honorific designations denoting bureaucratic rank without conferring specific administrative responsibilities, standing in contrast to Functioning Officials (*zhi shi guan*), which indicated actual posts with defined duties. Beginning in the Ming Dynasty (1368-1644), the rank grades of prestige titles were merged with those of functioning officials, and official remuneration came to be determined directly by the rank of one's functional post. Consequently, prestige titles were reduced to honorary designations and no longer played a role in the practical evaluation of official benefits. As a result, the historiographical consensus in China has long regarded the prestige title system in the late imperial period as lacking significant scholarly value. However, post-Ming prestige titles reveal a distinctive historical dimension in the context of China's relations with its frontiers. Throughout the Ming period, interactions between the Ming court and Mongol tribes alternated between conflict and détente. To ease tensions, certain Mongol chieftains accepted prestige titles conferred by the Ming. Through this practice, the Ming could ritually enact a hierarchical relationship casting itself as the sovereign and Mongol tribes as subjects. At the same time, for the Mongol tribes of the Ming era, receiving a prestige title which symbolized elevated status, also marked a tribe as distinguished and superior among other Mongol groups. Thus, a traditional Chinese ranking system that had become entirely functionally obsolete since the Ming Dynasty was transformed, in a remarkable manner, into a ritual mechanism within Ming-Mongol center-frontier interactions, facilitating multifaceted ethnic engagement on a semiotic level.

Friday 3 July, 10:20 – 11:50, Seminar Room 100

Visuality, Surrealism, and Subject Formation: An Intertextual Interpretation of Pi-Kuo's Poetry and Illustrations

Shu-Ling Horng (National Taiwan University)

While Western modernist aesthetics undeniably influenced Taiwanese modern poets, a hybrid poetics combining poetry and visual art emerged from this influence, establishing the unique characteristics and achievements of modern Taiwanese literature. Since the 1960s, the Epoch Poetry Society has promoted surrealism, and Pi-Kuo (1932-) has been recognized as a surrealist poet. His poetry reflects an isolated existential state, blending philosophical calm with intense bodily desires in both language and form. Beyond poetry, Pi-Kuo enjoys creating illustrations to accompany his verses, using free-flowing lines and colors to vividly capture sensory experiences and offer interpretations beyond words. More importantly, Pi-Kuo frequently adopts the persona of "Erdaye" (Second Master), who reappears in his poems as a fish, an orange, a drawer, or a patch of blackness—figures of transformation that reveal a layered, shifting subjectivity. Another recurring motif in his illustrations—eyes, fish, female bodies, vines—operates within an inner world that is rich, sensual, and enigmatic. Having migrated from China to Taiwan after World War II, Pi-Kuo's surrealist expressions reflect both the personal dislocation and trauma experienced during the Cold War. His poetic-visual intertextuality provides insight into how modernist and surrealist aesthetics were reimagined within the specific historical context of Taiwan. This paper explores Pi-Kuo's poetic and visual works as deeply personal modes of self-expression, identity construction, and emotional release—exemplifying the distinctive achievements of modern Taiwanese poetics.

Saturday 4 July, 10:20 – 11:50, Seminar Room 105

Crossing the Channel and Local Transformation: From Sunshine Collection to Philippine Sinophone Literary Forum

Chien-Chou Hou (National Quemoy University)

This study examines how Taiwanese and Filipino writers transcended the geographical barrier of the Bashi Channel and the political division that followed the 1975 diplomatic rupture during the Cold War, thereby weaving transnational literary networks. Focusing on Taiwan's Sunshine Collection's "Philippine Sinophone Poetry Exhibition" and the Philippines' Philippine Sinophone Literary Forum, this research employs archival analysis and field interviews to reveal how these publications established cultural exchange channels under martial law regimes. The findings demonstrate that the six special issues of poetry exhibitions facilitated a crucial transformation in Philippine Sinophone literature: shifting from imitating Taiwanese modernism to developing distinctive local characteristics, echoing the "returning to reality" poetics and coinciding with the critical moment of the Philippines' post-martial law "Sinophone literary renaissance." This reveals how literature functioned as connective agency in Cold War peripheries. By challenging the "separation paradigm" in Cold War studies and proposing a "connection perspective," this research recognizes small literary magazines as bridges that cross multiple boundaries, contributing new insights to a polycentric understanding of Sinophone literature.

Saturday 4 July, 10:20 – 11:50, Seminar Room 105

The Epigraphy of Buddhist Relic Practice in Gandhāra: The Language of Establishment

Kate Howell (Australian National University)

Relic practice has long been identified as the most significant element of Buddhist religious culture in ancient Gandhāra. While scholars have noted the special vitality of relic practice, its significance has not been subject to critical investigation. Why this lacuna? Earlier Western scholars tended to see relics and associated devotional practices as a sop to the Buddhist laity. They located 'true' Buddhism in Buddhist texts – just like the Protestant theologians who located 'true' religion in the word of the Bible. The words of the canonical texts were reified; practice was ignored. Because 'true' Buddhism was located in the 'Word' or doctrine, epigraphical sources which dealt with practice rather than doctrine were neglected. This presentation will address the lacuna by investigating Buddhist relic practice in Gandhāra between the 2nd century BCE and the 2nd century CE via an examination of contemporary relic inscriptions. The examination employs an in-depth study and analysis of the relic inscription genre and its language alongside a review of recent scholarly work on epigraphic language. This paper concludes that relic practice linked participants in a temporal and spatial web rather like the proverbial Buddhist dharmacakra, the wheel of the dharma or 'law'. Relic establishment, the paper concludes, provided the keystone for Gandhāran Buddhist religious culture.

Saturday 4 July, 14:40 – 16:10, Seminar Room 100

Transmedia Homemaking in Asia: Woman and Atypical Family in Taiwan New Cinema

Hsin-Chin Hsieh (National Taiwan University)

This study examines the films of Chen Kun-Hou, a cinematographer and filmmaker whose contributions to Taiwan New Cinema remain understudied, in order to explore how his work articulates women's agency and atypical family structures during Taiwan's localization in the 1980s. While the New Cinema movement often emphasized the idea of being rooted in the land, Chen developed a cinematic practice of homemaking through his adaptations of Taiwan literature. Rather than linking family narratives directly to national or political transformation, Chen's films work on an intimate scale. They highlight everyday gestures of joy, sorrow, conflict, and resilience, which together produce a form of realism grounded in both image and theme. Focusing on *Osmanthus Alley* (1987), the paper examines how the film employs a transmedia mode of storytelling to depict a woman negotiating agency within entrenched familial and social structures, situated between tradition and modernity and between Taiwan and Japan. The integration of songs and background music, which received the Golden Horse Award for Best Film Music, further expresses women's voices shaped by patriarchal expectations. The narrative also imagines Japan as the place where the protagonist secretly gives birth to a child fathered by another man, extending Chen's homemaking vision into a broader cultural geography. By situating Chen's work within trans Asian visibility, the paper argues that cinematic and media practices actively participate in forms of world making. Chen's films reveal how domestic life became a vital site for imagining democratic aspirations and emerging cultural identities during a period of social transformation.

Friday 3 July, 14:40 – 16:10, Seminar Room 028

Femininity, National Identities and the Imaginary of Modernity in Yuan Changying's and Bai Wei's Plays

Jen-Hao Walter Hsu (National Sun Yat-Sen University)

Yuan Changying (1894–1973) and Bai Wei (1894–1987) were two renowned female playwrights during the Republican era in China. Celebrated as archetypal “New Women” of the May Fourth generation—figures embodying education and social independence—Yuan and Bai are often studied and remembered as playwrights who fostered feminist consciousness and agency during the 1920s and 1930s. However, closer examination reveals significant ambivalence and contradiction in the theatricalized pictures of feminist subjects within their work, particularly where modern feminist consciousness negotiates, resists, or struggles with the demands of a masculinist national subject. In this paper, I engage in close re-readings of their plays and other writings and situate this analysis in the socio-historical context of 1920s–1940s China, examining how they theatrically construct female subjectivities against the backdrop of fervent nationalist and revolutionary sentiments, which often subsumed women's identity into a larger national project. In so doing, I attempt to show how their respective feminist consciousness led them to create modern huajiu (spoken drama) that is clearly influenced by the enlightenment discourse of modernity dominated by male intellectuals, and yet at the same time, profoundly exceeds it, opening up a poetic space of femininity that destabilizes, rewrites, or even challenges the dominant masculine imaginaries of Chinese modernity.

Saturday 4 July, 14:40 – 16:10, Seminar Room 022

How Geographic Isolation Amplifies Domestic and Family Violence (DFV) Risk for Chinese Migrants Living in Regional Australia

Kangshu (Kylie) Hu (Monash University)

This paper explores the complex struggles of Chinese-speaking migrant women facing Domestic and Family Violence (DFV) in regional Australia. We argue that their risk is not merely compounded; it is fundamentally amplified by a framework we call Dual Precarity. This concept links an individual's migration status (covering temporary to precarious permanent visas) with extreme geographic isolation. Our analysis focuses on how this spatial separation enables two critical structural failures: State Complicity and Social Entrapment. The migration system contributes to State Complicity by setting up administrative hurdles, like demanding evidence of a ‘genuine relationship.’ Because victims are isolated in remote areas, they are practically unable to meet this standard. This bureaucratic barrier, combined with a severe lack of local support, then creates a profound form of Social Entrapment that locks women into the perpetrator's pattern of control. We suggest that for migrant women in the periphery, the lack of accessible help—often exacerbated by linguistic barriers and cultural pressures for privacy—forces them to choose silence as a rational survival strategy. By examining the diverse experiences within the Chinese-speaking community, this research aims to show clearly how administrative policies and spatial factors intersect to deny basic safety, driving the need for better service reforms in non-metropolitan settings.

Saturday 4 July, 12:50 – 14:20, Seminar Room 446

World of Mahjong: from a Chinese pastime to a global phenomenon

Matthew Huan (The University of Sydney), Ron van't Veer (Radboud University)

“Mahjong comes from China but belongs to the world.” ~ Yu Guangyuan, first President of the World Mahjong Organization ~ Did you know that... • the name of ‘Mahjong’ and its current standard tiles were popularised by an American? • there are at least 40 variants of the game which reaches as far as Alaska, Argentina and South Africa? • Mahjong was banned in China, its birthplace, for over 40 years? • Mahjong started as a gambling game for men in China but transformed over time into a “women's game” especially in the US? We will explore an iconic game that is beloved by hundreds of millions worldwide. This session will cover Mahjong's development history and evolution within China and across the Asian diaspora; Chinese symbolism in its tiles, names, and scoring patterns; health impacts both positive and negative; portrayals in the media; and resurgence among the younger generation boosted by (among other factors) a growing digital presence and the COVID-19 lockdowns.

Saturday 4 July, 12:50 – 14:20, Seminar Room 028

Gesture, Role-Type, and the 20th Century Transformation of Sifan: Abstract:

Qianhui Huang (Duke Kunshan University)

This paper examines choreographic and gestural changes in the popular traditional Kunqu scene Sifan 思凡 (“Longing for the Secular Life”) from the late-Qing period to the present, based on performance manuals, contemporary videos, and the author’s own performance practice. Previous scholarship has shown how the characterization of the nun who escapes the monastery in search of earthly love operates through a dynamic between sympathy (qing 情) and strangeness (qi 奇), eliciting sympathy for the young nun’s emotional struggle while simultaneously catering to the erotic curiosity of socially dominant male spectators. Building on this, I suggest that from the early twentieth century onward, this balance gradually shifted towards a more interiorized portrayal of the nun. This, I argue, can be traced to narratives of classicization and cultural heritage in the Republican era promoted by figures such as Qi Rushan and Japanese scholar Aoki Masuri. This paper draws on performance knowledge to analyse specific stage movements to demonstrate that performance techniques associated with the elegant and maidenly wudan 五旦 role-type have been incorporated into what was originally performed with the characteristics for the flirtatious liudan 六旦 role-type. These include eye contact and gestures of demure restraint, increasingly emphasizing the nun’s inner emotional world over her sexual availability. This shift speaks to a broader process across Asia in which folk, popular performance traditions were reworked and elevated to national or classical art forms, a transformation that reshaped both aesthetic values and how the traditions have been inherited and reimagined.

Saturday 4 July, 14:40 – 16:10, Seminar Room 444

Female Agency in Contemporary East Asian Screen

Yu-Ting Hung

This article revisits the canonical question of “Nora after leaving home,” first posed in Henrik Ibsen’s *A Doll’s House* (1879), by examining the formation of female subjectivity in contemporary East Asian screen texts. Drawing on Hsu Hui-chi’s *Nora in China* (2024), Lu Xun’s *Regret for the Past* (1925), and Fran Martin’s concept of *shóunǚ* (“mature woman”) in East Asian media (2016) to view the becoming of Nora after she left as the cost of enlightenment, the study interrogates whether women’s acts of departure and choice necessarily produce a modern, autonomous subject. Through a comparative analysis of Japanese *Tokyo Girls* (Tanada Yuki, 2016) and *Aristocrats* (Sode Yukiko, 2020), Taiwanese *Women in Taipei* (Lee Yun-chan, 2022) and *The Making of an Ordinary Woman* (Yan Yi-wen & Chen Chang-lun, 2019), and South Korean *When Life Gives You Tangerines* (Kim Won-seok, 2025), the article argues that female agency is articulated in unstable and conditional forms. These include neoliberal self-management in urban contexts, constrained choices shaped by class hierarchies, and survival strategies marked by historical and emotional wounds. Rather than presenting a linear narrative of liberation, these texts depict female subjectivity as unfinished, fractured, and continually negotiated within specific socio-historical conditions. By framing “Nora after leaving home” as an unresolved historical problem rather than a completed story of emancipation, this study offers a critical rethinking of women’s agency amid rapid social transformation in East Asia.

Saturday 4 July, 10:20 – 11:50, Seminar Room 444

Embodying Purpose: Avocational Kunqu and an Asian Liberal Arts

Kim Hunter Gordon (Duke Kunshan University)

Performance studies, and increasingly the humanities at large, has approached embodied practice as a site where knowledge, value, and authority are produced through doing rather than inscription. It attends to performance dynamics that operate not only within professional or economic frameworks, but within social groupings more broadly. In contemporary China, embodied practices ranging from public square dancing to organised hobby societies have often been remarked upon for the meaning they sustain in later life. Less often examined is how similar performance-based logics are increasingly shaping the lives of younger adults today, as conventional pathways to economic status or professional recognition narrow. This paper examines avocational Kunqu societies as one such performance-based social form, situating them within a longer historical trajectory that includes their role in early 20th-century educational and intellectual life. During the Republican period, Kunqu was cultivated on university campuses and in amateur societies as a practice of singing poetry and shaping melody, valued for grounding participants in shared aesthetic traditions through sustained cultivation and study. Unlike comparable performance arts such as opera or ballet, in which excellence tends to be recognised in just professionals, Kunqu has continued to sustain societies in which competence, authority, and social standing are cultivated through avocational practice. This example highlights the relevance of the Asian humanities in approaches to social value and purpose across time, and of the potential role of avocational practice in liberal arts education.

Saturday 4 July, 14:40 – 16:10, Seminar Room 022

Noriaki Tsuchimoto and Photo-elicitation: On Photographing Memorial Portraits of Minamata Disease Victims

Chikara IJIMA (Kumamoto University)

This paper examines the work of documentary filmmaker Noriaki Tsuchimoto, who took portraits of victims of Minamata disease. From 1994, Tsuchimoto lived in Minamata for about a year, visiting fishing villages along the coast of the Shiranui Sea and taking approximately 500 portraits of victims of the disease. These portraits were exhibited as part of the “Tokyo–Minamata Exhibition” in 1996. His experiences during his stay in Minamata are documented in his posthumous work “Minamata Diary: Visiting Resurrected Souls” (2004). Drawing from materials such as lecture transcripts, interviews, documentaries, and the diaries his wife Motoko kept at the time, this paper explores how the sensitive work of photographing memorial portraits elicits a range of emotions—including both consent and refusal—among the victims’ families. Additionally, it considers how Tsuchimoto received the emotions and memories elicited by such photography. This leads to an exploration of how photo-elicitation is not merely an act of eliciting memories and emotions in local people but also a practice that would prompt transformation in those who engage with it. Based on these considerations, I explore what Tsuchimoto’s work on memorial portrait photography suggests for anthropological research attempting photo-elicitation.

Friday 3 July, 14:40 – 16:10, Seminar Room 444

Queer Migration in Yiyun Li’s and Li Kotomi’s Works

AKINORI INOUE (Kobe University)

This paper examines representations of queer characters and their migration in two Asian authors’ works. Yiyun Li (1972–), a Chinese American immigrant writer, has depicted various queer characters from the early stages of her career. In her first and second short story collections, most of the sexual minority characters migrated to the United States of America from China. In Asian American literary scholarship, previous studies have primarily approached queer migration in her work through the lens of U.S.–China relations. Building on these discussions, this paper broadens the scope to Asia, North America, and Oceania by comparing her work with that of another author. Li Kotomi (1989–) is a Taiwanese writer who writes in Japanese. Her first novel, *Solo Dance* (2018) is set in Japan and follows a lesbian Taiwanese protagonist who finally seeks to travel around the world. At the end of the story, Sydney, Australia emerges as a significant travel destination. These two authors are both immigrant and second-language writers, and their works engage with queer migration. In Yiyun Li’s early works, Chinese queer characters find hope in the United States, while in Li Kotomi’s *Solo Dance*, the Taiwanese protagonist lives in Japan. This paper analyzes the characters’ motivations for migration. It also discusses the significance of the protagonist’s journey to Sydney in Li Kotomi’s novel in terms of queer politics and Mardi Gras. This paper aims to elucidate the symbolic significance of the United States and Australia as viewed from an Asian perspective in each work.

Friday 3 July, 10:20 – 11:50, Seminar Room 105

Kae as an Indigenous System of Ecological Conservation and Food Resilience in Boti, West Timor, Indonesia

Kevin Abimanyu Jatmiko (University of Sydney)

Kae is a customary system practiced by the Boti indigenous community that regulates the temporal rhythm of human–non-human relations in agricultural and ecological terms. When kae is in effect during the cultivating season, community members collectively “pause” their interaction with the land by suspending food crops harvesting, tree-cutting, and the extraction of forest resources. Even when the growth of one crop interferes with that of another, they are prohibited from cutting it. This period of restraint is more than a set of prohibitions; it constitutes a form of temporal governance that shapes how humans relate to growth cycles, regeneration, and ecological balance. This study elaborates how kae operates, beginning from the start of the cultivating season to the harvesting period. Furthermore, this research seeks to understand the meaning of “pausing” within kae rules, both in the Boti community’s agricultural practices as well as in their strategies for food fulfilment. The study is based on ten months of ethnographic fieldwork by including active participant observation, key informant interviews with the usif (king) of Boti, Namah Benu and the women’s leader Molo Benu, as well as informal interviews with community members. By understanding kae as an indigenous temporal governance in the community’s agricultural and food systems, this study offers a locally grounded, cosmology-based perspective for reinterpreting the human–non-human relations in sustaining ecological continuity that supports the community’s food resilience.

Saturday 4 July, 12:50 – 14:20, Lecture Theatre 024

The Construction and Development of the Ideal Personality in Pre-Qin Daoism: A Study Based on Laozi and Zhuangzi

Xintong Jiang (Minzu University of China)

The “Dao,” regarded as the eternal and unchanging principle and the source of all things under Tianxia, forms the core of early Daoist thought. Guided by the principles of Ziran and Wuwei, Daoism posits that achieving an ideal mode of human existence requires harmonizing with the Dao through understanding, experiential practice, and application in daily life. In Laozi’s philosophy, the ideal personality is embodied by the Shengren, one who unites with the Dao, manifests naturalness and non-action, and serves as the expression of the Great Dao within human society. Building on Laozi’s foundation, Zhuangzi further elaborated the metaphysical dimensions of the Dao, emphasizing its origin, spontaneity, and universality, while extending its implications for human existence. He proposed the Zhenren—characterized by emotional detachment, selflessness, serenity, tranquility, and spiritual freedom—as the ultimate ideal personality. This conception transcends material and social constraints, focusing on the spiritual and existential dimensions of human life, thereby opening a new horizon for understanding human spirituality in early Chinese thought.

Saturday 4 July, 10:20 – 11:50, Seminar Room 100

(Re)Vitalizing Minamata Photography: Archiving, Workshops, and New Channels of Utterance

Yumi KAMURO (Kumamoto University)

This paper examines the ongoing (re)vitalization of Minamata photography through archiving, in-person workshops, exhibitions, and both ethnographic and practice-based approaches. It demonstrates how archival engagement can become a site for social dialogue and re-imagining. Since the 1960s, amateur and professional photographers have documented people with Minamata disease, their families, and the surrounding landscapes. In 2021, Minamata Photographers’ Eye (MPE) was established to preserve and utilize more than 100,000 negatives produced across different periods and motivations. Its members, all in their seventies and eighties, consist solely of photographers who have published photobooks on Minamata. Two female coordinators living in Minamata have been working to (re)illuminate photographs, mainly those taken from the 1960s through the 1980s for contemporary audiences, at times confronting opposing ideas from older generations. I present three case studies conducted in collaboration with MPE: 1. the archiving of negatives by the late photographer Takeshi Shiota, carried out with his wife at KUA; 2. a workshop using Minamata photography at REStArt 2025, EFRJ, in Belgium; 3. the Takeshi Shiota Photo Exhibition at Kumamoto University. By sharing images with participants from different generations and individuals who hold diverse positions, I argue that insights arise beyond the photographer’s original intention when images are interpreted through others’ eyes. I further suggest that these practices open new communicative channels, eliciting utterances through images and fostering the re-imagination of local history, memory, and landscapes.

Friday 3 July, 14:40 – 16:10, Seminar Room 444

Rethinking Climate Displacement through South Asian Humanities: A Multi-Perspective Framework

Aruna Karki (The University of Auckland)

In the age of the Anthropocene, climate-induced displacement stands as one of the most pressing humanitarian and philosophical challenges of our time. This paper reimagines the figure of the climate refugee through a South Asian lens, drawing on both testimonial and literary perspectives rooted in local histories of migration, memory, and ethics. Engaging with Deep Halder’s “Blood Island: An Oral History of the Marichjhapi Massacre” and Amitav Ghosh’s “The Hungry Tide,” the study explores how climate displacement exposes the limits of existing legal and humanist frameworks that govern refugee recognition. While international refugee laws often overlook climate-driven mobility, South Asian literary and oral traditions offer alternative ways of knowing: epistemologies that foreground relationality, ecological interdependence, and non-human agency. In dialogue with New Materialist theory, this paper argues that South Asian humanities provide a framework grounded in relational ontologies that can move discussions of climate justice beyond anthropocentric and state-centred paradigms. By reading lived testimonies alongside fiction, the paper highlights how narratives from South Asia contribute vital insights for rethinking belonging, sovereignty, and ethical responsibility in the Anthropocene. Ultimately, it calls for a renewed humanistic practice that bridges environmental, cultural, and moral dimensions of displacement through the lens of relational ontology.

Saturday 4 July, 10:20 – 11:50, Seminar Room 022

Translation Heuristics for Premodern Philosophical Texts: The Case of Translating Trichiliocosm

Samuel Khoo (The University of Sydney)

Translation is both culturally essential and philosophically interesting. It is culturally essential because it allows different cultures to communicate and (for the historian) can serve as a marker of the spread of ideas and texts. It is philosophically interesting because it raises questions about meaning and limits of thought, especially when certain words, terms, or concepts are seen as untranslatable. What heuristics have translators used in translating philosophical (as opposed to literary) texts? This paper examines this question through the lens of two key moments in Chinese translation history. The first is the translation of the term trisahasramahāsahasralokadhātu, sometimes translated as “trichiliocosm” in English and most often encountered in the term 一念三千 (yinian sanqian) in Chinese Buddhist texts. The second is the attempt to translate Aristotle into Chinese on the part of the Jesuits and their Chinese converts. Through a close examination of these two moments, I argue that translators of philosophical texts have employed fundamentally different heuristics depending on their priorities. The comparison also exposes a deeper problem: philosophical translation necessarily involves decisions about which features of a concept are essential and which are accidental, and these are decisions that themselves presuppose philosophical commitments. The translator is thus not neutral but a philosophical agent whose heuristic choices shape the conceptual possibilities available in the receiving tradition. This paper concludes by considering what these historical cases suggest about the conditions under which genuine philosophical dialogue across linguistic boundaries becomes possible.

Friday 3 July, 10:20 – 11:50, Seminar Room 442

The relationship between Korean media consumption and cultural identity among Korean diaspora in Australia

Chloe Kim (University of Canberra)

This research investigates the influence of media on the formation and expression of cultural identity among diasporic communities, with a particular focus on the relationship between Korean media consumption and cultural identities among Korean Australians. Grounded in scholarly perspectives that conceptualise cultural identities as fluid, dynamic, and context-dependent, the study examines how Korean media content can foster empathy and a sense of cultural connection. Through an interactive diary study and in-depth interviews, this research explores how engagement with Korean media contributes to the discovery and reinforcement of cultural identities among 1.5 and second-generation migrants. Ultimately, it aims to understand how such media consumption encourages Korean Australians to express and sustain their Koreanness within the broader Australian and global multicultural landscape.

Friday 3 July, 14:40 – 16:10, Seminar Room 102

Truth at the Boundaries: Wang Chong on Han Beliefs

Esther Sunkyung Klein (Australian National University)

The Han dynasty thinker Wang Chong (27–c.100 CE) wanted more than anything to develop a framework for identifying factual truths and debunking attractive falsehoods. Ironically, he ended up recording (and therefore preserving for posterity) a great number of Han dynasty beliefs that he described in order to argue against. One of the many fascinating features of Wang Chong’s book, Lunheng (A balance-scale for arguments), is that it accidentally serves as a compendium for interesting beliefs that otherwise might not have survived. Though Wang Chong seems to mock these beliefs, he also engages quite seriously with them, including entertaining long hypothetical scenarios. In this talk, I will survey a range of interesting beliefs that Wang Chong has preserved but did not hold, and use these to reconstruct some sense of the social and physical world they might presuppose. This project is interesting in its own right but also sheds light on Wang Chong’s motivation for wanting to develop a reliable and responsible method for handling evidence. I will conclude the talk with a few diverse examples of Wang Chong’s approach to the beliefs of his contemporaries, especially his largely unrecognised efforts to create more systematic and self-consistent representations of the world and how it works.

Friday 3 July, 14:40 – 16:10, Seminar Room 100

Nationness, Disability and Total War: Evacuation, Exclusion and Belonging at Fujikura Gakuen in Japan

Yasuko Hassall Kobayashi (Musashi University)

Japan's Total War System, institutionalized through the National Mobilization Law (1938) and the Imperial Rule Assistance Association (1940), followed by extensive civilian mobilization policies, restructured society under wartime nationalism. While existing scholarship primarily examines its governance, ideological coherence, and national unity across socio-economic backgrounds, this study interrogates its role in deepening social disparities—specifically, the differential treatment of able-bodied individuals and those with disabilities within wartime mobility frameworks. Focusing on Fujikura Gakuen, a facility for disabled individuals on Izu Ōshima that is one of the Tokyo Islands outside Tokyo, this study analyses the relocation of its students to Karuizawa under Japan's wartime group evacuation policy for schoolchildren. Despite being implemented as a uniform national strategy, evacuation policies functioned asymmetrically, revealing stark disparities in resource allocation, safety provisions, and institutional support between able-bodied and disabled evacuees. By examining these evacuation experiences, this research demonstrates how the Total War System not only reinforced existing structural inequalities but also intensified the marginalization of disabled individuals within Japan's wartime order. Additionally, it explores the resilience and agency of Fujikura Gakuen's staff, who, despite extreme adversity, navigated bureaucratic obstacles to safeguard their students and sustain their institution. This case study offers a critical lens on how state-imposed wartime policies intersected with entrenched social hierarchies, shaping the lived experiences of marginalized populations. More broadly, it contributes to discussions on the intersection of war, disability, and social stratification, challenging prevailing narratives of wartime unity.

