Image generated with DALL·E: Knowing the Past, Facing the Future. Retrieved January 17, 2025, from ChatGPT.

26th New Zealand Asian Studies Society International Conference

Comprehending the Past, Confronting the Future

Book of Abstracts

KEYNOTE 1

Just research? Research dilemmas in our changing region

Professor Sango Mahanty
Department of Resources, Environment and Development
Crawford School of Public Policy, Australian National University

Asia's colonial history and dramatic nature-society transformations raise crucial research challenges. Reckoning with extractive legacies calls for decolonial practices that take account of the region's diverse and changing societies. Alongside economic gains, rapid development has sparked contestation about social dislocation, resource governance, and toxic pollution – challenges that are intensified by Climate change. These come at a time when the humanities and social sciences are experiencing a crisis of support, including in Australia and New Zealand. How then can we position ourselves and our research in ways that nurture justice and hope? To explore this question I will share insights from two decades of political ecology research in the Mekong region, with the aim of catalysing discussion within and beyond the session.

KEYNOTE 2

The Northern Origins of South Korea

Professor Kyung Moon Hwang
Korea Foundation Professor
School of Culture, History & Language, Australian National University

Recently a major segment of South Korea's political leaders and populace has openly embraced right-wing authoritarianism. Among other things this stunning display underscores the disturbing durability of anti-communism, stemming from the ready animosity toward North Korea since the Korean War period. Most ironic, however, has been the role of ***northern*** Korea as the source of South Korea as a nation, state, and

nation-state. At all three levels, both North Korea and northern Korea have contributed substantially to South Korea's core character, particularly in religious and cultural identity. The origins of these influences date to the early 20th century and in some ways to even further back in Korean history.

KEYNOTE 3

India: The Global Strategic Chameleon
Associate Professor Chris Ogden
Global Studies, University of Auckland

India's international affairs are undergoing a significant reconfiguration. Driven by an evolution in its domestic identity under the Hindu nationalism of Narendra Modi, India is emerging as a highly influential and powerful Indo-Pacific great power. With the liberal international order in decline and the global system transitioning to a multipolar basis, India has never been more essential to the strategic calculations of the region and beyond. This centrality is underpinned by an ever-shifting and flexible foreign policy outlook that defines both New Delhi's ongoing pursuit of status but also her role as a global strategic chameleon. This keynote explores these dynamics and assesses the viability of India's ongoing great power ascent.

KEYNOTE 4

The Last Witnesses of Hiroshima and Nagasaki
Professor M.G. Sheftall,
Culture and Communication, Shizuoka University

Since 2016, Japan-based cultural historian M.G. Sheftall has been asking *hibakusha* — survivors of the atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki — to share with him their memories of the worst day of their lives. In the two volumes to arise from this research – *Hiroshima: The Last Witnesses* (Dutton, 2024) and *Nagasaki: The Last Witnesses* (Dutton, 2025) – Sheftall layers the stories of hibakusha in harrowing detail, to give a minute-by-minute account of the leadup, execution, and aftermath of the world-changing atomic bombing missions of 6 August and 9 August 1945.

These survivors and witnesses, who now have an average age over ninety years old, are quite literally the last people who can still provide us with reliable and detailed testimony about life in their cities before the bombings, tell us what they experienced on the day those cities were obliterated, and give us some appreciation of what it has entailed to live with those memories and scars during the subsequent seventy-plus years. The personal accounts they contain serve as cautionary tales about the horror and insanity of nuclear warfare, reminding us—it is hoped—that the world still lives with this danger at our doorstep. But the stories these *hibakusha* have shared with Sheftall – and through him, with all of us -- also stand as testaments to the incredible resilience of the human spirit in the face unfathomable horror, suffering, and destruction.

Session 1A

Text, Image, and Context: Buddhist Iconography in Tibet, Sri Lanka, and Indochina (PANEL) Elizabeth Guthrie, University of Otago

This panel examines Buddhist iconography in Tibet, Sri Lanka, and Cambodia. While representing distinct Buddhist traditions, these regions share common threads in how religious imagery is conceptualized, created, and utilized. The papers will explore how iconographic developments reflect broader cultural, political, and religious transformations within these societies. By bringing together research on these diverse Buddhist traditions, the panel aims to identify both unique regional developments and trans-regional patterns in Buddhist visual culture.

Visualizing Vaiśravaṇa in 14th century Tibet: Buton Rinchendrub's (1290-1364) theories of iconography and design

Yincheng Qian, University of Otago

This paper offers an analysis and translation of a short text from Buton Rinchendrub's (1290-1364) collection, titled Vaiśravaṇa's bri yig (design manual), which provides detailed descriptions of the iconographic features of Vaiśravaṇa and his attendant deities. While other texts also discuss Tibetan Buddhist deity imagery, this is the only work in Buton's collection specifically focused on design principles, like a concise design guide. Considering the popularity of Vaiśravaṇa images after the 14th century, this paper, in conjunction with representative paintings, particularly those from the Sakya School, examines Buton's text as a pivotal reference in establishing the norms for representing Vaiśravaṇa, underscoring its role in the evolution and standardization of iconographic practices.

Negotiating Colonial Symbols: Iconographic Expressions in 19th-Century Buddhist Temples in the Western and Southern Coasts of Sri Lanka

Koshalee Kakulandala, University of Otago

This study examines the shrine entrance sculptures and interior murals of 19th-century Buddhist temples in Sri Lanka’s western and southern coastal regions during British rule. It explores how motifs linked to colonial imagery, such as British royal insignia, depictions of the monarchy, Western clothing, architectural elements, and interior furnishings, were incorporated into traditional Buddhist art. Through contextual analysis of selected temples, the research investigates how these visual forms reflect a negotiation between Buddhist communities and colonial presence. Rather than viewing these inclusions as passive imitations, the study highlights how local communities actively engaged with the socio-political realities of the time. By examining how sacred spaces visually responded to foreign influence, the research offers new insight into the role of religious art in articulating power, identity and cultural resilience during the colonial period.

Buddhist iconography in late colonial Indochina and its origins

Elizabeth Guthrie, University of Otago

During the late colonial period (1920-1954), Cambodian artists began to use new iconographic styles to depict Buddhist images. This new iconography reflected the influence of western, European styles of art for Cambodian visual culture as well as technological changes brought by formal art education, print and print media. In this paper I will present a series of dated and signed images of the life of the Buddha from Khmer

wats in Cambodia and southern Vietnam from the late colonial period. These visual representations of the Life of the Buddha are relics of the religious beliefs and world view of Cambodian artists, abbots and pious Buddhist donors during the late colonial period; they are also invaluable templates for tracing the transmission and reception of ideas about Buddhist modernism and nationalism in the Mekong Delta during this period of history.

Session 1B

Politics and Identity in South Asia

Cultural Crossroads: The Legacy of the Sangam Era in Shaping Tamil Identity

Bhuvana Khannan and Alison Stevens Booth, Independent

The Sangam Era and the contours of contemporary Tamil identity present a profound convergence of historical memory and cultural significance, for the global community. While the Sangam Era (300 BCE to 300 CE) is often heralded for its literary achievements and cultural exchanges, modern Tamil identity remains a testament to the enduring legacies of this past, entangled in the complex and often contradictory forces of historical continuity and rupture. This research attempts to bring these two dimensions into dialogue, examining how the mechanisms of cultural transmission during the Sangam period shape Tamil identity today, amidst the contingencies of the 21st century. Through a methodologically plural approach, drawing on literary, archaeological, and epigraphic sources alongside modern anthropological inquiry, this paper seeks to elucidate the processes through which cultural practices were both transmitted and transformed, by means of highlighting key activities in that era. In doing so, it aims to trace how these cultural dynamics continue to resonate within the fabric of Tamil identity, contemplating our understanding of the relationship between historical formations and contemporary identity politics, persistently reconfigured by external influences.

Beyond State Narratives: People-to-People Reconciliation and Future Imaginaries in Pakistan-Bangladesh Relations (1974–2024)

Muhammad Abdullah, International Islamic University, Islamabad, Pakistan

This research explores five decades of people-to-people reconciliation between Pakistan and Bangladesh, focusing on how non-state actors have responded to the unresolved trauma of the 1971 War. It examines the period from 1974, a turning point when Pakistan formally recognized Bangladesh, until 2024. Departing from state-centric historiography, the study adopts a critical postcolonial framework, drawing on Subaltern Studies and Astrid Erll's theory of cultural memory, to examine how cultural producers, civil society actors, and diaspora communities mediate historical rupture and imagine post-conflict futures.

The study employs a tripartite methodology: (1) archival research in Pakistan, Bangladesh, and UK to recover marginalized diplomatic and media narratives; (2) oral history interviews with intergenerational participants, artists and activists; and (3) digital ethnography of transnational online communities engaged in cultural and ecological collaboration.

Findings highlight three interrelated themes: the re-narration of 1971 as a contested memory of shared grief, the rise of crisis diplomacy during climate catastrophes, and the ambivalent role of diasporas in perpetuating and disrupting nationalist discourse. This research argues for integrating people-to-people networks into formal diplomacy to reshape regional futures. It contributes to decolonial research by centering subaltern agency and offers a framework for studying reconciliation in other post-conflict contexts.

Exploring Visual Political Communication on Instagram: A Preliminary Study of Pakistani Political Parties' Election Campaign 2024

Zaneera Malik, University of Auckland

While election campaigns have long been central to political communication research, visual political communication (VPC) in the digital age remains largely examined through Western democracies and platforms like Twitter and Facebook. Instagram, despite its visual-first nature, remains critically understudied, especially in Global South contexts. This preliminary study explores how Pakistan's two major political parties, Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PMLN) and Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI), used Instagram for strategic communication in the 2024 General Elections. Employing quantitative content analysis of all Instagram posts of both parties for the pre-election week, the study analyzed nine thematic areas: broadcast, mobilization, self- and other-representation, populism, emotional appeal, tonality, hybridity, and tellers.

Findings reveal contrasting campaign logics. PTI adopted a decentralized, mobilization-heavy strategy with stronger populist framing and cross-platform hybridity. Meanwhile, PMLN emphasized centralized leadership, conventional visuals, positive tonality, and limited hybridity. These distinctions reflect not only ideological orientations but also adaptive responses to regulatory constraints and shifting public sentiment in the volatile political environment. By situating Instagram as a narrative and affective site of political campaigning, this paper expands the scope of VPC research and offers insights into evolving election futures of the Global South.

Session 1C Language and Education

Communities of practice in English-medium instruction (EMI) programs in Vietnam: Language ideologies and identity

Thy Le, University of Auckland

English Medium Instruction (EMI) programs have been implemented in Vietnam's tertiary education as part of the Vietnamese government's initiatives and policies to promote globalization and internationalization in higher education. These programs aim to enhance international exchange, tertiary education quality, and graduate employability. EMI has subsequently been developed across various disciplines in different universities, creating environments where students and lecturers shape language ideologies and identities. However, research specifically comparing different EMI contexts in Vietnam remains limited. Thus, this study examines the strengths and limitations of Vietnamese EMI programs through students' and lecturers' experiences, utilizing data from interviews, classroom observations, and document analysis. Preliminary analysis reveals that internationally oriented universities provide students with greater opportunities to use English, pushing them to overcome language barriers and meet academic expectations. In contrast, other EMI programs adopted a more scaffolded bilingual approach to support students' comprehension, though Vietnamese use could restrict deeper content exploration. EMI communities of practice have improved students' English proficiency, but speaking skills often need further development. The findings suggest that flexible bilingual practices can enhance learning, yet the use of Vietnamese varies across institutions, programs, and classroom settings.

Deictic Use of Demonstratives in Shouyang Dialect

Jingfei Ma, University of Auckland

Jin (晋语) is a widely spoken variety of Chinese. Its demonstrative system has long attracted scholarly attention due to its possession of three distinct demonstrative morphemes, in contrast to Modern Standard Chinese, which has only two. Jin demonstratives are generally considered to follow an egocentric system, with the distinction between the two non-proximal terms traditionally understood as reflecting different degrees of distance from the speaker—one referring to objects further away than the other. This study analyzes the deictic use of demonstratives in the Shouyang (寿阳) dialect, a variety of Jin, using a picture-based elicitation task where a participant selects demonstratives based on depicted scenarios. The results reveal that the use of the two non-proximal terms is closely related to the addressee's location: one term refers to objects located between the speaker and the addressee, while the other refers to objects outside the spatial domain of both. These findings challenge the conventional interpretation of Jin demonstratives as purely egocentric.

Diffusion of chatbots as conversational partners in Chinese language teaching: Insights from a case study

Jiajia Lin, University of Auckland

The emergence of advanced and versatile chatbots, represented by ChatGPT, has reignited discussions on their use in language education. However, the extent to which using chatbots as virtual language partners can benefit language learning is still controversial. To provide more insights into this question, this study investigates chatbot diffusion among three Chinese language teachers through a bottom-up perspective. Grounded in the Diffusion of Innovation (DOI) theory, the findings revealed the dynamic impact of communicative channels and innovation attributes on teachers' chatbot adoption, which enriched the accountability of DOI in this context. The findings also revealed the teachers' attitude shift from reluctant to willing to use chatbots, which highlighted using the curriculum-informed approach to tailor chatbot use to specific teaching demands. Overall, the study demonstrates the sustainable potential of chatbots as language partners, as this approach innovates the conventional practice of Communicative Language Teaching by facilitating socialisation-oriented practice.

Session 1D Media and Gender

Transnational Aesthetics and Gender Norms: Critical Discourse Analysis of 'Korean Aesthetics' in Chinese Media

Haiqing Li, Curtin University

In 2021, the Douyin platform took action against popular user Feng Xiaoyi for content that purportedly promoted negative social trends among Chinese youth. This highlighted China's growing concerns regarding the perceived negative influence of foreign aesthetics and popular culture fashions, particularly the so-called 'flower boy' aesthetic, on current hegemonic ideas about masculinity. This study examines how Chinese media narratives from 2014 to 2024 construct representations of masculinity, in relation to "Korean aesthetics." Using a critical discourse analysis framework, it investigates how young urban Chinese men's grooming practices are portrayed in news outlets, aligning with or challenging state-promoted masculinity ideals. The research integrates Foucault's governmentality, biopolitics, and neoliberal governmentality to explore the gender norm regulation. Findings reveal a strategic duality: the state publicly denounces "effeminate" male images as threats to national stability while tacitly supporting male beauty consumption for economic purposes. This dual approach emphasizes a balancing act between reinforcing hypermasculinity for nationalist narratives and accommodating consumer-driven, softer masculinity under a controlled framework. The study contributes to understanding how state power uses discourse to regulate gender norms and integrate

transnational cultural influences, advancing discussions on the intersection of governance, media, and masculinity.

Tweeting Against the Tide: Digital Feminism, Patriarchal Backlash, and the #MeToo Struggle on Chinese Social Media

Yiwen Xu, Victoria University of Wellington

This paper examines how digital platforms such as Weibo became contested arenas for both feminist activism and anti-feminist backlash in a high-profile #MeToo case involving Chinese Television host Zhu Jun. It explores the complexities and constraints facing the women's rights movement in contemporary China. Through critical discourse analysis of media narratives, online commentary, and state-aligned rhetoric, the study traces the transformation of Zhu Jun's public image—from alleged perpetrator to symbolic victim of feminist defamation. This shift reflects broader ideological tensions between rising feminist voices and entrenched patriarchal norms. My analysis shows how nationalist influencers, state-affiliated media, and anonymous netizens invoked narratives of legal authority, national unity, and social stability to discredit feminist claims and reinforce state-endorsed gender ideologies. In doing so, they constructed a binary between "authentic" and "radical" feminism, narrowing the space for gender justice in public discourse. While social media initially enabled new forms of feminist expression and solidarity, these spaces were rapidly co-opted by anti-feminist forces. By situating this case within the wider context of Asia's digital transformation, the paper argues that digital platforms function both as tools of empowerment and instruments of ideological control, shaping the contours of gender discourse and social movements in China's platformed public sphere.

Female Friendship Across Social Classes in Recent Fiction and Fusion Sageuk

Marla Arbach, Université du Québec en Outaouais

Since the era of fiction and fusion sageuk began, Korean historical television dramas have increasingly featured upper-class female protagonists (Choi 358-359), often accompanied by commoner-class female supporting characters. Sometimes, these helpers simply fulfill a plot function, and even when there is affection between the pair, the helper is rarely treated as a character with her own motivation and vision for her life. In this paper, I will analyze sageuk like Moonshine (꽃 피면 달 생각하고, KBS2, 2021-2022) and Knight Flower (밤에 피는 꽃, MBC, 2024), which portray the protagonist/helper duo as friends who help each other achieve their goals. The dramas do not pretend that the characters are social equals, nor do they devote equal time to their character development, but they do show that the helpers are women worth knowing as people beyond the function they can carry out on the protagonists' behalf.

