



International
Institute for
Asian Studies

Taiwan Workshop

Taiwan Studies in
Transition:

Sources,
Theories, and
Approaches

Old
Observatory,
Leiden

2 May 2024

Workshop convened by
Professor Ron Po and organised
by the International Institute
for Asian Studies



Taiwan Studies in Transition: Sources, Theories, and Approaches

Convening a dynamic group of historians, literary critics, and social scientists from Asia, Europe, and the United States, this symposium aims to examine, reshape, broaden, and critically analyse the field of Taiwan studies in the past few decades. It employs a diverse blend of sources, theoretical frameworks, and methodologies. Specifically, our objectives include fostering innovative research approaches, such as digital humanities and the 'material turn' in historical inquiries, and stimulating cross-cultural discussions on themes like 'solving problems without border across borders'. Additionally, we seek to question established academic conventions, including Eurocentrism, Asiacentricity, and postcolonialism. This event is designed as an invigorating forum, inviting scholars, students, and the general public to engage in intellectual discourse and collaboration, thereby enriching our understanding of Taiwan in regional, transcultural, and global contexts.

The workshop is convened by Professor Ron Po, Chair of Taiwan Studies, International Institute for Asian Studies and Leiden University, and organised by the International Institute for Asian Studies. This workshop is part of the Chair of Taiwan Studies programme which is supported by the Department of Cross-Strait Education of the Ministry of Education of the Republic of China (Taiwan), the Faculty of Humanities and the International Institute for Asian Studies have jointly established a Chair of Taiwan Studies, based at the Faculty of Humanities.

Programme:

8:45-9:00

Welcome and registration

9:00-9:15

Opening remarks by Laura Erber, IIAS and Ron Po

9:15-10:30

Distinguished Lecture by Prof. David Wang

10:30-11:00

Coffee break

11:00-12:45

Session One: Sources

Session chair: Ron Po

Isabelle Cockel

Cheng-heng Lu

Ling-Wei Kung

Ming Tak Ted Hui

Q&A

12:45-14:30

Lunch break (lunch is not included)

14:30-16:15

Session Two: Theories and Approaches

Session chair: Anne Sytske Keijser

Guanmian Xu

Kang-yen Chiu

Jens Reinke

Táňa Dluhošová

Q&A

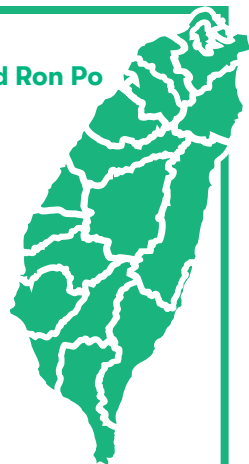
16:15-16:45

Coffee break

16:45-18:00

Roundtable

Roundtable chairs: Leonard Blussé and Ron Po



Distinguished Lecture

Fort Zeelandia, Formosa



Sailing to Zealandia: Dutch Connections to Taiwan Historical Fiction

Professor David Der-wei Wang
Harvard University, USA



In the fall of 1624, Maarten Sonck was appointed the Governor of Formosa and started the Dutch rule of Taiwan. The Dutch colonization of the island ended in 1662 when Koxinga took over Citadel Zeelandia, forcing the last Governor, Frederick Coyett, to surrender. This history has drawn renewed attention among Taiwan fiction writers in recent years. Instead of familiar historical accounts, however, they have tried to reconsider the Dutch factor in relation to the “genesis” of modern Taiwan. This lecture introduces multiple fictional cases which help reorient our inquiry into the Dutch/Taiwanese encounter: as a saga of European expansionism vs. Sinophone expatriatism, a contestation of multi-ethnic communities, a drama of gendered intrigue, and even an allegory of hybrid genealogy. As such, the lecture ponders the intricate relations between fiction and meta-history, and the contribution of the “Taiwan story” to the politics of narrating world history in the past as well as the present.

Dr David Der-wei Wang is Edward C. Henderson Professor in Chinese Literature and Comparative Literature, Harvard University. He is Director of CCK Inter-University Center for Sinological Studies, Academician of Academia Sinica and American Academy of Arts and Sciences.

Wang’s specialties are Modern and Contemporary Chinese and Sinophone Literature, Late Qing fiction, and Comparative Literary Theory. Wang’s recent publications include *The Monster That Is History* (2004), *Taiwan under Japanese Colonial Rule* (co-ed. with Ping-hui Liao, 2007), *The Lyrical in Epic Time* (2014), *Why Fiction Matters in Contemporary China* (2020). He is Editor of *Harvard New Literary History of Modern China* (2017).