Saturday 4 July, 12:50 – 14:20, Seminar Room 442

Against the transnational Military-Industrial Complex: Global Solidarity with Palestine

Lina Koleilat (Australian National University)

As the U.S. continues to expand its military reach through bases in Okinawa, South Korea, and so-called Australia among others, civilian populations in regions like Yemen, Palestine, and Iraq experience the devastating effects of military aggression originating from these strategic sites. Recently, South Korean defence companies, including conglomerates like Hanwha, have been contributing to recent military actions in Palestine, through the production of controversial military technologies used by the state of Israel. On the other hand, in so-called Australia, the deepening military integration with the United States and its own expanding defence sector further entrenches it within the global infrastructure of war that enables and sustains such violence. The ethical implications of such involvement of South Korean companies and Australian weapons manufacturing in devastating destructions and the killing of civilians underscore a disturbing entanglement of the global arms industry, and its effect on communities especially in the SWANA region. In response to this escalating militarisation, this paper argues that the recent ongoing genocide in Palestine compels a re-evaluation of hegemonic national borders, revealing the pervasive influence of the military-industrial complex in shaping our understanding of border politics. Solidarity with Palestine from sites such as Jeju Island, long targeted for militarisation and U.S. base expansion, exemplifies how local anti-military struggles already act against these interconnected structures of violence. This study challenges traditional, land-based geopolitical frameworks by adopting a model of a global transnational solidarity that fluidly navigates and transcends state-imposed borders, underscoring a non-hierarchical approach to a grassroots-led global resistance.

Saturday 4 July, 14:40 – 16:10, Lecture Theatre 024

Stratified Struggles: Capital Disparities and the Uneven Terrain of Indonesian Student Activism

Ben Laksana (Victoria University of Wellington)

This research argues that Indonesian student activism operates as a stratified field that complicates celebratory accounts of egalitarian resistance. It shows that structural inequalities shape who could access critical learning and who could sustain long term participation. Amid authoritarian resurgence and the neoliberal restructuring of higher education, the study draws on a theoretical synthesis of Bourdieu's analysis of capital and field and Freire's account of critical consciousness and praxis to examine how structural constraints mediate political becoming. Based on six months of ethnographic fieldwork in Yogyakarta, Indonesia the study shows that student activists entered the field on unequal footing. Their capacity to participate and to deepen critical consciousness depended on inherited economic and cultural resources. Students from A accredited institutions accessed stronger academic infrastructures, wider critical discourses, and higher levels of symbolic capital, which increased their visibility and influence. Capital constrained peers from B accredited institutions faced severe material scarcity, very low disposable incomes, and limited linguistic resources, which narrowed their opportunities for learning and political action. Such stratification produced cycles of overwork, strategic withdrawal, and exhaustion. Although activists relied on mutual aid and collective practices to redistribute food, books, and knowledge, these efforts remained fragile and uneven. The study conceptualises these practices as a communal radical habitus. This disposition showed that resistance persisted not by erasing inequality but by placing solidarity at the centre of everyday practice and continually contesting the reproduction of hierarchy within ostensibly radical fields.

Saturday 4 July, 10:20 – 11:50, Seminar Room 102

Transnational Afterlives of Sanskrit Epics: The Ramayana Across Southeast Asia

Jiva Lamsal (The University of Sydney)

The Vedic corpus and the classical Sanskrit epics—most notably the Mahābhārata and the Rāmāyaṇa—constitute foundational pillars of South Asia’s intellectual and cultural heritage. While the Vedas embody early ritual, metaphysical, and cosmological knowledge expressed in Vedic Sanskrit, the later epics, composed in classical Sanskrit, develop expansive narrative frameworks through which ethical dilemmas, political theory, philosophical reflection, and models of ideal conduct are explored. Together, these traditions form a multilayered knowledge system that has shaped South Asian moral imagination for millennia. This paper examines how such epistemic formations travel and transform beyond the subcontinent, focusing specifically on the transnational dissemination of the Rāmāyaṇa across Southeast Asia. Through a comparative analysis of the Thai Ramakien, the Javanese Kakawin Ramayana, and other regional adaptations, the study investigates how receiving cultures selectively preserve, reinterpret, and indigenize the narrative, reshaping its ethical emphases, aesthetic forms, and cosmological meanings. These transformations prompt a central research question: What does the movement and rearticulation of the Rāmāyaṇa reveal about cultural translation, intellectual exchange, and shared humanities frameworks across Asia? By tracing how the epic’s core narratives are adapted in performance traditions, literary forms, and courtly cultures, the paper argues that the Rāmāyaṇa’s Southeast Asian afterlives illuminate a dynamic process of intercultural knowledge-making. Ultimately, this study positions the transregional journey of the Rāmāyaṇa as a key example of how classical South Asian textual traditions continue to generate new ethical, aesthetic, and intellectual possibilities across Asia.

Saturday 4 July, 14:40 – 16:10, Seminar Room 100

The Exclusionary Edge: Social Capital, Adat, and the Costs of Non-Participation for Youth Success in Rural Java

Rara Sekar Larasati (Independent)

Drawing on six weeks of ethnographic fieldwork in rural East Java, Indonesia, this paper employs Bourdieu’s theory of practice to examine how local cultural structures both enable and constrain young people’s success. Focusing on Ngadas, a desa adat (traditional cultural village) known for successful potato farming and low levels of youth urbanisation, my study conceptualises success as *illusio*: a sense of being and belonging with and for others within the social field. I argue that for young people in Ngadas, success across key life domains—work, family, and religion—is fundamentally underpinned by a form of social capital produced through mandatory reciprocity and gift exchange embedded in adat. This social capital, characterised by trust, strong social ties, and collective harmony (*guyub rukun*), holds significant symbolic value, linking individual achievement to the continuity and success of Ngadas as a socio-cultural field. However, this system of reciprocal maintenance also reveals a critical exclusionary edge. Non-participation in adat inhibits the accumulation of essential social capital, resulting in alienation and social exclusion. The experiences of “misfits,” who exhibit a *habitus clivé* and struggle to accrue social capital due to non-engagement in these obligatory exchanges, illustrate how failure to participate restricts access to symbolic capital and belonging. While adat plays a central role in sustaining collective cohesion, it simultaneously functions as a powerful symbolic gatekeeper, imposing high social costs on youth who do not—or cannot—comply.

Saturday 4 July, 10:20 – 11:50, Seminar Room 102

New Traces of East Asia’s Musical Beginnings: Verse Albums and Music Charts in Warring States Chinese Manuscripts

David Lebovitz (The Hong Kong Polytechnic University)

For most of transmitted history, it has been assumed that traces of ritual “Music”(yue 樂) had been lost by the time of Confucius. Although music was understood as one strand, or canonical warp-thread (jing 經) of China’s multifaceted ancient knowledge system, there have until recently been few sources that might shed light on its early theory and performance. Moreover, whereas music-related texts known to the earliest bibliographies have been missing for millennia, in recent years, unearthed manuscript texts from Warring States (5th–3rd c. BCE) period China have come to light, bearing on this previously lost musical knowledge. After introducing some of these newly available manuscripts, this paper argues that new categories of texts (or genres), distinct from those that came to order both canons and bibliographies, are necessary to make sense of the meaning and function of these new sources. Some of these texts, which I call “verse albums” organize and present suites of musical poetry, often contextualizing the use of music within specific ritual settings. Other texts attest to the systematizing of musical knowledge in the Warring States. All of them promise to revise the early history of music and ritual performance in East Asia.

Saturday 4 July, 14:40 – 16:10, Seminar Room 100

Vietnam War Diasporas between Asia and Australia: A Humanities Perspective

Hayeon Lee (Australian National University)

This paper explores the untold narratives of Vietnamese women who migrated to Australia after the Vietnam War through relationships with men from South Korea (hereafter 'Korea')—soldiers, businessmen, laborers and technicians involved in Korea's military presence in Vietnam during the war. Despite the deployment of over 320,000 troops between 1964 and 1973, along with the presence of 15,000 civilians (the vast majority of whom were men), the history of Korea's involvement in the Vietnam War and its human consequences remain largely absent from official memory in Vietnam, Korea and Australia. Following the war, some Korean men returned home with Vietnamese wives, while others eventually settled in Australia. Drawing on oral histories and archival research, this paper examines how these women's lives unfolded across borders and how their narratives illuminate evolving identities, transnational ties, cultural adaptation, and family and community connections. By centering their voices, this humanities-based approach challenges dominant Vietnam War narratives and foregrounds lived experiences that reveal the complex legacies of historical violence, migration and multicultural nation-building.

Friday 3 July, 14:40 – 16:10, Seminar Room 105

Reconstructing Knowledge Pathways of Climate Adaptation in Asian Rural Communities

Bingnan Li (Shaanxi Normal University)

In the age of accelerating climate change, Asian rural communities have become crucial frontiers of adaptive transformation. Confronted with intensifying climatic uncertainties, diverse knowledge systems and modes of action converge, revealing the tensions and dialogues between tradition, ecology, and modernity. Drawing on long-term ethnographic research in northern and southern China, this study proposes two analytical frameworks—rooted adaptation and flowing adaptation—to interpret how rural communities negotiate resilience and transformation. Flowing adaptation refers to externally driven strategies shaped by technologies, capital, and policy interventions. The example of photovoltaic energy promotion in northern villages illustrates how such projects are reinterpreted through local economic reasoning and environmental sensibilities. In contrast, rooted adaptation derives from place-based wisdom embedded in cultural memory and ecological practices, as seen in the water and forest management traditions of minority communities in Yunnan. By comparing these trajectories, the paper argues that dominant "flow"-oriented approaches often prioritise efficiency and scalability while undervaluing the epistemic and cultural resilience embodied in "root" systems. Reconstructing climate adaptation through the humanities thus requires a creative integration of these two modes—linking innovation with tradition, and the global with the local. This study offers a humanistic lens on Asia's adaptive futures, positioning Asian rural knowledge as a vital resource for reimagining the humanities in the climate crisis era.

Saturday 4 July, 10:20 – 11:50, Seminar Room 022

Designing Participatory Infrastructure: Art Finance Innovation (AFI) and a Decolonial Turn in Asian Humanities

Chloe Yan Li (The Royal Society of Arts)

Reflecting on the decade since the 'Australia in the Asian Century' White Paper, this paper draws on my action research across a decade of trans-regional cultural engagement – from managing British Council initiatives in Asia to shaping Australia's international arts engagement strategies. I identify a 'systemic displacement' of value that fails to sustain regional social capital. I argue for a shift towards participatory infrastructure design. The Art Finance Innovation (AFI) initiative, supported by UNSW and Asialink at the University of Melbourne, moves beyond traditional subsidy frameworks by experimenting methodological knowledge from digital ecologies in the region. As an RSA Councillor for Asia & Oceania, I frame AFI as the catalyst for a Fellowship Innovation Hub (FIH), aimed at fostering a decolonised, local-led knowledge ecosystem. By embedding participation into regional Fellow networks, this research repositions the humanities as active value creators, ensuring the Asia-Pacific remains a self-determined centre for cultural innovation.

Saturday 4 July, 10:20 – 11:50, Lecture Theatre 024

Korean Popular Culture and the Chinese Young Men's Body Aesthetics

Haiping Li (Curtin University)

Korean cultural globalization has influenced youth cultures globally, including China (Joo, 2011; Kim, 2013). While there is extensive research on the impact of Korean popular culture on Asian pop culture, the intersection with local perceptions of masculinity, especially among Chinese urban young men, remains underexplored. This research addresses this gap by examining how young Chinese urban men integrate Korean pop culture aesthetics into their grooming practices, analyzing the social significance for Chinese masculinity within the context of transnational cultural flows (Butler, 1990). Through 24 semi-structured interviews and thematic analysis, the study explores participants' engagement with K-pop-inspired fashion, skincare, and body aesthetics in their microsocial contexts. This study draws on Connell's concept of hegemonic masculinity (Connell, 2005) and Butler's theory of gender performativity (Butler, 1990) to examine how Korean popular culture aesthetics are incorporated, embodied, and negotiated by young Chinese men through everyday grooming and style practices. These micro-level practices are situated within macrostructures shaped by institutions such as media, education, and family, which reinforce dominant gender norms and are influenced by transnational cultural flows. Foucault's concepts of governmentality (2007) and biopolitics (1990) provide a background framework for understanding how state-led discourses and institutional regulations construct normative male ideals. By focusing on how young Chinese men navigate between conformity, aspiration, and agency through their engagement with K-pop-inspired aesthetics, this study contributes to the existing field of study on Chinese masculinities, the body in society in China and how transnational cultural flows are understood and embodied in local contexts.

Friday 3 July, 12:50 – 14:20, Seminar Room 022

Local Agency and the Limits of Tokugawa Resource Control: The Rise of the Kelp Trade (Late 17th – Mid 19th Centuries)

LI Haolong (Sun Yat-sen University)

From the late seventeenth century onward, the Tokugawa shogunate promoted a policy of "marine products in lieu of copper" within the Nagasaki trade with China, thereby fostering new institutional approaches to the exploitation and governance of marine resources in Edo Japan. Among various marine commodities, kelp emerged as a product of particular significance due to its low cost, abundant output, and stable supply, especially at a time when exports of high-end marine goods from Nagasaki were in decline. Produced primarily in Hokkaido (Matsumae-Ezot), kelp benefited from local socio-economic conditions that allowed regional domains and private merchants to engage proactively in resource development and to strengthen their own economic capacity. Although the shogunate sought to reinforce its monopoly over marine-goods procurement, the inexpensive and high-volume nature of kelp made strict central control neither necessary nor feasible, thus creating institutional space for the growth of local domains and private commercial actors. Consequently, the rise of the kelp industry reflected not only state-led resource allocation but also the increasing agency of local actors—particularly entrepreneurial private merchants. The transformation of kelp production and distribution illuminates the internal tensions of the Tokugawa system. The shogunate's increasingly rigid monopoly over the Nagasaki trade ultimately contributed to its deterioration, while the expansion of private commerce and maritime networks gradually weakened central authority and laid the groundwork for the political and economic reconfiguration of the late Tokugawa period.

Friday 3 July, 12:50 – 14:20, Seminar Room 028

Catholic Missionary Constructions of the Ancient-Modern Confucian Divide through the Qin Book Burning

Kang Li (Wuhan University)

This paper investigates how Jesuit missionaries during the Ming-Qing transition participated in the transnational reconstruction of Chinese ancient history by reinterpreting the "Burning of Books and Burying of Scholars" (fenshu kengru 焚书坑儒). Drawing on a wide corpus of missionary Chinese historical writings by Jesuits such as Prospero Intorcetta, Jean-Baptiste du Halde, Philippe Couplet, and Christian Wolfgang Herdrich, as well as the Dominican missionary Domingo Fernández Navarrete—and employing a global intellectual history approach, To substantiate the accommodationist view pioneered by Matteo Ricci, later Jesuits—especially the Figurist school led by Joachim Bouvet—reinterpreted the burning of books as a catastrophic rupture that deliberately destroyed the textual evidence of God's primordial revelation to the ancient Chinese. This historical reinterpretation was a transnational intellectual hybrid. From the Western side, missionaries drew on the tradition of allegorical and typological biblical interpretation, as well as the ancient theology, the belief in a universal revelation accessible across civilizations. From the Chinese side, it resonated with the native tradition of "emphasis on the past and belittling the present" (hougu bojin 厚古薄今) and was influenced by the rigorous textual criticism of the ascendant Qian-Jia school of Han Learning, which itself sought to strip away later Neo-Confucian interpretations and return to the original classics. However, this appropriation created a deep cultural tension, as missionaries condemned burning of books while it actually held a positive connotation in Christian history as exemplified by events in the Acts of the Apostles. This study demonstrates that the missionary engagement with the Chinese past was not an objective transmission of knowledge but an ideological construction. It reveals how a key event in Asian history was transformed into a global narrative serving religious polemics, forged at the intersection of Chinese and European intellectual worlds.

Saturday 4 July, 10:20 – 11:50, Seminar Room 440

Research on the Textual Generation and Transmission of Zhu Xu's Deeds Recorded in the Zizhi Tongjian

Mingrui LI (Nanjing University)

In the Zizhi Tongjian's account of the Battle of Feishui, Zhu Xu is recorded as having loudly proclaimed defeat behind the Former Qin lines, thereby demoralising the troops and influencing the outcome of the battle. Yet Zhu Xu's deeds lack reliable chroniclers, and his story first appears only in his biography within the Jinshu. Throughout the Tang dynasty, Zhu Xu remained a marginal figure in accounts of the battle. It was only when the Zizhi Tongjian collated historical materials that Zhu Xu's "voice" gained widespread recognition, profoundly shaping later historical perceptions. Historical works and local gazetteers from the Song dynasty onwards largely drew upon the Zizhi Tongjian when recounting related events, clearly illustrating the text's dissemination process. While the subjective construction within the Zizhi Tongjian exerted its own influence, the seemingly objective collation of historical materials inevitably generated new textual meanings. This precisely demonstrates the rich possibilities inherent in interpreting Chinese historical writing.

Saturday 4 July, 10:20 – 11:50, Seminar Room 100

Evolution of the Classic: An Intertextual Analysis of The Legend of the White Snake

Shuhan Li (University of Macau)

This paper examines modern literary reworkings of The Legend of the White Snake in fiction by Li Rui, Yan Geling, and Li Bihua, focusing on how the rewriting of a classical Chinese folktale functions as a mode of humanistic inquiry rather than mere narrative adaptation. Drawing on intertextual analysis, the paper argues that these modern retellings engage the legend as a living epistemic resource through which questions of subjectivity, morality, desire, and historical consciousness are rethought in modern and contemporary contexts. Rather than treating the White Snake legend as a fixed premodern text, the paper traces its narrative evolution since the Song dynasty and foregrounds its openness to transformation. In Li Rui's *The Human Realm*, the legend is reconfigured through realist aesthetics and ethical inquiry, revealing tensions between transcendence and human limitation. Yan Geling and Li Bihua's reinterpretations further displace the moral and gendered structures of the original tale, mobilising the figures of the White and Green Snakes to interrogate power, desire, and marginality across different cultural and temporal settings. By situating these rewritings within a broader continuum of Chinese narrative tradition, this paper proposes myth rewriting as a distinctly Asian humanistic practice—one that negotiates continuity and rupture, tradition and modernity. The enduring adaptability of The Legend of the White Snake demonstrates how Asian narrative forms generate alternative modes of literary thinking, contributing to a reimagining of the humanities grounded in indigenous narrative logics and historical experience.

Friday 3 July, 14:40 – 16:10, Seminar Room 022

Historical Grievances and Community Resilience during the Post-Productivist Transition

XiaoLin Li (East China University of Science and Technology)

The conflicts caused by development projects have long gone beyond the scope of simple redistribution of material resources. Under certain circumstances, such projects may awaken long-accumulated historical grievances and draw communities into prolonged stalemate. This article draws on a longitudinal case study of a cross-provincial conflict triggered by the construction of a tourism shortcut on the Hunan-Guangxi border in China. It explores how development disturbances activate negative social memory and how governance interventions can gradually rebuild community resilience. The article shows that historical grievances persist over time and do not disappear naturally with time. As a form of negative social memory, they are preserved through institutional ambiguity, spatial anchoring, and the intergenerational transmission of emotionally charged narratives. Once reactivated, historical memory and material interests reinforce each other. The conflict then enters a costly state of memory and interest lock-in. Breaking this deadlock requires transforming moralized, identity-based historical disputes into negotiable public issues through factualization, moral reframing, and proceduralization. The article contributes to research on social memory and community resilience in three ways. It shifts attention from successful experience to historical grievance, identifies how development disturbances activate stored memory, and introduces the institutional transformation of memory as a concept for explaining governance reconstruction in historically rooted development conflicts.

Saturday 4 July, 10:20 – 11:50, Seminar Room 022

Dramatizing the Classics: Parody and Rewriting of Confucian Texts in Late Ming Drama

Yingyu Li (The Chinese University of Hong Kong, Shenzhen)

In contrast to mid-Ming plays that, under the vogue of “turning eight-legged essay into southern arias,” primarily served to promote Confucian doctrine, late Ming drama abounds in works that parody and rewrite the Confucian classics. These plays make strategic use of selective, out-of-context quotation. On the surface they conform to conventional practices of citation, abridgement, and collage of lines, yet through metrical transformation, displacement of context, and semantic inversion they work to destabilize the authority of the classics themselves. Beyond scattered moments in individual plays, the *chuanqi* *Dongguo ji* and the *zaju* *Qidong jue dao* construct entire plots around the Mencian text. *Dongguo ji* breaks with the usual two- or four-character convention for *chuanqi* titles by adopting an unaltered phrase from the Mencius, effectively casting the play as a “dramatic eight-legged essay.” *Qidong jue dao* not only ridicules Mencian teachings, but also directly exposes the tensions and contradictions embedded in Confucian ethical discourse. The confrontation and fusion between the solemn discourse of the classics and the popular stage reveal how the mismatch between literary genre and linguistic register are mobilized to achieve specific dramatic and ideological effects, offering a distinctive perspective on late Ming cultural fragmentation and the inner world of the literati.

Saturday 4 July, 14:40 – 16:10, Seminar Room 444

Prostitution in 1920s Chinese fiction

Yiwen Li (The University of Sydney)

The recurring depiction of prostitutes in Chinese Republican-era literature establishes a central theme, focusing on the dynamics between customers and prostitutes and revealing the psychological struggles faced by these women. These narratives diverge from the prevalent courtesan fiction of the Ming and Qing dynasties by introducing explicit erotic elements involving prostitutes and their patrons. However, a distinctive aspect of prostitute fiction from the Republican era is the emphasis on the pitiable circumstances faced by the girls in response to evolving societal trends. Authors of prostitute fiction assert a claim that transcends societal prejudices by affirming the inherent human dignity of prostitutes, a perspective that demands recognition. This article employs a female-centric analytical approach within the Republican context to investigate how prostitute fiction aligns with modern humanistic attitudes towards gender. Through an examination of key works such as He Haiming’s “Elderly Qin Master” (1922), Lin Biyao and Yao Min’ai’s “Daughter of the Brothels” (1922), and Ye Dingluo’s “Elder Sister’s Husband” (1926), this study contributes to the expanding scholarly discourse on how Republican-era writers assimilate humanitarian principles. The depiction of child prostitutes in these narratives serves as a metaphor for the anxiety and depression experienced by Chinese intellectuals. These works challenge cultural traditions and propose alternative conceptualizations and enactments of gender roles within society.

Saturday 4 July, 14:40 – 16:10, Seminar Room 020

From Chinese-Indonesian Soundscape to Betawi Symbol: The Cultural Politics of Gambang Kromong

Ziyunfei LI (Xinghai Conservatory of Music)

This paper examines gambang kromong, a Chinese-Indonesian hybrid musical genre from Jakarta and its surrounding areas, to explore how cultural performance participates in the making of “local tradition.” Chinese performance and music in Indonesia and Southeast Asia cannot be understood as simple offshoots of “homeland” traditions, but must be analyzed as negotiated practices shaped by state cultural policy, ethnic relations, and local histories (Stenberg 2019). Building on this insight, the paper approaches gambang kromong as a sonic field in which such negotiations become audible. Drawing on documentary sources, historical recordings, and ethnographic observation, it traces the genre’s emergence in colonial Batavia through interactions among Chinese, Sundanese, Betawi, and Western musical influences. The study asks how gambang kromong’s historical trajectories make audible Jakarta’s transformation from colonial port to postcolonial metropolis, how the genre acquires distinct meanings across performance contexts, and how political discourses of ethnicity and locality become inscribed onto sound. Comparing Chinese-Indonesian community celebrations with municipal cultural programs that frame gambang kromong as Betawi heritage and “multicultural Jakarta,” the paper argues that gambang kromong is not only a reflection of local tradition but also a reflection on the future of Asian culture, showing the fluidity and transformation of cultural identity in the context of globalization. Gambang kromong represents a negotiated musical space, where hybridity and recontextualization reveal the shifting cultural politics of identity and urban tradition.

Saturday 4 July, 12:50 – 14:20, Seminar Room 105

The Inner Mind and Outer Form: Early Confucian Views on Ritual from the Perspective of the Book of Songs

Shi Liang (Peking University)

The relationship between the inner mind of individuals in performing rituals and the outer forms is a central concern in Confucian political philosophy. In the early Confucian hermeneutical tradition, the Book of Songs (Shi 《诗》) offers a unique perspective on this issue through its depiction of human intentions and emotions. Within the texts such as Wuxing (《五行》), Min zhi Fumu (《民之父母》), and Shi Lun (《诗论》), on the one hand, they emphasize avoiding excessive focus on formality, which may hinder genuine emotional expression in the context of self-cultivation, or highlight the primacy of inner virtue over ritual and musical forms in governance. On the other hand, these texts also affirm the importance of ritual forms, recognizing rituals as vessels for expressing concealed intentions and as guiding forces that shape human minds. Early Confucianism thus maintained a delicate balance between inner mind and outer form in ritual practice.

Friday 3 July, 10:20 – 11:50, Seminar Room 100

Regional Accents and New Sounds: An Analysis of Chinese Opera Programming on Singapore's Rediffusion Radio

Chia Yi Lin (National Tsing Hua University)

Singapore's Rediffusion, a commercially operated wireless radio station, ran from 1949 to 2012. Prior to the promotion of the Speak Mandarin Campaign in Singapore in 1979, dialect programs constituted most of the station's content. A significant portion of this programming was dedicated to Chinese opera. Analyzing these programs allows for a discussion of the sonic content and mediation of Singaporean Chinese opera beyond the context of street opera. While Singapore's main dialect groups include Hokkien, Cantonese, Teochew, Hainanese, and Hakka, the volume of Chinese opera programs for these groups did not align with their respective population proportions. The key factor was that broadcast opera in Singapore relied primarily on commercial recordings rather than live broadcasts. Consequently, there was a high correlation between the number of published records available and the length of the opera programming. Furthermore, the recordings acquired by the station were not limited to local operas like Hokkien, Cantonese, and Teochew opera. In addition to Peking Opera (which already had established transmission networks), other forms such as Huangmei Opera and Yue Opera, which entered the view of overseas Chinese audiences during the Cold War era through the popularity of opera films, were also featured. This paper seeks to elucidate the multifaceted dimensions of overseas Chinese opera activities, moving beyond the simple concept of local accents.

Friday 3 July, 10:20 – 11:50, Seminar Room 446

Translating Shakespeare through Theatre: RSC Shakespeare Folio Translation Project in China

Wei-Yu Lin (National University of Tainan)

In 2015, the Royal Shakespeare Company launched the Shakespeare Folio Translation Project (SFTP), an ambitious initiative aimed at developing new, staging-oriented Chinese translations of Shakespeare's plays through Sino-British co-productions. Departing from earlier translation traditions that primarily prioritized literary concerns on the page, the SFTP introduced a novel model of theatre translation that was deeply integrated into the live theatre-making processes. This approach required Chinese translators to immerse themselves in RSC rehearsals and engage in collective textual discussions, subsequently developing translations collaboratively in dialogue with directors and actors during productions in China. Despite being interrupted by the COVID-19 pandemic, the project involved seven theatre institutions across three cities, standing as one of the largest-scale and longest-running instances of first-hand Sino-Western theatrical exchange in the history of Chinese spoken drama. By analyzing this specific case, Lin examines how the SFTP addressed the complex translation of plays from page to stage, effectively embedding cultural translation within the project's workflow. The paper demonstrates how this model encompassed the transformations between text and performance, facilitating a profound interweaving and rearticulation of British and Chinese theatre cultures in contemporary staging practices.

Friday 3 July, 12:50 – 14:20, Seminar Room 446

Re-orienting the Knowledge of Capitalism: The Straits Chinese's social and cultural reproduction

Zhengyuan Ling (University of Connecticut)

The Straits Chinese gentry-merchants of the early twentieth century were undoubtedly capitalist elites. What aspects of colonial capitalism enabled their reproduction of socio-cultural capital, and what roles did they play in colonial Southeast Asia? How did they conceive of a regulatory state, and following which intellectual paradigm(s) did they facilitate ethnic modernization? This paper addresses these questions by studying Yeoh Paik Tatt (1872-1925) and Yeoh Guan Seok (1883-1926) from Penang, where they monitored plantations and trade firms from the Andaman to the Malacca, tracked credit extended to Chetty moneylenders, and reinvigorated Chinese enterprises and participated in the official discourse of political economic policies. The two polyglot cousins' formal education began at Penang Free School. Guan Seok's law degree from Cambridge made him the town's first Chinese barrister. Paik Tatt, after a years-long apprenticeship at a German-Jewish corporation in Medan, became the treasurer of Penang Chinese Chamber of Commerce and the president of Chinese Town Hall. These Straits Chinese facilitated imperial projects like income tax and infrastructural development, as well as repatriating destitute Chinese and enforcing immigration ordinances; yet this paper argues that their roles in colonial state-building was not at the expense of ethnic autonomy nor ingenuity.