Regardless of how realistic these dramas are, featuring female friendships across social classes in imagined versions of Korea's past shows that they are something Koreans value today, and something that should be a part of Korean and global societies in the future.

Between Luck and Likeability: Celebrity image-making of Korean diasporic celebrities by Philippine entertainment media

Michelle Camille Correa, Curtin University

This paper examines how Korean diasporic celebrities in the Philippines are made and maintained by Philippine entertainment industry as products of its consumerist-driven media culture and postcolonial condition. Asian diasporic celebrities possessing sociocultural knowledge of their host and home countries have become pivotal in understanding notions of national identity and belongingness, racial politics, and

cultural hybridity. In the Philippines, diasporic Koreans such as Sandara Park (now of K-pop idol group 2NE1), Ryan Bang, Dasuri Choi, Yohan Hwang, and Sam Oh, have reached celebrity status in the Philippines. Their visibility as a small but important group opens inquiry into their emergence in Philippine entertainment against the backdrop of Hallyu's popularity. Through semi-structured interviews with media staff, I examine their star-making during the production process of reality TV shows where Korean diasporic celebrities are cast members. By situating this within cultural hybridity and authenticity in the context of reality TV star-making, I discuss how perceived and predicted likeability during the audition process, the nature of reality TV as a show and showcase of authenticity, and the novelty that the Korean flavor brings to Philippine entertainment facilitate Korean diasporic celebrities' emergence and acceptance in the country's entertainment landscape.

Session 1E Chinese Film

Chinese Ghost Films

Kaihui Bi, University of Canterbury

This abstract will examine ghost narratives in mainland Chinese cinema through the lens of Chinese studies.The ghost narrative in Chinese cinema is the truly marginalised and excluded due to the mainland's strict censorship. Through the examination of the ghost narratives in Chinese mainland cinema, this abstract argues that these films reflect how traumas and memories are suppressed by mainland cultural hegemony, while struggling and making compromises with censorship, and ultimately finding a way to express unique voices under the suppression of the domiance values. The agenda of Chinese ghost cinema revolves around the anxiety of anti-hegemony caused by cultural-political suppression, which was eventually unified into a common national consciousness through the mainstream discourse. Therefore, the focus of this abstract is on how the ghost that is not allowed to exist and the repressed memories represent a struggle against censorship and the mainstream discourse, and symbolically resolve these traumas and memories with the permission of socialist core values. Through a discussion of the film The Lonely Ghost in the Dark Mansion (1989), this abstract will show how trauma during the Cultural Revolution was manifested through ghosts and how historical trauma was healed through the resolution of the ghost issue.

New mainstream cinema and China's soft power conundrums: an analysis of Cliff Walkers

Yi Li, Zhengzhou University

Cliff Walkers (2021) is Zhang Yimou's new attempt at the espionage genre and soon becomes his second highest-grossing film so far. Being celebrated as an exemplary new mainstream production, the film's domestic success attests to the genre breakthrough of main-melody filmmaking and largely facilitates China's decision to submit the film for Academy Awards consideration. This article takes the film as a case study to explore China's soft power agendas and its new mainstream filmmaking, by critically engaging with the oft-neglected Chinese-language scholarship and Joseph Nye's soft power theory. It first sheds light on the limited applicability of Nye's soft power concept in the Chinese context and China's practice of harnessing films for soft power promulgation. By tracing the crucial terminological shift from 'main-melody' to 'new mainstream,' this article elucidates how new mainstream filmmaking became the pillar of the industry and a major soft power vehicle. With Cliff Walkers as an example, it argues that new mainstream films, a genre that embodies 'industrial aesthetics of films' and purposely designed to emulate Hollywood blockbusters, still lack appeal among western audiences and can partially fulfil China's soft power agendas at best.

Understanding the Political References in Ne Zha 2 Amidst China-U.S. Tensions

Xichen Sun, University of Auckland

The legend of Ne Zha, the quintessential rebellious figure in Chinese mythology, has been immortalised in classical works such as Investiture of the Gods and Journey to the West. Building on the success of Ne Zha: Birth of the Demon Child (2019), Jiaozi's sequel, Ne Zha 2 (2025), reimagines this archetype against the backdrop of contemporary geopolitical tensions between China and the United States. Weaving a rich tapestry of political allegories, the film offers a sharp satirical critique of U.S. hegemony. The Chan Sect, led by the Immortal Wuliang, allegorically represents the United States, residing in the white Yu Xu Palace and venerating the octagonal Tianyuan Cauldron as their ultimate treasure. Innocent demons are imprisoned and refined into immortal pills within the cauldron, reinforcing the sect's dominance. Moreover, the cauldron's engraving of the U.S. dollar sign and the green jade pass awarded to disciples who succeed in the Ascension Trial further underscore the film's incisive commentary on global power dynamics. This article argues that Ne Zha 2 constructs a compelling critique of modern geopolitics through layered symbolism and narrative innovation, masterfully embedded within its animated form. It demonstrates how mainstream Chinese animation can function as both popular entertainment and cinematic intervention.

The Printed Genderisation of the First Chinese Actress Lily Yim

Gabriel F. Y. Tsang, Hong Kong Baptist University

Lily Yim (1896-1952), born Yim Shuk Kei, is acknowledged as the first Chinese actress due to her role in Lai Man Wai's Chuang Tzu Tests His Wife (1913). Yet, she remains overlooked in scholarly research because her fame was overshadowed by her husband, Lai, a renowned figure in Hong Kong cinema, and due to scarce documentation of her life. Louisa Wei (2024) proposed using 'gendered memory' to shed light on the lives of marginalised wives of historical figures, yet this method is unsuitable for Yim due to the secondary nature of preserved memories in the media. This paper aims to explore the gendered representation of Yim from 1926 to 1946, highlighting three main points. Firstly, the media's focus on Yim's fascinating aspects prohibits employing a 'hertoriographical approach' to express her feminine voice authentically. Secondly, Yim's portrayal is shaped by a patriarchal gaze, evidenced by media like The Republican Daily News (1926), which emphasises traditionally male attributes such as horseback riding, and Kuahuo Lin (1946), which compares and contrasts her fertility to another of Lai's wives. Lastly, Yim's image is uniformly reproduced across various media, creating a 'technologised visuality' and limited portrayal as a traditionally dressed woman.

Session 1F Community Health and Wellbeing

Silent Burdens across borders: Transnational pronatalism and the stigma of infertility among Asian migrant women in Aotearoa New Zealand

Nelly Martin-Anatias, Massey University

This study examines involuntary childlessness among Southeast and South Asian migrant women in Aotearoa New Zealand, highlighting cultural and structural challenges exacerbated by diasporic pronatalist ideals. Using Greil et al.'s (2010) gendered infertility stigma and Goffman's (1968) stigma framework, qualitative interviews reveal three coping strategies: (1) strategic silence—avoiding fertility discussions to evade judgment; (2) social withdrawal—distancing from child-centric gatherings; and (3) spiritual reframing—interpreting childlessness through concepts like qadar (divine will), aligning with Pargament's (1997) religious coping. Pervasive questioning about reproductive plans, framed as casual conversation (basa-basi), reinforces cultural ties between womanhood and motherhood, intensifying stigma. Collectivist norms prioritising familial harmony

(Triandis, 1995) heighten internalized stigma and psychological distress, while cultural shame and systemic barriers hinder healthcare access. The study frames infertility through transnational identity negotiations, revealing tensions between diasporic cultural preservation, gendered expectations, and reproductive justice. It underscores involuntary childlessness as a socially mediated experience shaped by intersecting spiritual, communal, and migratory histories, beyond biomedical dimensions.

A transnational lens to investigate older Chinese immigrants' daily challenges and information practices in New Zealand

Yu Du, Jinan University, Academy of Overseas Chinese Studies

Population ageing and global migration are two formidable trends significantly transforming many countries' demographic profiles. This paper adopts transnationalism to investigate late-life Chinese immigrants' (65 years and over) everyday challenges and information practices in New Zealand. The findings result from a reflexive thematic analysis of in-depth interviews of 47 older Chinese immigrants. We found that interviewees' challenges and information needs involved New Zealand- and homeland-oriented issues, reflecting their transnational characteristics. Their information needs primarily targeted their daily challenges. Meanwhile, interviewees' challenges and information needs varied according to their settlement stages (newcomers versus long-established immigrants). In contrast, the settlement stage-based divergencies of their information sources were not obvious. Interviewees' information-seeking behaviours were both random and purposeful. The findings offer helpful suggestions for policy-makers to improve social service and information delivery systems. They also expand our understanding of late-life immigrants' local integration into host countries.

Whakawhanaungatanga and Pakikipagkapwa: The Need for Relational Care in Promoting Health and Well-being among Community Health Workers

Jude Vincent E. Parcon, University of Canterbury; University of the Philippines Visayas

Management of one's health should not be mechanistic where healthcare professionals can be time-bounded and are only focused on the substantive expertise aspect. Instead, it is also important that the relational care aspect in managing health should also be given attention. Afterall, the human interactions in a healthcare scenario are important, with relational care being considered as the heart of all professional care. Community health workers in the Philippines, despite the voluntary nature and the precarity of their work in the community, persist to provide not only primary healthcare services, but also maintain good relationships with members of the community. This research examines how relational care is enacted by the Philippines' community health workers despite their marginalised position. A review and discussion of the available literature show how the Maori concept of Whakawhanaungatanga or the establishment of meaningful relationships, and a similar Filipino notion of Pakikipagkapwa or the act of nurturing a shared identity enact relational care from a culture-centred viewpoint where meaningful and respectful interactions and observed and built and eventually maintained.

Session 2A Indonesia and Beyond

India, Austronesia and Monsoon Asia: stories from Bali

Graeme MacRae, Massey University, University of Melbourne

I recently retired from Massey University and now I'm busy confronting the future by trying to comprehend the past – revisiting unfinished business and loose ends from 35 years of research in (mostly) Indonesia. This paper consists of brief (mostly) auto-ethnographic stories set in the border-zone of Bali where historical Indic cultural influences meet, merge and intersect in various ways with the older-but-ongoing Austronesian foundations of maritime SE Asia, leading ultimately to what Paul Mus (1933) identified as the common religious infrastructure of monsoon Asia. These stories tell us something about systemic misreadings of the past for purposes of the present and future. But if they have any larger value it lies in reminding us that at the heart of the ugly political-economic haggling over borders which dominates global politics today are deeply cultural sets of beliefs. Ideologies reflect material interests, but they also guide them.

Wahiduddin Khan's Notions of Peace and Nonviolence and Their Relevance in Contemporary Discourse on Islam in Indonesia

Irfan A. Omar, Marquette University

This presentation introduces the Al-Risala movement (and Wahiduddin Khan, its founder) as a contemporary Islamic movement based in Delhi, India. Since its inception in 1976, the movement has transformed and reinvented itself several times; today it is arguably one of most visible Muslim movements in South Asia competing to define the discourse on Islam and inevitably, influencing Muslim thought and practice both locally in India but also globally. Khan's thought - described primarily as focusing on "Peace" & "Nonviolence" (Sikand 2003; Omar 2008; Okawa 2019) - has impacted Muslims beyond India. Thus, this presentation will also consider how Khan's thought has been received and interpreted in Indonesia. Recent studies (Luthfi 2012; Rahman 2017; Thoyib 2018) suggest that Khan's works have a wider appeal for Indonesian Muslims, particularly as a response to the rise in religious extremism. Thus, I will delineate how this positive reception informs as well as enhances indigenous calls for peace and against religious extremism. The overall aim of the presentation is to explore how the past (Khan's interpretation of Islam) informs the present and the future (reframing of Islamic norms) while at the same considering the dynamics of translatability of Islamic notions of "Peace" across cultures.

Borderless Fog at the Edges of the Indonesian Nation

Jesse Hession Grayman, University of Auckland

This presentation will discuss Borderless Fog (Kabut Berduri, 2024), an Indonesian thriller set on the Indonesia-Malaysia border in Borneo, as a point of entry for exploring the enduring anthropological concerns with edges, borders, margins, and peripheries. The narrative combines familiar tropes of crime noir and supernatural folklore to critically explore themes of border and plantation economies, hybrid and hidden identities (including ethnicity, class, and gender), cross-border human trafficking, Indigenous Dayak land dispossession, and state violence. My presentation briefly contextualises the film and then uses a hauntological framework to explore its layered plot lines in relation to questions about border governance, Indigenous resistance to plantation enclosures, uneven (and borderless!) citizenship, and especially the spectral entanglements of myth and state power.

Session 2B Introduction to the Special Collections at the University of Auckland Library

Cultural Collections: hands-on workshop exploring rare published and archival material relating to Asia
Jo Birks and William Hamill, He Māra Mahara/Cultural Collections, University of Auckland Library

Bookings required (12 participants max.). Email cultural.collections@auckland.ac.nz

Session 2C Global Education

Navigating Life Across Cultures: Asian International Students' Experience at Western Universities

Monika Satyajati, Antonia Lyons, and Rodrigo Ramalho, University of Auckland

In many Western countries, Asian international students (AIS) dominate the population of international students at tertiary education institutions. Asian students are motivated to move abroad for a better-quality education. However, moving to a different culture in early adulthood brings various experiences that can affect health and wellbeing. This research aimed to explore existing literature on AIS in Western universities and identify potential areas for future research on health and wellbeing. Relevant research databases were searched for peer-reviewed articles within the past 10 years with the keywords "Asian international students". Eleven articles were identified, reporting studies conducted in the United States (n=6), Australia (n=4), and New Zealand (n=1). The articles consisted of 7 qualitative studies and 4 quantitative studies, encompassing a total number of 1,344 participants from South Asia, Southeast Asia, and East Asia regions. Overall, students reported positive experiences, including good resources for education, self-development, and a healthier diet compared to their home countries. However, they also faced challenges, such as discrimination, different norms with their flat mates, acculturative stress, and difficulty managing themselves within heavy student drinking cultures. Future research could explore health challenges for AIS in Western countries, particularly in managing alcohol consumption within student drinking cultures.

The varying strategies, challenges, and opportunities of 'global university campuses under-one-roof' in the shifting higher education landscapes across Asia

Sachiko Horiguchi, Temple University Japan

In the past few decades, major players enhancing 'globalization' and facilitating shifts in in higher education landscapes across Asia have included international branch campuses (IBCs) typically established by American, Australian, British, and European universities. Plans are underway for starting Massey University's branch campus in Singapore, to be the first IBC for New Zealand. The last decade has also seen Asian universities opening IBCs within Asia, bringing about new patterns of international student mobility. Against this background, this paper examines the state of IBCs under a single roof in Asia, which we shall call: 'global university campuses under-one-roof.' This paper draws on ongoing research based on review of existing scholarship and media representations, along with collaborative fieldwork and interviews, that Choon Kiat Sim (Singaporean educational sociologist) and I (Japanese educational anthropologist) have conducted in Japan, South Korea, China, Singapore, and Malaysia, since 2022. I focus on diverse patterns of 'global university campuses under-one-roof' in these developed economies of Asia, and compare their strategies, challenges, and opportunities, as well as their impacts on local higher education landscapes. Through this examination, the paper aims to highlight the varying meanings, agendas, challenges and possibilities behind 'globalization' and mobility in the context of Asia.

Negotiating Teacher and Cultural Identities: A Longitudinal Study of Mandarin Language Assistants in New Zealand

Yi Wang, Xiamen University

This longitudinal qualitative study explores the identity development and cultural adaptation of 12 Mandarin Language Assistants (MLAs) working in New Zealand. Now in its third round of data collection, the study traces how MLAs negotiate their roles over time in an intercultural teaching environment.

Findings suggest two central identity dimensions—teacher identity and cultural identity—each encompassing multiple sub-identities (such as Chinese language motivator, intercultural communicator, cultural experiencer, and more). These identities often overlap and are difficult to disentangle, shaping both teaching practices and cultural engagement.

Tensions may arise as MLAs navigate competing expectations, such as balancing classroom authority with the desire to present an approachable and positive image of China. Such negotiations underscore the dynamic, context-sensitive nature of identity work in transnational educational settings.

In line with the NZASIA 2025 theme, Comprehending the Past, Confronting the Future, this study highlights how reflecting on evolving identity positions can support MLAs in addressing future intercultural challenges. It contributes to Asian studies by offering a nuanced account of how personal, professional, and cultural selves interact and adapt within Asia-Pacific language education contexts.

Session 2D Reimagining the Past, Envisioning the Future: Technology, Globalization, and Societal Challenges in Japan and Asia (PANEL) Nicole M. Mueller

How do Asian societies across temporal and cultural settings envision technological futures? Drawing on approaches from global history, science and technology studies, and digital humanities, this panel seeks to gain a deeper understanding of how state and non-state actors in Japan and Singapore rely on technological development to solve economic, social, and environmental challenges of globalization. We analyze past and present futuristic imaginations through transregional modernization discourses, technopolitical implementation, and a mapping of anticipated technological breakthroughs.