Session One: Sources

Amplifying their voices and humanising our research: Studying migrants in the developmental state of Taiwan

Isabelle Cockel

University of Portsmouth, United Kingdom

Migrants are often presented by academics as voiceless subalterns and their subalternity is at the core of the research. When academics claim to give the latter the voice they deserve, they also put each other in a power relation, part of which is to allow academics to build their career on. If academics do 'give them a voice' or 'draw a human face' of their subalternity, it is the former who decides what the latter will say and what they will look like in academic works, which are often out of their reach. Is it possible to introduce them purely based on who they are, without processing, extraction, or theorisation? One cannot be so naïve to deny the power relation, nor can academics imagine that they devote all their time and energy to document their lives without also publishing academic works since that is their profession. Acknowledging these structural advantages and constraints, could academics do both without feeling disillusioned? Whilst this is a universal question of strong decolonising implications, it is also manifested by my studies of Southeast Asian spouses and workers in the past 12 years when I argue that the developmental state of Taiwan has embarked on the journey to become a migration state. Reviewing 'Migrants' Biographies', a transnational project led by me and published by the Blog, this presentation reflects upon how intersubjectivity can be employed as an approach with which to address the dilemma at an individual level and underline the semi-peripheral position of Taiwan between the Global North and the Global South.

Dr Isabelle Cockel is Senior Lecturer in East Asian and International Development Studies at the University of Portsmouth. Her research focuses on labour and marriage migration in East Asia. She focuses on how the state instrumentalities immigration for political and economic interests. She publishes about sovereignty, citizenship, gender, activism, and irregular farm work in the informal labour market. She utilises academic blogs to raise public awareness of inequality and injustice embedded in labour migration. Taking gender as an approach, she also studies the Cold War in East Asia. Using women broadcasters as a case study, she argues that the propaganda broadcasting on the radio constructs an ideological soundscape across the Taiwan Strait. She is currently the Secretary-General of the European Association of Taiwan Studies (2018-2025). She is an Associate Editor of *Asia Pacific Viewpoint* and a member of the Editorial Board of the *International Journal of Taiwan Studies*.



Session chair:

Ron Po

*Chair of Taiwan Studies at Leiden University and IIAS,
The Netherlands*

Littoral Society in Western Taiwan: A Historical Anthropological and Maritime Environmental Study on Fish weir

Cheng-heng Lu

National Yang Ming Chiao Tung University, Taiwan

Fish weir is a worldwide human fishing infrastructure. In the 1950s and 1960s, scholars throughout explored the function, structure, and usage of fish weir from the approach and view of archaeology. In Taiwan, most of fish weir was made by stone and had been once the most common coast-scape along the western shore of Taiwan and Penghu at least during the Qing, Japanese, and post-war period. Nowadays, fish weir in Taiwan has been usually understood within the context of cultural study and heritage. This article aims to reinvestigate the function of fish weir and its impacts as well as effect on littoral society. By using the methods of historical anthropology and the perspective of maritime environmental history, this article argues that fish weir is not only a livelihood but also constructs social structure. Human beings must cooperate with each other rather than compete against so as to guarantee sustainable income. Meanwhile, littoral people would employ different strategies or ways to ensure the cohesion in order to handle the unpredictable challenges from the seas. Therefore, through examining fish weir in western Taiwan, this article uses sources, including conducting field research, analyzing social texts, collecting oral interviews, and discussing historical documents, to place littoral society within the framework of maritime environmental history to uncover another model of social structure in Taiwan.

Dr Cheng-heng Lu considers himself a maritime historian. His core geographical area of expertise is China and Taiwan, but his research focuses on the interaction between human beings and maritime world in the Early Modern Period. His recent study can be divided into three major themes. The first is what he calls the New Qing maritime history to understand the Qing Empire's maritime knowledge-building from the perspective of Inner Asian and global history and by employing Manchu-language sources. Second, he uses Taiwan as an agent to explore another important academic discussion in the field of Qing history, the Qianlong-Jiaqing transition. The final theme is examining the littoral society along the western coast of Taiwan and places it under the context of maritime environmental history through the approach of historical anthropology.