Saturday 4 July, 14:40 – 16:10, Seminar Room 442

Queering the Mainstream: Gender and Sexuality in Chinese College English Classrooms

Chen Liu (Massey University)

Amid calls to revitalize Asian humanities as a generative site of theory and practice, this paper foregrounds Chinese college English classrooms as key locations where Asia produces knowledge about gender, sexuality, and identity. In Chinese higher education, cisheteronormativity operates as an invisible norm that shapes pedagogical practices and marginalizes queer students. While scholarly attention has examined university experiences of LGBTQIA+ students holistically, dynamics inside English classrooms remain largely unexplored. This qualitative research draws on semi-structured interviews with 20 queer-identified students, and employs critical discourse analysis grounded in poststructuralist queer theory. This paper examines: (1) how queer students narrate their classroom experiences, (2) how queerness and "Chineseness" are discursively co-constructed in English language learning, and (3) students' visions for more inclusive, queer-friendly pedagogical practices. By centering queer Asian voices, this research challenges the presumed universality of Western queer and language education models. It reconceptualizes English classrooms as a site of exploring, negotiating and challenging identity, and shows how queer students navigate and rework the borders between "public" teaching and "private" identity, Chinese and Western cultural frames, and local and global discourses. In doing so, the paper contributes to reimagining Asian language education as a critical project of promoting inclusivity and challenging cisheteronormativity.

Saturday 4 July, 14:40 – 16:10, Seminar Room 102

The Embodiment of Voice: Musical Translation and the Female Auditory Subject

Chien-Chih Liu (National Pingtung University)

Taiwanese poet Ling Yu's poetry sequence "Daughter" was adapted by singer-songwriter Lo Sirong into the album *Daughters* in 2025, marking a significant case of contemporary poetry translated from text into the medium of sound. Centering on this work, this paper investigates the processes of medial translation and gender representation in the sonification of modern poetry. Combining close reading, musical structure analysis, and gender theory, the study examines how poetic texts are transformed into sonic expressions and how the collaboration between poetry and music generates a site for the re-creation of female voice. The rhythm, pauses, and intonation of poetry are reorganized through musical mediation, initiating a rewriting process centered on auditory experience. In this transformation, "the daughter" becomes not only the subject of the poem but also the embodiment of female voice. Lo Sirong, as both reader and performer, constructs a corporeal auditory subject through her voice, chant, and instrumental presence. Through this process, she reshapes the modes of poetic perception and agency and amplifies the poem's sonic quality, allowing *Daughters* to become a shared field of female experience. This study argues that the cross-media collaboration between Ling Yu and Lo Sirong expands the sonic boundary of modern poetry while providing a new cultural space for women's memory and voice. It reveals how the musicalization of poetry, through the interweaving of gender, body, and sound, reconfigures the structure of feeling of Taiwanese modern poems.

Saturday 4 July, 10:20 – 11:50, Seminar Room 105

A focused Ethnography and Narrative Inquiry of Chinese Christian Immigrant Mothers in New Zealand

Qian Liu (University of Auckland)

The present paper introduces the design of my PhD project, a study which aims to qualitatively investigate the lives of Chinese Christian immigrant mothers in New Zealand. It focuses on how they navigate their identity and self-perception, manage family language strategies and child-rearing practices, and integrate artificial intelligence (AI) and other digital religious or educational tools into their personal, familial, and faith lives. The paper will explain the mixed method design that combines a focused ethnography, narrative inquiry and a brief quantitative survey (on language usage, AI use frequency, and self-assessed identity negotiation). The merits of life-story interviews, go-along observation, photo-elicitation enriched by AI prompts will be explored in their conjunction with mother-child dyadic interviews, and online church community observation. I will then show how these elements can form an AI-mediated Maternal Care Model, drawing on aspects from an Ethics of Care, Family Language Policy/Translanguaging, Religious Social Capital, and Digital Religion/AI-Faith Interaction. The study is expected to contribute to scholarship at the intersections of immigrant identity, language policy, and digital religion; offer practical recommendations for churches, immigrant support services, and educators; and demonstrate a methodological model for integrating AI-interaction data into ethnographic and narrative research in the field of Asian Studies.

Friday 3 July, 10:20 – 11:50, Lecture Theatre 024

Constructing the Socialist “New Woman”: CCP Propaganda and Gendered Citizenship in Early PRC

Siyue Liu (University of Wollongong)

PRC, New Woman, Propaganda This research will examine how the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) used its expanding propaganda apparatus to construct and disseminate the image of the “New Woman” (新女性) in the early People’s Republic of China, with particular attention to the Korean War period. Since the late Qing, the figure of the “New Woman” has been central to intellectual discourse and state projects of cultivating the ideal female citizen. From its founding in 1921, the CCP defined women’s liberation (婦女解放) as a key revolutionary task. The Party’s 1922 Resolution on Women’s Movement called for mobilizing women through Marxist principles to enhance their status and promote self-emancipation. In line with this agenda, CCP organizations launched newspapers, producing at least eighteen women’s periodicals between 1922 and 1927. These publications demonstrated the Party’s early efforts to enlighten and politicize women through the press. After 1949, the CCP institutionalized what scholars characterize as a “Propaganda State,” using media and mass campaigns to reshape thought and behavior. Drawing on Yu Minling’s argument that those shaped by the “old society” required ideological transformation while those born in “new China” needed molding, this research analyzes how women were expected to become socialist “New Women,” embodying political loyalty, collective values, and productive labor. By tracing how propaganda framed and politicized this ideal, the study highlights the gendered foundations of nation-building in the early PRC.

Friday 3 July, 14:40 – 16:10, Seminar Room 107

Playing the Game: Migrant Platform Riders, Class Displacement, and Masculinities in Urban Australia

Tingting Liu (University of Technology Sydney)

This article examines how migrant masculinities are reconfigured within the algorithmic labour regimes of food-delivery platforms in Melbourne and Sydney. Drawing on in-depth interviews with young male riders on temporary visas working for Uber Eats and Hungry Panda, we explore how migration, class mobility, and digital labour intersect to shape distinctive migrant masculine practices and imaginaries. We draw several conclusions. Many participants experienced downward class displacement: despite middle-class or elite family backgrounds in their countries of origin, their Australian lives position them as working-class platform labourers. Riders narrate this disjuncture through playful, “boyish” metaphors—likening platform work to “playing a video game”—which recast precarious labour as a site of skill and strategic mastery. Language barriers and migrant status further mediate their encounters with Australian society. Fear of English-speaking customers and “unfriendly locals” drives some riders toward Hungry Panda (a Chinese food-delivery platforms), despite poorer labour conditions, reinforcing a bifurcated imagination of “local Australians” and migrant enclaves. At the same time, riders cultivate a datafied habitus: meticulously tracking platform incentives, optimising routes, and sharing tactics in WeChat and Xiaohongshu groups that foster a sense of fraternal solidarity and “brotherhood.” Through these practices, migrant men negotiate vulnerability and aspiration, reassembling masculinity in ways that combine economic pragmatism, digital playfulness, and collective care. Our analysis situates these emergent masculinities within broader debates on platform capitalism, migration, and gendered labour in the Global North.

Friday 3 July, 10:20 – 11:50, Lecture Theatre 024

Tracing Practices and Interpreting Traditions: Modern Transformations of Liyuanxi in Taiwan

Wan-Yi Liu (University of Vienna)

This paper examines how classical theatre in Taiwan has been practiced through encounters with modern theater practices by focusing on the historical development of Liyuanxi, one of the most ancient yet highly distinctive genres while highlighting the works of Gang-a Tsui Theater in Taiwan, including *Zubun* *Elopes with the Ghost*, *Passage to Lo-Jin*, *Apostate* and *Alone with the Ghost*. Through these productions, I analyze how experimental practice enabled traditional forms to engage with cross-cultural artists and international festivals. Founded in 1993, Gang-a Tsui Theater's works combine Liyuanxi with modern theater and presented a new path for the transformation of traditional art in modern way. *Zubun*, for example, a performance collaborating with the Japanese Butoh group Tomoe Shizune & Hakutobo, was invited to Paris by the Festival de l'Imaginaire in 2010. After the founder Zhou Yi-Chang passed away in Indonesia in 2016, senior members Wei Mei-Hui and Chen Jia-Wen reorganized the troupe in 2017 by producing *Passage to Lo-Jin*, which was one of the Taiwanese productions presented at the Festival OFF d'Avignon in 2019. Another collaboration with contemporary theater troupe called "approaching theatre", *Apostate*, was presented by The Kuala Lumpur Performing Arts Centre, directed by a Malaysian director. By examining Gang-a Tsui's collaborations with artists from different disciplines, this paper argues that Liyuanxi in Taiwan emerges not through linear modernization but through a constellation of intercultural exchanges and grassroots experimentation offering a distinctive island-based cultural identity, stimulated by transnational mobility and local artistic resilience.

Saturday 4 July, 10:20 – 11:50, Seminar Room 446

The Genre Transformation of Chinese Science Fiction in the 21st Century

Xiao Liu

The Genre Transformation of Chinese Science Fiction in the 21st Century Since the 21st century, with China's rapid rise in comprehensive national strength and a significant boost in national confidence, Chinese science fiction has witnessed a new wave of creative boom. This wave of creativity continues to this day and has been dubbed the "New Wave" of Chinese SF by scholars. Driven by both globalization and a heightened awareness of local culture, Chinese science fiction during this period has undergone a notable genre transformation. Visibly, it has shifted from children's science popularization stories, scientific fairy tales, and scientific fables to more diverse forms aimed at adult readers. Genres such as alternate history SF, cyborg SF, and Internet SF have become the most mainstream types of Chinese science fiction since the new century. This genre transformation reflects the process of science fiction, as an imported genre, achieving its Sinicization—a process in which it increasingly resonates with China's cultural soil. For instance, authors such as Liu Cixin, Fei Dao, Yan Leisheng, Zhang Ran, and Yang Wanqing have consciously engaged in numerous works of counterfactual history. For them, history is not an immutable fact but an imaginative space for creatively appropriating the past and understanding the present. Whether Yan Leisheng's engagement with the history of the Chinese Civil War in *The Way of Heaven* or Liu Cixin's departure from Cultural Revolution narratives in *The Three-Body Problem*, both demonstrate the authors' conscious historical awareness. Meanwhile, writers like Wang Jinkang, Chen Qiufan, Pan Haitian, Hao Jingfang, and Baoshu have actively embraced cyborg science fiction, exploring posthuman modes of existence within the context of contemporary China.

Friday 3 July, 10:20 – 11:50, Seminar Room 105

Palestine and Third World Solidarity at UP Diliman

Yi-hung Liu (Osaka Metropolitan University)

This paper examines the meaning of Third World solidarity by reviewing the political tradition of the University of the Philippines Diliman in the context of Israel's genocide of Palestinians in Gaza. UP Diliman boasts a long history of student activism, civic engagement, and an anti-imperialist ethos. Roughly a month after October 7, 2023, the UP Diliman University Student Council released a statement expressing solidarity with Palestine; ten days later, the UP Diliman University Council followed suit. When I was teaching there in the Fall 2025 semester and using Ghassan Kanafani's writings as my text, I found that almost all of my students—regardless of their majors—already had some familiarity with the question of Palestine. I consider this sensibility toward Palestine to be rooted in the university's political tradition. Yet, as we discussed Kanafani's work further, their ways of reading appeared to be circumscribed by the rhetoric of self-determination and human rights. While these terms are undeniably crucial, the historical nuances of Kanafani's writing, as well as the contextual meanings of these terms, were often diminished. This paper seeks not only to appreciate but also to assess this sensibility toward Palestine at UP Diliman, and in doing so, aims to engage with the Palestinian cause through a framework grounded in Third World solidarity.

Saturday 4 July, 14:40 – 16:10, Lecture Theatre 024

Tradition in Transformation: Rewriting Classics, Translating Cultures in GuoGuang's Princess and Her Magic Fan

Shih-Lung Lo (National Tsing Hua University)

This paper examines *Princess and Her Magic Fan* (《公主與她的魔法扇》), a three-year co-production by Taiwan's GuoGuang Opera Company and a French creative team, to rethink Asian humanities as a vital source of knowledge and practice at a moment when the humanities face existential pressures. Reworking the Iron-Fan Princess episode from *Journey to the West* and recomposing materials from *Jingju* and *kunqu* *Borrowing the Fan* (《借扇》), the production integrates codified vocal and movement vocabularies with the French "Giant Mirror" holographic theatre apparatus. I argue that this technology operates not as decorative spectacle but as a co-authoring device that reconfigures liveness, spectatorship, and interpretive authority. Methodologically, the study moves between comparative reception histories of *Journey to the West* in French translation and performance discourse, close reading of dramaturgical rewriting and perspectival shifts, and performance-based media analysis attentive to mediated embodiment. Departing from transnational framings that privilege Sun Wukong as the emblem of East-West encounter, the work recenters the Iron-Fan Princess and filters the narrative through a French girl-reader's horizon, thereby recalibrating the story's affective economy and ethical coordinates. Translation emerges less as linguistic transfer than as negotiated semiosis and shared authorship across cultural and technical regimes. The case ultimately proposes cultural sustainability as an active practice. *Jingju* endures through technologically enabled reconfiguration that renews its expressive capacity and secures a future-oriented mode of global circulation.

Saturday 4 July, 10:20 – 11:50, Seminar Room 446

Friendship and Reciprocity: Minor Networks in Asian International Exhibitions, 1980s–Present

Yvonne Low (The University of Sydney)

This paper examines minor networks of artist-initiated international exhibitions that has been largely overlooked in so-called age of the Biennales. Operating through discourses of "friendship" and "goodwill" between Asian countries, networks such as Asian Watercolour Confederation (AWC, mid-1980s–2002) and "Her Presence in Colours" (HPIC, 1993–present) constructed pan-Asian artistic communities around medium-specificity and gender identity, provided a platform for hundreds of professional and amateur artists working outside dominant contemporary art discourse. Art historical scholarship has privileged what art historian Yu Jin Seng calls "critical exhibitions" emerging from 1970s radical activism, while curatorial studies focuses on the biennial boom and state-sponsored exhibitions. Yet, as this paper will show, these friendship-based networks reveal a much larger exhibition ecology that remained unexamined despite decades of operation and significant geographical reach. Drawing on Michelle Wong's concept of exhibition-based "internationalism", I demonstrate how friendship functioned as curatorial and political strategy – enabling reciprocal hosting, horizontal cooperation, and regional solidarity. Recovering these sustained networks argues for expanding our understanding of how international art worlds actually operated, revealing platforms that shaped artistic careers and regional identities, bridged commercial sectors, while remaining invisible to dominant narratives privileging the biennial circuit and experimental contemporaneity.

Friday 3 July, 12:50 – 14:20, Seminar Room 444

From Shanghai to Nanyang: The Transregional Rural in Liu Yichang's novels

Jiayi Lu (The University of Hong Kong)

This paper reexamines the understudied rural depictions in the works of Liu Yichang 劉以鬯 (1918–2018), a writer whose life and career spanned Shanghai, Hong Kong, Singapore, and Malaysia. Renowned for his urban settings and mastery of New Sensation School 新感覺派 techniques, Liu's 1930s rural novels from Shanghai reveal an alternative stylistic trajectory rooted in the pastoral *xiangtu* 鄉土 tradition from Shen Congwen 沈從文. In contrast to his iconic urban novel *The Drunkard* 酒徒, these early rural works reflect Liu's efforts to incorporate two divergent aesthetic currents within modern Chinese literature: the New Sensation School's urban modernism and a pastoral tradition associated with rural landscapes. Following this early period, rural themes disappeared from Liu's works, only to reemerge in the 1960s after his return to Hong Kong from Nanyang (South Seas). Through a comparative analysis of the revisions and adaptations in *Jiao Feng Ye Yu* 蕉風椰雨, this article examines how Liu balanced the commercial and ideological pressures of Cold War-era U.S.-sponsored publishing networks with his artistic ambitions. It also explores how Liu's Nanyang rural narratives draw on his earlier Shanghai sensibilities while adopting distinctly local characteristics. By mapping this transregional trajectory, the paper challenges metropole-centric narratives of Chinese modernism. It demonstrates that Liu Yichang's aesthetic identity was a dynamic process of negotiation across these spaces, offering a new model for understanding modern Chinese literature as a networked phenomenon shaped by the circulatory dynamics of the wartime.

Friday 3 July, 14:40 – 16:10, Seminar Room 020

Embodying Feminism Out Of The Place: Australian University Classrooms as Transnational Feminist Space

Meihua Lu (The University of Sydney)

This paper studies an under-investigated transnational feminist place in the development of Chinese digital feminism: overseas classrooms of Gender Studies in Australia. Using my own teaching experiences as a Gender Studies tutor as an autoethnographic critical reflection, this study critically examines the transnational feminist knowledge in the resonance and collision of Chinese popular digital feminism embraced by Chinese international students in the post-socialist context. During my previous three years of teaching, I observe that these Australian classrooms sometimes become an alternative space of feminist knowledge translation in between the “West” and China, a space of critical discussion, debate, connection and reflection that is often disabled and limited in local Chinese authoritarian contexts. As many of students have already developed a sort of feminist sensibility under the complex influence of digital feminism in China, classrooms can become an intensive space of affect. In this space, contesting feelings of being connected and disconnected with the feminist knowledge being taught, often accompanied by confusions, sadness, resonance, and hope. Thus, this study is fundamentally influenced and guided by Elspeth Probyn’s work *Teaching Bodies* (2004), in which she asks for the recognition of affective reactions in feminist classrooms as central to political practices. Meanwhile, reflecting on my own affective tensions and connections with Chinese students in my Gender Studies classrooms, this paper further explores the question of what is Chinese feminism in the precarious post-socialist China, specifically through my critical reflections of teaching the core concepts of intersectionality and postfeminism to Chinese students.

Friday 3 July, 12:50 – 14:20, Seminar Room 022

The Translation and Reception of The Great Learning

Yixu Lu (The University of Sydney)

This paper will look at key translations of *The Great Learning* and explore *The Great Learning* as a text on knowledge, education, and the practical application of wisdom and how European intellectuals engaged with Confucian concepts from *The Great Learning*. It will consider the question whether or in what way European thinkers during the Enlightenment looked to Confucian epistemology to resolve debates on knowledge, practical learning, and Cartesian doubt.

Saturday 4 July, 10:20 – 11:50, Seminar Room 442

Art from Life, Art for Responsibility: Tsering Dolma and the Unseen Tibetan Female Body

Ruihan Ma (The University of Sydney)

In traditional Tibet, the female body is cast in religious imagery as both distraction on the path to liberation, and as the compassionate “Wisdom of Mother,” encoded in the canonical term *skyes dman*, denoting “woman” yet literally meaning “lower-rebirth body.” Historically, art production remained concentrated in androcentric monastic and lay lineages, leaving women’s participation – whether it occurred or under what conditions – largely untraceable. Recent institutional developments, including art academies and *thangka* schools, have created new avenues for Tibetan women to pursue art beyond monastic frameworks. Among the few active female artists in Tibet, Tsering Dolma (b. 1968) is locally respected, yet her works remain absent from the already understudied field of contemporary Tibetan art and have seldom circulated within gallery networks. This paper argues that Tsering Dolma’s minor position stems from her attempt to inscribe the lived bodily experience of pregnancy, childbirth, maternal obligation into the religious continuum of life and death – a gesture out of joint with, and refusing to coincide with, either Buddhist doctrinal discourse or contemporary Tibetan art. As Dolma remarked to me, “I feel a strong responsibility to paint down the heritage.” Her self-fashioning solitude of artmaking is thus not just spiritual labour. The layered iconographies, though seemingly outlawed and fantastical, are legitimised by their moral utility, revealing an erudite artist of this epoch who understands her role as a Tibetan: to safeguard art’s pedagogical value and ethical transmission as a critique of the modern and a hope for preserving traditions valued by broader humankind.

Friday 3 July, 12:50 – 14:20, Seminar Room 444

Digital Heritage Education in Chinese Context: Practices, Impacts, and Implications

Xiaochun Ma (Australian National University)

This study investigates how Chinese universities deliver heritage education in higher education, especially through online platforms, and analyses the political implications of these practices on younger Chinese generations. In recent decades, as global interest in cultural heritage has surged, heritage education has emerged as an interdisciplinary approach to knowledge transmission and meaning-making. Despite substantial research on the political-economic utilisation of cultural heritage and digital heritage, there is a noticeable gap in scholarship concerning Chinese heritage education within university settings. This gap extends to understanding its political and cultural implications, particularly in light of emerging educational technologies. Based on ethnographic research conducted at a university in Weifang, Shandong, this study explores the political and cultural implications of online heritage resources used on campus. Students' responses are observed as they interact with these resources and provide written feedback. Through an analysis of their interactions, this study offers a critical perspective on digital platforms for heritage education. Specifically, it argues that digital platforms serve as an effective new tool for delivering heritage education, enhancing accessibility and acceptability for students engaged in the meaning-making process. However, it's crucial to acknowledge that despite the innovations in pedagogy and accessibility brought about by new technologies, the educational system continues to function as a political instrument, influencing the legitimacy of discourses and the power they hold. The political function of digital platforms in reinforcing cultural nationalism building aligns with state-promoted 'Cultural Awareness and Self-Confidence' campaigns.

Saturday 4 July, 14:40 – 16:10, Seminar Room 102

Ruist Embodiment in Digital Transition

Jordan Martin (Hunan University)

Of the various schools of East Asian thought, it is undoubtedly Ruism which places the greatest value on human embodiment. In Ruism, the human body is the site of interchange between the inextricably linked human and heavenly (or 'natural') daos. Put another way: no dichotomy separates "technical objects" from natural/biological phenomena; rather, the human body is the interchange between these two domains. With respect to the human relationship to technology, the Ruist approach has historically been neither atavistic nor utopian. Furthermore, nearly every aspect of Ruist philosophy is grounded in the visceral and visible embodiment of human virtues – a disembodied and alienated Ruism is inconceivable. As such, the need for Ruists to consider the impact of the digital transition on the contemporary articulation of their core ideas is particularly pressing. After substantiating the above claims, this paper will turn to their implications for emerging digital technologies: it will suggest ways in which ancient wisdom pertaining to embodied virtue can be applied in a new digital milieu; it will consider a role for postmortem avatars in Ruist-coded thanatological rituals; finally, it will insist on consciousness as a criterion for moral patienthood, and propose a Ruist perspective on the legal status of digital corpses.

Friday 3 July, 12:50 – 14:20, Seminar Room 102

Classicists and Revolutionaries: Historical Contexts for the Asian Humanities in Australia

Lewis Mayo (The University of Melbourne)

This paper will explore the relationship between classicism and revolution in the cultural and political history of a number of Asian societies in the 20th century and will consider that relationship with reference to the broader history of humanistic enquiry as this has unfolded in different parts of Eurasia and in Australasia between the medieval era and the present. It seeks to contextualise Asia-focused humanities scholarship produced in Australia with reference to the structures of classicism and to the interaction of classicist culture with impulses towards revolution, especially as these played out in the years after non-indigenous cultures began to implant themselves in Australia and Aotearoa New Zealand from the 17th century onwards. It will argue that classicist cultures were not simply part of an old order that revolutionary culture and politics sought to overthrow, but were in fact animating elements helping to drive revolution forward. It will then look at the afterlives of classicism and revolution in humanistic scholarship in Australasia and in different Asian countries since the 1980s, an era in which revolution has purportedly been in retreat.

Friday 3 July, 12:50 – 14:20, Seminar Room 107

Sweet potatoes, yūkō trees and rocks: Environmental Hidden Christian heritages in the Gotō Islands

Gwyn McClelland (The University of New England)

In this presentation I intend to describe aspects of environmental heritage of the Hidden Christian settlers of the Gotō Islands, from 21 interviews conducted between 2022 and the present. For Williams and Riley, 'oral history as embodied, nuanced and intersubjective understandings of environments ... offer a more politically engaged and reflective understanding of environmental ... ideologies.' [1] The Hidden Christians were forced to engage with the environment in new and more complex ways than those who were already there. The relationship that the settlers cultivated on the Goto Islands between communal living, their spiritual lives, and the difficult, restrictive environmental conditions was key to survival. For most Hidden Christians through necessity growing sweet potato and barley was the norm rather than rice. Ozaki Natsuki (pseudonym) showed me an onjaku rock at the back of her home church. Stones 'speak' of memory and history to the people of the Goto and offer a way into understanding the more-than-human environment – the onjaku are mentioned too in the Hidden Christian 'bible', the Tenchi Hajimari no Koto. Ozaki showed me a tree found behind the church. She said, the tree is a citrus yūkō – allowing the Hidden Christian settlers the scent, flowers, and tastes of their lost homeland, Sotome. An eighty-eight-year old, Tanaka, explained how her Hidden Christian grandmother introduced her to gardening: 'The sapling comes out, leaves come out, and the flowers come out ... and I am happy.' She remembers her family were so poor 'instead of miso soup we had salt broth'.

Friday 3 July, 10:20 – 11:50, Seminar Room 442

Confucian and Legalist Justifications for Punishment

Tiantong Meng (The University of Hong Kong)

This paper examines the ancient debate between Confucianism and Legalism through the lens of their divergent attitudes toward severe punishment. Legalists defended publicly fixed and largely unmitigated severe punishments as the basis of deterrence, state power, and an impersonal rule of law. They rejected leniency based on motive, filial piety, or remorse—as undermining the objectivity of laws and inviting corruption—insisting that legitimate law and punishment require the exclusion of subjective factors to ensure clarity and social order. Confucians, conversely, conditioned the legitimacy of punishment on its subordination to moral transformation and ritual harmony. They therefore authorized judicial discretion to mitigate or adjust penalties on ethical and situational grounds that prioritize moral cultivation over mere retribution or deterrence. This clash over the justificatory conditions for punishment thus illuminates a deeper tension between “rule by institutional standards,” which demands formal predictability, and “rule by persons,” which allows contextual subjective discretion. Hence, imperial China forged a distinctive synthesis: formally severe statutes were retained for their deterrent effect, yet implemented through morally disciplined judicial discretion and institutionally embedded Confucian values. This hybrid model offers contemporary legal philosophy a fresh perspective on the legitimacy of judicial discretion under the rule of law insofar as preserving the credibility of punishment while subordinating it to public reason, human feeling, and the possibility of moral cultivation.

Friday 3 July, 14:40 – 16:10, Seminar Room 100

The First Three Translations of the Zhongyong published in Europe

Thierry Meynard (Sun Yat-sen University)

Zhu Xi considered the Zhongyong as an abstruse work, and he ranked it fourth and last of the Four Books. The Italian Jesuit Michele Ruggieri translated the Zhongyong with the other three books in the years 1590 to 1592, partially into Spanish and fully into Latin, but his translations remained unpublished. Subsequently, three translations of the Zhongyong were published in Latin: by Prospero Intorcetta in Asia in 1667-1669, by Philippe Couplet in Paris in 1687, and by Francois Noël in Prague in 1711. While the Latin translation published in 1687 has been researched to some extent, it is crucial to understand the synthetic connections linking the three translations. We shall replace the translations and examine their evolution in the context of the Rites Controversy, showing how they responded to the Controversy, primarily to assert the Jesuit position on the Rites against the friars, but also to go beyond the Controversy. Due to the metaphysical and spiritual dimensions of the Zhongyong itself, the Jesuit translations sought to orient the debate away from an ecclesiastical-based notion of religion towards a more spiritualist and humanist idea of religion. This shift has tremendous implications for how religion is understood since the Enlightenment.