Recalibrating the past, emulating the future: Knowledge and technology transfer between Japan and Singapore during the 1980s

Dolf-Alexander Neuhaus, German Institute for Japanese Studies (DIJ) Tokyo

This presentation explores the transfer of knowledge within the context of bilateral technical assistance between Japan and Singapore during the 1970s and 80s. It focuses on the establishment of technical schools like the Japan-Singapore Institute of Software Technology, whose inauguration was extensively covered by Japanese and Singaporean media. Japan’s economic miracle, which heavily relied on pioneering advancements in electronics, robotics, and software, rendered it synonymous with future technologies and positioned Japan as a developmental model for aspiring young nations like Singapore.

Drawing on newspapers, technical reports, and white papers, I situate Japanese technology transfer within the context of developmentalist and modernization discourses in Asia, such as Singapore’s "Learn from Japan" campaign of the 1980s. The presentation strives to better comprehend how Japan’s vanguard role was narrated through references to its earlier successful modernization and purported traditional “Asian values”. It furthermore examines how these narratives were simultaneously linked to imaginaries of a globalized, technologically advanced future embodied by Japan.

Japanese Techno-Politics of Innovation and Cybernetic Avatar Technologies

Celia Spoden, German Institute for Japanese Studies (DIJ) Tokyo

Since 2020, the Japanese government has been funding research on cybernetic avatar technologies under the Moonshot R&D Program to realize a society “in which human beings can be free from limitations of body, brain, space, and time by 2050.” The aim is to maintain Japan’s global economic competitiveness by creating solutions for challenges arising from the aging of society, particularly a labor shortage. In this presentation, I trace the concept of an avatar-symbiotic society back to the 1980s’ imaginary of a “telexistence society” and show how the future visions of individual scientists and state research funding agencies have influenced each other and led to institutionalization and expansion of certain imaginaries. I further highlight how these future imaginaries were adapted to economic and social challenges over time and how they were embedded into a Japanese robot history and national identity. Concluding, I illustrate how coexisting future imaginaries were integrated and scaled-up to form the umbrella imaginary of Society 5.0 in 2016, governing the Japanese techno-politics of innovation.

Overcoming the Present, Imagineering the Future – A Multi-Method Mapping of Japanese Metaverse Discourse

Nicole M. Mueller, German Institute for Japanese Studies (DIJ) Tokyo

Japan’s Metaverse discourse relies on collective, often prescriptive visions of technoscientific futures that blur the line between science fiction utopia and strategic roadmap. Combining a large-scale digital corpora analysis and interviews with 13 expert practitioners from Japan’s tech scene, this paper utilizes "imaginary" as an analytical concept to identify four Japanese Metaverse trajectories: anticipation, digital revolution, (invented) tradition, and the Metaverse as a solution for societal challenges.

Given that Metaverse technologies include the fully immersive virtual reality as well as the semi-immersive augmented reality, I argue that the future Metaverse’s (supposed) potential to meaningfully address social and ecological crises is linked to immersiveness: Whereas a fully immersive Metaverse gravitates towards escapism, imaginaries of a semi-immersive Metaverse are more likely to acknowledge the multitude of challenges Japanese society is currently facing. In both cases, however, repeated setbacks and hyperbolic expectations have given rise to imaginaries that focus on distant, utopian futures.

Session 2E Following the New Wave Against Gender Discrimination in Contemporary South Korea (PANEL) Kang Aram

This panel analyzes the cultural manifestation of gender discrimination in Korea and testifies to the emergence of narratives against it. With the development of online technology, Korea has become one of the most infamous countries for digitalized sexual discrimination. After the popularization of feminism in the mid-2010s, the Korean cultural industry has become active in opposing misogyny. Parodies of patriarchy and re-invented women's gukgeuk show cultural strategies to cope with the new wave.

The Gamification of Misogyny: Telegram Deepfake Crisis in South Korea

Hong Soomin, The University of Sydney

This paper examines the growing prevalence of digital sex crimes in South Korea, focusing on the transformation of sextortion into a game through the exploitation of deepfake technology. By exploring the intersection of traditional rape culture and modern technological advances, the study sheds light on the dynamics of victim exploitation and the peer reinforcement of misogyny.

Online environments steeped in rape culture enable men to reinforce their masculinity by systematically excluding and degrading women. In these toxic digital spaces, acts of misogyny and sextortion evolve into a perverse play, reducing women's suffering to a form of entertainment that reinforces male dominance. Low sexual literacy contributes to a disturbing normalization where illicit sexual videos without consent are dismissed as mere pornography. Feminist activists and scholars have long denounced the country's pervasive rape culture, which has been further amplified online. A diverse array of online spectators and distribution networks openly seek out sexual content, regardless of its legality, while profit-driven actors continuously devise methods to supply it, often exploiting vulnerable populations.

Rising of the Boss Daughter – The Age of the Filliarch

Kang Aram, Hanshin University, South Korea

This study analyzes contemporary family romance through Sulla Lee's The Age of the Filliarch (2022). Lee, who has recently gained popularity through her email newsletter, is primarily known for her essays and interview books. Thanks to her fame as a writer-influencer, The Age of the Filliarch has been published in Japan and Taiwan, with upcoming releases in the UK, US, and Italy.

The term "Filliarch" (derived from "filia," meaning "daughter") is a parody of "Matriarch," which in turn is a parody of "Patriarch." The novel examines the patriarchal model that once supported the male-centered family ideology of the past, suggesting that it no longer functions in contemporary society. The Age of the Filliarch reconstructs a daughter-centered family romance by parodying the patriarchal system and exploring the family's internal and external relationships. The narrative is that the daughter's care for her family is accompanied by employment. The daughter, named after the author herself, runs a publishing company and employs her parents. This corporatized family structure reflects a commercialized lifestyle in a highly capitalized society.

Connecting with the History of Women's Gukgeuk

Cho Minhyung, Ewha Woman's University, South Korea

This study aims to uncover the disconnected history of women's gukgeuk. Women's gukgeuk is a performance by all-female performers based on traditional Korean musical opera. It was a popular show after the Korean War, but its popularity waned in the mid-1960s, and it was subsequently excluded from the National Theater System. Koreans have long forgotten the existence of women's gukgeuk. However, in the 2020s, women's gukgeuk has been on the stage through webtoons, dramas, and performances.

Korean feminists accepted women's gukgeuk as a female narrative, a narrative that the main female characters have agency and are not all about heteronormativity love. This phenomenon accelerated in the webtoon and drama <Jeongnyeoni>. It dehistorizes women's gukgeuk by simplifying the aesthetics of women's gukgeuk and saying it was 'a paradise only for women'. On the other hand, the documentary film "Women's Gunkgeuk: Enduring on the Edge of Time" deals with differences and conflicts between seniors and juniors in interpreting traditions in the absence of state support. Park Soo-bin and Hwang Ji-young, experience in the process of re-enacting women's Gukgeuk on stage.

Session 2F Global Histories and Technology

From San Diego to Manila: Bioprospecting Indigenous Plant Knowledge across the Pacific

Carey McCormack, George Mason University Korea

The Philippines served as the center of Pacific trade during the early modern period and Luzon acted as the gateway to China and Southeast Asia for Spanish explorers and later colonizers. Spanish administrators paid close attention to indigenous plant knowledge on both sides of the Pacific to ascertain the commercial value of plants. Through an analysis of archival materials from Missions and government records, this paper focuses on exchanges of commodity crops between Spanish California and colonial Manila in order to track indigenous plant knowledge exchanged between Asia and California. The Philippines maintained a central role in Pacific transfers which in turn led to exchanges with China and Southeast Asia. Current debates around who produces knowledge and who owns communal knowledge are central to sustainable development plans laid out by the United Nations. The landmark Treaty on Intellectual Property, Genetic Resources and Associated Traditional Knowledge signed in 2024 protects traditional knowledge and biological resources of indigenous people, which alters international patent laws. This treaty is the first international attempt to validate indigenous knowledge and to protect the biological resources of the Global South. This study focuses on historical exchanges, but the power dynamics established in the past influenced contemporary issues.

Reimagining British Descriptive Geometry in Late Qing Imperial Construction (1875–1878): Cosmotechnics from Arsenals to Tombs

Zhaoyi Ma, Nanyang Technological University

This study examines how late Qing China (1875–1878) negotiated British descriptive geometry—an emblem of industrial modernity—through cosmotechnical synthesis, offering strategies for non-Western societies confronting global technoscience. Analyzing Jiangnan Arsenal's technical translations and Yangshi Lei architects' imperial blueprints, the research reveals a dual reconfiguration of spatial concepts: Han Technocrats embedded Euclidean and analytic geometry within Confucian ti (ontological substance) and Daoist dao (cosmic principle) for militarized production by reframing orthographic projection as xian zhenxing (顯真形, revealing primordial forms). Manchu-Supervised Craftsmen crafted a Daoist divine gaze perspective as yong (tools) for imperial construction management by fusing British aerial projections with geomantic dipan yang (地盤樣) and 3D jiehua (界畫). This stratified adaptation transcended the ti-yong binary: geometry geometry became neither Western abstraction nor Chinese tradition, but an interface between industrial precision and cosmological order. By comparing the Qing's shift (ti to yong) and Britain's trajectory (Euclidean to analytic geometry), the study argues that cosmic resonance universally precedes technoscientific domination. The Qing's cosmotechnical synthesis epitomizes how non-Western technocultures absorbing cross-cultural technical rigor without surrendering cultural agency.

Museums as a Bridge Connecting Past and Future: Renovation of Quasi-Colonial Built Heritage in China

Xinbei Wang, University of Birmingham

In the 1840s, the First Opium War marked the entry of Western informal imperialism into China, integrating the Chinese market into British global free trade network. Following the establishment of concessions and foreign settlements in Treaty Ports, Western-style architecture gradually emerged across China, with British consulate buildings holding particular importance. These consulates, as sites where extraterritorial rights were exercised, significantly shaped Sino-British relations and served as material symbols of British quasi-colonial influence. Beyond their official function, consulate buildings also embodied imperial ornamentalism, as British consuls transformed these spaces to mirror homes in the metropole, making them vehicles for British politics and culture, as well as capitalistic social hierarchy.

This research examines the evolving identity of consulate, using the British Consulate in Wen-Chow as a case study. Initially serving as administrative and residential spaces, this Consulate was repurposed several times now as a dissonant built heritage. While its spatial layout retained the essence of a residence, the Chinese government transformed it into a museum, reshaping its function and symbolic meaning. This renovation accentuates the distance between the building's quasi-colonial shadow and its new role, reinforcing its current identity as a cultural site over its past as a symbol of British power.

Session 3A Literature and Music

The Development of Yue Opera in Wartime Shanghai

Xinjue Zhang, Massey University

This paper explores the transformation of Yue Opera—one of China's most influential opera forms and the only one with all-women casts—during wartime Shanghai. Despite Yue Opera's significance, there is little scholarship on it, especially outside China. I focus on the shift from all-men to all-women casts and how this shaped Yue Opera. Amid war, shifting audiences, and new technologies, women actors chose cooperation, rejecting the cutthroat competition occurring among men actors. Women casts drew inspiration from film and Kunqu, rather than imitating Peking Opera as did all-men casts, so that they both innovated and maintained Yue opera's uniqueness. Crucially, all-women casts prioritised audience engagement, refining performances through public feedback—a responsiveness absent in their all-men counterparts. They embraced radio and recordings to expand their reach and revised scripts that sexualised women to present more humanised characters. These strategies made Yue Opera more resilient and popular, transforming it from a marginal folk opera into Shanghai's dominant operatic form. Reflecting on this history, I argue that cooperative ecosystems, artistic uniqueness, responsiveness, openness to technology, and ethical representation provide guiding principles for sustainable development of traditional arts today.

The Silent Traveller as Flâneur: A Study of the Persona in Chiang Yee's Travel Writing

Xiaodan Duan, University of Auckland

This paper examines "The Silent Traveller," a persona created by a Chinese writer, as an unconventional flâneur in his modern travel narratives. First, the study considers the non-Western identity and Chinese cultural background of the Silent Traveller, or the writer himself. The outsider identity means that the he sometimes walks with apprehensiveness, making it more difficult for him to blend into the crowd as a classical flâneur without interruption. Flânerie serves as a coping mechanism for him in this context, as he consistently remaps familiar hometown scenarios onto the foreign landscapes of European or American cities he meanders through. This research also views the persona as a genius flâneur, focusing on the artistic inclination of his flânerie and the personal discoveries through thoughtful observation and keen appreciation of different cities, which distinguishing the Silent Traveller from a wide range of classical flâneur figures. Ultimately, through the process of walking and writing, the Silent traveller as a flâneur continues to sustain his subjectivity in a state of being drifting.

"Traveling Through Crisis: The Humanitarian Dimensions of Mobility in Contemporary Assam"

Isha Mahato, National Institute of Technology, Silchar

This paper examines how contemporary Indian travel writing has shifted from the conventional trope of destination to the politics of displacement, reflecting a significant evolution in the genre. No longer limited to

landscapes and itineraries, recent travel narratives focus on people, crisis-driven mobilities and the human dimensions of movement. In the context of Assam, mobility produced by crisis compels a political rethinking of both travel and travel literature. Using Robert Clarke's concept of dark travel, this study explores how travel writers engage with experiences shaped by migration, displacement, and sociopolitical tension. The travelogues of Samrat Choudhury (The Braided River) and Suchitra Vijayan (Midnight's Borders) humanize Assam's ongoing crisis through local anecdotes, offering critical perspectives rooted in empathy and witnessing. They juxtapose privileged travel with forced displacement, highlighting the duality of movement in contemporary Assam. This paper argues that dark travel, as a framework, allows for a deeper understanding of postcolonial mobility, memory, and the enduring impacts of colonial and state violence on both individual and collective experiences of travel in Assam. Central to Assam's present are overlapping narratives of cultural anxiety and refugee exclusion, making it a region caught between historical memory and evolving notions of citizenship.

Comprehending Cultural Memory and Communal Identity of the Angami Nagas from English Literature: Reading Easterine Kire's Novel When the River Sleeps

Agnidh Baruah, National Institute of Technology Silchar, India

In recent times, a number of writers from Nagaland have started writing in English, making them read (heard) across the globe, thus, finally telling their own story instead of someone else describing them in History. In narrating the stories, especially in the fiction genre, the writers directly and indirectly present the cultural memories of their respective community, which seem to be a great aid in the formation and reconstruction of their communal identity.

That is what this researcher wishes to explore with a textual analysis of Easterine Kire's novel When the River Sleeps to understand how one ought to understand the Angami Nagas and their culture and worldview in terms not only of their past but also present practice and imagined future. The author belongs to the Angami tribe, and the narrative is set in the Angami hills of the Nagaland state of India and depends heavily on the folklore of the concerned community. This researcher would like to read the text employing LeAnne Howe's concept of tribalography, in which she says that native writers "tell a kind of story that includes collaboration with the past and present and future".

Session 3B Security in the Asia-Pacific

Asia in Flux: A Game-Theoretical Analysis of US-China Competition Under Trump

Yiyang Xu, University of Sydney

The Trump administration introduced a more confrontational U.S.-China dynamic, disrupting the strategic balance in the Asia-Pacific. This paper applies game theory to analyze how shifts in trade, military posturing, and Taiwan policy affected strategic interactions between Washington and Beijing. Using models of deterrence and Nash equilibrium, it explores how Trump's unpredictability altered China's strategic calculations, increasing regional tensions. The analysis suggests that escalating rivalry heightened the security dilemma. The study evaluates whether these interactions led to a stable deterrence equilibrium or raised the risk of miscalculation and conflict. By integrating game-theoretical insights with empirical events, this paper assesses the broader implications for Asia-Pacific stability.

Conceptualizing Authoritarian Welfare States in Asia

Stephen Noakes, University of Auckland

Although democratic welfare states have been a focus of scholarly inquiry for decades, questions of when, how, and why non-democracies spend on social programs have received comparatively little attention. This paper is a modest step toward addressing that imbalance, offering a framework for explaining the development—and the diversity—of authoritarian welfare states specifically in Asia. The paper lays a foundation for further study, setting out scope conditions for the selection of test cases beyond Asia and outlining a range of endogenous (i.e. competition among ruling elites or factions, incentives to co-opt opposition), and exogenous (social demands for spending, scrutiny from the global community) factors underpinning varied forms of authoritarian welfare states. The final portion of the paper outlines an agenda for future research, drawing from a comparison of hereditary monarchies (Brunei), party dictatorships (Singapore, China), military regimes (Myanmar, Thailand), and illiberal/partially competitive democracies (Malaysia).