Revisiting Qing Campaign History of Conquering Taiwan

Ling-Wei Kung

Academia Sinica, Taiwan

The so-called *fanglue* (campaign history) was an important genre of official historiography in the Qing Dynasty, mainly recording the major military campaigns. Most of the surviving copies of the *fanglue* from the Qing Dynasty are circulated in the form of printed editions, while the manuscript drafts from the compilation process are relatively rare. Hence, in terms of the history of Qing historiography, there is still significant room for research advancement by using the manuscript drafts of *fanglue* to explore their compilation process. After its conquest of the Koxinga regime in 1683, the Qing Dynasty compiled the *fanglue* concerning the military campaigns in Taiwan. Nevertheless, the campaign history of conquering Taiwan was never published and circulated during the Qing era. Fortunately, the archives of Grand Secretariat at the Institute of History and Philology contain the original Manchu and Chinese manuscripts of the campaign history. By the comparative studies of the Manchu and Chinese texts together with multilingual documents, this research aims to explore not only the nuanced historical events between the Koxinga and the Manchus but also how the Qing reconstructed the historical memories of Taiwan for different ethnic groups in the empire.

Dr Ling-Wei Kung is a historian of early modern/modern China and Inner Asia, with a focus on information, technology, and knowledge in international and comparative contexts. He received a B.A., summa cum laude in History from National Taiwan University (2012), and his M.A. (2015), M.Phil. (2018), and Ph.D. (2021) in History and East Asian Studies from Columbia University. His current book project, tentatively entitled “The Great Convergence: Information Circulation, International Trade, and Knowledge Transmission Between Early Modern China, Inner Asia, and Eurasia,” investigates the Eurasian integration of knowledge systems from Inner Asia, the middle ground between China, India, and Russia. Supplementing modern and classical Chinese sources with multilingual materials in Tibetan, Mongolian, Manchu, Japanese, Russian, and a range of European languages, his research goes beyond the limits of the metropole-periphery discourse by shedding light on the mobility, indigeneity, and transnationalism of Tibetan, Mongolian, and Uyghur societies in the making of the modern world.



Representation of Natural Disasters in Poetry in 1920s Taiwan

Ming Tak Ted Hui

Oxford University, United Kingdom

The study of 1920s Taiwanese literature has primarily focused on the Taiwan New Literature Movement, with discussions centring on Taiwanese writers' identity and their resistance against Japanese colonial rule. However, there has been limited exploration of the comparison between the ancient-style poetry written by Japanese poets in Taiwan and the modern poetry written in Taiwan during that period. To fully understand the intellectual and literary changes, it is necessary to consider both classical and modern forms and their interaction within the evolving cultural scene of Taiwan. This paper aims to bridge this gap by examining works published in newspapers such as *Taiwan Nichi-nichi Shin-pō*. It explores how Japanese poets in Taiwan utilized traditional forms to express contemporary ideas and investigates their relationship with classical poetry in Taiwan. By comparing works on similar topics, such as natural disasters and their prevention, this paper reflects on the boundaries between classical and modern poetry. It argues that the current discussions that separate them into distinct genres are inadequate. Instead, a deeper understanding of the interplay between classical and modern elements is necessary to fully appreciate the poetic landscape of the time.

Dr Ming Tak Ted Hui is an Associate Professor of Classical Chinese and Medieval China at the University of Oxford. He obtained his B.A. from the Chinese University of Hong Kong in 2009 and completed his Ph.D. at Harvard University in 2020. As a post-doctoral fellow, he contributed to the TEXTCOURT project and is currently finalizing a book project that delves into the multilingual environment of the Yuan dynasty during the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, a period characterized by Mongol rule over China. His research focuses on various areas such as Chinese poetry and poetics, frontier studies, and the relationship between language and power.

Session Two: Theories and Approaches

Image taken by Ron Po

Buffalo Regimes: Animal Labour and the Sugar Frontiers of Early Modern Taiwan and Java

Guanmian Xu
Peking University, China

A stereotypical representation of Asian (including Taiwan) rural environment often involves a swamp buffalo (*Bubalus bubalis kerebau*, commonly referred to as water buffalo), driven by a peasant, tediously tilling a small paddy field, symbolising traditional Asian peasantry and standing in stark contrast to the capitalistic plantation system developed by European colonial powers in the Atlantic World. This pervasive perception has significantly influenced the studies of Asian peasantry and rural society in the past century, contributing to the development of important concepts, such as agricultural involution, industrious revolution, rice economies, lineage society, and more. However, at the same time, it also limits our perspective by essentializing Asian agriculture as characteristically peasantry and non-capitalist. This research challenges this perception. It questions the oversimplified link between Asian peasantry and buffaloes and examines evidence regarding the important roles played by buffaloes in the understudied transformation of tropical environments to capitalist commodity frontiers in early modern Asia, with a particular focus on the sugar frontiers of Taiwan and Java since the seventeenth century. Through critical reading of local and colonial archives, it asks how buffaloes drove, structured, and resisted the expansion of sugar frontiers in Taiwan and Java. Liberating buffaloes from the fixed imagination of non-capitalist Asian peasantry, it foregrounds two different types of buffalo regimes on the expanding sugar frontiers of Taiwan and Java, which can be compared, in many respects, to the development of the slavery plantation regimes in the Atlantic world.