Saturday 4 July, 10:20 – 11:50, Seminar Room 442

The Vibrant Colours of Myanmar Pagoda Festivals

Pan Htwa Myo Sein (University of Wollongong)

Theravada Buddhism, originating from India, has spread across the border to Myanmar along the Silk Road through missionaries' efforts over two millennia, profoundly shaping the values and ethos of Myanmar society. As a result, Myanmar culture is rooted in Buddha's philosophy and psychology, influencing every aspect of daily life and events. Traditional festivals are celebrated throughout the year, with the pagoda festival being the most prominent of social cohesion among Myanmar people. Pagoda festivals are esteemed for their distinctive sacred rituals, such as the Phaung Daw U festival, during which Buddha images are paraded around Inle Lake on a royal barge accompanied by leg-rowers. These festivals are major religious occasions honouring the history of pagodas, including their founding and the crowning of their umbrellas. Many events are based on the Myanmar lunar calendar, such as the Ananda Temple and Shwezigon Pagoda festivals in Bagan. Among them, the Sand Pagoda Festival is a shared tradition between the Theravada Buddhist countries of Thailand, Laos, and Cambodia. As part of Myanmar's cultural heritage, pagoda festivals should be maintained by preserving Buddhism and promoting social unity through shared rituals while passing them down to future generations.

Friday 3 July, 10:20 – 11:50, Seminar Room 028

Early Modern Reception and Polemical Uses of the Chinese Morality Book *Precious Mirror for Enlightening the Mind* in Europe

Junyang Ng (Monash University)

This paper examines the early modern European reception of the Chinese morality book *Precious Mirror for Enlightening the Mind* (明心寶鑑 Mingxin baojian, 1393), a collection of moral excerpts resembling European florilegia and commonplace books. Such collections in both traditions gather religious, philosophical, and literary materials under thematic headings. Despite its noncanonical status, *Precious Mirror* drew the interest of European missionaries in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, leading to one Latin and two Spanish translations. Only the Spanish version by the Dominican Domingo Fernández Navarrete (c. 1610–1689) – a key opponent of the Jesuits in the “Chinese Terms and Rites Controversy” – made it to print at that time. Examining the European reception of *Precious Mirror* through Navarrete's translation reveals what happens when Chinese and Latin anthological traditions intersect. Drawing on the translation, unpublished manuscripts, and eighteenth-century Jesuit publications, the paper traces how this Chinese morality book crossed linguistic and cultural borders to become embroiled in the “Terms and Rites Controversy.” It contributes to the history of Sino-European encounters by showing how a Chinese textual tradition became entangled with European intellectual and religious frameworks.

Saturday 4 July, 10:20 – 11:50, Seminar Room 442

Sacred to Secular: Rethinking Potehi in Modern Indonesia

Olivia (Petra Christian University)

This study explores how Indonesian potehi (布袋戲), a traditional Chinese hand puppet performance, has shifted from a sacred ritual to a secular cultural practice. Historically, potehi was performed in temples as an offering to deities. Durkheim was described as the sacred domain – ritualistic, symbolic, and exclusive to religious space. Today, potehi performances increasingly appear in malls, schools, and government cultural programs. This trend indicates a transition toward secularization and cultural commodification. Using the lens of sacred–secular hybridity, this research examines how potehi now moves between ritual, heritage performance, and entertainment. Cultural transformation theory suggests that traditions do not disappear. Instead, they are reshaped through reinterpretation and reinvention. In this context, potehi is reframed as cultural heritage rather than solely religious ritual. Rational Choice Theory helps explain why puppeteers, temple organizations, and cultural institutions adjust their performance formats, locations, and narrative content. Decisions to shorten stories, use Indonesian, or perform outside temples reflect strategic efforts to reach wider audiences, remain relevant, and sustain the troupe economically. Based on ethnographic observation and interviews in 2024–2025, the findings show that Indonesian potehi exists in a hybrid form. It is partially sacred, increasingly secular, and embedded in the cultural economy. Rather than fading, potehi evolves alongside changing identity, heritage politics, and market demand in contemporary Indonesia.

Friday 3 July, 10:20 – 11:50, Seminar Room 446

Skilled Negotiation and Flexible Acceptance in the 'Coming Out' Process: Case Studies of Disabled Tongzhi

Shanshan Ouyang (Ritsumeikan University)

This paper examines how disability shapes the intricate processes through which LGB individuals disclose their sexual identities to their parents, focusing on three case studies of disabled tongzhi (LGBTQ) in Taiwan. Prevailing scholarship on intersectionality often postulates that possessing dual minority statuses—sexuality and disability—inevitably results in “compounded disadvantages,” thereby creating multifaceted barriers to familial acceptance. This study challenges such deficit-based assumptions by analyzing how these individuals strategically negotiate family relationships within specific socio-cultural contexts. Drawing on theoretical frameworks from Queer Sinophone Studies, the analysis applies three conceptual models: the globalized “coming-out” model, the family-oriented “coming-home” model, and the relational “coming-with” model. Through in-depth qualitative analysis of the three cases, the paper demonstrates that these models are not mutually exclusive nor used in isolation. Instead, the participants demonstrated a skilled capacity to flexibly combine and switch between these models depending on situational contexts and parental reactions. Crucially, the findings reveal that the status of being a disabled minority did not act solely as a negative factor. Rather, the pre-existing necessity for care and negotiation within the parent-child relationship transformed disability into a relational resource. This allowed for a gradual reconfiguration of family ties that accommodated sexual diversity. By highlighting the agency of disabled LGB individuals, this paper argues for moving beyond fixed, universalized models of disclosure. It emphasizes the importance of understanding “coming out” as a dynamic, skilled negotiation process that redefines the intersection of disability, sexuality, and family in Asian contexts.

Friday 3 July, 12:50 – 14:20, Seminar Room 020

From Secret Sisterhood to Cultural Soft Power: The Political Journey of Nüshu in Contemporary China

Anqi Peng (The Chinese University of Hong Kong), Kai YANG (Lingnan University)

This article traces the cultural and political journey of Nüshu, the world's only script invented and used exclusively by women in Jiangyong County, China, from a marginalized “secret sisterhood” to an orchestrated instrument of cultural soft power. It argues that Nüshu's dramatic transformation—from a private vehicle for emotional expression and social solidarity among peasant women (Liu, 2001; Silber, 1995) into a public, state-sanctioned cultural symbol—encapsulates a distinct mode of cultural governance in contemporary China. Through an analysis that integrates policy documents, heritage discourses, and artistic representations, the paper examines the mechanisms of this strategic reinvention. It demonstrates how the script's historically subversive gender politics have been sanitized, while its aesthetic uniqueness and antiquity have been amplified to serve national narratives. The study finds that this process is not a simple top-down imposition but a complex negotiation involving local communities, state actors, and global cultural markets, particularly following its designation as Intangible Cultural Heritage in 2006. Ultimately, this study examines the state's repurposing tradition for modernity and the dynamics of China's soft power strategy. It positions Nüshu as a critical case for understanding how local, gendered cultural forms are managed, mobilized, and given new political life in the project of building national identity and global influence.

Friday 3 July, 10:20 – 11:50, Seminar Room 022

What is left of Gaodao zhuan and why does it matter?

Benjamin Penny (Australian National University), Nathan Woolley (Australian National University)

Collections of biographies of Daoist immortals go back to the Eastern Han dynasty in the form of the ‘Biographies of Immortals, Arrayed’ Liexian zhuan 列仙傳. Every few centuries a new collection was produced, continuing the tradition, which preserved the lives of immortals from those subsequent periods. These collections have been passed down often in fragmentary form or in reconstructions. One of the most notable but at the same time one of the least studied is the 11th century ‘Biographies of Eminent Daoists’ Gaodao zhuan 高道傳. The project that the presenters, and other colleagues, have been engaged in has had three main concerns: the rigorous reconstruction of what remains of the Gaodao zhuan, studies of the contents of Gaodao zhuan to explicate the nature of Northern Song Daoism, and a re-examination of the methods of text history in Sinological studies.

Saturday 4 July, 12:50 – 14:20, Seminar Room 100

From Civic Engagement to Political Participation: A Case Study of Sri Lankan Migrants in Aotearoa, New Zealand

Sandesha Perera (University of Auckland), Timothy Fadgen (University of Auckland)

Civil society organizations act as pivotal platforms for migrant integration and political engagement, enabling community participation and representation in multicultural democracies. In this sense, New Zealand-based Sri Lankan Civil Society Organizations (SLCSOs) have the potential to allow social capital and political advocacy for Sri Lankan migrants to flourish. This research investigates how SLCSOs use social capital to build civic engagement and political participation for migrants. In this qualitative study, data were collected through forty semi-structured interviews with SLCSO leaders and Sri Lankan migrants in New Zealand. Based on the Social Capital theory and Civic Voluntarism Model, the study suggests that SLCSOs cultivate community bonding through cultural, educational, and welfare activities. Also, bridging and linking ties to the broader New Zealand society and to various institutions can potentially increase migrants' civic competencies and self-efficacy. In turn, this active civic engagement may serve as the basis for broader political participation and the exercising of political rights. The study contributes to understanding how diaspora organizations use social capital in the context of politically empowering migrants, broadening the social capital and civic engagement theories into the migration context. It highlights the likely significance of community-based organizations in increasing immigrant political engagement in multicultural societies.

Saturday 4 July, 12:50 – 14:20, Seminar Room 446

Tradition and Transformation in Vietnamese Women's Academic Leadership: An IPA Photo-Elicitation Study

Jane Phuong (University of Canberra)

This study explores the lived experiences of Vietnamese academic women in leadership, focusing on how they navigate cultural expectations and professional aspirations. In Vietnamese society, humility is traditionally upheld as a virtue of a 'good woman'. While ambition is often discouraged. These cultural norms can obscure women's authentic leadership stories, making it difficult to access the depth of their experiences through conventional interviews alone. To address this complexity, this research employed Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) alongside photo elicitation interviews with women in academic leadership roles in Vietnam. Conducting and analysing in Vietnamese preserved linguistic nuance and allowed participants to express themselves more freely. Participants also shared self-selected photos that revealed layers of meaning beyond verbal accounts, offering visual metaphors for their leadership journeys. A recurring metaphor was that of navigating a river, showing life is in water in Vietnamese. The images shed light on hidden barriers, coping strategies, and moments of resilience of these academic women while swimming along the boat where their male academics are on. This methodological approach enabled a deeper understanding of how Vietnamese academic women make sense of their leadership experience, not only through what they say but also through what they show, providing insight into how leadership is experienced and embodied in culturally specific ways. This study contributes to scholarship on gender and leadership in Southeast Asia by offering a culturally sensitive, virtually enriched perspective on women's lived experiences in academia.

Friday 3 July, 10:20 – 11:50, Seminar Room 022

The Anglo-Portuguese Contest over Extraterritorial Rights in Macao via the James Summers Incident

Lok Paul Poon (Lingnan University? Alternatively, Lingnan University / Hong Kong Metropolitan University)

On June 7, 1849, Protestant missionary James Summers was arrested by Portuguese authorities in Macao for failing to observe Catholic religious protocols. Upon learning of the incident, British naval officer Captain Keppel demanded Summers' release from Macao's Governor João Ferreira do Amaral, but the request was denied. Consequently, Keppel resorted to forcibly freeing Summers from detention, escalating a doctrinal dispute into a diplomatic crisis. The underlying issue of the jailbreak centered on the Regulations for Trade at the Five Ports: Customs Tariff, which stipulated that British subjects in China were subject to British jurisdiction. As Macao was under Chinese sovereignty, the treaty principles implied that British extraterritorial jurisdiction should extend to Summers in Macao. However, Governor Amaral insisted on Portugal's judicial authority over the territory. The James Summer Incident thus represents not only the extension of Protestant-Catholic doctrinal conflicts to the East but also a significant contest between Britain and Portugal over extraterritorial jurisdiction in Macao.

Friday 3 July, 10:20 – 11:50, Seminar Room 442

Culinary Architectures: Food, Space, and Care in Ramen Teh and Little Forest

Tito Ramos Quiling, Jnr. (Monash University)

This paper examines how *Ramen Teh* (Ramen Shop) (Eric Khoo, 2018) and *Little Forest* (Yim Soon-rye, 2018) navigate Asian identities through culinary heritage and domestic spaces. Drawing from Yuriko Saito's aesthetics of care and phenomenological film theory, these films position food preparation and architectural spaces as artefacts that preserve cultural memory across geographic, generational, and historical borders. In this paper, I briefly examine culinary and spatial practices as embodied forms of knowledge to present how Asian cultural traditions offer critical insights into care, continuity, and belonging. *Ramen Teh*, a Singapore–France–Japan co-production, follows Masato's journey to reconcile his Japanese–Singaporean heritage through his parents' signature dishes (ramen and Bak Kut Teh) against the backdrop of the Asia-Pacific War's trauma. The film displays how culinary practices can bridge historical ruptures between nations while negotiating diasporic identity formation. *Little Forest*, a Korean adaptation of a Japanese manga, traces Hae-won's return to rural Korea after urban displacement, where her mother's recipes become outlets for healing and cultural transmission. The agricultural landscape and childhood home are sites where rural–urban divides are conveyed through embodied knowledge. These two transnational Asian films present domestic and restaurant spaces as archives where care relationships transcend geographic boundaries. This paper analyses gastronomic imagery and spatial design, exploring how these films address contemporary Asian experiences of migration, urbanisation, and heritage preservation while positioning culinary heritage as forms of Asian humanistic practice and cultural perseverance across shifting borders.

Saturday 4 July, 12:50 – 14:20, Seminar Room 028

Archipelago of Solidarity: Muslim Internationalism from Southeast Asia during the Sixties

Ariff Hafizi bin Mohd Radzi (Humboldt University of Berlin)

In recent years, there has been growing interest in the archipelagic turn within the humanities and area studies, which emphasizes relationality, flows, and transregional processes over the traditional area studies tied to fixed geographies and methodological nationalism. Building on this archipelagic turn, my paper approaches the archipelago not merely as a metaphor or geographical feature, but as both a method and praxis for examining the relationships between faith-inspired social movements in Southeast Asia (Malaysia, Indonesia, and the Philippines) and their counterparts in the Middle East during the 1960s. These transregional connections/networking and processes constitute what I refer to as 'Muslim internationalism,' wherein multiple nodes of Islamic practice, thought, and activism exist in dynamic relation, continuously evolving through non-hierarchical interactions and interdependencies that extend beyond national borders. Drawing on Jamkajornkeiat's concept of an "archipelago of solidarity," which was originally developed to connect dispersed platform worker mobilizations in Southeast Asia (De Leon et al, 2024), this paper links a constellation of local struggles grounded in related though not necessarily identical political orientations, discourses, and practices, conceptualizing them as relational sites of political articulation rather than isolated cases. By engaging with religious undercurrents in Southeast Asia and the Middle East (or West Asia) and thinking archipelagically, my paper contributes to the ongoing discourse on Global Asia/s or 'Asia multiple' as a relational formation, shaped by the ideas, practices, and projects through which Asia is produced, reproduced, reshaped, and contested, both in the singular and the plural.

Saturday 4 July, 10:20 – 11:50, Seminar Room 440

A Collective Journey Through Uncertain Waters in the Dry Zone Agrarian Communities of Sri Lanka

Malathi Rambodagedara (Massey University)

As an ancient hydraulic civilisation of monsoon Asia, Sri Lankan society has long been shaped by an enduring relationship between water and agriculture. The Small Tank Cascade Systems (STCSs), traditional village-level shared irrigation systems, have supported dry-zone agrarian communities of Sri Lanka for over two millennia. As complex socio-ecological systems, STCSs are now recognised as Globally Important Agricultural Heritage Systems (GIAHS). Historically, local communities collectively nurtured and governed these shared irrigation systems, or commons. However, colonial land and irrigation policies disrupted customary water-management practices, weakened local autonomy and collective action of water-dependent communities around these shared irrigation systems. Post-independence land and water reforms, economic liberalisation, and shifting political priorities further marginalised these systems. These political-ecological processes reshaped the STCSs, contributing to contemporary socio-ecological challenges, including deteriorating irrigation infrastructure, forest depletion, and intensifying human-wildlife conflict. Notably, climate change has escalated to levels never previously experienced, posing severe and complex threats to these historically resilient irrigation and livelihood systems. This research is grounded in the theoretical lenses of collective action, critical institutionalism, and political ecology. Drawing on two comparative case studies, this in-depth qualitative study explores how water-dependent communities collectively adapt, sustain their livelihoods, and maintain shared irrigation systems amid an increasingly unpredictable socio-ecological landscape and with the partial ruins of a once-robust commons. The findings reveal that power asymmetries and inequalities across multiple scales generate resource governance conflicts and collective action dilemmas, underscoring the importance of engaging with the contemporary and evolving complexities of shared social-ecological systems.

Saturday 4 July, 10:20 – 11:50, Seminar Room 020

New Roots of Asian & Pasifika Masculinities

Maryam Raza (The University of Auckland)

The post post-modern era has witnessed a massive shift in the gender paradigms, with the onset of gender fluidity and feminism soaring high. However, less attention is given to masculinity studies. It is noteworthy that masculinity is being moulded into a contestable form, owing to the roots of multiculturalism in countries like Aotearoa New Zealand, where a plurality of masculinities is gaining attention. Strikingly, the co-existence of hegemonic Western masculinity alongside ethnic Asian and Pasifika masculinities gives rise to competing conceptions of the masculine; with the latter interspersed within a diachronic shift between traditional and contemporary masculinity. To explore this terrain, this paper compares two films, “Sione’s Wedding” (2006) and “Ghost Bride” (2013), to situate evolving Samoan and Chinese masculinities within social spaces in Aotearoa New Zealand. Beginning with an analysis of lascivious Samoan men, depicted in “Sione’s Wedding”, as rising providers in a capitalist system who embody new forms of unconventional political leadership, the paper will argue that their sexual prowess can be seen as a means of finding their identity. Likewise, the Chinese men featured in “Ghost Bride” stereotyped as sexually passive “Little Fresh Meats” are shown to transcend the familiar binary of Confucian Wen-Wu and Taoism’s erudite masculinity to represent a dynamic kaleidoscope of traditional Chinese masculinity. Drawing on the structures of Robert L. Moore & Douglas Gillette’s King, Warrior, Magician, Lover: Rediscovering the Archetypes of the Mature Masculine, this paper contends that Chinese and Samoan men are represented in these films as mirroring the archaic machismo of Polynesian figure, Maui. Steeped in defiance and liminality, Asian and Pasifika masculinities send down roots in a pool of Moana masculinities; reclaiming traditions through imitation that renders self-expression, redolent of mythic masculinity.

Friday 3 July, 10:20 – 11:50, Lecture Theatre 024

Translation, Translanguaging, and Social Cohesion: Multilingual Group Translation and the Poetry of Badr Shākir al-Sayyāb

Samuel Reichman (Victoria University of Wellington)

As of 2023, just under 30% of New Zealanders were overseas-born, ethnic diversity in Aotearoa/New Zealand was increasing, and over 150 languages were spoken in the country (StatsNZ, 2024). At the same time, anti-Māori, anti-Muslim, and anti-Jewish racism were on the rise (The Disinformation Project, 2023). What role can translation play in creating social cohesion and reducing prejudice in this increasingly diverse context? This paper explores the role of translanguaging; group translation; and multimodal translation in reducing prejudice towards and increasing social cohesion for ethnic, religious, and linguistic minorities, particularly those originating in Western Asia, and for indigenous peoples in the contemporary Aotearoa/New Zealand context. While much has been written on the relationships between translation, ethnocentrism, and nationalism (e.g., Baer, 2021; Carbonell, 2004; Venuti, 2005), the literature remains largely theoretical. This paper will present empirical research seeking to fill this gap, using the poetry of Badr Shākir al-Sayyāb as a case study. Al-Sayyāb (1925-1964) was a leading Iraqi poet, known primarily for helping invent Arabic free verse. I am translating al-Sayyāb’s work multimodally and multilingually, creating translations which combine English, te reo Māori, Arabic, and Biblical Hebrew; original poems written in response to these translations which also use these languages; and illustrations of al-Sayyāb’s work. As I prepare these translations, responses, and illustrations, I am working in consultation with members of Arab, Māori, and Jewish communities in Aotearoa. This paper will present preliminary findings on the impacts of this work on intergroup attitudes and feelings of belonging for project participants.

Friday 3 July, 14:40 – 16:10, Seminar Room 105

Grassroots practices of sumud across Palestinian communities and across Asia

Joshua Rickard (Prefectural University of Kumamoto)

Palestinian communities have been systematically divided and contained across geographic, political and socially fragmented spaces. Yet Palestinians have endeavored to maintain a common struggle through the personal practice of sumud, or steadfastness, and rootedness in the land, traditions and resistance from settler-colonial erasure. The concept of sumud acts as a place-making, agency-producing notion for Palestinians in navigating everyday life amid both immobility and displacement. This paper discusses grassroots civil society initiatives to sustain communities in the absence of accountable institutions, and define a unified identity across fragmented territories. In relation to the grassroots struggles of Palestinian communities, this paper will also discuss a rise in anti-colonial awareness and support for Palestinian rights across Asia with a particular focus on the formation of social moments in Japan.

Saturday 4 July, 14:40 – 16:10, Lecture Theatre 024

Archipelagic Counter-Archives: Austronesian Ocean-Kinships from Taiwan to Aotearoa in the Chthulucene

Ananya Roy (The Chinese University of Hong Kong)

This paper argues that the Asian humanities can be revitalised by reading across Austronesian ocean-kinships that link Asia to Oceania. Focusing on Syaman Rapongan's *Eyes of the Ocean* (Tao/Yami, Taiwan) and Witi Ihimaera's *The Whale Rider* (Māori, Aotearoa NZ), I show how indigenous oceanic storytelling operates as a counter-archive to extractive modernity, articulating futures grounded in more-than-human relations. Combining critical ocean studies (DeLoughrey), hydrofeminism (Neimanis), and slow violence (Nixon), I read the sea not as backdrop but as agent and method: a medium of memory, kinship, and responsibility across island worlds. The analysis is framed by scholarship that traces Austronesian migrations from Taiwan into the Pacific, situating these novels within long arcs of voyaging, translation, and ecological expertise. Rapongan's maritime poetics render the sea a living pedagogy of ghosts, winds, and currents—an ethics of attention that refuses resource logics. Ihimaera's mythic realism repositions leadership and care through cetacean-human reciprocity, refusing a land/sea split and re-centering Māori futurity. Read together, these works model archipelagic method: inter-island, relational, and decolonial. By staging an Asia-Oceania dialogue, the paper reframes "Asian humanities" as an epistemic source rather than a regional object: a field where traditions (voyaging, myth, philology) meet transformations (climate change, extraction, migration) to imagine futures grounded in oceanic reciprocity. For a humanities facing existential pressures, the ocean here is not only theme but infrastructure for method, pedagogy, and coalition across the Pacific

Saturday 4 July, 12:50 – 14:20, Seminar Room 446

The Global Community of Tamil Film Dance: The Case of Singapore and Malaysia

Kristen Rudisill (Bowling Green State University)

The Tamil film dance scene in Singapore and Malaysia is paradoxically both vibrant and invisible. These are countries with active performing art scenes and a large number of dance classes and studies. Overwhelmingly, the most present Indian dance form is the classical Bharata Natyam style, which is often equated with "Tamil" or "Indian" dance. The minority Indian populations are predominately Tamil, and many watch Kollywood films and listen to the music. The long-running Tamil reality television dance competition *Attam Nooru Vagai* in Malaysia and the shorter-lived *Dhool* in Singapore are evidence of viewer interest. But it is Bollywood film dance that is most represented in the popular dance studios. The Temple of Fine Arts, which in Singapore offers only classical dance forms, has been offering a Bollywood class in Kuala Lumpur for ten years. Bollywood Dance International and Bolly Dancing Studio in Singapore and BollyOn Studio in Malaysia offer Bollywood dance classes. Though nearly invisible online, with the exception of some Instagram presence, I found scattered classes in Kollywood or Kuthu as well as a number of workshops with visiting choreographers. Era Dance in Kuala Lumpur is the only studio dedicated to this style, and they are often asked to perform as backup dancers when Indian film personalities come to the city. Though these Southeast Asians are a key part of the global Tamil dance network, my fieldwork reveals distinct differences in the scene and the function of the style here as compared to the situations in India, Sri Lanka, and western cities.

Saturday 4 July, 12:50 – 14:20, Seminar Room 105

Revisiting Hong Kong's 1966 Riots: A Focus on Elsie Elliott-Tu

Alexia Rutkowski (The University of Melbourne)

In April 1966, there was a week of rioting in Hong Kong that became a defining moment for Elsie Elliott-Tu, who at the time was an Urban Councillor in the colonial government. Historical accounts on the riots tend to focus on how So Sau-chung's hunger strike caused the riots, largely ignoring Elsie's petition to oppose the fare increase which gained over 100,000 signatures. Following the riots, there was an inquiry into their causes, where a conspiracy that Elsie had caused the riots but also paid members of the public to riot was introduced. During the inquiry, Elsie's name appeared in the media daily, and she gained an almost celebrity-like status in the colony. Despite, Elsie's involvement in organising resistance to the ferry fare increase, and the inquiry which tried to blame her for the riots, her role in the 1966 riots is overlooked in historical accounts. My research assesses her role in the 1966 riots, while also reflecting on the impact the riots had on her future political career in colonial Hong Kong. This research is built on archival materials from the National Archives in the United Kingdom, Hong Kong Baptist University and documents sourced through Hong Kong's public library databases, as well as Elsie's own publications. The presentation will argue the importance of these riots for her political career in Hong Kong while illuminating the benefits of enriching historical accounts by focusing on neglected or overlooked areas of history.

Friday 3 July, 14:40 – 16:10, Seminar Room 020

Japanese Jinbun (humanities) influencers in the Platform Age: Centred on Miyake Kaho's YouTube Channel

Rumi Sakamoto (University of Auckland)

This paper examines the emerging phenomenon of jinbun (humanities) influencers on contemporary Japanese social media, focusing on Miyake Kaho's YouTube channel. I analyse this phenomenon through Foucault's concept of technologies of the self and against the backdrop of Japan's recent kyōyō (cultural literacy) boom, where reading classics, cultivating aesthetic sensibility, and learning history or philosophy are promoted within business and self-help contexts. Foucault developed technologies of the self to describe practices such as writing, reflection, and self-examination through which subjects actively shape themselves. While such technologies can function as modes of governmentality that reproduce dominant power structures, Foucault also emphasised their potential to open alternative ethical orientations. I argue that both the contemporary kyōyō boom and the rise of jinbun influencers can be understood as platform-era technologies of the self, oriented toward different forms of subject formation. Fast-knowledge platforms mobilise kyōyō toward neoliberal self-optimisation, framing the humanities as tools for productivity and success. By contrast, Miyake Kaho's channel mobilises the humanities through slower, reflective practices centred on reading, criticism, and linguistic articulation. Rather than treating the humanities as instruments of self-optimisation, Miyake constructs meaning through sustained engagement with texts and the fine-grained verbalisation (gengo-ka) of reading experiences. Emphasising interpretative openness, her videos frame reading as a pleasurable practice in which meanings emerge differently for each reader. Working within platform affordances, Miyake's channel reconfigures jinbun as a practice of self-cultivation grounded in forms of attentiveness that hold the potential for resistance to neoliberal self-optimisation.

Friday 3 July, 14:40 – 16:10, Seminar Room 102

Humanistic Buddhism in Modern China: Overlooked Voices

Yu Sang (The University of Sydney)

This talk examines the development of Humanistic Buddhism (renjian fojiao 人間佛教) in modern China by drawing attention to overlooked voices that have not been fully integrated into existing scholarship. While the formation of Humanistic Buddhism in the early twentieth century is often associated primarily with the influential reformer Taixu 太虛 (1890–1947), this study argues that a more nuanced understanding of the movement requires consideration of other key figures, such as Taixu's prominent student Fafang 法舫 (1904–1951), who contributed to its conceptual articulation and practical orientation. By situating Humanistic Buddhism within the broader intellectual and socio-historical context of twentieth-century China, the study explores how different actors articulated the relationship between Buddhism and the human world and redefined the role of Buddhist practice in response to modern challenges. It highlights alternative interpretations that emphasise the practical transformation of human life, ethical responsibility, and the integration of Buddhist teachings into everyday social realities. Recovering these overlooked voices not only deepens our understanding of modern Chinese Buddhism, but also reveals the diversity of strategies through which Buddhism was reinterpreted and revitalised in the modern era.