Relationship weaving through proximity and distance in inter-state relations

Germana Nicklin and Bhagya Senaratne, Massey University and NYU, Shanghai

In the Asia-Pacific region, island states with large maritime zones are becoming more politically relevant as great powers vie for influence in oceanic regions. Two such island states are Sri Lanka and New Zealand, the former close to the region's centres of power and the latter at its outer edges. Scholarship on the interplay between the concepts of proximity and distance in international relations has been largely northern hemisphere and continent centric. It has not taken into account the security influences for island states. This paper compares the dynamics of security Sri Lanka and New Zealand have had with their closest, much larger and more influential neighbours, India and Australia, respectively, through the lens of proximity and difference. Utilising examples from the past, the paper reveals interrelated and interdependent influences for the smaller states in the pairings. By way of a new conceptual framework that shows the dynamic interweaving of distance and proximity, this paper argues that a deeper understanding proximity and distance will help smaller states navigate security issues arising from global and regional politics.

3C Formosan languages in motion: Diachrony, vitality, and linguistic insight (PANEL) Victoria Chen and Karen Huang

This panel features three papers on Formosan languages—the Indigenous languages of Taiwan that represent the most archaic branches of the Austronesian language family. The first investigates their structural diversity and its implications for language change. The second re-examines Proto-Austronesian phoneme reconstruction through Formosan phonology. The third examines language policy and its role in revitalization efforts. Together, the panel aims to underscore the significance of Formosan languages in understanding linguistic evolution, maintenance, and typological diversity.

Through the Formosan lens: Rethinking language evolution from the heart of Austronesia

Victoria Chen, Victoria University of Wellington

Having developed in the homeland of the Austronesian family for over 5,000 years, the indigenous languages of Taiwan (also known as Formosan languages) offer a unique laboratory for investigating the dynamics of language variation and change. This paper presents a first attempt at mapping 10 representative grammatical

features across western Austronesian languages of Taiwan, the Philippines, and Indonesia. The findings highlight the exceptional syntactic diversity of Formosan languages and underscore their role as a super-diverse hotspot within the Austronesian family. By situating the Formosan patterns in a broader typological context, we show how these languages shed new light on linguistic divergence and the evolution of grammatical systems.

The primary subgrouping of Austronesian: A reanalysis of the data

Craig Stansfield, Victoria University of Wellington

Prior to European colonization the Austronesian family was the world's most widely spread language family, consisting of approximately 1256 languages spoken across Maritime Southeast Asia and numerous parts of Mainland Southeast Asia and on Taiwan, Madagascar, and the islands of the Pacific Ocean. The homeland of this family is widely accepted as being Taiwan/Formosa. Although various approaches have been proposed for its primary-level subgrouping, controversy remains regarding how many primary branches are subsumed under Proto-Austronesian and whether the Malayo-Polynesian languages constitute a single primary branch. This study is looking at the primary subgrouping of Austronesian through a literature review of the existing hypotheses and the evidence for them and through an investigation from first principles, using the standard comparative method, of whether closer attention to the phonetic environments in which phonemes occur can reduce the number of correspondence sets that need to be considered in reconstructing the phonology of Proto-Austronesian and whether there are any credible alternative protophonemes to those reconstructed within the existing principal hypotheses.

Testing Revitalization: A Critical Examination of Taiwan's Indigenous Languages Proficiency Certification

Karen Huang, University of Auckland

Taiwan's Indigenous languages have become highly endangered due to decades of Mandarin-only policies. Since democratisation in the 1990s, government-led efforts have aimed to revitalize these languages, including the Indigenous Languages Proficiency Certification Test promoted by the Council of Indigenous Peoples. Drawing on Shohamy's (2022) Critical Language Testing, this study examines how such tests impact Indigenous communities. While the test has encouraged youth to learn their heritage languages—especially through incentives like university admission and job eligibility—it also reinforces narrow language standards, marginalizes dialects and oral traditions, and favours those with access to formal education. As a state-led initiative, it risks sidelining community values and cultural transmission. I argue for more inclusive, community-driven assessments that reflect Indigenous knowledge and goals.

Session 3D Digital Cultural Reinterpretations

New Meanings for Old Monsters: Contemporary Reinterpretations of Yōkai in Japan

Michael Dylan Foster, University of California, Davis (USA)

Monsters, spirits, and fantastic creatures have been part of Japanese culture for centuries. Such yōkai, as they are collectively called, are often characterized by an ability to change with the times; once the protagonists of local legends and folktales, today they have shapeshifted to become the stars of contemporary anime, video

games, and other forms of popular culture. Rather than focus on the way yōkai themselves have transformed in the popular imagination, this talk explores instead how people in local communities are actively reinterpreting their old yōkai narratives to better grapple with contemporary circumstances—including sound pollution, depopulation, and climate change. Based on firsthand work in three small communities, I explore how residents draw on old and all but forgotten yōkai to find meanings in the present and, sometimes, new directions for the future.

Reclaiming the Past: Rekijo Fandom and the Gendered Reconstruction of Japanese History on Social Media

Mo Tu, University of Auckland

This study examines the Rekijo (歷女) fandom, a Japanese subculture of women who reinterpret historical narratives through social media, blending historical scholarship with creative agency to challenge patriarchal historiography. Drawing on virtual ethnography and critical discourse analysis frameworks, this study explores how platforms like X and Facebook shape gendered identity performance and historical reimagining. Through practices such as fan art and parody accounts, Rekijo members subvert male-dominated historical discourse, reframing figures like samurai or Bakumatsu-era women as symbols of empowerment. The study integrates platform-specific affordances with Japanese cultural contexts, revealing how Rekijo communities negotiate public/private boundaries and vernacular historiography. Findings underscore social media's role in democratizing historical narratives, enabling marginalized voices to reshape cultural memory. This research contributes to discussions on gender, digital fandom, and participatory historiography in Asian studies, offering insights into how technology mediates intersections of identity, power, and historical representation in the 21st century.

Ethical Debates and Cultural Disruption of Digital Resurrection in China

Shuwei He, University of Exeter

Digital resurrection technologies, artificially intelligent systems capable of recreating a deceased person's voice, image, or personality, are gaining attention globally, particularly in China. While these technologies offer new ways to cope with grief and preserve memories, they also raise ethical debates and challenge long-standing cultural values around death, mourning, and the afterlife. This paper examines digital resurrection's ethical and cultural implications in the Chinese context, where ancestral reverence, filial piety, and spiritual closure are central to death-related practices. Using a qualitative method, in-depth interviews were conducted with individuals familiar with or affected by these technologies, including bereaved family members and developers.Findings reveal a range of ethical concerns, including lack of consent, data privacy, emotional manipulation, and the commercialization of grief. Culturally, many participants expressed discomfort with digitally "reviving" the dead, citing conflicts with beliefs about letting the soul rest and the importance of final rituals. The study highlights the growing tension between technological innovation and cultural continuity, and calls for ethical guidelines informed by cultural values.This paper contributes to broader discussions on how societies can balance innovation with respect for cultural and spiritual traditions.

Session 3E Inventing Contemporary K-Narratives by Mediating the Social (PANEL) Yoon Heo

This panel examines the narratives created through the mediation of social media. The development of web-based media has transformed the landscape in which narratives are created and disseminated. Korea's most widely consumed narratives have expanded to include web-based novels, cartoons, and YouTube. This shift demonstrates that mediation has become a key way of remembering and imagining the social. This panel aims

to confirm the invention of contemporary Korean narratives as a form of mediation that reads through personal devices and fictionalizes the politics of society.

Intersecting Capital, Body, and Technology: Occupational Horror Tales of Car Dealers on YouTube

Eunwoo Lee, Research Institute of Korean Studies, Korea University

This paper advances the discussion by focusing on YouTube-based “car dealer occupational horror tales,” exploring the similarities and differences between modern stories featuring car dealers and the itinerant figures of traditional Korean folktales. The study reveals that mysterious threats—once embodied by wild natural forces or supernatural beings—have evolved into capital and technology, yet they still operate through a similar narrative logic.

These narratives illustrate how car dealers, exposed to unpredictable customers and unfamiliar or liminal environments, reenact the mobility and vulnerability of protagonists in folktales. Characters are often drawn into isolated, dangerous spaces, facing bodily harm, death, and even organ trafficking. The allegory of the gumiho in traditional tales is reappropriated in a capitalist context as a new cannibalistic narrative. Survival depends on intuition, professional skills, and assistance from unofficial networks, such as shamans or underworld figures, revealing the irony that social safety nets are often powerless and that only extra-legal or supernatural interventions can provide rescue.

Fantasy, Memory, and Militarization: Postmemory of the Korean War in a Contemporary Korean Web Novel

Sohyun Ahn, Setsunan University

This study analyzes representations of youth mobilization in Jung Soo-il's fantasy web novel, I'm a Liberal Arts Major, but I'm Not Sorry to be in Another World, through the lens of Korean War memory and postmemory. Although some memoirs were published in the 1990s, public attention increased significantly in the 2000s through municipal memorial projects and films that portrayed their experiences. These narratives, often shaped by national perspectives, emphasize patriotism and voluntary sacrifice, raising concerns about the normalization of child militarization in South Korean collective memory. Such state-framed depictions have become deeply ingrained in the public consciousness. This paper explores how such representations are echoed in the fantasy web novel, where the protagonist is transported into a fictional kingdom and awakens as a 17-year-old magician attending a royal defense academy. As war unfolds, he and his peers are drawn into battle. This research explores connections between fictionalized youth war experiences and historical realities, revealing how militarism and war trauma are represented even within Korean fantasy web novels.

Fanlights in Korean Public Squares: Hwang Jungeun's There Is No Need to Say Anything

Jung Woojoo and Yoon Heo, Ehwa Woman’s University

This paper reinterprets Hwang's novel as a prehistory of the Fanlight Protest in South Korea. Although situated within the context of the Candlelight Protests, the story focuses not on revolutionary triumph but on the unresolved fractures that persisted afterward. By representing revolution as unfinished, Hwang exposes misogyny dismissed as trivial under the public cause of democracy and delves into the lives of those, such as homosexuals and people with visual impairments, excluded from common sense.

Following the declaration of martial law on December 3, 2024, South Korean public squares witnessed mass gatherings demanding the impeachment of the president, marked by the prominent sight of citizens waving colorful fanlight sticks and singing K-pop songs. This phenomenon, distinct from the 2016 Candlelight Protests,

highlights the visibility of women in their 20s and 30s as key agents and foregrounds diverse identities, such as sexual minorities, laborers, and individuals with disabilities, that resist homogenization. This paper argues that Hwang's novel reveals that minorities recently gained visibility have always existed.

Session 3F Global Histories

Civil Wars, State-Building, and Mobilization of Koreans in Manchuria, 1945-1950

Tomer Nisimov, Princeton University

Examining the particular conditions in postwar Northeast Asia, this paper demonstrates that in 1945-1950, Koreans in Manchuria had become a targeted group for mobilization by multiple actors. This study of the mass mobilization of Koreans and the driving rational of these various parties is based on archival and primary sources in Korean and Chinese that include memoirs, newspapers, and intelligence. Both the GMD and the CPC mobilized Koreans for intelligence missions and military units for the Civil War in Manchuria. Simultaneously, Korean organizations and personnel affiliated with Seoul and Pyŏngyang worked on harnessing Manchuria's Koreans for constructing the future institutions of their respective regimes.

I explain how certain events in the Civil War in China had impacted the way the different actors had mobilized Manchuria's Koreans. I point out that the CPC's permission to North Korea to mobilize Koreans in Manchuria in 1947 served as a precedence for future mobilization of Koreans for the Korean War. The study concludes that the postwar circumstances had led to unprecedented need for skilled manpower due to which Koreans were deliberately marked and mobilized.

The Singapore Mutiny of 1915 and the Global Networks of Rebellion and Resistance during the First World War

Bernadette How, University of Auckland

On 15 February 1915, the Indian Army's Fifth Light Infantry stationed in Singapore rose up in a bloody mutiny against their British officers. The colonial government swiftly quelled it and framed the mutiny as a mere emeute. The public was told that the event was an outburst of religious fanaticism, and discontent among the Fifth Light Infantry regarding promotions. Court martials and executions swiftly followed a Court of Enquiry whose findings were kept secret until recently. Some scholars have discussed the mutiny in connection to a greater Indian nationalist movement. Nevertheless, present historiography recognises the Singapore Mutiny as a pan-Islamic, Indian nationalist movement enmeshed with international Indo-German intrigue intended to harass the British outposts. This paper situates the Mutiny within global networks of anti-imperial activities by rebels as well as anti-revolution resistance on the part of the imperial powers. This study traces the global threads of mobility and interconnectivity of anti-imperial rebels. It also scrutinises the military, economic and intelligence cooperation amongst imperial powers as they struggled to resist and contain rebel activities in their various outposts. At the same time, this study examines the intersecting networks of agencies from top down and bottom up that formed unlikely alliances in order to advance their individual agendas.

Colonialism and the Historical Creation of Malay(si)a

Wei Wen (Wilbert) Wong, The Australian National University, The University of New South Wales

Archipelagic Southeast Asia provides a good example of how historical boundaries and identities of nation states were inherited from the borders that were constructed by imperial powers. Colonial historians played a crucial part in this nation-building process by helping create the histories of these regions, crafting identities for communities, polities or nations that did not previously exist. Their historical constructs served as a base for the national histories of the countries that would emerge out of these colonial territories. I will examine how the idea of "Malaya" was conceptualised as a historical entity and nation in the twentieth century by colonial historians and the legacies of their construction in Malaya's (and, later, Malaysia's) postcolonial national narrative. The concept of "Malaya" as a nation had no prior existence before the twentieth century. Through their histories, British colonial historians wrote Malaya into existence as a nation and provided the ideological framework that would be useful for Malaysia's nation-building project. Within the context of world history, this legacy of colonial discourse in Malaysia's nation-state historiography is an example of the influence of colonial narratives in the national discourse of former colonial states because they are useful for nation-building.

Session 4A Asia and New Zealand

Who was Thomas McKenzie? A short life story of an early Anglo-Indian arrival in Aotearoa New Zealand

Robyn Andrews, Massey University

Thomas McKenzie was born in West Bengal in 1824 and died in 1869 in Kai Iwi. He accompanied Sir John Cracroft-Wilson on the Akhbar, docking in Christchurch in April 1853. McKenzie came to the presenter's attention after research was launched focusing on Anglo-Indians in New Zealand and seeking research participants. McKenzie's great-great-grandson, knowing his ancestor was Anglo-Indian, contacted the researcher, who was later connected with further relatives. These relatives collected a large amount of data, which has been pieced together into a narrative of McKenzie's life, contextualising it within both Indian and Aotearoa New Zealand social histories. This narrative is the focus of the paper.

Occupation and Internationalisation: Accounts of Japan from Jayforce Members and JET Programme Participants

Ian Fookes, University of Auckland

As part of a project exploring the role of literary and cinematic representations of Japan in constructing New Zealanders' identities, this paper compares three types of testimony relating experiences of sojourns in Japan: (1) informal stories of those serving with Jayforce between 1946 to 1948; (2) accounts by JET Programme participants between 1998 and 2006; and (3) testimonials from the JET Programme website (2002-2021) written for promotional purposes. Although comparing a military occupation with an educational programme seems unusual, the paper argues that structural similarities provide a basis for comparison. The accounts rely on narrative techniques for coherence, and their content is shaped by the fact that both Jayforce and the JET programme involve modes of "internationalisation" in their mission statements. Members of both groups engaged in social and touristic activities and relate struggles to adapt to the programmes and their cross-cultural encounters.

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. The research is motivated by the fact that the author, a recent immigrant from China, finds herself learning more about her mother, family, and homeplace through long-distance conversations about food. The project aims to uncover inherited dumpling-making traditions and recipes and invent new recipes in the context of building new and enhancing existing relationships. Informed by auto-theory and auto-ethnography, the primary research method is artistic practice, emphasizing personal experience and reflexivity. The dumpling-making sessions are performative events in which personal stories and traditional or alternative dumpling recipes are collected.

Session 4B Politics and Social Justice

The Merits and Deficits of Regional Autonomy in Cordillera, Northern Philippines

Maileenita Penalba, University of the Philippines Baguio

The quest for regional autonomy in Cordillera, Northern Philippines is protracted and challenging. The region, composed primarily of indigenous groups, has a history of violent confrontation with the state but successfully lobbied for the inclusion of indigenous rights and autonomy in the 1987 Philippine constitution. However, nearly four decades later, Cordillera remains an administrative region, as plebiscites in 1990 and 1998 both resulted in an overwhelming rejection of autonomy. Surveys show that a majority of Cordillerans have limited knowledge of autonomy. This study explores why the pursuit of regional autonomy remains a polarizing and complex issue. Using primary and secondary data, the study unpacks the state of discourse about the merits and deficits of the current autonomy debate in this ethnically diverse region. By examining spoken and written texts, the study highlights continuities and discontinuities in the Cordillera autonomy discourses over the last 30 years.