Saturday 4 July, 12:50 – 14:20, Seminar Room 107

A Newly Identified Islamic Text from Sixteenth-Century Java: Fulda Codex Ba 7

Wayan Jarrah Sastrawan (Australian National University), Ali Aldahesh (The University of Sydney), Adrian Vickers (The University of Sydney)

This paper examines the ancient debate between Confucianism and Legalism through the lens of their divergent attitudes toward severe punishment. Legalists defended publicly fixed and largely unmitigated severe punishments as the basis of deterrence, state power, and an impersonal rule of law. They rejected leniency based on motive, filial piety, or remorse—as undermining the objectivity of laws and inviting corruption—insisting that legitimate law and punishment require the exclusion of subjective factors to ensure clarity and social order. Confucians, conversely, conditioned the legitimacy of punishment on its subordination to moral transformation and ritual harmony. They therefore authorized judicial discretion to mitigate or adjust penalties on ethical and situational grounds that prioritize moral cultivation over mere retribution or deterrence. This clash over the justificatory conditions for punishment thus illuminates a deeper tension between “rule by institutional standards,” which demands formal predictability, and “rule by persons,” which allows contextual subjective discretion. Hence, imperial China forged a distinctive synthesis: formally severe statutes were retained for their deterrent effect, yet implemented through morally disciplined judicial discretion and institutionally embedded Confucian values. This hybrid model offers contemporary legal philosophy a fresh perspective on the legitimacy of judicial discretion under the rule of law insofar as preserving the credibility of punishment while subordinating it to public reason, human feeling, and the possibility of moral cultivation.

Saturday 4 July, 14:40 – 16:10, Seminar Room 100

Women's mobility and the search for authenticity in colonial Java and the Straits Settlements (1910s-1940s)

Guo-Quan Seng (National University of Singapore)

This paper rethinks the conditions of possibility for the emergence of a wave of Confucian feminisms in early twentieth century colonial Indonesia, Malaysia and Singapore. Between the 1910s and 1930s, Dutch- and English-educated women of Chinese descent emerged in their respective colonial public spheres as champions for equality in marriage, and for women to embrace their new roles as scientific mothers and working professionals. With a focus on the feminist discourses of the Chung Hwa Hui (1910s-1942) and Chinese Women's Association (1932-40) in Java, and the Chinese Ladies Association (1910s-today) in the Straits Settlements, this paper historicizes women's appropriation of the Confucian tradition in diaspora to remake ethnic identities for their adopted homelands in Southeast Asia. While their reformist fathers, husbands, brothers and compatriots traveled in trans-colonial circuits of Confucian knowledge production, and began to engage in mass-based politics, women reformers were expected to stay at home as mothers, managers and hosts in a reconceptualized form of the localized and modern ethnic Chinese family. As these new family-based identities took shape in the 1920s and 1930s, these women also began to forge their own feminist solidarities across colonial and racial boundaries in their adopted homelands and home region.

Saturday 4 July, 14:40 – 16:10, Seminar Room 442

I am Worshipping Common Sense: Scientisation and Modernist Discourse in Won Buddhism

Sergei Seviugin (Victoria University of Wellington)

My paper will focus on the scientisation process and the distinctive characteristics of modernism in Won Buddhism. Analysing media sources and interviewing 25 followers in South Korea and New Zealand, including university professors, academic researchers, religious leaders, and former clergy, I explore how Won Buddhists strategically integrate scientific and academic language, concepts, and reasoning. Specifically, I will cover three main ways this happens: rationalisation, medicalisation, and instrumentalisation. This approach not only enhances appeal and legitimacy for a modern audience but also serves as a catalyst for internal development. Through a comparative lens, I explore the nuances of this interplay between secular and the sacred, community and individual, modernity and tradition, superstition and spirituality, the market and selfhood, commodity, and authenticity in the context of controversial globalisation. Through my study, I seek to underscore the in-betweenness of religion and ways in which such discourse reconfigures religious worldview and identity with contemporary rationality. The case of Won Buddhism stands out as particularly noteworthy. It is one of the few Asian new religious movements that emerged in the 20th century, riding the wave of Tonghak revolutionary ideas, and successfully achieved official global recognition, with representation in international institutions and a presence in 23 countries worldwide. Overall, my research explores how religion adapts in an interconnected, science-oriented world, with a focus on Korean and Western contexts, to offer new insights into the evolving relationship between religion and science.

Saturday 4 July, 10:20 – 11:50, Seminar Room 440

Paintings Can Complain: Identity Dilemmas and Artworks

Shao Yihang (Southeast University)

The term "cross-border court painters of the Two Song Dynasties" refers to painters whose service to the regime spanned the Northern and Southern Song Dynasties and who were primarily affiliated with the Hanlin Painting Academy. Although Emperor Gaozong nominally revived the painting academy, the institutional framework of the academy, political environment, and ideological atmosphere all had a significant impact on the psychology of these cross-border court painters, causing significant identity dilemmas and exerting a profound influence on their creative techniques, theme selection, and expressed thoughts and emotions. This study utilizes macro-historical backgrounds and the personal experiences of cross-disciplinary court painters to construct their history of life, and primarily analyze specific identity dilemmas from the perspective of painting academy system and space-affection from the north to the south.

Friday 3 July, 10:20 – 11:50, Seminar Room 100

The Ming Dragon's Controlled Dance: Yuegang and the Asian Tradition of "Limited Globalization"

Junhao Shen (Minnan Normal University)

The 16th-century global silver trade, catalyzed by the Manila Galleons, posed a fundamental challenge to Ming China. This paper examines the Ming state's strategic response at the port of Yuegang: the creation of a "Limited Globalization" model. It argues that this was not a passive reaction but a deliberate Asian governance tradition—a sophisticated, state-centric system designed to harness global economic forces while rigorously mitigating their political risks. This tradition was institutionalized through a tripartite regulatory framework: the chuanyin (trade permits) to control actors and volume, the Duxiangguan (maritime tax bureau) for fiscal extraction, and the spatial division of the "Eastern and Western Oceans" to manage geopolitical threats, notably by excluding Japan. This system enabled China to actively participate in and benefit from global trade, yet on its own terms, prioritizing sovereign control and stability above maximal profit. Ultimately, the paper contends that the Yuegang model offers a crucial Asian precedent for rethinking global integration. Its historical narrative—of innovative adaptation and subsequent rigidity—provides profound insights for today's global challenges, from digital governance to sustainable development. The Yuegang case demonstrates how Asian traditions of strategic calibration, not merely blind openness, offer vital historical resources for envisioning alternative, sustainable modernities in an interconnected world.

Friday 3 July, 14:40 – 16:10, Seminar Room 442

Beyond Aesthetics: The Epistemological Turn of Mono no Aware in Japanese Kokugaku

Yujiao Shen (Waseda University)

This study re-conceptualizes the traditional Japanese notion of mono no aware (the pathos of things) by approaching it as an epistemological rather than an aesthetic concept. The paper conducts a hermeneutic analysis of the literary works of Motoori Norinaga (1730–1801)—the pioneering figure of the Kokugaku (National Learning) academic movement during the Edo period, particularly looking at his *Genji Monogatari Tama no Ogushi* (The Tale of Genji: A Little Jeweled Comb) (1796), which features the quintessence of his theory of mono no aware based on *The Tale of Genji* (c. 1000–1012). I argue that Norinaga transformed mono no aware from a literary aesthetic concept that appreciates the impermanence of things to an epistemological principle—an indigenous way of knowing the world, self, and life through kokoro (a knowing heart). This kokoro, I contend, is rooted in Shinto makoto (sincerity) and Buddhist mujo (impermanence). Norinaga sought to construct an imagined Japanese identity that values emotional sincerity, independent of the then-dominant Confucian criticism of moral judgment. This re-evaluation contributes to the scholarship on mono no aware and kokugaku, provides a non-Western perspective on epistemological theory and temporality, and enriches our understandings of the cultural boundaries and imaginaries in East Asia.

Saturday 4 July, 14:40 – 16:10, Seminar Room 105

The Tripartite Nation: Chinese International Tertiary Students' (Re)imagination of Hip-Hop Music in Australia

Guangbin Shi (The University of Sydney)

This study employs narrative inquiry as the research methodology to investigate the ways Chinese international tertiary students in Australia recontextualise African American Vernacular English (AAVE) and slang used in hip-hop music. I conduct semi-structured interviews with students from Australian universities, vocational education and training, and other tertiary education institutions, inquiring about their methods of negotiating multiple identities by incorporating and reconfiguring AAVE and hip-hop slang, such as "homies," "hood," and "keep it real." The preliminary findings reveal that Chinese international tertiary students have reimagined the notion of Blackness to grapple with forms of marginalisation, such as parental pressure and racism, and to socialise with their Australian peers. As both Chinese citizens and Australian residents, these students highlight linguistic and cultural reciprocity, establishing what I call a tripartite hip-hop nation where these three cultures converge. In this nation, Chinese international students integrate their local struggles into the transnational identities of Blackness, extending geographical boundaries and thus reaching the very understanding of the nation itself. This study, therefore, contributes to the role of hip-hop music in promoting national inclusiveness through students' sharing of AAVE with their Australian peers. These findings together address Asian-Australian humanities by recognising the resilience and enculturation of Chinese international tertiary students as an integral rather than separate component of Australian culture and society.

Friday 3 July, 14:40 – 16:10, Seminar Room 446

Reading Prostitute Bodies: Taiwanese Women's Writing, Gender Studies, and the Prostitution Debate

Shr-tzung Shie (National Tsing Hua University)

This paper examines how Taiwanese women's writing intervenes in the prostitution debate by staging the prostitute's body as a contested site of gender, class, and national discourses. Beginning with Liao Hui-ying's short story "Lost Moonlight" (1983), the first section situates the figure of the office girl-turned-prostitute within the contradictions of Taiwan's postwar state capitalism. It shows how Liao's text negotiates a fraught terrain in which women gain limited economic and sexual autonomy even as the patriarchal family is reaffirmed as the foundational unit of national development. The second section turns to Hu Shu-wen's fiction in the wake of the late-1990s controversy over the abolition of licensed prostitution in Taipei. Against the backdrop of Hu's activist engagement with the sex-workers' rights movement, it argues that Hu constructs prostitutes as transgressive erotic subjects who reject imposed shame and victimhood. Through reworking key terms such as "sex work," "prostitute," and "comfort woman," Hu multiplies the meanings of prostitution, destabilizes dominant stereotypes, and blurs the boundaries between sacred and the profane in the realm of sexuality. Together, these two case studies trace a shift from moralizing containment to critical re-signification, illuminating how literature both reflects and reshapes Taiwan's evolving debates on sexuality and gender politics, demonstrating the persistent significance of gender studies within Taiwan's humanities and social sciences.

Friday 3 July, 10:20 – 11:50, Seminar Room 444

The Feminist Practice of Border-crossing and Demilitarisation in Jane Jin Kaisen's *Apertures/ Specters/ Rifts* (2016)

Shim Soo-Min (UNSW Sydney)

On May 24 2015, an international delegation of thirty women embarked on a historic journey crossing the demilitarised zone (DMZ), the heavily armed buffer zone that has partitioned the Korean peninsula since the 1953 armistice of the Korean War. These women were part of the diasporic-led feminist collective Women Cross DMZ advocating for the centering of women in peacebuilding efforts. Among the delegation was artist Jane Jin Kaisen and in the year after her visit, she created the work *Apertures/ Specters/ Rifts* (2016), which consists of thirty-six photographs of anonymous women, children, and pastoral landscapes in North Korea on red light-boxes. The fragmented order and display of these photographs resist easy narrativisation, derived from two different sources: Kaisen's own archive from her visit to North Korea in 2015, and archival images from the 1952 book by Danish journalist Kate Fleron, *From North Korea: Impressions from the End of the World*, created after Fleron's 1951 visit to North Korea as a representative of the Women's International Democratic Federation. This paper is the first sustained study of *Apertures/ Specters/ Rifts* and Kaisen's involvement with Women Cross DMZ. I argue that Kaisen's resistance to legibility, linearity, and resolution is itself mimetic of the process of demilitarisation. As historian Suzy Kim argues, demilitarisation is an inherently feminist praxis that foregrounds method, struggle, and process, in contradistinction to state-produced narratives of reconciliation and reunification. Kaisen's work visualises the minor networks of feminist solidarity across temporal and geographical boundaries as part of her transborder practice.

Friday 3 July, 12:50 – 14:20, Seminar Room 444

Sharing Experiences Through Audiovisual Materials

Kentaro Shimoda (Kumamoto University)

This paper examines the trajectory of documentary film screenings organized by Noriaki Tsuchimoto (1928–2008), who documented Minamata for more than 30 years. In Minamata, the release of methylmercury into the wastewater of the Chisso Corporation's factory caused severe mercury poisoning, widely known as Minamata disease. First identified in 1956, the disease is a neurological syndrome resulting from the consumption of fish or shellfish contaminated with methylmercury and, consequently, spread along the Shiranui Sea coast. From July to November 1977, a group of film professionals led by Tsuchimoto traveled to fishing villages around the Shiranui Sea, where many residents had remained largely uninformed about Minamata disease. They screened his films in an effort to help local communities understand what the nature of the disease. At the same time, mindful of the evocative capacities of cinema, Tsuchimoto sought to cultivate a new sense of local reality and pursue a new mode of filmmaking grounded in that reality. Drawing on Tsuchimoto's documentaries, unpublished project proposals, diaries, lecture transcripts, media articles, and published writings, this study interprets the journey with particular attention to the sharing of experiences through audiovisual materials. Based on these findings, I suggest how Tsuchimoto's practice of sharing might contribute to "shared anthropology" and to collaborative anthropological practices developed through archival engagement.

Friday 3 July, 14:40 – 16:10, Seminar Room 444

Byung-Chul Han's Construction of East Asian Aesthetics and His Creative Misreading

Pei Shu (Wuhan University)

This paper examines Byung-Chul Han's construction of East Asian aesthetics through the concept of *Abwesen* and the creative misreading that emerges in this process. Han employs a phenomenological interpretation of East Asian culture and philosophy, using the German category *Abwesen* to articulate a non-essential dimension of East Asian thought. The theoretical foundation of *Abwesen* lies in the deconstructive force of East Asian philosophical notions such as *Dao* (道), *Kong* (空), and *Quan* (权) against the essentialist orientation of Western metaphysics, thereby manifesting a non-essential spirit. In practice, it effectively encompasses diverse aesthetic phenomena within the East Asian cultural sphere, ranging from everyday practices and literary texts to visual arts and material culture, which manifest de-subjectivity, de-fixity, and de-limitation. Thus, *Abwesen* may serve as a fitting discursive marker for capturing the overall characteristics of East Asian aesthetics. However, it must be pointed out that Han's interpretation of East Asian aesthetics still exhibits one-dimensional, impressionistic projections, such as obscuring cultural diversity, homogenizing the philosophical spirit, and de-historicizing East Asian phenomena. By treating East Asian culture as a fixed mode of appearance, he ultimately constructs an "Orientalized East Asia," defining it as "inherently non-essential." Therefore, *Abwesen* should be regarded as Han's "creative misreading" of East Asian aesthetics. The paper concludes that, despite some misreadings, Han's construction of East Asian aesthetics nevertheless highlights an aesthetic spirit whereby East Asian culture, through the deconstruction of essentialism, seeks inner freedom in an uncertain world. *Abwesen* provides a significant conceptual marker for repositioning East Asian thought. The non-essential dimension of East Asian culture does not signify passivity, but rather offers resources for reflecting on contemporary spiritual crises, reconfiguring the epistemic limits of modernity, and resisting the ossification and closure of present society.

Friday 3 July, 12:50 – 14:20, Lecture Theatre 024

Pakistan's Governance of Religious Tourism: Building Pathways for Religious Inclusivity and Interfaith Conviviality

Muhammad Sohail (Victoria University of Wellington)

Pakistan is a predominantly Muslim country, and many studies have criticized its Islam-centric governance structure, which often excludes religious minorities. These studies highlight the neglect, discrimination, extremism, and hostility faced by religious minorities from radical factions, as well as restrictions on their ability to practice their faith freely in Pakistan. However, in this study, I will examine why, despite being a Muslim-majority state, Pakistan has invested heavily in and provided significant support for minority religious tourism. I will analyze Pakistan's governance of religious tourism by looking at policies and strategies at key sites: Taxila for Buddhism, Hinglaj Mata for Hinduism, and Kartarpur for Sikhism. I will argue that Pakistan's governance initiatives at these sites are religiously inclusive and promote interfaith conviviality between minority religious tourists and their Muslim hosts. This paper draws on data from my recent fieldwork at the Taxila, Hinglaj Mata, and Kartarpur sites in Pakistan to study the connection between religious tourism and interfaith conviviality. I will analyze data such as policy frameworks, archival records, official documents, interviews with government officials, and governance mechanisms used to regulate religious tourism in Pakistan. The research is situated within an Asian humanistic lens and a pluralist framework, highlighting the importance of state-level initiatives to support religious minorities' rights, potentially fostering a more socio-religiously inclusive environment in Pakistan. Additionally, the study will advance interfaith studies beyond dialogue and underline how religion is lived and negotiated through the governance of everyday interactions in the South Asian context.

Saturday 4 July, 10:20 – 11:50, Seminar Room 440

Multicosmological Vanguardism in 1920s–30s Penang

Simon Soon (The University of Melbourne)

This paper proposes Penang in the 1920s–30s as a minor site of artistic becoming, where parallel modernities emerged through the parallel and interlingual textures of a cosmopolitan port-city. Drawing on Deleuze and Guattari's concept of minor literature, I frame Penang's artistic field as a set of minor networks, focusing on the intertwined activities of Yong Mun Sen and Abdullah Ariff. The paper examines their painting, photography, print work, and organisational initiatives – Shanghai Studio, the Ying Ying Art Exhibition Society, illustrated periodicals, and school-based graphic yearbooks – not as linear stylistic developments but as responses to Penang's noisy cultural infrastructures: artist studios, inter-Asian trade routes, and print culture's readerships and oral ecologies. Within these environments, the modern emerges through what James Siegel describes as overheard, in which I describe cross-cultural attunements produced through a shared visual language of the modern, shaped by proximity and circulation. To qualify this port-city avant-garde, I draw on animism as a relational ontology, following Guodo Sprenger, to describe Penang's multicosmological 'geist' or animating spirit. This reveals a vanguardism grounded not in rupture but in the coexistence of Chinese, Malay, Islamic, and transregional visual worlds—offering a historiographic possibilities for rethinking modernism from its minor edges.

Friday 3 July, 12:50 – 14:20, Seminar Room 444

Chinese performance in Colonial South Australia

Josh Stenberg (The University of Sydney)

Way Lee (Yett Soo-War 葉繡華, 1852-1909) was among the most prominent Chinese businessmen and community leaders in South Australia of his generation. By 1878, he had established his business network in Adelaide. A Presbyterian, married to a woman of Scottish descent, and after 1882 a naturalised British subject, Way Lee remained concerned for the welfare of Chinese communities in Australia. After Federation in 1901, he became a major advocate at a national level for establishing closer trade links with China. In 1906, he helped host the highest-ranking Qing official to visit Australia, and presented a petition on behalf of South Australia Chinese. This paper concerns his initiation of Chinese musical performances in 1898 in Adelaide for the Charity Carnival. These South Australian performances do not seem to have been noted in scholarship before, and allow us expand the understanding of Cantonese performance, in however a small way, to a fifth Australian colony in the years immediately before Federation. In late October and early November of 1898, Adelaide hosted a Charity Carnival, with Way Lee organising Chinese involvement. Way Lee arranged for musicians from the Bendigo Cantonese opera to perform as part of the Carnival, but was accused afterwards of having attempted to take financial advantage of the Carnival. While expanding in a small way what we know of Cantonese performance in the Australian colonies, Way Lee's experience also shows how quickly the colonial establishment's interest and welcome of exotica could veer into abuse and exploitation.

Friday 3 July, 10:20 – 11:50, Seminar Room 446

Sound in Transit: Art Tune Records and the Afterlife of Chinese Opera

Chengjin Su (Zhejiang University)

This paper examines the transnational circulation and digital afterlife of Chinese opera recordings produced by Art Tune (藝聲唱片), a Hong Kong-based company historically connected to the China Record Corporation. While many releases reissued from recordings of mother company, Art Tune also commissioned exclusive recordings of regional genres—such as Gaojia opera and other Fujianese operas—specifically for overseas Chinese audiences in Southeast Asia. Relying exclusively on publicly accessible digital traces rather than restricted archives, this study reconstructs Art Tune's historical reach through born-digital and digitised-afterlife data. Metadata and marketplace listings were collected from platforms such as eBay, Discogs, Carousell, 7788.com, Goofish, Kongfz, and various publicly accessible social media forums. These sources allow for mapping geographic distribution and rarity classifications, which serve as proxies for understanding market networks and the cultural preferences of diasporic Chinese communities. A particularly illustrative case is a previously undocumented Gaojia opera Sao Qin (掃秦) vinyl. Absent from all online databases, music platforms, and domestic catalogues, it resurfaced only after being digitised by the author and uploaded first to Bilibili and later to YouTube. By integrating media archaeology with migration history, the paper argues that Art Tune functioned as a crucial cultural intermediary, shaping transnational soundscapes, sustaining regional opera traditions, and generating mobile archives whose significance continues to evolve in the digital era.

Saturday 4 July, 14:40 – 16:10, Seminar Room 444

From Technology to Style: The Trace Machine and the Technomorphic Foundations of Anime

Davide Benvenuti (Nanyang Technological University), Kania Arini Sukotjo (Nanyang Technological University)

This paper examines how the adaptation and invention of the Trace Machine transformed Japanese animation from the early 1960s through the 1990s, drawing on Renato Barilli's theory of Technomorphism, which holds that artistic style materialises the underlying logic of contemporary technologies (2012: 20). The research traces how 1960s technologies shaped the visual character of anime and reorganized production as a whole. This technological innovation was not unique to Japan, but Japanese studios built their own versions of the relevant machines and diverged sharply from practices common elsewhere. Inspired by the Disney-style Xerox tracing seen in 101 Dalmatians (1961), Toei Studio commissioned Seiki Co., Ltd. to partially modify a Xerox tracing machine for animation production. It was first used on the debut episode of Wolf Boy Ken (1963). In 1967, Toei asked Duplosystem Co., Ltd. to develop a successor, the Trace Machine, though the first TV animated series to use the machine during production was TCJ Studio's (now Eiken) Sasuke (1968). Studio Ghibli later commissioned Duplo for a trace machine fitted with brown carbon, enabling the soft brown line work of My Neighbor Totoro (1988) and Grave of the Fireflies (1988). When Toei opened its Philippine subsidiary in 1986, it deployed a modified Xerox copier using the same method. Through Barilli's lens, anime emerges as a visible externalisation of the Trace Machine's operational logic, its procedures, limits, and efficiencies inscribed in its aesthetic style.

Friday 3 July, 10:20 – 11:50, Seminar Room 102

An Analysis of the 1980 Paris Conference on “Chinese Literature during the War of Resistance against Japan”

Yu-Wen SUNG (National Central University)

From 16 to 19 June 1980, the international conference “Chinese Literature during the War of Resistance” was held in Paris, bringing together scholars from Europe and the United States, mainland China, and Hong Kong, with thirty papers presented. Convened shortly after the normalization of Sino-U.S. relations in 1979, the conference took place at a critical juncture when the Cold War was entering a new phase and post-Cultural Revolution China remained in transition. The conference offered the Western world a renewed perspective on Chinese literature by revisiting literary developments in different regions of wartime China, such as the Jin-Sui Border Region anti-Japanese base area and the Japanese-occupied areas of North China, reexamining unresolved debates at the intersection of literature and politics, including national form and the popularization of literature and art, and reopening discussion of writers marginalized within left-wing literary discourse, including Ding Ling, Ai Qing, and members of the July School such as Qiu Dongping and Lu Ling. This conference marked an early moment in China’s “opening to the world” in the 1980s and signaled the world’s turn toward China. Drawing on the 1982 edited volume *La Littérature chinoise au temps de la guerre de résistance contre le Japon (1937–1945)*, conference accounts by participants Hsu Kai-yu, Constantine Tung, and Gaylord Kai Loh Leung, as well as contemporaneous reports in Taiwanese newspapers and periodicals, this paper examines the discursive confrontations at the conference and the Cold War-inflected affective dynamics that shaped them.

Saturday 4 July, 12:50 – 14:20, Seminar Room 440

Turning Coarse into Cool: Linguistic Innovation in Thai Youth Activism

Chavalin Svetanant (Macquarie University)

This paper explores how Thai youth activists have reconfigured linguistic norms during the 2020 pro-democracy movement, revealing broader cultural shifts in contemporary Thai society. Long-standing Thai politeness conventions are closely tied to hierarchical social relations, particularly in expressions of deference. In recent years, however, young activists have strategically employed impoliteness, satire and playful linguistic remixing as tools of critique and dissent. Through inventive uses of slang, re-lexicalised expressions and pop-cultural reference, protesters not only challenged state authority but also opened new modes of political participation that are emotionally resonant and widely accessible across digital publics. These creative practices reflect a significant transformation in the cultural meaning of language, where expressions once deemed improper or taboo evolve into markers of authenticity, solidarity and generational identity. At the same time, this linguistic shift highlights tensions between younger and older speakers, raising questions about cultural continuity, intergenerational dialogue and the future of public discourse in Thailand. By examining these linguistic innovations as cultural practice, this paper considers how contemporary youth activism contributes to rethinking language, identity and power in Asian humanities today, foregrounding Asia as a site of ongoing conceptual and social transformation.

Saturday 4 July, 10:20 – 11:50, Seminar Room 102

Representations of Rural Migrant Women and Gendered Social Inequality in Sheng Keyi’s Fiction

Ruttapond Swanpitak (Chulalongkorn University)

This research aims to advance scholarly understanding of social and gender inequality—issues that remain urgent in contemporary society and have yet to be addressed in a comprehensive or effective manner. In the Chinese context, such inequalities have been vividly illuminated in the literary works of contemporary women writers, most notably Sheng Keyi (b. 1973). A prominent post-Mao woman writer of rural origin, Sheng Keyi migrated from a village in Hunan to Shenzhen, where she experienced firsthand the rural-to-urban transition, marginalisation, and the gendered social inequalities embedded in urban life. Drawing on these lived experiences, she employs an unconventional narrative style to portray rural migrant women who endure intersecting forms of oppression shaped by gender, class, and the rural-urban divide in Shenzhen. This paper seeks to fill a research gap in scholarship on Chinese migrant literature by examining Sheng Keyi’s novel *Northern Girls* (2004) through a poststructuralist feminist lens. It explores the representation of rural migrant women, the construction of female subjectivity, and acts of transgression, while also analysing the narrative strategies through which Sheng Keyi exposes the suffering, exploitation, and injustices these women endure. By engaging with the themes of subjectivity, marginality, inequality, and transgression, this study contributes to feminist analyses of contemporary Chinese women’s writing and deepens the understanding of Chinese cultural dynamics, gender relations, and the social realities of marginalised populations in the post-Mao era.

Friday 3 July, 12:50 – 14:20, Lecture Theatre 024

Parallax Visions: Re-reading Arasaki Moriteru's Okinawa as a Catalyst for Peace in East Asia

Shinnosuke Takahashi (Monash University)

Arasaki Moriteru (1936–2018) left a singular body of work in the studies of post-WWII Okinawan society and politics, which materialised as an array of volumes on 'postwar Okinawan history', for over half a century. With some of his seminal works translated into multiple Asian languages, his historical texts on Okinawa, which often centre around the history of social struggles undertaken by the multitude of individuals as the movers of history, introduce the deep political agency of the borderland community, located at the heart of this tumultuous region. This paper examines one of Arasaki's late works with a focus on his concept of Okinawa as a 'catalyst (触媒) for peace' in East Asia by revisiting and analysing his text under the same title, first presented in 2012 in Shanghai in the midst of territorial disputes. Arasaki's catalyst thesis, especially his emphasis on the cross-border space lived by local fishermen's communities as the optimal reference point of regional cooperation, offers 'parallax visions' that allow for the way to dislocate our understanding of not only today's political confrontation but also the Cold War dialectic that ideologically underpins the regional rivalries in the region by introducing different modality of dialectic over territory, history and sovereignty in terms of islands, fluidity and commons.

Saturday 4 July, 12:50 – 14:20, Seminar Room 442

'Superintendent Hnin Maung' stories by Min Thein Kha – A multicultural detective story born in the socialist era of Myanmar

Yuri Takahashi (Australian National University)

Myanmar's socialist era, known as 'the Burmese way to socialism,' and the subsequent 20-some years of military rule that emerged from the 1988 coup are known for their isolationist diplomacy, and strict publishing censorship which lasted more than half a century. However, this period also saw the publication of many valuable Burmese-language literary works, though they have not been fully investigated from overseas. Min Thein Kha (1939–2008) has been a popular author in Myanmar since the 1970s, publishing detective stories and mystery novels with occult elements that have attracted many readers. His first work featuring a Burmese superintendent, Hnin Maung, was well-received, resulting in Min Thein Kha keeping writing the series of more than ten books. The stories are set during the British colonial era and cosmopolitan life at that era are vividly depicted. Superintendent Hnin Maung, a Burmese colonial police officer, solved complicated mysteries and saved those who were caught up in crime, regardless of their ethnicity or social status. The stories are still widely read by Myanmar readers today. Myanmar is a country with a diversity of ethnicity and multiculturalism, and an ideal harmonious multicultural society presented in the stories appears to strongly resonate with the readers.

Saturday 4 July, 12:50 – 14:20, Seminar Room 102

Pedagogical Constructions of National Identity in Chinese Junior Secondary History Textbooks since the Reform Era

Bruce Xin Tao (The University of Sydney)

This article examines how national identity has been pedagogically constructed in junior secondary history education in China across successive curriculum reforms since the beginning of the Reform Era. Drawing on a diachronic analysis of state-authorised history textbooks from the early 1980s to the present, alongside curriculum standards and policy documents, it explores how shifting educational priorities reshaped students' understandings of the national past and their sense of belonging. Treating textbooks as pedagogical artefacts rather than merely ideological texts, the study analyses how historical narratives were designed to cultivate particular orientations towards the nation. It identifies several recurring emotional orientations embedded in textbook narratives, including national humiliation, collective pride, developmental confidence, and civic responsibility, and shows how these emotional codings rendered national identity meaningful and learnable within the school curriculum. The analysis traces four broad phases of identity construction. In the early Reform Era, textbooks emphasised moral reflection in the aftermath of national trauma. During the 1990s, patriotic education institutionalised a more affirmative collective identity grounded in pride and loyalty. In the 2000s, narratives of development foregrounded a future-oriented national self. More recent state-compiled textbooks have emphasised unity, security, and civic duty, repositioning students as responsible national subjects. By situating national identity construction within the longer history of curriculum reform, this article contributes to the history of education and textbook studies, and to broader debates in Asian humanities on emotion, pedagogy, and historical narration in the formation of national belonging.

Saturday 4 July, 14:40 – 16:10, Seminar Room 102

Reframing Non-Deductive Reasoning in Confucian Political Philosophy

Junbo Tao (The University of Hong Kong)

In *The Arts of Chinese Philosophy*, Paul R. Goldin highlights the distinctive features and complexities of non-deductive reasoning in ancient Chinese classics. Among these forms of argumentation, the method of “appeal to example” (yinzheng fa 引證法) plays a central role in Confucian political philosophy, particularly in discourses surrounding sage-king politics. Ancient Chinese scholars and political actors frequently invoked the legends of sage kings and canonical Confucian texts to justify their political ideals and actions—often without rigorous deductive reasoning or systematic analysis. Building on Goldin’s insights, this article proposes an alternative approach to studying the fragmented and intricate historical corpus in which successive generations repeatedly appealed to sage-king exemplars without constructing a coherent, developed political-theoretical framework. Rather than treating these appeals as isolated or repetitive, it gathers and analyses the diverse invocations of sage-king politics by individual interpreters to uncover the complex interrelations and tensions among them, thereby generating new theoretical insights within the Confucian tradition. To test this methodology, the article focuses on the Sixteen Kingdoms period (ca. 304–439)—a time of political fragmentation and upheaval—when various powerholders appropriated sage-king narratives to legitimise coups and usurpations. Through a multi-level textual analysis of the critiques and defences of sage-king ideals during this era, the article argues for a critical theory of Confucian moral legitimacy and demonstrates the generative potential of this new interpretive approach for advancing future research.

Friday 3 July, 14:40 – 16:10, Seminar Room 100

Rectifying the Narrative Logic: Violence and Social Pressure in *Parasite* versus *No Other Choice*

Minyu Tian (University of Macau)

This paper employs Robert K. Merton’s theory of social anomie and Randall Collins’s theory of interaction ritual chains to conduct a comparative analysis of violence in Bong Joon-ho’s *Parasite* and Park Chan-wook’s *No Other Choice*. From Merton’s structural perspective, both films depict actors who accept societal cultural goals (upward mobility or middle-class stability) but lack legitimate institutionalized means to achieve them. *Parasite* exemplifies the “innovation” mode of adaptation, as the impoverished Kim family employs illicit schemes for intrusion. Conversely, *No Other Choice* embodies a form of “rebellion,” where the protagonist, stripped of his legitimate means, seeks to preserve his attained status through calculated violence against his peers. Micro-sociologically, Collins’s framework explains their divergent violent logics. In *Parasite*, the climactic violence stems from a failed interaction ritual—the humiliation triggered by the smell—which generates a flood of negative emotional energy, rupturing the father’s initial intent and leading to impulsive, disintegrated action. In *No Other Choice*, violence is not an impulsive outburst but a planned act sustained by the positive emotional energy drawn from protective familial rituals (visually rendered through parallel editing of the sleeping wife and the burying husband). This ensures a coherent alignment between his emotional drive and violent action. Thus, Park’s film rectifies the narrative logic of Bong’s, shifting the critique from the explosive chaos of horizontal class conflict to the cold, coherent despair of vertical intra-class cannibalism within a betraying system.

Saturday 4 July, 10:20 – 11:50, Seminar Room 028

Chinese Queer Expression: In Danger Yet Inexorable

Xi Tian (Bucknell University)

Censorship and legal punishment for “pornographic” content have long been persistent fears within the Chinese digital sphere, largely because the delicate line between pornography and artistic creation remains undefined by law. This legal ambiguity grants the Chinese government significant latitude to take legal action, sometimes on a barely grounded basis. In particular, women’s queer desire and its written expression are easy targets for governmental policing, especially as they increasingly challenge traditional patriarchy and heteronormative norms. This paper examines the Chinese government’s recent detention of “Boys’ Love” (BL) writers in 2025, a consequence of their online novels depicting erotic relations between men. By comparing this event with the well-known trial of BL writer Tianyi in 2018, this paper will discuss the significant changes in this most recent round of crackdown, including its purposes, the enlarged public engagement, the role platforms played, and the widespread fear and dissolution among authors. Although these changes primarily appear within the BL world, this paper argues that they, in fact, embody and highlight the clash between Chinese women’s inexorable social and sexual awareness and the government’s relentless attempts to revive and maintain dated morality. Contrary to many people’s fears regarding the decline of BL and queer expression, recent reality shows that the control and restriction of specific media practices have never succeeded in suppressing the sentiments and affect underlying unconventional practices.

Friday 3 July, 12:50 – 14:20, Seminar Room 020

Traditional Chinese Medicine, the Existential Cancer Threat, and a New Way of Being in the World

Rey Tiquia (Independent)

Seeing 'qi as matter' and 'matter as qi' and translating Qi, Yin and Yang and the Five Elements wu xing as space-time-matter-in-motion, I discuss the balancing attributes of medicinal matter yaowu vis-a-vis cancer as the existential threat to our yinyang existence and its etiology in traditional Chinese medicine. I present a case study of a lung cancer patient whose condition was stabilized by chronoacupuncture and materia medica herbal therapy i.e. his anti-pathogenic yang qi (zheng qi) which is the body's capacity to resist all disease causing agents) and his 'pathogenic yin qi' (xie qi) which refers to all disease causing factors including lung cancer as kesou (cough) evolving in a harmonious state of yin and yang balance. Finally, I translated and outlined TCM oncologist, Dr. Jia Kun's a TCM proposals on how to prevent being afflicted by cancer.

Saturday 4 July, 12:50 – 14:20, Lecture Theatre 024

Chinese-New Zealand Mothers and Daughters Making Dumplings Together

Yurong Tong (Massey University)

This creative practice-led doctoral research explores the creative potential in making and eating dumplings while sharing stories and recipes between Chinese-New Zealand immigrant mothers and/or daughters. This research is motivated by the fact that as a recent immigrant to NZ from China, I find myself learning more and more about my mother, family and homeplace through long-distance conversations, especially about food such as dumplings, a Chinese Jiaozi. The project aims to uncover inherited dumpling-making traditions and recipes and invent new dumpling recipes in the context of building new and enhancing existing relationships in the context of spatial and performative events. Informed by auto-theory and auto-ethnography, my primary research method is artistic or creative practice, all of which emphasize personal experience, subjectivity, and reflexivity from my perspective as recent Chinese-NZ immigrant daughter well as from the perspectives of my dumpling-making guests. In this research, I experiment with a range of dumpling-making techniques and recipes while sharing with invited guests in-person or online. These guests are Chinese-New Zealand immigrant mothers and/ or daughters. The dumpling-making sessions are performative events in which personal stories and traditional or alternative dumpling recipes are collected.

Saturday 4 July, 12:50 – 14:20, Seminar Room 028

Post-/Cold War Geo-affective Reading: Sex/Gender Trauma and Reparative Ethics in Ghost Town

Meng-Che Tsai (National Kaohsiung Normal University)

This paper proposes a "post-/Cold War geo-affective reading"—an analytic framework developed by combining emergent Cold War cultural studies with queer affect theory—in order to extend Eve Sedgwick's theorization of affect through Kuan-hsing Chen's Asia as Method. Focusing on the representation of homoerotic desire in Kevin Chen's award-winning novel Ghost Town (2019), the paper examines how sex/gender trauma reveals the cultural imaginaries of oppression directed at queer subjects (including homosexuals and political dissidents) under the Cold War-authoritarian regime of 1980s Taiwan. I argue that the novel embodies the Cold War residues of 1950s McCarthyism and reproduces a Cold War specter from East Asia Cold War and Chinese Civil War. The narrative further develops this logic by invoking post-Cold War Germany, where neo-nationalist patriotism intertwines with homophobia and xenophobia. Moreover, it interrogates the ways Cold War liberal binaries shape cultural memory, proposing alternative representational strategies and reparative ethics in relation to the White Terror. By bringing together East Asian geopolitical histories and transnational contexts, this analysis reconsiders how post-/Cold War affects continue to shape the formation of contemporary national communities, challenges linear narratives of democratization and liberalization, and posits instead the possibility of a relational ethics of co-existence.

Saturday 4 July, 12:50 – 14:20, Seminar Room 440

Tracing Overseas Taiwanese Opera in the Japanese Colonial Period via “Ryoken”

Hsin-hsin Tsai (National Cheng Chi University)

“Ryoken” was a travel permit used by subjects of the Japanese Empire residing in Taiwan when traveling abroad during the Japanese Colonial Period. It recorded information such as the Ryoken ID number, name, ethnic group, place of permanent registration, residential address, age, occupation, destination, and purpose of travel. By examining and collating these Ryoken records, one can find a significant number of people who departed with travel purposes such as performance, for the purpose of performance engaging, theatrical performance, or performance tours. Their destinations included Southeast Asian countries such as Manila (Philippines), the Straits Settlements, Singapore, Penang (Malaya), Borneo, Siam (Thailand), Burma (Myanmar), and Surabaya (Indonesia). Coupled with a review of overseas newspaper historical materials, it can be inferred that most of these travelers were members of Taiwanese opera troupes. Some artists even traveled to Xiamen (China), before departing for Southeast Asia. However, the difficulty in searching for Ryoken is compounded by the fact that many performers used stage names rather than real names. Still, the archives of the Taiwan Sōtokufu (Taiwan Governor’s Office) provide credible historical record of Ryoken for reconstructing the history of the transnational performances of Taiwanese opera during the Japanese Colonial Period, which are worth studying and applying in research. Hsin-hsin Tsai’s tracing of transnational Taiwanese opera performances during Japanese colonial rule by analyzing travel extends what we know about the range of the Southeast Asia (e.g., Manila, Singapore, Penang, Surabaya) and Xiamen despite challenges like stage names, corroborated by overseas newspapers.

Friday 3 July, 10:20 – 11:50, Seminar Room 446

Visuality, Mediality, and Translation: Rethinking the Poetics of Yu Kwang-chung

Shu-wei Tu (National Sun Yat-sen University)

This paper reexamines the poetic evolution of Yu Kwang-chung, one of the most influential postwar poets in Taiwan, by focusing on three analytical perspectives: visibility, mediality, and translation. Yu’s poetic language—particularly in works from his neoclassical phase through his “Cultural China” explorations (e.g., *Associations of the Lotus*, 1965–1969; *White Bitter Gourd*, 1974–1981)—is deeply shaped by mediating objects such as plants, calligraphy, paintings, artifacts, and cultural relics. These media not only serve as poetic imagery but also activate processes of cultural memory and identification. Drawing on theories of cultural translation and visual culture, I argue that Yu’s poetic representation of China as a cultural “Other” is constructed through visual hybridity and spatial imaginaries, encompassing linguistic, social, and symbolic dimensions. The poet’s cultural identity is thus neither stable nor singular but inherently translational, situated within processes of displacement, nostalgia, and aesthetic negotiation. By integrating the perspectives of visibility, mediality, and translation, this paper reexamines the originality, becoming, and dialecticism of Yu’s poetic structure of feeling toward “Cultural China”.

Saturday 4 July, 10:20 – 11:50, Seminar Room 105

“Aren’t You Ashamed of Yourself?”: Queer Sri Lankans and Lajja Baya Across Stage, Screen, and Street

Matthew Tyne (The University of Sydney)

This paper explores how queer Sri Lankan men acquiesce, resist, and reconfigure *lajja baya* (shame/fear), a Sinhalese cultural norm theorised by anthropologist Gananath Obeyesekere, that regulates sexuality and gender expression. Drawing on Foucault’s theory of discursive formations, the paper situates queer Sri Lankan subjectivities within postcolonial and religious regimes that inscribe *lajja baya* through ideals of sexual restraint and modesty. These structures systematically delimit queer citizenship, circumscribing participation in the nation’s imagined moral community. Through close readings of the advocacy network Sakhi Collaboration’s group-devised performance *If You Promise Not to Tell* (2012), Visakesa Chandrasekaram’s film *Frangipani* (2014), and queer interventions in the Aragalaya movement (2022), the paper traces how queer narratives simultaneously contest and accommodate these moral technologies. These performative acts, articulated through critical disclosure, resignify *lajja baya* by transforming its regulating influence into a site of resistance. They exemplify what Muñoz (2009) theorises as ‘utopian gestures’: practices that resist the present moment’s constraints by imagining alternative futures. Yet such utopian gestures are necessarily limited. Their power lies in affective disruption rather than in obtaining enduring cultural reforms. They rehearse alternative moral communities and pierce *lajja baya*’s disciplining force, yet remain ephemeral interventions that alone cannot dismantle established postcolonial and nationalist regimes. By juxtaposing theatrical and cinematic texts with embodied public protest, the paper illuminates the roles of performance in Sri Lanka’s contemporary public sphere. Performance here functions as a tactical negotiation of queer visibility, safety, and staging futurity, while revealing ‘utopian gestures’ fragility in the face of persistent structural constraints.

Saturday 4 July, 10:20 – 11:50, Seminar Room 020

From “Butterfly” to “Terrorist”: Queer Outbidding and Moral Backlash in Sri Lankan Political and Religious Discourse

Visakesa Chandrasekaram (UNSW Sydney)

In 2015, the former President of Sri Lanka unconstitutionally dismissed the Prime Minister, publicly referring to him as a “Butterfly”—a slur implying homosexuality and, by extension, an alleged incapacity to govern. A decade later, during a televised sermon, the Archbishop of Colombo escalated this rhetoric by characterizing the queer rights movement as a new form of “terrorism” threatening the nation, in response to proposed curricular reforms aimed at introducing sexuality education in secondary schools. Similar condemnatory remarks were voiced by Buddhist clergy, prompting the incumbent President to pledge that no new laws or programs would be introduced if they risked provoking public objection—despite his election manifesto’s commitment to decriminalize homosexuality by amending archaic colonial legislation. This paper situates this pattern of politically motivated homophobia in Sri Lanka as an orchestrated moral backlash, strategically deployed to outbid the limited recognition extended to queer communities by progressive political or social actors. Drawing comparative insights from moral backlashes against queer rights reforms in other South Asian contexts such as India and Pakistan, the paper explores how successive Sri Lankan governments have repeatedly marginalized queer citizens by invoking national priorities, thereby displacing queer rights into a state of permanent exceptionalism. Furthermore, it examines how leaders across opposing political camps instrumentalize this backlash to outbid one another, withdrawing even the minimal recognition previously afforded to queer citizens’ right to exist, and reframing sexual diversity as a threat to cultural sovereignty and national security.

Friday 3 July, 12:50 – 14:20, Seminar Room 020

Taiwan Soft-Power on the Mainland: the Activities of Playwright, Director, and Dramaturge Lai Shengchuan in Mainland China

Jon von Kowallis (UNSW Sydney)

Homi Bhabha has written about the importance of re-membering the past—piecing together fragmented memories—in the construction of cultural identity. With his internationally-known plays “Secret Love: the Peach Blossom Land” (1986) and “The Village” (2008), Lai Shengchuan (b. 1954) reconstructs a collective past that speaks for the island as a whole and situates it squarely within the diaspora—a capsule central to the entire diasporic experience. In that sense, Lai brings Taiwan back to center stage, as in Tu Wei-ming’s concept of a “cultural China.” In his more recent works, Lai draws on the historic and ancestral connections between the Taiwanese and Chinese people, retelling history to younger generations in a vivid and compelling way in his modern opera “Dreamers” (2011), and reflecting on the enduring impact of World War II on contemporary subjectivity in “One One Zero Eight” (2019). Beyond his creative output, Lai has played a key role in revitalizing economic and cultural life on the mainland through initiatives like the annual Wuzhen Theatre Festival and Huichang Theatre Village in his father’s native place (opened 4 Jan 2024 and continuing). This paper poses the question of how amid an atmosphere of rising cross-Strait tensions, Lai has been able to redefine Taiwan not only at the center of the diaspora but also internationally, staging its own story as an equal entity “amongst the nations” in China and accomplishing all this from his own non-partisan perspective.

Saturday 4 July, 10:20 – 11:50, Seminar Room 446

City that Never Sleeps: the Urban Lighting and Visual Modernity in Shanghai, 1860–1949

Jiayin Wan (The University of Hong Kong)

This article examines the emergence of urban lighting in modern Shanghai and its role in shaping Chinese experiences of visual modernity from the mid-nineteenth to the first half of the twentieth century. Taking Shanghai—one of the earliest Chinese cities to be described as a “city that never sleeps”—as its central case, the study traces the technological transitions from oil lamps to gas lighting, electric arc lamps, and later electric illumination, and explores how these changing lighting infrastructures transformed everyday visual perception and cultural understandings of modernity among urban Chinese residents. Rather than focusing solely on technological innovation or industrial development, the article emphasizes lighting as a mediating material practice that connected technology, the city, and human sensory experience. It argues that modernity in Shanghai was not only seen but actively learned, negotiated, and internalized through everyday encounters with artificial lighting. Drawing on newspapers, diaries, memoirs, and visual materials, the article analyzes three interrelated mechanisms through which urban lighting operated: the production of light as spectacle, its deployment in ritualized public ceremonies, and its role in creating spaces of leisure and pleasure. These mechanisms not only altered nocturnal urban rhythms but also conveyed symbolic meanings of progress, brightness, and scientific advancement, thereby reshaping how Shanghai’s residents perceived and imagined modern urban life. The article further demonstrates how uneven lighting conditions between concession areas and the Chinese town generated new visual hierarchies and spatial inequalities.

Saturday 4 July, 14:40 – 16:10, Seminar Room 020

“Xiang” versus “Cun”: The Dispute over Land Distribution Units and the Shaping of Class Subjectivity in the Central Soviet Area

Wang Zifan (Sun Yat-sen University)

During the Agrarian Revolutionary War, determining the unit of land distribution was not merely a technical means of resource redistribution. Instead, it represented the revolutionary regime's political vision for reconstructing rural society, embodying an intense conflict between revolutionary goals and traditional strategies for rural survival. In the Central Soviet Area, the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) established the xiang (an administrative township) as the basic unit for distribution. This policy deliberately rejected the cun (natural village), which upheld lineage ties and local customs. The objective was to dismantle the peasants' traditional social networks and livelihood patterns. However, implementation encountered local resistance, sparking profound historical friction. As traditional livelihood structures fractured, peasants were integrated into the organizational system led by the xiang Soviet, ultimately transforming into "class subjects" dependent on the revolutionary regime.

Friday 3 July, 14:40 – 16:10, Seminar Room 107

“Men of Lofty Ideals Sacrificing for Noble Causes at All Time” and Chen Yinke's Discourse on Confucian Liberalism

Wang Gang (Jiangxi Normal University)

Chen Yinke regarded "independent spirit and free mind" as an inherent tradition of the Chinese nation, advancing it as "At all times we witness men of lofty ideals sacrificing for noble causes", thus ushering the discourse of Confucian liberalism. Within the framework of "one substance and multiple functions", he highlighted the significance of the traditional culture and its core—the Dao of benevolence—that men of lofty ideals sacrificed for, renewing the traditional substance-function debate rooted in utmost benevolence and righteousness. By integrating ancient-modern and Chinese-Western theories, he surpassed discussions on Bonds and Conventions and set a metaphysical theoretical origin breaking the monolithic definition of liberalism popular at that time. As Chen advocated, modern Western liberalism shall not be taken as the only criterion; instead, it should be reinterpreted from a modern perspective within a broader ideological vision.

Saturday 4 July, 12:50 – 14:20, Seminar Room 107

From Pure Land to Bamboo Grove: The Indigenization of the Crane Image in Chinese Buddhism

Huize Wang (Zhejiang University)

The crane, as a quintessential symbol of traditional Chinese culture, was not only revered in early Indian Buddhism but also imbued with rich meanings within Chinese Buddhist culture. It serves as a microcosm of Buddhism's sinicization. Through a diachronic analysis of representative Chinese Buddhist texts and images, this study identifies four stages in the evolution of the crane image in Buddhism after its introduction to China. First, it functioned as an exegetical vehicle, employing natural attributes as metaphors. Second, it became a sacred bird in the Pure Land, whose melodious sounds spread far and wide. Third, it served as a miraculous symbol associated with eminent monks' enlightenment and nirvana. Finally, it emerged as a motif of Chan Buddhism, coexisting in secular landscapes with Buddhist deities and renowned monks. Alongside this process, the philosophical depth, sanctity, humanistic resonance, and aesthetic qualities of the crane image in Buddhism gradually developed. These dimensions intertwined and mutually reinforced one another, culminating in its transformation from a foreign Buddhist symbol into an emblem of cultural aesthetics of Chinese Buddhism. Moreover, the crane image actively integrated with indigenous representations of cranes, enriching the symbolic framework of traditional Chinese crane culture.

Friday 3 July, 10:20 – 11:50, Seminar Room 028

Villagers' Religious Life as Revealed by Ming-Qing Temple Inscriptions in Jiangsu-Zhejiang Villages

Kai Wang (Ocean University of China)

In traditional Chinese villages, ordinary residents could hardly secure a place in history through literary achievements like the elite, nor could they rely on gazetteers to preserve their memory as gentry or local figures did. Consequently, academic research has long focused more on elite Buddhism and urban Buddhism than on rural religious practices. Based on five years of fieldwork, however, a large number of surviving Ming-Qing period stone inscriptions from village temples in Jiangsu and Zhejiang have been examined. These materials record a rich array of religious activities and daily life details of common villagers from market towns to remote settlements. Our study demonstrates that during the Ming and Qing dynasties, local belief systems in these regions were characterized by a fluid syncretism of Confucian, Buddhist, Daoist, and folk religious elements. Temples not only served as spaces for spiritual life but also functioned as vital arenas for the operation of rural communal authority and the maintenance of harmonious social relations. These findings challenge the conventional academic narratives of "the decline of Buddhism in late imperial China" and the reduction of Jiangsu-Zhejiang Buddhism to "ritual-oriented services," offering a more nuanced understanding of religious vitality at the grassroots level.

Saturday 4 July, 12:50 – 14:20, Seminar Room 022

Musical Modernity in Cold War Asia: Mandopop, Media Technologies, and Urban Experience in Taiwan Cinema

Nien-ying Wang (Fu Jen Catholic University)

Bai Jingrui played a critical role in the development of postwar Taiwan cinema, bridging the state-directed moral realism of the 1960s and the transnational media culture that defined the following decade. His films *Lonely Seventeen* (1968), *Accidental Trio* (1969), and *Home Sweet Home* (1970) mark a crucial moment when cinema, popular music, and media technology converged to produce new forms of urban modernity in Cold War Taiwan. While Bai's works have often been situated within the paradigm of state-sponsored "Healthy Realism" and read as allegories of national modernization, this paper reorients attention toward their sonic and performative dimensions. Through scenes set in coffee shops, dance halls, and nightclubs, these films vividly capture Taipei's evolving urban soundscape, where Mandopop stars, live bands, and film musicals shaped a new sensory experience of modern life. Through an approach grounded in archival and media research, the paper argues that postwar cultural regulation, intended to suppress "vulgar" entertainment and enforce moral discipline, ironically fostered the emergence of a vibrant transregional entertainment culture across Taiwan, Hong Kong, and Southeast Asia. By featuring popular singers and diegetic performances, Bai transformed cinema into a transmedial platform that visualized and mediated Taiwan's participation in the regional Mandopop network. Situating his films within the broader Cold War media ecology, the paper demonstrates how sound, performance, and technology together shaped a distinctly Asian experience of modernity.

Saturday 4 July, 10:20 – 11:50, Seminar Room 028

1829: The Pinnacle and Period of John Francis Davis's Translations

Shih-Pe Wang (National Taiwan University)

John Francis Davis (1795-1890) began his engagement with Chinese literature through the translation of short stories and drama, notably works by Li Yu and Yuan drama. This paper argues that poetry plays a central role in Davis's understanding and translation of Chinese literature. He highlighted the poetic elements in the narrative and dramatic texts and translated many verse passages within them. His 1823 translation of *Hien Wun Shoo*, a collection of rhymed maxims, further illustrates his interest in poetic form. In 1829, Davis published a long treatise entitled *POESEOS SINENSIS COMMENTARII*, a systematic introduction to Chinese poetry. This collection contains fifty poems drawn from a remarkably diverse range of sources, including *Shijing*, *Sanzijing*, Daoist texts, Tang and Ming poetry, *ci*, *qu*, and even *Honglou meng*. While not always accurate in their rendering, and at times containing significant misreading, the selections themselves are revealing. This breadth of selection reflects Davis's wide-ranging reading interests and his sensitive awareness of the crucial nature of Chinese literariness—rhyme and meter. Using Davis's poetic translation as a case study, this paper thus explores how poetry functioned as a key method for cross-cultural interpretation and literary mediation in the formative stage of British sinology.

Friday 3 July, 12:50 – 14:20, Seminar Room 446

Form and Boundaries: Reconstructing the Identity of Chinese and Australian Abstraction

WANG Shuo (Beihang University)

Since the 1950s and 1960s, lyrical abstract art in China and Australia has consistently reflected a conscious engagement with the transformation of traditional art and artistic expression into modernity. This paper focuses on the transcendence of form and boundaries in abstraction, and proposes a comparative research methodology based on an East Asian–Oceanic perspective to examine parallel practices in this field in both regions. Firstly, this paper conducts a comparative study of abstract works from both regions, where artists experimented with paintings situated between abstraction and figuration, inspired by calligraphic brushwork, and the dynamic movement of Aboriginal Art. The artists placed emphasis on nature, using simplified formal languages, brushwork and materials to modernize traditional aesthetics. This contributed to a shift in modernism, fostering similar creative approaches across China and Australia. The paper also examines how artists transformed abstract cross-regional aesthetics into self-referential systems. It elucidates the evolutionary logic of abstract language, shifting from mutual observation to cultural self-awareness. This study seeks to uncover the synchronicity of traditional thinking in abstraction and its transcendent characteristics in rewriting modernity. Furthermore, it explores how abstract art, as part of postcolonial modernization, maintains continuity in artistic thought and achieves ontological presence by integrating art into life. Ultimately, the paper aims to provide a shared historical framework for inter-regional East Asian art studies that transcends national boundaries and emphasizes the subjectivity of presence.