Political Economy of Debt Distress - Political Determinants of Unsustainable Debt: Lessons from Sri Lanka

Nipuni Perera, University of Canterbury

Navigating through debt crisis/episodes remains a crucial challenge for many countries, including Asia. Current literature on debt has mostly ignored the role of politics, an important underpinning of sovereign debt. This study explores the relationship between political factors and debt distress through a case study of Sri Lanka's 2022-2023 debt crisis. Using this case, the study aims to identify if political factors (such as the quality of institutions, type of political system, geopolitical dynamics like the emergence of China as a global donor) had an impact on the recent debt crisis. The study deploys a qualitative case study approach with semi-structured interviews and document analysis as primary data collection methods.

Resisting Resource Grabs: Prey Lang Community Network in Cambodia

Bunny Yorth, Massey University

In the context of intensifying authoritarianism and environmental degradation across Southeast Asia, grassroots movements confront urgent questions about how to sustain resistance. This paper examines environmental social movements through the case of the Prey Lang Community Network (PLCN) in Cambodia. Since the early 2000s, PLCN has brought together Indigenous and local communities to contest deforestation, illegal logging, land enclosures, mining, and resource grabs affecting the 500,000-hectare Prey Lang forest

(literally meaning “Our Forest”). Drawing on narrative interviews, this paper explores the significant personal histories and activist trajectories of the PLCN members, tracing their experiences, challenges, and opportunities over two decades. The study traces how their emotional attachments to land and forest sustain mobilization under political repression.

4C Creative Arts and Music

The Making, Anchoring, and Reassuring of "Meaninglessness": A Critical Multimodal Discourse Analysis of Chinese Dance Drama The Eternal Radio Waves

Zhenxing Jiang, Massey University

This study offers a critical discourse analysis, through the lens of modal affordances, of a Chinese dance drama The Eternal Radio Waves, including a detailed scrutiny of one segment, Song of the Fishermen. This segment, differing from the overall performance which conveys overt political messages, pays little apparent attention to storytelling or delivering political narratives, and has been described by some audiences as meaningless, useless, and abrupt. However, this segment has become the most popular part of the performance. The study examines the use of modes and their affordances in the making, anchoring, and reassuring of “meaninglessness” in Song of the Fishermen. Through post-Marxist discourse theory, it argues that this apparently meaningless segment functions as a heterogeneous element detached from, but articulated with, the performance’s overarching political identity. The paper concludes that Fishermen’s “meaninglessness” is afforded by extensive use of dance, while its implicit political undertones are firmly anchored by prevalent nodal points constructed by antagonistic storytelling charged with distinct emotional investment.

Decontextualization and recontextualization of Bimox ritual music in the music practice of Yi singer-songwriters in Liangshan Autonomous Prefecture, Sichuan Province, China

Chaowei Ji, Victoria University of Wellington

Bimox ritual music has historically been central to Yi religious and cultural life, functioning in exorcism, blessing, and funeral rites. However, in contemporary Liangshan, Yi singer-songwriters increasingly incorporate Bimox musical elements into popular music, leading to decontextualization and recontextualization. This paper examines how these musicians utilize digital sampling to creatively repurpose ritual sounds, shifting their meanings from sacred contexts to expressions of cultural memory and identity negotiation. Drawing on interviews and textual analysis, the study explores how the transformation of Bimox music challenges conventional boundaries between sacred and secular, ritual and entertainment, heritage and innovation. By situating this transformation within broader discourses on musical hybridity, cultural sustainability, and indigenous modernity, the research sheds light on how local traditions negotiate identity and authenticity in an era of global cultural flows.

Metal and Mantra: Reimagining Buddhist Ritual through Death Metal in Contemporary Taiwan

Hsuan-Chen Lin, Victoria University of Wellington

This presentation explores how the Taiwanese band Dharma reimagines Buddhist ritual through the sonic and aesthetic language of death metal. Founded in 2018, Dharma integrates scripture-based lyrics, Buddhist chanting, and ritual symbolism with distorted guitars, guttural vocals, and high-intensity rhythmic structures. While such sonic practices may appear incompatible with traditional Buddhist values of peace and stillness,

they align with Mahāyāna doctrines of impermanence, karmic suffering, and transcendence—core teachings embedded in Taiwan's religious landscape. Based within my ongoing PhD research on Buddhist music in Taiwan, this paper examines how Dharma draws from historical ritual forms while creatively reassembling them through global extreme music aesthetics. Their performances enact a sonic assemblage that negotiates the shifting boundaries of religious expression—between ritual and entertainment, tradition and innovation, locality and transnational soundscapes. This case study positions Dharma as part of a broader reconfiguration of spiritual expression in Taiwan. Their work sheds light on how ritual adapts within a context shaped by transnational flows, media saturation, and sensory intensification. In doing so, this paper contributes to wider conversations in Asian studies on the evolving dynamics of ritual, embodiment, and sonic practice in contemporary religious life.

Session 4D Digital and Rural Transformations

An Integrated Model of FinTech Adoption for Financial Inclusion in Rural Thailand

Nittaya Khwankaew, Lincoln University

The increasing digitalisation of financial services has enhanced financial inclusion, particularly for vulnerable populations in rural areas. This study examines the determinants of FinTech adoption for financial inclusion in rural Thailand by integrating the Technology Readiness Index (TRI), the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM), and the Theory of Planned Behaviour (TPB). Using Confirmatory Factor Analysis and Structural Equation Modelling, the findings reveal that behavioural intention directly and positively affects FinTech adoption, while attitude influences adoption indirectly through behavioural intention. Perceived usefulness and perceived ease of use significantly affect behavioural intention. Optimism and innovativeness positively influence these perceptions, while discomfort negatively affects perceived ease of use.

Understanding The Livability in Yogyakarta Urban Areas: A Comparative Study

Anggi Rahajeng, Universitas Gadjah Mada

The agglomeration of Yogyakarta development leads to the transformation of the surrounding areas. Spatial population concentration moves toward the polycentric city in the Yogyakarta urban area. Thus, an evaluation of urban agglomeration may assist in planning more livable and sustainable cities. This study modifies and applies an evaluation system indicator that is frequently used in global urban planning to measure the livability of a city of Yogyakarta urban area (Yogyakarta City, Sleman Regency and Bantul Regency). Objective and subjective approaches are used to calculate the livability index. Objective indicators based on secondary data are analyzed using the entropy method while residential preference is investigated using the Analytical Hierarchy Process. A triangulation approach is provided to achieve a comprehensive analysis of livability among areas. Environmental considerations are ecologically important in sustainable and livable urban development, and are therefore integrated within the evaluation framework. Results are expected to provide recommendations for urban planning and environmental management in the Yogyakarta Urban Area.

Reshaping Institutions: Collective Action Through Uncertainties

Malathi Rambodagedara, Massey University

Grounded in a critical institutional lens, this presentation argues that local institutions of Sri Lanka's small-scale communal irrigation systems are continuously reshaped through everyday social interactions and shifting

socio-ecological dynamics. Past collective action arrangements have been fragmentally passed down, and a complex interplay of past and new arrangements blurs the boundaries of collective action. Close-knit social bonds and collective commoning practices are gradually weakening amid contemporary uncertainties. Institutional actors play an important role in navigating the institutional landscape and blending existing institutional elements in creative ways. However, in-depth field research reveals a darker side to institutional bricolage as power asymmetries and inequalities lead to resource governance conflicts and collective action dilemmas, which may steer institutions in unfavourable directions.

4E Postcolonial Mobility and Asian Identities on Screen (PANEL) Dr Hee-seung Irene Lee

Asia's colonial history, intertwined with modernity, spurred population movements that reshaped racial, ethnic, and cultural identities through imperialist frameworks. Postcolonial nations, entangled in Cold War ideologies, revisited colonial experiences in cultural productions. This panel examines (post)colonial mobility's impact on Asian identities through screen media.

'Comfort Women' Reframed as Mata Hari: Postcolonial Cold War Memory in Korean TV Drama <Eyes of Dawn(1991–1992)>

Hyun Gyung Kim, Seoul Women's University

This presentation examines the South Korean television drama <Eyes of Dawn (1991–1992)> to explore how the memory of "comfort women" has been reconstructed within the postcolonial Cold War context. Set against the backdrop of South Korea's democratization and the first public testimony of a former comfort woman, the drama reframes gendered victimhood by tracing the complex mobility of its female protagonist, Yeo-ok. Her journey across colonial and Cold War landscapes—from colonial Gyeongseong to U.S.-occupied Seoul and revolutionary Jeju—illustrates how women's forced and strategic movements were entangled with broader geopolitical forces. By analyzing how <Eyes of Dawn> both reflects and challenges the archetype of the Cold War femme fatale, this presentation argues that the drama offers a critical site where colonial legacies and Cold War memory structures continue to reshape the historical imagination. Ultimately, this case study highlights how postcolonial mobility and gendered agency intersect in the cultural remembrance of imperial violence.

The Birth of the Post-colonial Zombie: The First Korean Zombie Movie, <A Monstrous Corpse (1980)>, and the Im/possibility of Translating Western Modernity

Juyeon Bae, Sogang University

The current K-Zombie genre plays a major role in the global success of Korean popular culture, featuring spectacular visuals and fast-paced action that position South Korea at the forefront of global media capital. However, the first Korean zombie film, <A Monstrous Corpse (1980)>, contrasts sharply with today's polished K-Zombie content. It was an unauthorized, pirated adaptation of the Italian-Spanish film <Let Sleeping Corpses Lie (1974)>, which critiques industrialization and environmental degradation in Western society. In 1980s South Korea, however, the conditions for such a critique were absent: the country was still in the midst of state-led industrialization. The Korean version reimagines the zombie outbreak as the result of experiments conducted by an American laboratory, with a Taiwanese scientist serving as a symbolic counterpoint. This adaptation shifts the original's anti-capitalist message into a postcolonial framework, revealing the complexities and tensions involved in translating Western modernity into a Korean context.

Two Faces, Two Worlds: Postcolonial Mobility in <The Sympathizer> and its HBO Adaptation

Hee-seung Irene Lee, University of Auckland

Viet Thanh Nguyen's <The Sympathizer (2015)> follows a nameless, mixed-race narrator whose dual loyalties and hybrid identity reflect the complexities of postcolonial mobility. Educated in the U.S., trained by the CIA, and serving in South Vietnam's secret police, the Captain embodies both French colonial legacies and East-West cultural fusion. As a Communist double agent with "two faces and two minds," he challenges dominant U.S. narratives about Vietnam and amplifies the silenced voices of enemies, victims, and refugees. Korean auteur Park Chan-wook—executive producer, showrunner, and director of HBO's 2024 adaptation—is known for exploring hybrid identities and internal conflict in works like <Joint Security Area>, <Thirst>, and <Decision to Leave>. This presentation examines how Park's adaptation deepens the novel's exploration of the narrator's "weakness for sympathizing," portraying a protagonist who navigates and critiques a bipolar world shaped by colonial histories. Park's vision brings new emphasis to the transcultural tensions that define the postcolonial Asian experience.

"An Immigrant Mentality is Where We're All Headed": The Trajectory of Korean Diasporic Cinema

Ji-yoon An University of British Columbia

When Celine Song's semi-autobiographical <Past Lives (2023)> premiered at Sundance, it was met with critical acclaim for its modest restraint and subtle beauty. However, upon its global release, social media responses—especially among Asian American viewers—revealed deep dissatisfaction, criticizing the film's embrace of the "model minority" immigrant narrative, epitomized by lines like "Korea is too small a country for your ambition." Critics such as Ian Wang noted that while the characters are Asian American, they emphasize their Americanness, raising concerns about authenticity and white hegemony. This divergence in critical and public reception highlights key tensions in diasporic cinema today. Sylvia Shin Huey Chong suggests that the category of Asian American cinema is becoming obsolete in a "post-racial" era, where such films are simultaneously desired for representation and disavowed for avoiding racial specificity. While <Past Lives> appears to fit this pattern, I argue that its ambivalence reflects an evolving diasporic identity shaped by postcolonial modernity. Through this lens, <Past Lives> reveals not a failure, but a new phase in diasporic cinematic expression.

4F Modern History and Literature

The Counter-Enlightenment Petitioning of Shimazu Hisamitsu

Amin Ghadimi, University of Osaka

Popular petitioning of the Meiji government marked a major development in early Meiji political culture. However, the Meiji government was not the only target; local actors across Japan, inspired by a petition from Kagoshima strongman Shimazu Hisamitsu, began submitting petitions to him instead of the central state. The Meiji government viewed this political movement around Shimazu as a grave threat. This presentation offers the first major English reading of the petitions to Shimazu Hisamitsu, identifying common concerns, including the perceived collapse of public morality due to a corrupt West, the problem of modern knowledge amid the erosion of tradition, and the perceived glory of a factitious past. The presentation argues that the petitioning of Shimazu signaled the rise of what should be called a popular counter-enlightenment movement in the early Meiji era, which reverberated for decades thereafter.

Mission for Empire: Koizumi Ikuko and Japanese Christian Women during the Sino-Japanese Conflict of the 1930s

Yanjie Li, University of Auckland

This paper examines the life and activism of Koizumi Ikuko (1892–1964), a Japanese Protestant missionary whose case exemplifies the complex roles Japanese Christian women assumed during the Sino-Japanese conflict of the 1930s. Educated in the United States (1922–1930), Koizumi developed a Christian feminist vision. Upon returning to Japan, she advocated for women's participation in peace initiatives. In 1935, she moved to China and joined a network of Japanese Protestant women engaged in peace advocacy, cultural exchange, and social reform at institutions like Airinkan (Hall of Neighbourly Love). Their work revealed how humanitarian efforts were embedded within Japan's imperial system. The study explores how Koizumi adapted her feminist ideals amid rising tensions, her vision for Japan's presence in China, and the role she ascribed to Japanese women in that process. The research argues that through such reform initiatives, these women redefined feminist ideals in ways that ultimately served Japan's colonial dominance in wartime China.

Sino-British Romance in the 1920s: Lao She's Fictional Portrayal and the Reality

Chi Sum Garfield Lau, Hong Kong Metropolitan University

Sino-British relations in the 1920s were marked by confrontation between the young Chinese Republican government and imperialist Britain. British nationals believed in the civilization of their Empire and viewed the Chinese race as savages. In this era, Lao She considers the possibility of having Sino-British romance and conjugal relations in his novel Mr Ma and Son (1929). The paper adopts an interdisciplinary approach combining textual analysis with an assessment of how diplomatic relations and legislative measures affected Sino-British interraciality in fiction and reality. Attention will be paid to the features of Sino-British diplomacy that gave rise to xenophobia and derogatory perceptions of the Chinese, dissecting how institutional policies might affect personal acts or choice of actions.

5A Modern Literature

The Image of Girls in Chinese Fiction During the Republican Era

Yiwen Li, University of Sydney

The finding of the children is a significant literary theme in contemporary Chinese literature and a crucial means by which intellectuals in the Republic of China strive to construct a contemporary sense of national identity. The academic community has progressively paid more attention to images of children and women, but the topic of how children and women were discovered and constructed by modern literature, with "girls" as the key thread, has not been completely explored. This research will examine how girls are portrayed in novels written during the Republican era to better understand their survival and mental state. Using close reading, literary theory, and historical context, this study will examine how the image of the girl in literature reflects the social and cultural background of the Republic of China and how intellectuals sought to create a new nation through these representations.

A Japanese Woman Writer in Borneo: Revisiting Wartime Responsibility in Kirino Natsuo's _Nanika aru_(2008-9)

Michiko Suzuki, University of California, Davis

Kirino Natsuo (b. 1951), known for thrillers such as Out (1997), has also produced novels that rewrite the lives of canonical Japanese authors. This talk discusses Nanika aru (Something is there, 2008-9) in which Kirino imagines the secret life of bestselling female author Hayashi Fumiko (1903-51), focusing particularly on her wartime sojourn in Borneo. During 1942-1943, prominent Japanese women writers were sent to the "South" (Nanpō) to report about the "positive" influences of the Japanese Empire. In Nanika aru, Kirino creates a complex tale borrowing heavily from Hayashi's life and full of historically accurate details about imperial policies. By overlaying fiction with non-fiction, Kirino reassesses Hayashi's reputation as an author who actively contributed to the war effort, exploring both her complicity and victimhood. The novel invites readers to think about individual agency and desire expressed under extreme state surveillance and within the logic of imperialism and colonialism.