Saturday 4 July, 14:40 – 16:10, Seminar Room 446

Sci-Fi Cold War Cinema in Motion: Trans-Asia Planetary Mobility in Taiwanese-language Manga Film

Wan-Jui Wang (National Chung Cheng University)

Beyond adapting local folktales and traditional operas, Taiwanese-language cinema relied on the transnational circulation of media forms, labor, and capital. The Taiwan–Japan co-produced Dragon Superman Trilogy (Dragon Superman, Moonlight Superman, and Skyfly Superman, 1968), directed by Kobayashi Satoru and Shao Luo-hui, exemplifies a mode of Taiwanese-language manga film shaped through cross-border mobility in Cold War East Asia. Adapted from Japanese manga and their television derivatives, these films channel the dramatic tensions of science fiction through a fundamental opposition between the “human” and the “other,” with alien antagonists functioning as Cold War metaphors that visualize ideological threats to the anti-communist bloc. By adopting the planetary as an aesthetic and ethical process of world-making, this study offers a theoretical alternative to the circulation bias of world/global cinema and approaches the world as both a representational construct and a physical entity. Situating Cold War trans-Asian cinema within a longer genealogy of planetary visibility reveals how geopolitical spectacle produces both continuity and rupture in planetary imaginaries. Ideologically, these films reinforce horizontal media alliances between Taiwan and Japan under the banner of “Free Asia,” while visually, the Li Tang-hua Stunt Troupe merges traditional martial arts with technoscientific spectacle. The trilogy thus shows that Cold War cultural competition was waged not only through cinematic technology but also through the transnational circulation of performance traditions. Ultimately, this paper argues that trans-Asian mobility functioned not merely as industrial collaboration but as a generative force in imagining the planet anew within the battlespace of Cold War East Asia.

Friday 3 July, 14:40 – 16:10, Seminar Room 028

Characterhood as Literary Mediation: VTubers and the Future of Trans-Asian Literary Studies

Wei-Chih Wang (National Tsing Hua University)

This paper proposes characterhood as a conceptual bridge between contemporary VTuber performance and the transforming frontiers of Asian humanities. Amidst the existential challenges facing traditional text-centered scholarship, VTubers offer a vital site for rethinking literary mediation. Drawing on East Asian theoretical frameworks, specifically Azuma Hiroki’s database theory and Itō Gō’s character aesthetics, the paper argues that VTubers function not merely as digital entertainers but as complex sites of cultural translation. Unlike the static objects of traditional literary critique, VTubers enact a transductive poetics where voice, embodiment, and narrativity circulate fluidly across linguistic and technological registers. Situated within Taiwan’s genealogy as an intermediary in East Asian exchange, these practices reveal how characterhood operates beyond fixed textual forms. The Taiwanese VTuber ecology encompasses both local independent talents and engagements with Japanese agencies, exemplifying an Inter-Asian mode of production where translation and readerly co-construction unfold in real time. These figures illuminate how literary questions of voice, fictionality, and reception are mutating within platform-mediated environments. By foregrounding VTubers as arenas of trans-Asian cultural translation, this paper reframes literary study not as the preservation of textual tradition but as the analysis of how meaning migrates across media. This approach positions the VTuber not only as a case study in Taiwan’s digital culture but as a methodological key for theorizing the future of the Asian humanities, demonstrating how the field might adapt to the algorithmic and affective flows of the 21st century.

Friday 3 July, 10:20 – 11:50, Seminar Room 444

Mathematical World Construed in the Nine Chapters on the Mathematical Art

Yingyu Wang (Shanghai Maritime University)

Ancient Chinese mathematics possessed a unique discourse system, distinct from both contemporary Western mathematics and modern mathematics. Guided by the philosophy of structuralist mathematics, this paper employs Systemic Functional Linguistics theory as an analytical tool to explore the discursive means by which the classic texts of Chinese mathematics to construct their mathematical world. The specific research question is as follows: What discursive forms were employed in classics to represent abstract mathematical objects such as numbers, structures, and spatial geometry, and to establish the relationships between them?

Saturday 4 July, 12:50 – 14:20, Seminar Room 107

Plants of Providence: Jesuit Natural Theology and the Translation of Chinese Flora

Sophie Ling-chia Wei (Chinese University of Hong Kong)

This paper examines how early Jesuit translations of Chinese flora were shaped by natural theology and theories of ancient revelation rather than neutral scientific description. Renaissance natural history often treated botany as a path to contemplating God's providence: Leonhart Fuchs's *Historia stirpium* presented plant study as a means to grasp divine wisdom in creation, integrating morphology and medicinal uses within an explicitly Christian understanding of nature. Ignatian spirituality likewise urged contemplation of how God "dwells" and "labors" in creatures, turning the observation of plants and animals into a spiritual exercise within Jesuit practice. Against this background, the paper revisits Michał Boym's *Flora Sinensis* (Vienna, 1656), one of the first European natural histories of China, and Athanasius Kircher's *China Illustrata* (1667), which integrated Boym's materials into a broader vision linking Chinese flora, language, and religion. Kircher not only reproduced Chinese plants but also proposed that certain classes of character radicals derived from natural forms—roots, wings, animals, and branches—reading script and nature together as signs of primordial theology. Tracing the reception of these works among later Jesuit Figurists, especially in their readings of the *Shijing* and other classics, the paper argues that translations of Chinese flora became sites where natural theology, script theory, and missionary strategy converged. Drawing on printed works and Jesuit manuscripts in the Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana and the Bibliothèque nationale de France, it reconstructs a genealogy of Jesuit theological perspectives as they "grew" through sustained engagements with Chinese plants beyond their economic value.

Saturday 4 July, 10:20 – 11:50, Seminar Room 442

Rescaling Modernism in Sinophone Cold War Asia: The Case of Chao Foon

Nicholas Y. H. Wong (Hong Kong University)

What does the GIS mapping of literary networks from a Chinese-language journal from Cold War Malaya (and later Malaysia) tell us about the arc of Third World humanism, modernism, and decolonization? Using geospatial information about authors, translators, and publishers, as well as locations mentioned in texts from Chao Foon (Jiao Feng) from 1955 through 1989, I develop data visualization as a method to rethink the spatial boundaries, direction, and network of modernist texts and ideas across Southeast Asia and mainland China/Taiwan/Hong Kong. The use of relationships and location as data, which selects one path and forecloses another, is "deformative and ergodic" (Miguel Escobar Varela, 2021) but could facilitate re-interpretation of existing narratives about Cold War modernism in Asia. For example, Yip Wai Lim's translation of T. S. Eliot's *The Waste Land* in Chao Foon will be identified as Taiwanese, based on when and where he had translated it, notwithstanding Yip's possible identities as a Hong Kong poet or U.S. academic. Such a geo-tag stands out and can be used to model new, unacknowledged spatial relationships, and connect to broader literary concerns during the era. I will show how students might use the GIS website as a resource to craft further research questions about Cold War modernism and the circulation of literary and cultural ideas across mainland China/Taiwan/Hong Kong and Southeast Asia.

Friday 3 July, 14:40 – 16:10, Seminar Room 020

Chronotopes of return: Envisioning về quê ('going home') among Vietnamese boat refugees in the diaspora

Angela Wong (The University of Sydney)

My paper uses Bakhtin's chronotope to examine 'homeland return' amongst surviving boat refugees in Sydney's Vietnamese diaspora. It sees return to be a spatiotemporal formation that binds memories of escape, moral obligations forged through migration and encounters with a transformed post-socialist Vietnam. Drawing on oral histories, photovoice elicitation and ethnographic accounts of return, I argue that return activates layered temporalities in which past trauma, present attachments and imagined futures coexist and contend. Shaped by productive nostalgia—a mode of longing that mobilises memory toward ethical action rather than homeland restoration—return takes form through material and embodied affective practices. These can include gift exchange, ritual repayment, visits to sacred sites and touristic movement. Such return practices mediate diaspora-homeland relations by giving form to ambivalence, gratitude, responsibility and fear, positioning return not simply as movement across space but as an ethical and affective negotiation with history, obligation and belonging. This paper contributes to understandings of diaspora-homeland relations in ways that highlight unique insights offered by humanities-based approaches in Asian migratory contexts. First, it rethinks return as a chronotopic process rather than discrete event. Second, it positions productive nostalgia as a moral technology that orients diasporic subjects through care, repayment and ethical restraint rather than nationalist recovery. Third, it demonstrates how both physical return and its absence generate distinct yet related chronotopes, revealing how homeland relations persist through affective and mediated practices, even sans-bodily movement. These insights reconceptualise return as an ongoing and ethical negotiation that reworks homeland, belonging and responsibility post-displacement.

Friday 3 July, 14:40 – 16:10, Seminar Room 105

The Mutual Constitution of Body (身 shen) and Heart-Mind (心 xin) in the Zhouyi

Baolin Wu (Minzu University of China)

In the Zhouyi (I Ching), the concepts of "shen" (body) and "xin" (heart-mind) are characterized by functional and process-oriented dimensions, both constituting essential aspects of the human self. A dynamic and reciprocal relationship obtains between body and mind. The "xin," understood as individual self-awareness, encompasses reflective capacities pertaining to cognition and emotion, as well as the role of moral judgment and moral volition in guiding action. In contrast, the "shen" comprises sensory experience, bodily afflictions, and socially embedded actions, among which ritual sacrifice occupies a particularly salient position. Through an interpretive analysis of selected Hexagrams—including Xian (咸 Wooing), Gen (艮 Limitedness), Jing (井 Well), Kan (坎 Danger), Xu (需 Waiting), Yi (益 Benefit), and Heng (恒 Perseverance)—the correspondence between the hexagrams, the hexagram statements and the line statements, it becomes evident that the body and heart-mind function as mutually constitutive. Each serves simultaneously as condition and consequence of the other. The normative ideals guiding the mind include justice (貞 Zhen), tranquility (安 An, 億 Yi), sincerity (敦 Dun), and integrity (孚 Fu)—principles that regulate both the individual's relation to heaven, ghosts, and spirits, and interpersonal ethical relations. Moral practice, therefore, can only be achieved through the harmonious integration of mental awareness, sensory perception, and purposive action.

Friday 3 July, 14:40 – 16:10, Seminar Room 100

A story of Bian, a Tibetan cross-border trader

Bow Wu (The University of Sydney)

Us two design researchers and Chinese and Indian citizens undertook our wedding without each other, as an art performance at the Indo-China border, during the Doklam military standoff in 2017. Now in 2026 in Sydney, using the lens of our experience, we reflect on the meaning of 'Asian humanities' by revisiting a particular recorded memory and interaction from that performative project at the Indo-China border. We share the story of meeting Bian, a Tibetan Indo-Chinese cross-border trader, from Rikaze. A day before the date of the wedding, Bian was confided with our background and story; of how we had received permission to plan a wedding on the Indo-China border, then how just a few days before the wedding, were unable to meet as bride and groom because of the sudden confrontation and build-up between Indian and Chinese military, and subsequently how the Chinese citizen was not being permitted to even go close to the Indian border. After hearing this, Bian, as a border trader, who could still move back and forth between the Indian-Chinese sides, agreed to carry the wedding ring from the Chinese side and delivery it to the groom on the Indian side. We discuss this episode, of how Bian embodied the grace and compassion of the humanist, and what the humanities across India, China and beyond can learn from this Indo Chinese Tibetan trader.

Saturday 4 July, 10:20 – 11:50, Lecture Theatre 024

Playing Alternative Histories: A Critical Analysis of the Three Kingdoms Games

Chia-rong Wu (University of Canterbury)

This paper investigates the phenomenon of playing alternative historical stories through interactive digital media, with a focus on the evolving discourse of video gaming around China's Three Kingdoms period. Through what-if scenarios in video gaming, players can creatively reimagine pivotal moments and cultural narratives of bygone eras. These digital experiences extend beyond entertainment and offer fresh insights into contemporary understandings of history, identity, and collective memory, while simultaneously defying canonical historical accounts and introducing alternative epistemologies. Central to this study is the role of Three Kingdoms-themed video games developed in Taiwan, which have emerged as significant and ambitious responses to broader Sinophone and global gaming trends. These Taiwanese titles are distinct in their treatment of historical materials and innovative in their gameplay mechanics, embodying both homage to classical literature and a localized reconceptualization of China's historical past. Structured into three sections, the paper first outlines the transcultural legacy of the Romance of the Three Kingdoms, followed by a theoretical discussion on ludonarrative historiography and historical simulation. It then closely analyzes Taiwanese games, such as *The Rising Dynasty* and *Heroes of the Three Kingdoms*, and explores how they not only reinterpret history through play but also engage in the negotiation of postcolonial identity and digital cultural memory. This paper argues that these Three Kingdoms games function as essential cultural artifacts that reflect Taiwan's unique position within the Sinosphere and its active participation in the global landscape of video gaming.

Friday 3 July, 10:20 – 11:50, Seminar Room 102

Mercenaries, Pirates, and Merchants: The Malay "Maritime Zomia" in Southern Vietnam (1700–1840)

Xia Boyu (Xiamen University)

At the end of the so-called "Age of Commerce" (1450–1680) and amid the Vietnamese southward expansion, references to Malay actors in what is now southern Vietnam suddenly increase. At first these Malays intervened in Vietnamese internecine warfare and expansionary campaigns as mercenaries; the Vietnamese applied to them the archaic epithet "Java 閩婆." With Siam's conquests in the Malay world, ever greater numbers of Malays were forced to abandon their homelands. These displaced groups began to coalesce into communities in southern Vietnam; former mercenaries and traders transformed in many cases into pirate bands that attacked the Vietnamese coast, thereby becoming a problem that Vietnamese authorities could no longer ignore. The dispersed settlement of Malays in southern Vietnam both opposed terrestrial regimes and, to varying degrees, entered into cooperative arrangements with them, producing a distinctive "maritime Zomia" phenomenon. The emergence of this phenomenon depended not only on Malay choices and strategies but also on the wide political and geographic vacuums that characterized southern Vietnam at the time. As Vietnamese state power gradually penetrated and consolidated these spaces, the Malay "maritime Zomia" in southern Vietnam ultimately disappeared.

Friday 3 July, 12:50 – 14:20, Seminar Room 028

Translators as Gatekeepers: A Case Study of AI-Assisted Chinese Opera Script Translation

Shuang Xiao (The Chinese University of Hong Kong)

On August 22–23, 2025, Hong Kong's Chinese Culture Festival staged "Classics Revisited – Highlights of Peking Opera and Kunqu", presenting six plays. I was responsible for translating the surtitles of four of these plays, while the remaining two were translated by the renowned Sinologist-translator John Minford. With the organizer's permission, I employed AI tools—primarily ChatGPT and DeepSeek—during the translation process. Throughout this collaboration, Minford did not use any AI tools; as a recognized authority in translation, he reviewed and revised the final drafts, affirming the quality of the translations I had produced. Drawing on this experience, this paper reflects on the use of AI in translating Chinese opera scripts by closely comparing AI-generated versions, my editorial interventions, and Minford's final revisions. It also examines effective strategies for productive dialogue with AI, with the broader aim of bridging Translator Studies and AI-assisted translation research. AI-assisted translation places increased demands on the translator's editorial judgment, aesthetic sensibility, and writing ability, as the human translator must ultimately act as the final gatekeeper. In interactions with AI, the formulation of appropriate prompts is crucial, as translation inherently involves making choices—decisions that depend on the translator's evaluative and interpretive skills. One method for cultivating such skills is the study of exemplary translations and the approaches of accomplished translators. This study contends that insights from Translator Studies can substantially inform AI-assisted translation, highlighting a promising cross-disciplinary domain for further exploration.

Friday 3 July, 10:20 – 11:50, Seminar Room 102

Strategic Curiosity: Late Qing China Intelligence Gathering and Diplomatic Engagement with New Zealand

Guosheng Xie (Victoria University of Wellington)

While historiography of Asian history tends to describe late Qing China as a largely reactive actor in the face of Western imperial expansion, how it understood and engaged with the South Pacific remains underexamined. This study challenges existing scholarship that portrays China as politically inert by highlighting the Qing authorities' efforts to gather information and interact with New Zealand. Drawing upon Chinese official records, overseas Chinese petitions, as well as sources from New Zealand, Australia, and Britain, this study traces how Beijing built its geopolitical knowledge of New Zealand. The article examines two pivotal cases. The first is the 1906 visit of Chinese commissioner Hwang Hou Cheng, which reveals an attempt to obtain first-hand information through direct observation. The second is the inspection report submitted in 1909 by Hwang Yung-liang, the first Chinese consul, which provides an assessment of the colony's political, legal, and commercial environment. By situating late Qing official activities in New Zealand within broader debates on polity, warfare, and society, this study argues that these engagements were not incidental but formed part of a sustained pattern of strategic curiosity and imperial statecraft. These diplomatic practices in the South Pacific thus reveal that the Qing state was not merely a victim but an active participant in defining its interests within the global colonial order. They also provide a case for reconsidering multiple dynamics in Asian history.

Friday 3 July, 14:40 – 16:10, Seminar Room 442

Gunpowder, Faith, and Confucianism: Ming–Portuguese Military Collaboration in Seventeenth-Century China

Jingzhen Xie (University of Macau)

This study delves into the intricate dynamics surrounding the deployment of European firearms during the late Ming dynasty's concerted efforts to resist the ascendancy of the Manchu-led Qing dynasty. It examines how unforeseen events reshaped the collaborative relationships between Ming scholar-officials and the Portuguese enclave of Macao. Beginning with an analysis of the severe political instability and the multifaceted battlefield challenges faced by the Ming court in the early seventeenth century, the study provides a contextual backdrop that underscores the difficult situation of the Ming military. The discussion progresses to explore the significant impact of mutinies and defections within the Ming forces, which precipitated a need for external support. In this context, it highlights the tactical assistance rendered by Portuguese military units, showcasing a moment of strategic engagement that brought together Chinese officials and European actors for mutual benefit, albeit characterized by underlying tensions. This alliance was not without its complexities, as certain elite factions within the Ming bureaucracy linked Portuguese Macao to broader concerns about the spread of Christianity and its implications for Confucian values. Ultimately, the article posits that despite the Ming dynasty's keen interest in adopting foreign military technology, both the Ming and Qing regimes remained firmly anchored in a Confucian worldview. This ideological framework is epitomized in the nuanced responses of Chinese Christian scholar-officials, who thoughtfully navigated the interplay between technical innovation and moral doctrine, reflecting an ambivalence toward the integration of foreign influences within their traditional cultural milieu.

Friday 3 July, 14:40 – 16:10, Seminar Room 442

On the Evolution and Causes of Nanping's 'Two Swords Becoming a Dragon' Folk Legend

Xiangkang Xie (Nanjing University)

The folk legend of 'Two Swords Becoming a Dragon' in Yanping District, Nanping City, originated with the compilation of the Book of Jin during the Tang dynasty and took shape in local gazetteers written during the Ming and Qing dynasties, undergoing multiple transformations over several centuries. This legend and its historical evolution reflect not only shifts in ancient perceptions of the 'snake-dragon' relationship and environmental changes in the Yanping region, but also political and cultural interactions between the central government and the 'barbarian lands of the Eight Fujian Provinces.' While becoming part of Yanping's collective memory, the 'Two Swords Becoming Dragons' folk legend also served as a significant catalyst for the Eight Fujian Provinces' integration into the cultural system of the Central Plains.

Friday 3 July, 10:20 – 11:50, Seminar Room 028

Temple, Smoke, and Shifting Signs: A Generational Geosemiotic Study of Identity-Making in the Chaoshan Mazu Temple

Mingxun Xu (Beijing Normal Hong Kong Baptist University)

The research examines how the the Chaoshan Mazu Temple in Shengqian Village, Swatow, constructs semiotic meanings and reproduce the ongoing Chaoshan collective identity across generations. Beyond serving as an embodied sacred site for everyday devotional practices such as daily incense offering and the annual talisman preparation, the Chaoshan Mazu Temple renarrates its spatial significance from generational perspectives. Drawing on Martin Radermacher's notion of religious emplacement, Elliot Gaines' semiotics of space, as well as Ron and Suzie Wong Scollon's geosemiotic framework, this research conceptualizes the Temple as a spatial assemblage of signs and materials like bodily experiences and architectural arrangements that are continually producing cultural meanings. For the elders worshipers, the Temple remains a daily ritual site, where the incense smoke, the routinized bodily rhythms, and the temple's vicinity to the original hamlet bridge past and present, reinforcing sense of belonging and collective identity. Conversely, younger generations increasingly engage with the Temple through mediated forms, circulating its imagery as a cultural landmark on social media and broader heritage discourse.. Methodologically, this research employs geosemiotic mapping, sensory ethnography, and intergenerational interviews to analyze how semiotic landscapes like incense practices, architectural layouts are interpreted and inhabited by different age groups. By situating ritual materialities as both semiotics and affective agents, this research investigates how generational shifts reshape the Temple's spatial meanings from an embodied sacred site to a mediated cultural symbol of Chaoshan identity. It asks: 1) How the Temple's architectural space extends semiotic functions across generations; 2) how these material signs reinforce or reconfigure contemporary understandings of Chaoshan identity.

Saturday 4 July, 12:50 – 14:20, Seminar Room 022

From Jiaoqi to Zhishi LV: Moral Language and Feminist Belonging in Contemporary China

Zhenqi Xu (Monash University)

This paper examines feminist “cancel culture” in contemporary China through the moral language that structures belonging and exclusion in platformed publics. It focuses on the controversy surrounding feminist influencer Quan Xixi after her interview with Japanese feminist scholar Chizuko Ueno, in which Quan was denounced as jiaoqi (“pampered wife”) and kaichu nüji (“expelled from womanhood”). Rather than asking whether such cancellation is justified, the paper investigates how feminist legitimacy itself is produced, withdrawn, and renegotiated through culturally specific vocabularies of judgement. Drawing on discourse, stance, and affective analysis of a 28-minute response video released by Quan and her collaborators, the paper traces three interrelated dynamics. First, it shows how irony, self-mockery, and strategic self-deprecation enable a form of “re-entry from the margins,” allowing a cancelled subject to reclaim partial discursive authority. Second, it demonstrates how Quan relocates feminist legitimacy from abstract mastery of feminist “isms” to embodied life decisions around marriage, work, and reproduction, reframing authenticity as practice rather than doctrinal purity. Third, it analyses counter-cancel discourse that mobilises vernacular figures such as xiejiao (“evil cult”) and zhishi LV (“intellectual Louis Vuitton”) to project accusations of dogmatism, elitism, and knowledge-as-status back onto critics. I argue that these moral vocabularies function as cultural and ethical technologies within China's digital feminist publics, revealing how platformisation reshapes debates over authority, knowledge, and feminist belonging in contemporary Asian contexts.

Friday 3 July, 10:20 – 11:50, Seminar Room 107

Fermenting Heritage: Sour Soup, Microbes, and the Making of Ethnic Tradition in Southwest China

Jieling Yang (Victoria University of Wellington)

This paper explores the cultural and political life of sour soup (suantang), a fermented broth central to the cuisines and identities of Miao, Dong, and Buyi communities in Guizhou, Southwest China. Traditionally prepared from rice, wild tomatoes, shrimp, or leftover meat, sour soup has recently been reimagined as an icon of “intangible cultural heritage” through tourism, entrepreneurship, and rural revitalization campaigns. By following its movement from village kitchens to urban restaurants and state heritage programs, the paper examines how fermentation becomes a site where taste, governance, and modernity are continuously negotiated. Drawing on multi-sited ethnographic research conducted in Shanghai, Guiyang, and rural Guizhou, the study approaches fermentation not only as a biochemical transformation but as a way of thinking, sensing, and relating across species. The paper situates the making of sourness within broader transformations in Chinese cultural politics, showing how microbial processes and sensory experiences participate in the production of heritage and ethnicity. By bringing Chinese ethnographic realities into dialogue with global debates on materiality, sensory experience, and more-than-human relations, this paper argues that fermentation provides a fertile ground for rethinking what tradition means in an age of ecological uncertainty and cultural reinvention.

Friday 3 July, 10:20 – 11:50, Seminar Room 020

Looking North from the Global South: Engaging with North Korea on RedNote

Xiaofei Yang (RMIT University), Shiyang Zhu (RMIT University)

This paper investigates the rise of Chinese student influencers studying in the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK), or North Korea who document everyday life on Xiaohongshu (RedNote), a lifestyle-oriented Chinese social media platform, drawing engagement from both Chinese and international audiences. Using online ethnography and a (post)socialist affective methodology to examine the posts and comment sections of five student influencers, the study explores how DPRK is framed and received on RedNote. While invoking nostalgic representations of the nation as temporally behind and physically isolated, the influencers' everyday content fosters empathy and layered cross-cultural connections. The paper theorises this through inter-Asian orientalism and inter-Asian referencing, where DPRK is "othered" via Chinese developmentalist logics, yet also becomes a site for producing knowledge about Asia, through Asia. In doing so, this article adds nuances to the framework of inter-Asian orientalism by examining how othering occurs without colonial entanglements. Meanwhile, it exemplifies emerging forms of inter-Asian referencing that challenge dominant Western epistemic frameworks and reimagine Asia as a site of knowledge production.

Friday 3 July, 14:40 – 16:10, Seminar Room 102

Merdeka's "new-style" Malay films: Rethinking the transitional period in Malay film history

Yeo Min Hui (Singapore University of Social Sciences)

In 1974, the Malaysia-based Merdeka Studio, owned by the illustrious Shaw Brothers, announced plans to make seven films that would inaugurate "a new age (satu zaman baru)" for Malay cinema. Unbeknownst to the public is the fact that these films, said to bring about a rejuvenating brand-new style of Malay filmmaking, would be adapted from old Mandarin box-office hits produced by the Shaw Brothers' studio in Hong Kong—the Shaw Brothers (Hong Kong) Company. Directors and technical crew would also be transferred from Hong Kong to Malaysia to help with the shoot. This little-discussed episode reveals a much more complex transborder recalibration of power and resources during a critical time of transition in Malay film history, unsettling the dominant narrative that the Shaws simply became irrelevant by continuing to make old-fashioned Malay films through the Merdeka Studio, and that Malay cinema simply turned inwards unto itself during the 1970s under the promptings of ethnonationalism

Saturday 4 July, 12:50 – 14:20, Seminar Room 102

Pride and Prejudice: King Vajiravudh's Literary Appropriations as Siam's First World War Propaganda

Faris Yothasamuth (Kasetsart University)

This paper examines literary and dramatic translations of King Vajiravudh (Rama VI) in Siam during and after the First World War. First, it analyzes the translation of Arthur Moreland's satirical work, *The History of the Hun*, into Thai as *Tamnan Chat Hun*. The study demonstrates how King Vajiravudh adopted British anti-German propaganda to cultivate prejudice against Germany among the Siamese public. This translation, along with his other writings, served as an instrument in legitimising Siam's decision to join the war on the Allies side. Second, the paper investigates the adaptations of two British plays: Reginald Berkeley's *French Leave*, adapted as *Phit Winai*, and Robert Marshall's *Second in Command*, adapted as *Than Rong*. These theatrical works foreground the contributions of Siamese expeditionary forces in Europe during the Great War and helped foster a sense of national pride in the aftermath of the conflict. This research illustrates the King strategically appropriated British texts to construct political discourses—defined here as "prejudice" directed at Germany and "pride" associated with Siamese military achievements—to support the state's foreign and domestic policies.

Saturday 4 July, 12:50 – 14:20, Seminar Room 102

Translation–Brief–Informed Prompting for Reader–Oriented ChatGPT Health Translation

Xing You (University of Sydney)

Access to reliable health information is not only a matter of linguistic accuracy, but also of readability, cultural accessibility, and emotional support. For Chinese-speaking readers seeking online information about bipolar disorder, baseline ChatGPT translations may be semantically acceptable but still less suitable for reader-oriented health communication. Recurrent issues include transliteration, unidiomatic collocation, over-explication, semantic shift, and a lack of empathetic tone. This study examines whether embedding a translation brief into prompts can simulate human translators' decision-making, to what extent it mitigates the translation issues observed in baseline outputs, and which issues remain unresolved. It then investigates how a human translator would address those stubborn problems about what strategies and adjustments would be proposed. The ultimate goal is to explore a balanced human-AI collaboration. Baseline ChatGPT alone cannot fully meet the needs of reader-oriented health translation, but by incorporating human translator expertise into prompt design, some issues can be effectively reduced. Nevertheless, certain errors may persist despite optimal prompting. This invites further inquiry into the unique value of human translators and their current role within the translation workflow in health communication contexts.

Friday 3 July, 12:50 – 14:20, Seminar Room 102

Chinese Landscape and National Image: The 1935–36 Royal Academy Exhibition

Kaiyue Yu (Zhejiang University)

The International Exhibition of Chinese Art in London in 1935 was the first large-scale foreign art display mainly featuring the cultural relics of the Forbidden City. It aimed to shape the positive international cognition and gain cultural recognition through the export exhibition of cultural relics. From the selection and core metaphors of landscape paintings in the exhibition, this paper explores how their selection, display and dissemination participate in the construction of cultural images. By further exploring the collision of curatorial concepts, selection criteria and display strategies between China and the UK, it reveals the concept of landscape painting from an international perspective and its carrier nature in cultural politics and national spirit, as well as how landscape painting transforms the image of "picturesque" landscapes into the national image of China from a cross-media perspective.

Saturday 4 July, 10:20 – 11:50, Seminar Room 444

How to Promote the Modern Transformation of Confucian Classic Interpretation: A Discussion Centered on Ma Yifu

Wenbo Yu (Beijing University of Chemical Technology)

Confucianism is not only central to Chinese civilization but also an integral part of Asian culture. Its core teachings are primarily conveyed through the classical system represented by the Six Arts. However, Confucian classics once faced skepticism, with claims that they "no longer hold value in modern society". In response to such doubts, the modern Chinese thinker Ma Yifu adopted a moral interpretive approach to the classics. Through his "Theory of the Six Arts", which posits that "the Six Arts encompass all branches of learning", he constructed a modern interpretive system that highlights the moral dimensions of Confucian texts. The teachings of Confucius in the Analects, the supreme virtues and essential principles in the Classic of Filial Piety, the benevolence in the Book of Poetry, the righteousness in the Book of Rites, the sovereign standards in the Book of Documents, and the unchanging principles in the Book of Changes—all these embody the timeless moral significance of Confucian classics and demonstrate their enduring value. In the contemporary world, Ma Yifu's thought offers three key insights: firstly, it calls for the awakening of subjectivity, encouraging confidence in one's cultural heritage and a conscious effort to uncover its modern relevance; secondly, it emphasizes morality, as the value rationality and ethical meanings highlighted by the Six Arts point toward a truly human and dignified moral life; and thirdly, it underscores the importance of classical foundations, urging that the roots of civilization be anchored in millennia-old traditions.

Saturday 4 July, 10:20 – 11:50, Seminar Room 100

How would you tell our story? The Robe Landing Narrative and the Making of Modern Chinese Australian Identity

Yangbeiyao Yu (Australian National University)

This thesis explores how the Chinese community in Australia has proactively reshaped the collective memory of Robe Landing. In this 19th-century event, Chinese gold miners walked overland from Robe in South Australia to the Victorian goldfields to bypass a racist head tax. This thesis explores how Robe Landing is remembered, retold and reproduced in the narratives of contemporary Chinese community in Australia. Given the scarcity and mythological nature of historical materials on this event, the core of this study is not to conduct historical research, but to view it as a key case of cultural memory, analysing its narrative evolution and social functions for the Chinese community, as well as the Australian public. This thesis draws on the theoretical framework of cultural memory, combined with critical discourse analysis and anthropological fieldwork, to examine how Robe Landing is remembered, constructed and represented as a cultural memory across museums, medias, literature, and the oral histories of community members. It identifies several narrative patterns surrounding Robe Landing, including its articulation as the origin myth, a testament to contribution and a lesson for multiculturalism. The central argument in this thesis is that the retelling the Robe Landing story constitutes a key mechanism through which Chinese Australians build community connections and engage in an important cultural-political practice. Through this discourse practice, Chinese Australians transform historical memory into cultural capital, challenging historical marginalisation, constructing a modern diaspora identity, and negotiating their position in the national historical narrative.

Friday 3 July, 14:40 – 16:10, Seminar Room 105

The Crisis of Survival Order and Aesthetic Enlightenment in Modern China

Yan Yu (Renmin University of China)

This paper explores the emergence of aesthetic enlightenment as an intellectual response to the crisis of survival order in late Qing and early modern China. Amid rapid population growth, economic strain, and the disintegration of traditional social structures, Chinese intellectuals confronted a “vagrant” society lacking ethical cohesion and collective orientation. Taking Zhang Taiyan as a central case, the paper examines how aesthetic and cultural practices were mobilised to address this crisis beyond institutional or economic reform. Through an analysis of Qiu Shu and Zhang’s engagement with secret societies, popular rituals, fiction, and folk performance, the paper argues that aesthetic enlightenment functioned as a mode of affective mediation. Rather than rejecting popular beliefs as superstition, Zhang and his contemporaries strategically reactivated traditional cultural resources to regulate emotions, cultivate revolutionary ethics, and reconstruct social solidarity under conditions of survival anxiety. Situating these practices within a comparative perspective of modernity, the paper suggests that aesthetic enlightenment in modern China represents a non-European response to social fragmentation. Aesthetics thus emerges not merely as an artistic or pedagogical concern, but as a critical site where political philosophy, ethics, and the reconfiguration of Asian humanities intersect.

Saturday 4 July, 14:40 – 16:10, Seminar Room 020

Integrating Confucianism into the ‘Digital Court’ Reform in China: Some Initial Observations

Fang Yuan (The University of Newcastle), Bin Li (The University of Newcastle)

In the global wave of digitalisation, China’s ‘Digital Court’ reform, leveraging multifunctional AI-assisted platforms to transform a comprehensive judicial system, has positioned China at the forefront of digital justice in the world. Current research on this reform primarily focuses on its technological characteristics, institutional design, judicial and societal implications, and the achievement of Central Government’s goals, while the philosophical aspects behind this reform remain to be explored, particularly the integration of Confucianism to better support the reform. This article conducts a philosophical exploration of this reform, aiming to understand the potential crucial role of the Confucian culture in the judicial sectors, and its specific impact on multiple stakeholders (including judges, disputing parties, AI providers), relevant to the different types of AI-assisted platforms. By exploring the interplay between ‘Digital Court’ and Confucianism, this article argues that the Confucian culture, such as Harmony without Uniformity, Subduing One’s Self, can be integrated into the process of judicial reform through a ‘Soft Policy’, serving as a complementary measure for the building of the ‘Digital Court’ system. This ‘soft policy’ approach could not only expand the function of AI technology in courts and help stakeholders adapt to the AI era, but also help address the concerns of conflicting interests among stakeholders in judicial informatisation. This holistic approach to the Confucian culture in the context of the Digital Court Reform could help fill the blind spots in the reform, as well as providing a theoretical framework for the cultural awareness and responsiveness in the modern reform.

Friday 3 July, 12:50 – 14:20, Seminar Room 102

Reimagining the Wall: Mural Art and Projection Mapping in Australia and Japan

Zilia Zara-Papp (University of New South Wales)

This comparative study examines the evolving role of mural art and projection mapping in Australia and Japan, focusing on how “the wall”—traditionally seen as a symbol of division—has been reimagined as a powerful medium for visual storytelling and public engagement. Tracing the arc from ancient cave paintings to contemporary digital displays, the paper explores how walls have long served as platforms for cultural expression. In Western traditions, public murals emerged as tools for community engagement, education, and even political messaging. In contrast, Japan’s architectural reliance on wood and cultural emphasis on impermanence limited the historical use of exterior walls for art. Instead, Japan developed portable visual formats such as folding screens and utsushi-e (magic lantern shows), which anticipated today’s ephemeral projection practices. In modern Australia, a vibrant street art culture—rooted in both Indigenous artistic traditions and Western muralism—uses urban walls as canvases for bold, socially engaged art. Japan, by contrast, favors non-invasive projection mapping on historic architecture and natural landscapes, reflecting a continued respect for transience and preservation. Both countries now integrate augmented reality and immersive technologies to create multisensory experiences that bridge the physical and digital realms. Ultimately, this study reveals how walls, rather than dividing, can serve as unifying platforms for artistic innovation and cultural dialogue. Through mural art and projection mapping, Australia and Japan demonstrate distinct yet complementary approaches to transforming public space into a shared, interactive, and meaningful visual experience.

Saturday 4 July, 10:20 – 11:50, Lecture Theatre 024

Empathy and Cultural Adaptation in Translating Postpartum Depression

Boren Zhang (The University of Sydney)

Postpartum depression (PPD) is a prevalent yet under-recognised mental health challenge that affects the wellbeing of women, infants and families. Although one in seven women experience PPD within the first postpartum year, stigma discourages disclosure and leaves nearly half of cases undiagnosed. Focusing on English–Chinese translation, this study locates PPD discourse within Chinese-speaking cultural contexts where expectations of motherhood, forms of emotional expression and linguistic conventions shape how mental health is articulated. Building on these humanistic traditions, the research then considers how the digital turn transforms the circulation of psychological knowledge. YouTube, as a major platform for health communication, together with its automatic subtitle system, mediates PPD information across linguistic and cultural boundaries. Through qualitative analysis of ten selected videos, the study examines the limitations of auto-translated subtitles in conveying empathy, cultural meaning and appropriate formatting. Drawing on mental health language guidelines, it identifies four dimensions for empathy-driven translation: destigmatising phrasing, respectful wording, positive framing and sensitive handling of suicide and death discourses. It further analyses challenges involving terminology, cultural nuance, metaphors and polysemy, and develops refinement strategies. Looking to the future, the study offers a culturally responsive framework for subtitling. It emphasises empathy, linguistic sensitivity and awareness of social attitudes towards PPD in Chinese-speaking communities. By tracing movement from inherited cultural narratives to digitally mediated forms of knowledge, it shows how translation becomes a space where Asian humanities negotiate change and imagine more inclusive mental health communication.

Saturday 4 July, 12:50 – 14:20, Lecture Theatre 024

Male Influencers and the Politics of Empowerment on Chinese Short Video platform Douyin

Keting Zhang (University of Nottingham Ningbo China)

Since 2018, feminist discourse has gained increasing visibility in Chinese cyberspace, often accompanied by male resistance and the proliferation of misogynistic narratives. Against this backdrop, a notable phenomenon has emerged on Douyin, one of China’s most influential short-video platforms: male influencers who claim to teach heterosexual relationship skills and promote women’s “empowerment.” This article examines how these male influencers mobilize feminist discourse while simultaneously reproducing masculine authority within the intersecting genres of “female growth” and romantic-relationship advice. Drawing on Sarah Banet-Weiser’s (2018) concept of popular misogyny, the study interrogates the ideological tensions through which patriarchal logics are rearticulated under the veneer of feminist allyship, particularly through advice that positions male perspectives as authoritative knowledge for women seeking emotional and romantic success. Empirically, the study analyzes a corpus of 500 highly engaged videos produced by the top ten male relationship influencers on Douyin, alongside 10,000 highly ranked user comments. Using Multimodal Critical Discourse Analysis (MCDA), the article examines how verbal discourse, visual aesthetics, affective performance, and platform-specific conventions operate together to construct pseudo-feminist legitimacy. The findings show that influencers consistently adopt a professionalized and authoritative visual style, while advancing three dominant discursive themes: the commodification of romantic relationships, essentialized representations of self-interested male desire, and moralized narratives of women and “true love.” These discourses subtly recentralize male interpretive authority, objectify women as strategic subjects of romantic investment, and reframe gender inequality as a matter of individual competence rather than structural power.

Friday 3 July, 12:50 – 14:20, Seminar Room 022

Divorce Notices, Sexual Morality, and Gendered Power in Overseas Chinese Families, Southern Fujian, 1930s–40s

Lijun Zhang (Cornell University)

Since the mid-nineteenth century, large waves of Chinese male migration overseas from China's Southeastern coasts created a prevalent phenomenon of transnational families. Sustained by migrant men's remittances and left-behind wives' domestic labor, these households have often been idealized as pragmatic strategies for socioeconomic survival. This paper questions such portrayal by focusing on how left-behind family members—especially wives—responded to their household arrangements. Drawing on numerous public notices of marital and familial dissolution published in Quanzhou Ribao (泉州日报), a newspaper from Southern Fujian, it explores gendered power relations and fraught tensions within overseas Chinese families between the 1930s and 1940s. In particular, the paper centers the voices of left-behind wives who refused to silently accept their circumstances. By publicly announcing their divorces, women expressed their dissatisfaction with their husband's infidelity, financial neglect, and in-laws' mistreatment. In the meantime, these public acts of announcement also served to protect their reputation in response to the intense moral policing within local communities. As family members used newspapers to turn private disputes into public spectacles, these media spaces became sites where household authority and moral legitimacy were contested.

Saturday 4 July, 14:40 – 16:10, Seminar Room 442

Living Bridges, Enduring Houses: The Transnational Careers and Family Inheritance of Xu Zongshun and Lee Chu

Peng Zhang (Beijing Language and Culture University)

During the Qianlong period of the Qing Dynasty, Xu Zongshun was stationed in the border city of Fenghuang for a long time, overseeing interpretation affairs related to the Joseon Dynasty. Over three decades, he frequently accompanied Qing envoys, investigators, and consultants on trips to Joseon, participating in the interrogation of border violators and criminals, as well as the retrieval of drifters. Meanwhile, Lee Chu, a Korean interpreter of the Madarin language, was long engaged in affairs with the Qing and had frequent interactions with Xu Zongshun. Due to Xu Zongshun's proficiency in Korean, which facilitated border trade between the Qing and Joseon, Lee Chu and others requested the Qing court to allow Xu Zongshun to reside permanently in Fenghuang. As a result, both Xu and his family, as well as Li and his family on the Joseon side, maintained long-lasting influence over bilateral affairs between the Qing and Joseon. This paper utilizes Qing archives from the First Historical Archives of China and Korean historical records such as the Seungjeongwon Ilgi to outline key moments in the lives of Xu Zongshun and Lee Chu. Through case study analysis, it reveals that the stable development of Qing-Joseon relations by the 18th century was attributed not only to the changing attitudes and policies of the rulers on both sides but also to the long-term, steady efforts of grassroots interpreters like Xu Zongshun and Lee Chu. The latter, though often overlooked, in fact played a subtle yet profound role in this process.

Friday 3 July, 14:40 – 16:10, Seminar Room 442

Reimagining Republican History through Youth, Memory, and Cultural Re-Narration in The Nine's Theatre

Ting Zhang (University of Vienna)

This paper discusses the theatre group The Nine (Huaju Jiuren 话剧九人) as a cultural formation that reveals the transformation in the relations among history, memory, and youth subjectivity in post-socialist China. One of the most influential youth-driven theatre groups today, The Nine draws on Republican-era biographies, archival fragments, and forgotten intellectual histories not to reproduce an authorised historical narrative but to activate the past as an affective and imaginative resource for negotiating contemporary social realities. Through performance analysis, interviews, and public conversations, the paper argues that The Nine's work constitutes a distinctive mode of affective historical re-narration, in which cultural memory is reshaped through the emotional and ethical concerns that structure the lives of China's young generation. Their theatre works reconfigure the Republican past through women-centred and multi-vocal narrative strategies, foregrounding female agency and minoritarian experience while challenging androcentric and state-framed accounts of Chinese cultural history. At the same time, their use of historical distance allows sensitive critiques—such as anxieties around educational inequality, scientific labour, gender expectations, and intergenerational pressures—to be expressed through double-coded dramaturgical forms that remain legible to contemporary audiences yet navigable within China's cultural environment. By situating The Nine within broader conversations on East Asian cultural memory, youth affect, and post-socialist transformation, the paper demonstrates how young Chinese artists mobilise the past to articulate new cultural imaginaries and forms of social critique. The Nine thus offers a compelling case for understanding how contemporary theatre participates in the redefinition of history, gender, and cultural identity in twenty-first-century Asian humanities.

Saturday 4 July, 14:40 – 16:10, Seminar Room 022

Governing By Numbers: Educational Statistics and the Mass Education Movement in China (1923 – 1937)

Xian Zhang (Southern University of Science and Technology)

Between 1923 and 1937, the Mass Education Movement (MEM) spearheaded by Y.C. James Yen sought to confront China's overwhelming illiteracy through a novel fusion of grassroots activism, philanthropy, and state-building. More than a literacy campaign, the MEM pioneered a statistical regime that reframed illiteracy as a quantifiable public emergency and made numbers central to mobilization, policymaking, and evaluation. Village surveys, cost-per-new-literate calculations, and weekly progress charts not only galvanized resources from the Nationalist government and international philanthropies such as the Rockefeller Foundation, but also professionalized educational administration by standardizing forms, reporting intervals, and inter-regional comparisons. Li Jing-han's landmark Ting Hsien Social Survey (1933) exemplified this turn, providing an empirical baseline that linked local reform to national planning and influenced both contemporary and later survey practices. While the Japanese invasion curtailed the MEM's work, its statistical ethos endured and the People's Republic of China quietly inherited simplified primers, numeric benchmarks, and reporting mechanisms for its own literacy campaigns. By situating the MEM within Republican China's broader statistical modernity and global interwar survey movements, this article argues that the movement both empowered reform through quantification and exposed the limits of numbers in capturing the human realities of education.

Saturday 4 July, 10:20 – 11:50, Seminar Room 444

Translating Bite Back with Intersectional Feminist Ethics in a Highly Censored Mainland Chinese Context

Yi Zhang (Monash University)

This project investigates how feminist translation can intervene in mainstream Chinese discourses by translating Hannah Ferguson's Australian text *Bite Back* into Chinese. Bringing together transnational feminist translation and intersectionality, it develops an intersectional translation ethics that resists domestication and epistemic violence while remaining accessible to diverse Chinese readerships. Methodologically, the project uses Lazar's Feminist Critical Discourse Analysis as an analytic framework and complements this with a creative feminist translation practice that experiments with concrete strategies in translating *Bite Back* and is accompanied by reflexive examination of my own positionality. Analytically, it uses *Bite Back* as a site of experimentation to examine how women's discourses are narrated, and how these meanings can be rearticulated or muted in a highly censored Chinese context through lexical, syntactic, and paratextual choices. The project makes three main contributions. First, it proposes a Chinese-contextualized model of intersectional feminist translation ethics that takes intersectionality as a distinctive analytic lens. This model departs from conventional translation ethics and seeks a more productive balance between textual intervention and ethical responsibility in feminist translation practice. Second, by treating the Chinese translation of *Bite Back* as a situated example of transnational feminist translation in and from the Global South, it offers a mainland Chinese case that promotes two-way epistemic flows. Third, in the highly censored and ideologically sensitive context of China, it explores translation strategies that enable the circulation of feminist resistance and critiques, thereby providing strategic and methodological guidance for the further development of both Chinese feminism and feminist translation.

Friday 3 July, 10:20 – 11:50, Seminar Room 107

A Brief Analysis of the Oral History of the China-Burma-India Theater

Haokai Zhao (Chinese University of Hong Kong)

For a long time, the China-Burma-India theater (CBI) has been regarded by the academic community as a "forgotten theater". So far, there are still many gaps in related research. However, due to the significant deficiencies and limitations of the existing archival materials, it is still necessary to pay attention to collecting oral recollections of the soldiers who participated in the war. Especially, the historical events from the occupation of Burma and western Yunnan by Japan in 1942 to the eve of the strategic counteroffensive in 1944 are a major blind spot in the study of World War II, and the oral records of the participants can largely fill this gap. Through interviews with them, many details (such as the daily life of the military, the course of battles, military affairs arrangements, and personnel relations) can be well restored. On this basis, by combining paper-based materials including official archives, newspapers and periodicals, a more complete historical puzzle can be obtained, thereby expanding the multiple aspects of the research on the China-Burma-India theater. In addition, based on personal oral history research, what is presented will no longer be a bunch of cold numbers, but rather a series of vivid and rich life legends. By studying their life trajectories, researchers can also gain a completely new perspective to observe the turbulence and changes in China since the 20th century.

Saturday 4 July, 14:40 – 16:10, Seminar Room 107

“I’m not a feminist, but...” Hegemonic Femininities and Women’s Autonomy Revisited in Urban China

Xuyi Zhao (The Chinese University of Hong Kong)

In recent years, much academic attention has been drawn to a “feminist awakening” in China and its domestic backlashes, especially in relation to the broader reflections on feminism(s) in Asia. This paper draws on ethnographic field research to analyze how urban Chinese women understand feminism in their everyday lives, to what extent they are scrutinizing their personal experiences with what they understand as “feminist principles,” and how they reconcile conflicting expectations about womanhood. As my interlocutors’ experiences and narratives indicate, urban Chinese women with high educational attainments are less likely to identify with submissive female roles as daughters, wives, and mothers. However, their attitudes toward the new motto of women’s autonomy are at least equally ambivalent. Situating individual life experiences within a broader theoretical discussion on hegemonic femininities, this paper unpacks such ambivalence by illustrating how interlocutors approximate multiple frameworks of “ideal womanhood:” a waning socialist ideal viewing women as liberated producers, a traditional Confucian-familial ideology viewing women as dutiful reproducers, and a market-liberalizing discourse casting women as suitable consumers. Moreover, I suggest an emerging “sidestepping feminism” narrative deserves more serious scholarly attention as it may open up new possibilities for enriching and theorizing women’s studies in Asia.

Friday 3 July, 10:20 – 11:50, Seminar Room 022

Erotics of Remembering: Desire, Memory, and the Female Body in Vicissitudes of Life

Yushan Zhao (UNSW Sydney)

This article examines the “deviant love” in Yan Geling’s *Renhuan* (Vicissitudes of Life, 1998) as a key site where gendered trauma, historical violence, and female subjectivity converge. Centring on the protagonist’s quasi-incestuous erotic attachment to the revolutionary patriarch Ho Yiji, the essay argues that this “deviant love” is neither mere psychological aberration nor narrative sensationalism, but a deliberate feminist strategy through which Yan rewrites Cultural Revolution memory from the perspective of embodied female desire. This study demonstrates that this erotic fixation emerges from a historically specific psychosexual landscape shaped by the Cultural Revolution, including the collapse of familial authority, sacralisation of political masculinity, and systematic disruption of emotional development. In such a context, desire becomes the psychic language through which the protagonist negotiates her trauma, reattaches meaning to experiences of violation, and reconstructs a fractured self. By analysing how Yan eroticises memory, collapses victim/perpetrator binaries, and transforms taboo intimacy into a narrative force, this article proposes deviant love as a form of feminist trauma epistemology: a mode of remembering that exposes how history inscribes itself onto the female body as longing, shame, fantasy, and ambivalence. Situating Yan within the feminist literary turn of the 1990s, the article argues that Yan’s treatment of deviant love destabilises revolutionary masculinity and reclaims erotic memory as a legitimate form of historical testimony. In doing so, it contributes to rethinking Cultural Revolution fiction through the intimate temporality of female desire, where to remember is inseparable from the act of longing.

Saturday 4 July, 14:40 – 16:10, Seminar Room 440

Torrents in a Courtyard: Ba Jin’s Family, Spring and Autumn (1931–1940)

Yi Zheng (UNSW Sydney)

This study suggests that Ba Jin’s shifting narrative trajectory in *Torrents* (Ji liu 1931–1940) shows the uneasy development of the post-May Fourth full-length Chinese novel in navigating its commitment to narrate personal destiny in historical change. Ba Jin’s vacillation between a spatialized presentation of the historical decline of the traditional Chinese family, and a linear narrative of its young members’ path to new life, belies his conflicting historical and literary vision. *Torrents*’ parallel and sometimes clashing narrative schema also underscore the modern Chinese novel’s competing formal and generic ambitions, in particular the predominance of spatialized narrative structure and form over linear development in the formation of its twentieth-century tradition.

Saturday 4 July, 14:40 – 16:10, Seminar Room 440

East as Modernist Method: W. Somerset Maugham's Chinese and Indian Philosophies

Ray Zhou (The University of Sydney)

This paper examines the significance of Asian philosophies in W. Somerset Maugham's fiction within the scope of global modernism. Although Maugham travelled extensively and wrote prolifically about Asia, scholarship has often dismissed him as a 'popular' or 'colonial' British author. My PhD thesis proposes a threefold methodology of reading the East in literature, 'East as Other,' 'East as Reference,' and 'East as Method' (Zhou 2025). Under this framework, Maugham's imperial critique far exceeds the 'East as Other' pattern and demonstrates sustained philosophical engagement with Chinese and Indian thought, which I conceptualise as 'East as Modernist Method.' Particularly, this paper looks at three novels: Daoism in *The Painted Veil* (1925), Buddhism in *The Narrow Corner* (1932), and Advaita Vedanta in *The Razor's Edge* (1944). I argue that these works constitute Maugham's modernist endeavour to resist Western imperialist ideology and challenge the conventions of the English novel: Daoism undoes binaries and transcends linguistic limits; Buddhism exposes desire as the root of suffering and reveals the illusory nature of appearances; Advaita Vedanta offers a path to illumination and spiritual liberation through the pursuit of knowledge.

Saturday 4 July, 12:50 – 14:20, Seminar Room 444

Xiqu Reform and Market Stagnation in China (1980–2024)

Zijian Zhou (Shanghai Theatre Academy)

Since the 1980s, as traditional Chinese Xiqu has faced market decline, "innovation" (创新) has gradually become a key term in the discourse of government and industry practice. Discussions of Xiqu reform more often used terms such as "reform" or "transformation" ("变革" or "革新") before, which carried political and revolutionary (革命) meanings and served state ideology. If Xiqu reform before the 1980s was mainly led by the CCP to meet political needs, innovation after the 1980s can be understood as a form of Xiqu's self-adjustment in response to audience loss. Its main goal has been to attract younger audiences and improve box office performance. This article examines the relationship between Xiqu innovation practices and market data. It analyzes the development of Xiqu innovation under government policy. Using statistical data from the China Association of Performing Arts from 2014 to 2024, the study compares the number of performances, audience size, and box office income across spoken drama, concerts, dance, and Xiqu. The findings show that over the past decade, concerts, spoken drama, and dance have experienced steady growth, while the Xiqu market has remained stagnant or even declined. Innovation of contemporary Xiqu has not reversed the structural decline of the Xiqu industry. This study argues that contemporary Xiqu innovation should be seen as a response to policy and market pressure, relying heavily on institutional support rather than stable audience growth or sustainable market expansion.

Saturday 4 July, 14:40 – 16:10, Seminar Room 444

The Political Ecology and Family Networks on the East Coast of the Malay Peninsula in the 17th Century

Zhou Yancheng (The University of Melbourne)

The 17th century was a pivotal period in the transformation of political structures and cultures in the Malay world. After the fall of the Melaka Sultanate in the 16th century, Malay polities faced increasing external pressures, leading to more frequent diplomatic interactions and shifting alliances. Central to these dynamics was the intricate web of intermarriages among royal and noble families—what this paper terms "family networks." Viewed through the lens of these networks, key political actions of the time—war, alliance, neutrality, and coups—reveal deep connections to kinship ties. Previous studies have often interpreted these developments either through a Western-centric, realist framework focused on interests or through the abstract model of the mandala system. Both approaches overlook local cultural perspectives and the need for analysis that balances macro and micro scales. This study, therefore, adopts a locally grounded approach, focusing on the Patani on the east coast of the Malay Peninsula. Drawing on Malay manuscripts and Western sources, it reconstructs the family networks linking Johor, Pahang, and Patani, and explores their role in the 1633 Gulf of Siam War. This paper argues that these family networks were neither subordinate to the hierarchical mandala model nor reducible to Western international relations paradigms. Rather, they represent a localized mode of political engagement rooted in Malay concepts of sacred kingship, where intermarriage functioned not only as a political tool but also as a core mechanism for constructing internal and external legitimacy.

Friday 3 July, 12:50 – 14:20, Seminar Room 028



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