Body, Mind, and Soul?: The Physical and the Metaphysical in the Fiction of Mishima Yukio and Murakami Haruki

Jonathan Dil, Keio University

Jonathan Dil Mishima Yukio and Murakami Haruki are very different writers who share a commitment to the physical as a means of sustaining the mental. Mishima pursued this through kendo and bodybuilding, while Murakami did so through running and triathlons. Both suggest a distinction between physical pain and mental suffering, implying that mastery of the mind can be cultivated through discipline of the body. Alongside this physical focus, both authors engage deeply with metaphysical questions shaped by Buddhist thought. Mishima's The Sea of Fertility tetralogy draws directly on Yuiishiki (Mind-Only) Buddhism, which addresses reincarnation in a world without a permanent self by positing a storehouse consciousness (ālaya-vijñāna) where karmic "seeds" persist. Murakami explores similar ideas in Hard-Boiled Wonderland and the End of the World (1985), where identity, memory, and the soul are portrayed as divided and uncertain. This paper explores the shared arc in both authors' lives and works: from physical practices that shape the body and ground the mind, to metaphysical speculations on what, if anything, survives after death.

5B Gender and Politics

Indonesian Female Migrant Workers' Stories of Freedom, Constraints, and Imaginations in the Gendered Labor Migration System

Asma Nabila, University of Auckland

This paper explores the lived experiences of Indonesian female migrant workers (FMWs). Recognizing that FMWs significantly contribute to the country and their households through remittances while facing multiple forms of discrimination, this research rejects the simplistic binary view of women's mobility as only opportunities or constraints. Drawing on theories critiquing the sexist and racist values embedded in transnational labour migration, the paper adopts a decolonial feminist epistemology to contextualize the historical, patriarchal, and hierarchical processes underpinning Indonesia's contemporary labour migration regime. Using in-depth interviews, the study emphasizes amplifying FMWs' voices and everyday lived experiences as critical epistemic resources. These perspectives will navigate the work toward decolonizing practice, including (1) challenging elitist concepts of legitimate voices; (2) rejecting mainstream state

narratives that depict FMWs as passive victims; and (3) amplifying their hopes and imaginations as crucial sources for informing solutions for a more just human mobility.

Local Context of Gender Quotas in Asia: The Case Study of Regional Politics in Nepal

Makiko Habazaki, R Professional University of Rehabilitation, Japan

In Nepal, gender quotas have been introduced by law to ensure a certain number of women participate in political sectors as part of inclusive democracy, giving Nepal one of the highest ratios of female parliamentarians in Asia. The local election law requires political parties to nominate a woman candidate for either village head or deputy head. In the 2022 local elections, 12,637 women were elected as ward assembly members (51.5% of the total). However, among women in leadership, there were only 61 women among 6,168 ward chairpersons, 9 women among 223 mayors, and 11 women among 438 rural municipalities chairpersons. In contrast, there were 174 women among 222 deputy mayors and 315 women among 437 vice chairpersons in rural municipalities. This situation confirms that even with gender quotas, a political power gap between men and women exists in Nepal. This paper examines the current state of women's participation in local politics and local gender quota based on interview data with female mayors and deputy mayors.

Demographic Desires, Eco-Fascist Fantasies, and Demography as a Science in India and Aotearoa

Dr. Nayantara Sheoran Appleton, Victoria University of Wellington

Demographic governance of the past used a development narrative for the global south as justification for reproductive injustices towards women. This developmentist focus has been replaced by the rhetorical move to attach the climate crisis to population size. Even some well-meaning feminists have supported this anti-natalism, leading to stringent criticism from critical feminist scholars. The connection between absolute population size and climate change is used to allow for the continuation of eugenics ideas concerning population management in the south and, second, for subterfuge that distracts from extractive economic systems resulting in unprecedented concentration of wealth. This paper adopts a feminist Science and Technology Studies (STS) lens to examine similarities and divergences in how narratives about populations circulate and co-construct evidence supporting ecofascist fantasies in and about India and Aotearoa.

5C Language and Identity

Language, Belonging, and Bias: Filipino Diaspora Identity in Aotearoa

Janet Hope Tauro Batuigas, De La Salle University Manila and Nelson Marlborough Institute of Technology

This paper explores the complex relationship between language, belonging, and bias within the Filipino diaspora in Aotearoa New Zealand. Filipinos are one of the fastest-growing migrant communities, and Tagalog has emerged as one of the top five most spoken languages in the country, marking demographic growth and cultural resilience. Despite this visibility, Filipino migrants often encounter subtle racism and unconscious bias in social interactions, workplace dynamics, and institutional settings, where cultural difference can lead to exclusion or stereotyping. Language becomes a site of negotiation—a source of pride and identity, but also a trigger for marginalization. The paper argues for a deeper understanding of how linguistic diversity intersects with social equity and how acknowledging these dynamics is essential for confronting the future of multiculturalism in Aotearoa.

Claiming and un-claiming: Dialogues between Korean ethnic and non-Korean ethnic on North Korea

Jinah Lee and Richard Lawrence, University of Waikato

This study explores cross-cultural dialogues on North Korea (The Democratic People's Republic of Korea) between a non-Korean expert with extensive experiential knowledge and a South Korean academic with limited field expertise, using a duo-ethnographic approach. It examines how ethnic identity and cultural knowledge are negotiated in conversations designing a student workshop. The research addresses two questions: 1) Does ethnic identity inherently confer authority over North Korean culture and issues? 2) How are tensions between experiential and academic knowledge resolved to shape workshop content?. The analysis develops a framework for equitable cross-cultural discussions, emphasising mutual respect and co-created understanding. It reveals that ethnic identity offers valuable perspectives but does not automatically grant knowledge ownership.

Exploring Cultural Heritage and Identity through Heritage Language Practices in Asian Interlingual Families in Aotearoa New Zealand

Yujun Wu, University of Auckland

Immigration experiences reshape how heritage languages and cultural identities are constructed and transmitted within families. This study investigates how Asian interlingual families in New Zealand engage in heritage language use and maintenance as part of their transnational identity construction. Utilizing qualitative interviews and questionnaires with parents from seven diverse Asian backgrounds, the research identifies key intersections among immigration experiences, cultural heritage transmission, and identity negotiation. The analysis reveals that parents actively manage language practices to maintain cultural connections across generations, while navigating practical challenges. Heritage language use becomes central to expressing identity and belonging, even when dominant societal pressures toward English exist. The findings highlight the need for policies and community initiatives that recognize and support heritage language maintenance as integral to cultural identity and transnational family cohesion.

Voice of the Margins in Northeast Asia: Issues in Communicating Evenki Cultural Products in the Chinese Context

Chao Guan, Victoria University of Wellington

The Evenki, a branch of Tungus people speaking the endangered Evenki language, face essential challenges in maintaining linguistic vitality and cultural representation. In the Chinese context, past cultural products like the novel The Last Quarter of the Moon and the movie The Last Shaman of East Evenki enhanced the visibility of Evenki culture under a Han-centric lens but revealed issues of cultural appropriation and misrepresentation. This study investigates current issues in communicating Evenki cultural products, aiming to propose more representative, sustainable communication strategies. Utilizing interviews with Evenks in China and critical textual analysis, it explores how limited resources and commercial pressures affected authentic cultural expressions. Findings indicate that literary works with thick depiction have effectively represented the Evenki language and culture and resonated with the Evenks. However, cinematic portrayals—even with cultural consultation—have led to community dissatisfaction and limited effectiveness in cultural representation. The research stresses the urgent necessity of more accurate, community-centred representations, avoiding over-conflation of Evenki identity with other communities.

Session 5D Tourism

Financing Community-Based Tourism Enterprises

Ye Myo Htet, University of Canterbury

Community-Based Tourism Enterprises (CBTEs) are crucial for local development but often struggle with financial instability due to institutional, economic, and operational challenges. This study investigates how CBTEs in Thailand access financial resources, the barriers they face, and strategies for overcoming these constraints. Using a sequential exploratory mixed-methods design, the research involves three phases: (1) a systematic literature review using the TCCM framework to explore financial enablers and barriers; (2) applying institutional theory to a multiple-case study of three CBTEs in Northern Thailand, analyzing data from observations, documents, and interviews; and (3) a survey of 385 CBT entrepreneurs across Thailand utilizing multivariate analysis to reveal access patterns. The study proposes an adaptive financial framework aligned with policy, social expectations, and sustainability, offering tailored insights for entrepreneurs, policymakers, and financial institutions.

No Man Ever Steps in the Same Hanoi Twice: How the Transformation of Place Influences Place Attachment and Its Dimensions Through the Lens of Cultural Values, Social Norms, and Personal Attitudes – A Story of Hanoi, Vietnam

Hana Hoa Nguyen-Quynh, University of Canterbury

This study explores place attachment and its dimensions under the lens of cultural values, social norms, and personal attitudes transformation in Hanoi, Vietnam. In-depth semi-structured interviews were conducted with 41 participants among local-born residents, domestic migrants, and tourists. The study reveals generational cultural conflicts and group-based differences due to place attachment's various dimensions, reflecting the place transformation over wartime, subsidy periods, and rapid economic development. The collectivist culture context of Hanoi highlights the role of a sense of responsibility and a sense of community in shaping the sense of place attachment, where people feel happiness in giving, mutual support, value recognition, and well-being.

Analysis of the embedding path and mechanism of Chinese cultural and tourism capital going to the countryside - Taking Y Village in Ji'an City as an example

Xi Jiang, Jiangxi University of Finance and Economics

Under the strategic backdrop of rural revitalization in China, the influx of cultural tourism capital into rural areas has emerged as a vital pathway to activate rural development momentum. However, its embeddedness process faces dual tensions of "disembedding" and "over-embedding". Utilizing embeddedness theory, this study examines Village Y in Ji'an City, Jiangxi Province, proposing a three-phase embedding mechanism: "organizational-relational-structural" integration for rural cultural tourism capital. During the organizational embedding phase, local governments act as authoritative intermediaries. The relational embedding phase focuses on land transfer and employment relationships, forming interest-driven social network interactions. The structural embedding phase achieves deep integration of capital logic and rural values through creative transformation of cultural capital. Sustainable embedding requires adherence to the "dual checks and balances" principle: establishing government-led supervision to constrain capital's profit-seeking impulses, while implementing contractual governance to ensure equitable benefit distribution.

Session 5E Modern Korean Culture

Korean Victimhood and Intergenerational Responsibility

Kina, Kunz, Eberhard Karls University of Tübingen

Contested war memories and competitive victimhood shape Japan-South Korea (Korea) relations. This research draws on public opinion surveys and in-depth interviews to explore the perspectives of young Koreans, focusing on the channels through which historical narratives are perpetuated, their views regarding Japan and intergenerational responsibility, and their memories of the Colonial Period and the Asia-Pacific War. The most important channels in disseminating historical narratives were education, news, and visual media. Young Koreans compartmentalise their perceptions of Japan; they have more positive views of Japan's people and culture than older generations but maintain an unfavourable perception of Japan's government. Themes of victimhood were strong in young Koreans' historical memory, suggesting generational shifts alone will not improve Korea-Japan relations. Interviewees valued education the most and additional compensation the least for resolving history issues.

The Shifting Landscape of Suicide in South Korea: Generational Differences in Attitudes Towards Suicide

Cayla Taljaard, Victoria University of Wellington

This paper examines generational differences in attitudes toward suicide in South Korea. Older generations tend to frame suicide through traditional Confucian values, emphasizing honour, familial duty, and moral failure, reflecting Durkheim's concepts of altruistic and egoistic suicide. Younger South Koreans increasingly interpret suicide as a response to systemic marginalisation, economic precarity, and existential disillusionment, aligning with Durkheim's anomic and fatalistic suicide types. By using Joiner's Interpersonal Psychological Theory, the study illuminates the perceived burdensomeness and thwarted belongingness experienced by both generations. The paper argues that suicide prevention must account for generationally distinct experiences of belonging, self-worth, and structural constraints to develop more effective and culturally sensitive interventions.

Resonant Voices in the Work of Park Soo-nam: Life, Film, and Resistance in <Voice of the Silenced>

Hee-Seung Irene Lee, University of Auckland

This presentation introduces Voice of the Silenced, a documentary co-directed by Zainichi Korean filmmaker Park Soo-nam and her daughter Park Ma-ui. The film documents the lives of Korean victims of Japanese colonialism—including atomic bomb survivors, forced laborers, and "comfort women"—by bringing together archival footage, testimony, and intergenerational reflection. The presentation explores how the documentary blurs the boundary between filmmaker and subject, as Park Soo-nam is both a chronicler and an active participant whose life and activism are embedded in the narrative. Her daughter's role adds a second layer of reflection, turning the film into a multi-voiced testimony across generations. Focusing on the director's life-long dedication, the argument is that the film exemplifies how documentary practice can serve as political witnessing and decolonial remembrance, inviting a rethinking of the ethics of representation and film's transformative power in making historical trauma visible.

Session 5F New Zealand- Asian Histories

Voices Across Boundaries: The 1872 Chinese Petitions and Judicial Resistance in Aotearoa New Zealand

Guosheng Xie, Victoria University of Wellington

In 1872, the Chinese community on the South Island of New Zealand organized a large-scale petition to protest the actions of a local Warden, claiming he had demonstrated “serious bias” in his rulings, repeatedly harming the interests of Chinese miners. The petition emphasized that Chinese immigrants had long been law-abiding and diligent in gold mining and trade. Notably, 527 Chinese residents signed the petition, highlighting its organized nature. The petition requested the Warden’s removal but was unsuccessful. This incident is a case of legitimate resistance, highlighting the active defense and self-protection of the Chinese community in 19th-century New Zealand. It also reveals the unequal power structure in the conflict between immigrant and colonial judicial systems.

A Japanese Diplomat in New Zealand

Rowena Ward, University of Newcastle, Australia

In January 1938, Vice Consul Nakafuji Namio arrived in New Zealand to establish a Japanese Consulate in Wellington, accompanied by his wife and daughter. His family returned to Japan in April 1941. From their departure until 8 December 1941, Nakafuji lived alone in his residence. On the outbreak of war, in accordance with diplomatic norms, Nakafuji was placed under house arrest, cutting all communications with the outside world. Until he was transferred to Australia to await exchange, his contact was limited to Army personnel and representatives of the Protecting Power, which negatively impacted his wellbeing. There has been no prior research into Nakafuji’s case. This presentation considers Nakafuji as an example of what happens to enemy diplomats on the outbreak of war, especially when they live alone.

Japanese Social Reformists’ Reflections of New Zealand, 1925-1960

Shin Takahashi, Victoria University of Wellington

This paper examines three books on New Zealand written by Japanese social reformists: New Countries—New Zealand and Australia (1925) by Namae Takayuki; New Zealand—the Southern Eutopia (1942) by Kawase Isamu; and Five Women Going to New Zealand (1962) edited by Sato Teru. Written across different times (pre-war, wartime, and post-war), their illustrations highlight various aspects of the country as seen by the Japanese, who sought to observe and experience alternative ways of life. The biographical approach reveals broader implications of their work as historical and comparative texts about the two island countries that started their journeys largely as modern agrarian nations around the same period. The author argues that these books on New Zealand must be read as critical primary sources documenting Japanese reformists' thoughts, actions, and social capital, which spanned a transimperial scale, challenging the institutional and social norms of their country at the time.

Session 6A Asian Arts and Cultures

Talking About Sinitic Poetry in Early Modern Japan: Shiwa/Shihua as a Regional Genre

Matthew Fraleigh, Brandeis University

Like their counterparts elsewhere in Sinographic Asia, Japanese Sinitic poets have authored extensive prose reflections on writing poetry that are known as shiwa 詩話, or “remarks on poetry.” Shiwa flourished mainly during Japan’s early modern period, but the genre is both capacious and heterogeneous. Representative shiwa may combine features of a theoretical treatise, an anthology of noteworthy poems, a primer for aspiring poets, a survey of the poetic scene, or a desultory commentary on various aspects of poetic practice. While Japan-based scholars have long regarded individual works in the shiwa category as essential basic materials for researching Japan’s Sinitic literary traditions, they have undertaken surprisingly little systematic consideration of Japanese shiwa texts as a category. In fact, much of the research on Japanese shiwa in recent years has been pursued by scholars based outside of Japan, writing in languages other than Japanese. These include numerous comparatively oriented scholars publishing in Chinese who have considered Japanese shiwa in comparison with Chinese shihua and Korean sihwa. This talk introduces the principal features of Japanese shiwa, highlighting the diversity of the category while also exploring the value of reading individual works as part of a regionally legible genre.

Before Chanoyu: Musō Soseki and His Chinese World

Zixi Chen, University of Canterbury

Chanoyu, or Japanese Tea Ceremony, which developed in the medieval period of Japan (1185-1600), forms an essential part of Japanese cultural history. Its standard history describes it as something peculiar to Japan and, as a result, much research has been directed to its development in the Japanese context and the contributions made by leading Japanese tea practitioners. However, many of the ideas and forms of chanoyu have historical roots in China, to which little scholarly attention has been drawn.

To explore how chanoyu artists absorbed and integrated Chinese elements with their practice, it is necessary to trace the sources of their ideas. The ‘National Teacher’ Musō Soseki (1275-1351), a renowned Zen master, poet, and garden designer, was a key cultural figure of the medieval period and, like many Japanese intellectuals of his day, proficient in Chinese language and culture. This paper describes how records show that Soseki had an intimate affiliation with the advent of making tea in a ceremonial manner in Japanese history and that his life and works evidence important ideas adopted from China which became integrated into chanoyu practice after his time.

Sounding the Past: The Morin Khuur and Cultural Continuity in Mongolia

Yuwei Jing, Victoria University of Wellington

The morin khuur stands as the most emblematic traditional bowed string instrument of the Mongolian people, deeply rooted in the pastoral nomadic culture of the steppes. Its distinctive horse-head design and rich, resonant tones reflect not only reverence for the horse but also profound cultural symbolism. In performance, Mongolians often associate the instrument with the spirit of the Mongolian horse, expressing values of strength, freedom, and endurance. This symbolism reinforces ethnic identity and a deep connection to pastoral life, where the horse remains central to both economy and culture.

This study explores the multifaceted roles of the morin khuur in Mongolian society through fieldwork, interviews, and musical analysis. It reveals how the instrument bridges tradition and modernity, acting as both a symbol of identity and a medium for cultural transmission. The morin khuur continues to play a vital role in rituals, festivals, education, and media, adapting across historical periods while responding to broader social

and cultural shifts. By tracing its transformation, the research offers insight into how cultural forms endure and evolve amid contemporary challenges in Inner Mongolia.

Session 6B Politics and Policy

Beyond Debt Trap Diplomacy: An Analysis of Colombo Port City (CPC) Project in Sri Lanka

Asha Lanka, University of Auckland

Colombo Port City (CPC) is one of the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) projects that demonstrates China's strategic blend of economic investment and geopolitical influence in the Indian Ocean. While existing scholarship has examined China's "debt-trap diplomacy" in ports like Hambantota or Gwadar, fewer studies critically analyze how CPC's unique urban-development model connects with Sri Lanka's domestic economic priorities and local social dynamics. This paper addresses this gap by analyzing CPC as a space where China's vision of a "maritime Silk Road hub" handles Sri Lanka's aspirations for post-crisis recovery and regional connectivity. The study employs qualitative case study analysis, combining document analysis of CPC agreements and reports with discourse analysis of Sri Lankan and Chinese media sources. Based on the Dependency Theory, it investigates whether the CPC reinforces asymmetric power relations or enables Sri Lanka through renegotiated terms. From a Sri Lankan perspective, this research contributes to the debate on how small states navigate great-power investments. Preliminary findings suggest that CPC's impacts pivot not on Chinese investment alone but on Sri Lanka's ability to control the project for equitable growth while attracting FDI. These insights contribute to broader debates about how global south countries can balance sovereignty with infrastructure funding.

The Belt, the Road, and the Island: Exploring China's Rising Influence in the Pacific Island Countries from the Perspective of Strategic Narratives

Jing Wang, University of Auckland

The 21st century has been a growing focus on the dissemination of persuasive strategic narratives to secure support for foreign policy, both domestically and internationally. The growing recognition of this the epoch of narrative power in international politics is reflected in the fact that political actors around the worldwide participate in narrative-based communication. As a discursive tool playing a significant role in competition among great powers, strategic narratives comprise a form of storytelling that integrates recourse, shapes perceptions, and fights for interests. Accordingly, the Chinese government has recently consistently emphasized “telling China’s story well.” China’s rise is undeniably one of the most significant stories of this century. However, the way in which this story is narrated remains unexplored. This study addresses this topic by investigating power in China’s strategic narratives, an essential element of its activities. Addressing this gap, the three main questions of this study include: As a political actor, what is the content of China’s strategic narratives regarding the PICs? How are these strategic narratives formed and projected? How effective is the reception of these strategic narratives by the PICs?

Sixteen Years of Listening to the Voices of Vietnamese Citizens: Considerations for a Modern State

Thanh-Huyen Do, United Nations Development Programme

Initiated in 2009, Viet Nam’s PAPI offers a unique, long-term view of local governance through citizen feedback. This presentation highlights PAPI’s role in capturing evolving citizen experiences and perceptions,

focusing on rights, service delivery, and accountability. By surveying thousands annually, PAPI yields data for trend analysis and improvement. Utilizing this data, the presentation examines shifts in citizen evaluations, focusing on policy reforms and socio-economic changes. It explores the link between feedback and public administration improvements, showing PAPI's impact on policy. Analyzing 16 years of engagement reveals the government-constituent relationship, offering insights into participatory governance and service delivery. This presentation underscores PAPI's significance in promoting accountability and responsiveness in Viet Nam's developing context.

Session 6C Urban Environments

Spatial inequality: Microspatial occupation phenomenon in Hong Kong and Chongqing

Siyuan Chen, Massey University

Hong Kong and Chongqing, as important migrant cities in China, have attracted huge amount of foreign migrants and rural migrants. In the capital-dominated city, a similar and unique spatial phenomenon has emerged - foreign domestic workers and bang bang, representatives of the marginalized groups in both cities, who temporarily and periodically occupy public places for gathering and socializing, and create informal spaces flexibly. This microspatial phenomenon has gradually developed since the reform and opening policy in China and the beginning of labour export in the Philippines since 1970s, and it still exists today. However, it has never been researched from the perspective of spatial injustice. Therefore, this study aims to sort out the relevant studies in the spatial justice and combine with the public place occupation phenomenon to propose the necessity of investigating spatial injustice from a micro perspective. I argue that the spatial phenomenon, as a social action and a social reality, is an important aspect of reflecting individual agency and social structure, and that this dialectical, intertwined relationship should not be obscured by macronarratives alone.

Street-Level Perspectives on Philippine Digital Transformation Policy Implementation: Integrating the Multiple Streams Framework and Bureaucratic Discretion

Ditta Mae Siena-De Guzman, The University of Auckland

This paper explores digital transformation policy implementation in the Philippines by integrating the Multiple Streams Framework (MSF) with street-level bureaucracy theory. While digital transformation has become a central pillar in governance reform, policy implementers continue to face challenges, including limited infrastructure, capacity gaps, and the ambiguity of "digital transformation" itself. Drawing on case studies from the education, justice, and local government sectors in the Philippines, the analysis reveals how components of the MSF and street-level bureaucracy align with Philippine digital policy implementation. This study argues for a synthesized framework that captures both macro-level policy dynamics (via MSF) and micro-level implementation realities (via street-level bureaucracy). By understanding how past digital reforms were shaped not just by agenda-setting but by street-level experiences, this paper offers a grounded perspective on building more inclusive, adaptive, and context-sensitive digital governance in the Philippines.

Accessing Hallyu in a neoliberal, post-postcolonial India: A post-structural ethnography of how fan experiences differ based on their identity matrix

Garima Bisht

Hallyu, or the Korean Cultural Wave, has seen immense popularity in India since the COVID-19 pandemic. Indians consume the various accoutrements associated with K-culture, like K-pop, K-dramas, K-beauty, K-fashion, and K-food. However, the consumption of this K-culture is informed by the positionality matrix of Hallyu's fans and consumers. Indian fans of K-culture negotiate and navigate their fandom within their social realities, which leads to several negotiations just to express their love without severely disturbing their habitus.

While doing thematic analysis of the transcripts, I noticed that while everyone accesses K-culture with specific cultural negotiations, there is variation in access based on the socio-economic class and sociocultural identities. While some participants can fly to South Korea with their family to realise their fandom, others express their support with likes and constant streaming. This presentation draws from my PhD research that explores the influence of Hallyu on Indian fans by focusing on their narratives informed by their diverse sociocultural identities, like gender, class, and region. I will bring forth the experiences of Indian fans based on my participant observations at several Korean cultural events and semi-structured interviews.

Cultural and Spatial Character of Chinese Ethnoburbs in Auckland: Experience from Small Business Development

Songming Yang, Massey University

Ethnoburbs are suburban areas characterised by specific ethnic communities, significantly reshaping urban landscapes worldwide. This paper qualitatively examines the cultural and spatial dynamics of Chinese ethnoburbs in Auckland, New Zealand, with a particular focus on the role of small businesses. Employing in-depth interviews, participant observations, and thematic analysis, the study investigates how Chinese migrant entrepreneurs both shape and are shaped by suburban cultural identities and spatial configurations. The findings illustrate that these businesses serve as cultural nodes reinforcing the distinctiveness of ethnoburbs. However, they also generate challenges, including difficulties with social integration and spatial inequalities. This paper contributes new insights into the lived experiences of migrant entrepreneurs and deepens the understanding of the interplay between migration, entrepreneurial practises, and urban development.

Session 6D Migration

Japanese Migrants' Belonging Across Distances: Political Connection to the Homeland

Atsushi Takeda and Andreas Eder-Ramsauer, Ritsumeikan University, University of Vienna

Scholarship on Japanese migrants has flourished in recent decades, highlighting their motivations for migration and their settlement experiences. These studies provide crucial insights into understanding Japanese migration, identifying push and pull factors such as social pressures, cultural aspirations and lifestyles, as well as the obstacles they face in a new country. Despite the growing literature on Japanese migration, little research has examined these migrants' political engagement in their homeland from afar. While there are studies on migrants' involvement in homeland politics, the case of Japanese migrants has not received much attention, despite the large number of Japanese living abroad. This study investigates the transnational political participation of Japanese migrants and examines the factors behind their involvement. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with nine Japanese migrants in Europe. The interview data revealed how they became involved in politics at home and what their transnational political activity means to them.

Navigating Multilingual Heritage: Family Language Policies of Malaysian-Chinese in New Zealand

Phebe Ning Ruoh Ha, University of Auckland

This comparative study investigates how plurilingual Malaysian-Chinese parents—speaking five to six languages, including English, Mandarin, Malay, and various Chinese dialects (e.g., Cantonese, Hokkien)—and their second-generation adolescent children in New Zealand negotiate their family language policy (FLP). A qualitative mixed-method approach, including language portrait tasks, interviews, and home literacy environment observations, is used. Findings show that despite parents' multilingual upbringing and positive attitudes, parents and children perceive multilingualism as a practical tool rather than a heritage and see it as less relevant to their lives in New Zealand. Parents prioritise English and Mandarin for academic, social, and career success in both local and global contexts. Parents' home language practices and ideologies influence their children's language ideologies, language proficiency, and identity construction. Challenges for heritage language maintenance include unsuitable language classes, limited community support, balancing life demands, and adolescents' disinterest in their multilingual heritage. Exploring the experiences of these Southeast Asian heritage families, often included under the broader "Chinese" label, underscores the challenges they face and the importance of strengthening the next generation's personal and ethnocultural identity, enhancing their cultural capital for engaging with a complex and vibrant Asia and diasporic communities.

Silence or Resistance? Understanding Chinese Australians' Perceptions and Responses to Uncivil Discourse in Digital Spaces

Yu Du, Jinan University

Online uncivil discourse is an increasing concern among scholars. Immigrants, due to their distinct life experiences, may have varied perceptions and responses to uncivil discourse compared to the general population. This paper applies the bystander intervention model to explore how Chinese Australians perceive and respond to online incivility. Based on semi-structured, in-depth interviews with Chinese Australians, the findings reveal that while interviewees encountered different online incivility, few actively responded unless being personally targeted. The criteria for identifying incivility varied among interviewees, influencing their decision to engage. Although most acknowledged a responsibility to combat online incivility, they were reluctant to take action, perceiving it as a costly action with limited personal benefit. They were concerned with facing confrontation with perpetrators, becoming involved in unproductive arguments, and damaging relationships with friends. These findings expand our understanding of how immigrants perceive and respond to online incivility.

Session 6E Rethinking China against the grain: perspectives from literature, film, media, artists and artisans (PANEL Part 1) Lorraine Wong and Paola Voci

Our panel examines how cultural practices from diverse contexts, emerging both within and outside the geopolitical borders of the PRC, intersect with hegemonic ideologies, affirm marginalized discourses, enable counter-ideologies, and develop non-national (rather than global or transnational) positionalities. In part 1, we examine the interplay between cinematic violence and main melody film (Junhuan Liu's investigation of the globalization of the China Dream in The Wandering Earth), and re-envisioning of the native place in literary and audiovisual nonfiction (Luo Hui and Paola Voci's critical dialogue on academic writer Liang Hong and social media influencer Li Ziqi, based on their co-authored book project). In part 2, we focus on music and

performative gender constructions (Imogen Walker's study on contemporary singer Zhou Shen), the articulation of revolution in typographic imaginations (Lorraine Wong's analysis Hong Kong typeface makers), and the construction of Chinese women's subjectivity (Linna He's "camera stylo" essay film project).

Across a wide range of cultural practices, China is not only "read against the grain" (Rojas and Sung, 2020), but its core premise opened up and refracted into multiple perspectives. While still recognizable as "China-related", these perspectives foreground other cultural and artistic affinities and take on different social and political urgencies.

"Cosmic salvation and national redemption: the globalization of the China Dream in The Wandering Earth"

Presenter: Junhuan Liu, University of Otago

This presentation explores The Wandering Earth as an example of how Chinese main melody films mobilize cinematic violence and spectacle effects to propagandize the China Dream and construct a world order under China's leadership. Through its sci-fi setting of planetary crisis and human survival, the film succeeds in transforming the narrative of cosmopolitanism to the value system which emphasizes filial piety, collective sacrifice, and national duty, one that coincides the Chinese nationalist perspective. The marginalization of non-Chinese characters and enshrinements of Chinese sacrifice confirm the violence, being planetary destruction or narrative erasure. Drawing on Deleuze's deterritorialization, this presentation argues that The Wandering Earth has produced a critical space where China's borderless futurism paradoxically reaffirms a national essentialism. Such a deterritorialized nationalism extends the emotional and ideological boundary of the China Dream beyond Earth itself. In doing so, The Wandering Earth represents not a break of pure entertainment from state ideology but a global rearticulation of it.

"The (dis)enchanted village: re-envisioning the native place in contemporary Chinese nonfiction and video documentary"

Luo Hui, Victoria University of Wellington and Paola Voci, University of Otago

The native place (xiangtu), or hometown (guxiang), has been a persistent trope in modern Chinese culture, often represented as "a site of authentic values of a larger formation, such as the nation or civilization" (Duara 2000). This joint presentation juxtaposes two distinctive re-envisionings of the native place in contemporary China – Liang Hong's nonfiction trilogy on her native "Liang Village" and Li Ziqi's video blogs about her life in the countryside – to highlight critical and creative interventions on mainstream discourses on rural China. Against the backdrop of news reports and official narratives that frame rural migrant workers as part of a cost-and-benefit analysis within China's global success story, Liang's self-searching "I"-witness accounts of rural disintegration and Li's video re-enchantment of country life exemplify the power and agency of autoethnographic reflexivity and vernacular creativity. Whilst divergent in register, modality and aesthetics, Li's documentaries and Liang's nonfiction share a "nonstory" ethos that resist and reject the imperative to "tell a good China story" through narrative suspension, fragmentation, and poetic ruptures.

Session 6F Drugs and Doctors: Medical History in China and Japan (PANEL) Ellen Nakamura

This panel will explore some of the encounters between Chinese, Japanese and Western medicine in the early modern and modern periods, touching upon popular health care, ethics, and the debates around the use of stimulating drugs.

“Nourishing Life” in Meiji-era Japan: Traditional Philosophies for a New Era

Ellen Nakamura, University of Auckland

During the Meiji era (1868-1912), popular theories of health care in Japan came to be based on an anatomical understanding of the body and modern Western scientific approaches to medicine. Books about theories of “hygiene” or “sanitation” proliferated and gradually came to replace the long tradition of preventative health care that was called yōjō, or “nourishing life.” Many yōjōron writings in Japan came to adopt social Darwinism as their philosophy in the Meiji era, with an accompanying shift in emphasis from the internal environment within the individual body to the external environment, and from self-control to government control. Yet, this evolution in ideas produced some unique examples of confluences between the different strains of thought. This paper considers writings such as those by Seki Kansai (1830-1912), who urged people to work hard for emperor and nation so as to live a good and happy life, and Itō Shigeru (1857-1926), whose Philosophy of Nourishing Life (1897) was inspired by his encounter with social Darwinism. These examples demonstrate the longevity, flexibility, and creative potential of the East Asian tradition of yōjō thought.

Professional Ethics of Physicians in Early Modern Japan

Toyoko Kōzai, Bukkyō University

In Japanese academic circles, the period before the 1970s is said to be a period of vacuum in medical ethics. Indeed, the core of medical ethics in Japan is now based on bioethics imported from the U.S. in the 1970s. In medical school curricula, medical students are taught the professional ethics of Hippocrates and the code of ethics derived from medical practice during World War II. In Japan, however, the "this is how a doctor should be" argument has been held endlessly since the early 18th century, when the population of doctors rapidly increased, and the famous Confucian scholar Kaibara Ekiken's saying, "The most important thing for a doctor is compassion for patients," was believed by doctors until the early 20th century. In this paper, I will introduce the debate on professional ethics for doctors in early modern Japan and discuss the background of the break in this trend in the mid-20th century.

What Stimulated Modern China (1858-1949)?

Yuqi Jin, University of Auckland

This study offers a snapshot of my PhD research which examines how stimulants used for therapeutic, ritual, and recreational activities worldwide embodied the epistemic collisions and integrations between Western and Chinese pharmacology during China's modern period (1858-1949). Stimulants offer a unique lens into China's struggles reconciling tradition and modernity. Using archival research and textual analysis, the research traces the history of stimulants with particular attention to 1) how medical practitioners negotiated the concept of stimulants through cross-cultural epistemic debates, redefining their medical applications; 2) how the public understood and used stimulants, and how the media shaped the image of the stimulants and spurred collective anti-stimulant movements; 3) how stimulants transformed from "neutral" remedy to the negative connotation of "drugs" in both medical and social contexts. I argue that stimulants, such as tobacco, have scientific and social attributes: they serve multifaceted therapeutic roles in daily life. Their conceptual evolution demonstrates how material practices became a battleground in China's medical modernization.

Session 7A Modern Japan

Mapping the Communicative Ecology of Naha's Market: Culture, Commerce, and Community in Okinawa

Evangelia Papoutsaki, Unitec Institute of Technology

This presentation explores the complex communicative ecology of Naha's market, a vital yet understudied hub in Okinawa's capital. Combining ethnographic fieldwork, oral history collection, and sound-visual mapping, our research investigates the interplay between island culture, commerce, tourism, gender, and social history within this dynamic space. Traditional markets like Naha's serve as crucial sites of cultural heritage, economic sustenance, and social cohesion, offering insights into Okinawa's socio-economic development and intangible cultural assets.

Focusing on dominant communication channels—language, symbols, and sensory elements—we examine how gender shapes market dynamics, the role of oral traditions, and the impact of tourism, particularly post-COVID. We also analyze the market's social and administrative structures, revealing how micro-communicative ecologies influence its function. Through participant observation, interviews, and spatial mapping, we document the stories of vendors, customers, and stakeholders, capturing the oral histories that define the market's identity.

By mapping Naha's market as a cultural, economic, and social nexus, this study highlights its significance in preserving Okinawan heritage while adapting to current challenges. Our multimodal methodology provides a nuanced understanding of how traditional markets sustain community resilience in a rapidly changing world.

Branding the Base Town: Tourism and Everyday Militarisation of Yokosuka, Japan

Rumi Sakamoto, University of Auckland

This paper examines how Yokosuka City has redefined its military identity through tourism. It argues that military tourism provides cultural support for Japan's broader security policies and remilitarisation, but that this role developed through local negotiations rather than state-driven agendas. Unlike conventional military tourism focused on historic battlefields or memorials, Yokosuka promotes tourism around active military sites, including the U.S. Navy base and Japan Maritime Self-Defense Force (JMSDF) facilities. This strategy emerged in the early 2000s, as the city faced economic decline and demographic challenges, when local leaders decided to rebrand Yokosuka's stigmatised image as a crime-ridden 'Navy Town' into one focused on military heritage and tourism-driven revitalisation. Through analysis of policy documents, tourism campaigns, and local events, this paper shows how Yokosuka's military tourism forms an assemblage of state, market, and community actors that together enable the normalisation of the military, while also acknowledging the ambivalence around and resistance to such a trend. By situating tourism within everyday processes of militarisation, the study contributes to critical military studies and tourism research, offering insights into how militarism is co-produced in civilian spaces as a concrete, lived experience.

The contested principle of territorial jurisdiction: Brazilian hibakusha and their legal battle for benefits in Japan

Lilian Yamamoto, University of Sao Paulo

This work examines how the territorial jurisdiction principle denied Japanese welfare benefits to Brazilian hibakusha (atomic bomb survivors), focusing on the role of the Hibakusha Brazil Association for Peace and key court rulings. The Treaty of San Francisco (1952) barred lawsuits against the U.S., redirecting claims to Japan, which later passed the Atomic Bomb Victims Relief Law (1994). However, Ministry of Health Directive No. 402

(1974) excluded overseas survivors. Legal challenges led to the Japanese Supreme Court overturning this restriction and recognizing retroactive rights. The study reveals that litigation, not policy reform, proved crucial in securing justice, exposing gaps between legal rights and administrative barriers. The case demonstrates how marginalized groups mobilize transnationally to contest state exclusion, reshaping reparations debates. While the ruling affirmed universal victim rights, it also highlighted systemic biases in welfare distribution, calling for greater scrutiny of bureaucratic discretion in historical redress. Ultimately, the struggle of Brazilian hibakusha underscores the tension between legal entitlements and institutional resistance in post-war justice.

Session 7B Nature and Literature

In the Flow of Ethics: Rivers and the Philosophy of Life in Shen Congwen's Literary World

Cheng Chun, Victoria University of Wellington

Shen Congwen's literary world is saturated with water. Rivers, streams, and ferry crossings are not merely geographical features in his fiction; they are symbolic ecosystems that shape and reflect the emotional, ethical, and existential conditions of his characters. By foregrounding human–river interactions, Shen's narratives construct a philosophy of life in which nature, love, death, and life choices are intimately tied to the rhythms, power and uncertainties of flowing water.

This paper draws on the theory of the hydrosocial cycle (Linton & Budds, 2014) to offer a close reading of selected works of Shen Congwen —including Border Town (1934), Long River (1938), and 'Baizi' (1928). I intend to argue that Shen does not portray water as a passive backdrop, but rather as an agentive force that helps contribute to the formation of human subjectivity and life philosophy.

Moreover, Shen's river narratives also represent his active participation in the post-May Fourth debate on the philosophy of life (人生觀). Through water narratives, he suggests that the reconstruction of a philosophy of life should be centred on restoring human connections with nature, society, and the self and literature as a powerful medium for transmitting affective and ecological experiences.

Embodied Climate Crisis: Gendered Ecological Trauma in Chinese Cli-Fi

Ling Wang, Chengdu Normal University and University of Canterbury

This study examines Chinese climate change fiction's evolutionary trajectory: its emergence from early science fiction genres, its reconstruction of climate discourse through quotidian and localised narratives, and its dual formal-conceptual innovation challenging anthropocentric climate frameworks. Grounded in ecological trauma theory, the research conducts a comparative analysis of Zhou Ming's Tian yu (The Climate Language, 2008) and Liu Hongwei's Qihou youying (The Shadows of the Climate, 2023), two realist works featuring female scientists as protagonists. Zhou portrays an aviation meteorologist's professional conviction disintegrating amidst extreme weather encounters, while Liu depicts a climatologist embroiled in geopolitical conspiracies. Their female protagonists transcend simplistic victimisation-resistance binaries to propose dynamic ecological trauma recovery models through natural power, individual agency and community engagement. The gendered perspective enriches trauma theory's social dimensions, exposing climate change's disproportionate impacts on structurally marginalised groups. These works transform climate crisis from abstract geological concepts into embodied ethical dilemmas, simultaneously critiquing Western-centric environmental discourses. This research contributes to the theorisation of Chinese cli-fi within global ecocritical debates and expands trauma theory through culturally and gender-informed perspectives.

Amitav Ghosh, Climate Displacement, and the Problem of Sovereignty

Aruna Karki, University of Auckland

Lacking recognition under international law (UNHCR, 2025), climate refugees are often victimized and abandoned by nation-states. Their existence in legal limbo raises urgent questions regarding sovereignty, biopolitics, and human rights in the context of climate change. Amitav Ghosh explores such questions in his novel "Gun Island" and essay "The Great Derangement," both of which depict the socio-political consequences of climate-induced displacement on the refugees of the Sundarbans in the aftermath of Cyclone Aila. Through a close reading of Ghosh's texts, this paper will demonstrate how the modern nation-state's acts of biopolitical abandonment and denial of legal recognition result in a failure to protect displaced populations. Further, by distinguishing between "climate refugees" and the broader category of "environmental refugees," the paper argues that Ghosh advocates for formal recognition of "climate refugees" as a distinct legal and ethical category, and a reconceptualization of displaced communities informed by Actor Network Theory and indigenous knowledge of the Bengal Delta.

Session 7C Documenting memory

Conversations with Freedom Film Network (FFN)'s Filmmakers on Producing Social Issue Films

Nurul Ezzati Aisya, Mohd Zaki, University of Auckland

Drawing from interviews with documentary filmmakers from the Freedom Film Network (FFN), this study explores the filmmakers' reflections on production practices, negotiations, and conditions that constitute the documentaries' production and distribution processes. FFN is a brainchild of Pusat KOMAS, a human rights organisation, and the founding organiser of FreedomFilmFest (FFF), Malaysia's only human rights film festival since 2003. The findings imply two central notions: (1) the duality of professionalism and nurturing collaborative practices within Malaysia's social issue advocacy network and (2) the equivocal state censorship practice that hinders social issue documentary productions and distributions in Malaysia. Grounded by the Coalition Model, this production study also explores the role of documentary films for advocacy and the filmmakers' measures in navigating the complexities of representing social realities in Malaysia. In due time, the study aims to contribute to a deeper understanding of the documentary production landscape in Malaysia and the film form's potential for social commentary and reform.

Geographical Imaginations of the Vietnam War

Jamie Gillen, University of Auckland

30 April, 2025, marks the fiftieth anniversary of the end of the Vietnam War. This paper acknowledges the date by presenting three concepts reflecting the impact of the war on geographical thinking: territory, circuitry, and memory. My argument is that consolidating contributions about the Vietnam War benefits research on the geographies of war, imperialism, and justice studies. A summary points out some blind spots in the extant body of research and connects geography's attention to the Vietnam War with global conflict more generally.

Teruya Rinsuke's impact on the development of Okinawan culture from the post-war period to today

Joshua Jeffery, Victoria University of Wellington

Teruya Rinsuke (1925-2005) was an Okinawan musician and comedian. He was active from the post-war period until his death in 2005, involving himself in various projects such as his radio show “Watabu-show,” and the creation of the record label “Maruteru records,” alongside many other projects. He popularized the idea of Okinawa’s culture being “Champuru culture,” an idea that has persisted within Okinawa until today. Champuru means “something mixed,” and refers to a type of Okinawan dish that takes elements from Japan, America, Southeast Asia and China. Despite all of this, his influence on the development of Okinawan culture, both musical and otherwise, is often understated, with artists that he influenced or supported, such as his son Teruya Rinken, creator of the “Rinken band,” gaining more mainstream recognition. Academically as well, he tends to appear as a footnote when mentioning the achievements of other prominent Okinawan musicians. Thus, this paper aims to draw attention to the significant impact that Teruya Rinsuke has had on the shaping of Okinawan cultural and musical identity in the period of American occupation and beyond.

Looking back, looking forward: Rituality and images of national community building in the 1963 NHK Red and White Song Battle

Lun Jing, Leiden University

This paper examines the history and sociocultural connotations of the 14th event of the Red and White Song Battle (Kōhaku utagassen), an annual TV-radio music special produced and broadcast live by Japan’s public broadcaster NHK on 31 December, 1963, which enjoys the status of the most-watched TV programme in Japanese history. Positioned as the eve-party of the 1964 Tokyo Olympics, the event took on a “double rituality”: a good number of ritualistic elements and practices in the Olympic Games were introduced to the stage on a ritualistic time point—New Year’s Eve—that carries the overtone of the simultaneous end and beginning of a temporal phase. This paper investigates how the audience was manipulated to “look back and look forward” during the ritualized show; they were not only invited to relocate their own lives in retrospect and in prospect, but also tempted to review Japan’s remarkable economic and social achievements in the past (year) and anticipate the coming Tokyo Olympics, so as to bid farewell to the postwar inferiority complex and embrace Japan’s promising future. Thus, the music event became a rite of passage through which Japanese individuals and families were led to (re)produce collective memories in a mediated community.

The Pipa in Transcultural Collaboration: Performer Perspectives and Emotional Responses

Wenxin Xu, Victoria University of Wellington

The pipa is a well-known traditional Chinese plucked instrument, widely performed in famous concert halls, street festivals, and on social media platforms around the world. Pipa performers frequently collaborate with musicians playing instruments from other cultures, such as the guitar, lute, and violin. One possible reason for this is the pipa’s historical transmission from Persian lutes, with a connection between the pipa and global lute-family instruments. However, although past studies have examined the historical development of the pipa’s transcultural communication in specific regions, few have stepped further into the underlying mechanisms, such as the roles of performers, audiences, and technology. As a pipa performer, I am particularly interested in the collaboration process between the pipa and non-Chinese instruments. While some research has addressed performer-composer collaborations, little attention has been paid to performers’ own perspectives: how they think and improvise during the collaboration.

As part of my PhD research, I will conduct action research involving both myself and other performers to investigate these collaborative processes. I plan to not only interview myself and other performers, but also measure the emotional responses through brainwave recordings in the formal study. My research will provide a written account of the transcultural communication of the pipa, with a focus on the intercultural collaboration that scholars have marginalised.

Session 7E Rethinking China against the grain: perspectives from literature, film, media, artists and artisans (PANEL Part 2) Lorraine Wong and Paola Voci

"Between the Traditional and the Contemporary: Zhou Shen's The Butterfly Lovers"

Imogen Walker, University of Otago

The Butterfly Lovers 梁山伯与祝英台 is a tragic romance between the heroine Zhu Yingtai 祝英台 and the oblivious scholar Liang Shanbo 梁山伯. This presentation compares how contemporary singer Zhou Shen 周深 delivers two performances of this tragic romance with his impressive gender blurring voice. I show how Loutai 楼台 as an independent production leverages its distance from the state censors and creates a space for Zhou Shen to explore non-state approved ideology with his innately feminine voice. I contrast this independent production with Liang Zhu 梁祝, the official CCTV production, analyzing how Zhou Shen's performance in this version excludes gender blurring and sexuality themes that are deemed sensitive. In traditional China, Zhu's tragic ending was received in light of her defiance of patriarchal Confucian society; in early Communist China, Zhu was upheld as an inspiration for gender equality; in today's China, the core themes of this tragic romance are shaped by the official inclination to restore Confucianism-influenced gender ideology. I argue that Zhou Shen's impressive gender blurring voice and vocal techniques are a double-edged sword, which can promote official ideology but also subtly challenge it.

"Enduring Revolution: Typographic Imaginations from 2010s Hong Kong"

Lorraine Wong, University of Otago

"Reclaim Hong Kong, Revolution of Our Times" 光復香港，時代革命 is a slogan that signals the threshold of political changes in Hong Kong between 2010 and 2020. This paper explores the sense of revolution in Hong Kong beyond the immediate contexts of the 2014 Umbrella Movement and the 2019 Anti-ELAB Movement, showing how this explorative sense of revolution has taken the "typographic turn"—a turn towards Chinese script as a medium of social and cultural innovation. Whereas revolution is consecrated in the current official discourse of the People's Republic of China, it was intensely lived in Hong Kong's protests during the 2010s and continues to generate energy, passion and feeling in non-spectacular ways long after the protests were shut down heavy-handedly. In face of the developmental mandate of the Chinese state, typeface makers endure as precarious artisans, designers, and art lovers on the edge of uncertainty. In their typographic works, they inscribe the heterogenous social fabric of their lives, hoping to pull, as Walter Benjamin would say, "the emergency brake" on the locomotive of runaway capitalism. Type-making might seem inconsequential, yet typeface makers importantly inspire the possibility of changing the world without taking power.

"Re-framing Chinese women's subjectivity: reflections from a film essay project"

Linna He, University of Otago

I share some preliminary reflections emerging from my film project centered on an intergenerational investigation of Chinese women's subjectivity. Relying on essay film methods, my film develops a critique of documentary power dynamics and explores how subjectivities emerge at the intersection of individual expressions and dialogic exchanges. My project aims at empowering its participants to have agency and shared authorship, developing a collaborative/shifting gaze that exposes the film's core reflexivity. In this presentation, I select one example of such collaborative/shifting gaze, by focusing on the relationship between my quasi-illiterate rural grandmother, whose reality is anchored in village labor and oral tradition and myself, an urban academic-filmmaker, whose reality is defined by urban pace and instant communication. I give my grandmother the camera and she captures her reality through her hands and her eyes. On screen, connections and differences emerge as we interact with the world (e.g., with hands for farm work vs with hands to type on computers) and we photograph each other. The essay film becomes a space where our subjectivities collide and blend, revealing how Chinese women's subjectivity is negotiated across generations not just in story, but in the act of its telling.