Dr Guanmian Xu is an assistant professor in the Department of History at Peking University. He obtained his Ph.D. from Leiden University in 2021. He has broad research interests spanning global and more-than-human history. Some of his writings have appeared in *Journal of World History*, *International Review of Social History*, and *Itinerario*.



Session chair:

Anne Sytske Keijser, Leiden University, The Netherlands

Anne Sytske Keijser serves as a Lecturer in Modern Chinese, Chinese Literature, and Film at the Department of Chinese Studies, Leiden University. She translated the award-winning *Soul Mountain* by Gao Xingjian and *Nanjing 1937: A Love Story* by Ye Zhaoyan into Dutch in 2002 and 2003, respectively, and has written numerous articles since 1995. Here in Leiden, she has taught a variety of courses on Chinese literature and language acquisition. Additionally, she was the editor of a Dutch-Flemish magazine for literary translations from Chinese, *Het Trage Vuur*.

The Visual Representation Walter Scott's Ivanhoe in Taiwan

Kang-yen Chiu

National Yang Ming Chiao Tung University, Taiwan

Walter Scott (1771-1832) was a prominent novelist of the British Romantic period whose historical fiction influenced the development of European fiction in the 19th century and whose novels entered the eyes of Chinese readers at the beginning of the 20th century through Lin Shu's translations, influencing the creation of modern Chinese fiction. However, Lin Shu's translation could not circulate smoothly in Taiwan because that region was under Japanese colonialism then. It was not until the early 1950s, when Scott's best-known novel, *Ivanhoe*, was adapted for the Hollywood movie, that it could attract Taiwanese readers'/viewers' attention and form a primary impression and (incorrect) understanding of Scott's oeuvre. This paper attempts to argue that the reception of Scott's novels in Taiwan is highly visual and that this visualization is often linked to the culture, religion, and politics of medieval England instead of Scott's own time and country. The paper will illustrate this phenomenon with examples from the first generation of Taiwanese readers/viewers of Scott, such as Bai Xianyong, Li Ou-fan, and Zhu Tianxin.

Kang-yen Chiu, PhD in English Literature from the University of Glasgow, is associate professor at the Institute of Visual Studies, National Yang Ming Chiao Tung University (NYCU). Currently, he is NYCU's deputy director of the Language Learning and Writing Center, and book review editor of *Wenshan Review of Literature and Culture*. He was visiting researcher at the Institute of European and American Studies, Academia Sinica. He specializes in the writings of Sir Walter Scott, historical novel and postcolonial theories. He is also an expert on the long Eighteenth-Century British painting, Enlightenment Aesthetics and film adaptation. He has published in journals such as *The Wenshan Review*, *The BARS Review* and *Scottish Literary Review*. He is working on a monograph tentatively titled *Sir Walter Scott and the Sinophone World*.

Polyphonic Buddhist Assemblages: Exploring Taiwanese Buddhism Through a Spatial Lens

Jens Reinke

Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam, The Netherlands



A prevalent portrayal of Buddhism in Taiwan depicts it as the post-war epicentre of the Chinese Mahayana. In this narrative, the island, situated on the periphery of the Sinosphere, transforms into its core. This triumphalist narrative positions Taiwan as the guardian of one of the gems of Chinese tradition—the Chinese Mahayana—while simultaneously presenting it as the catalyst for modernizing this tradition and offering it to the globalizing world. By employing the concepts of “polyphonic assemblages / contamination as collaboration” (Lowenhaupt-Tsing) along with the method of multi-sited ethnography (Marcus), I argue for a more multifaceted understanding of Taiwanese Buddhism. My aim is to emphasize its multilinear and intertwined nature, characterized by strategic appropriations, competition and collaboration, as well as arbitrary intersections. Its locale encompasses physical and increasingly digital spaces, various spatial imaginations and a variety of historical narratives. Unfolding in Taiwan as a de facto nation-state, it is situated within the broader sinosphere, yet extends to a global scale. My theoretical reflections are exemplified by two case studies: a German nun trained in Taiwan within the Chinese Mahayana tradition spreading the Dharma in Berlin, and the intersection of Buddhism and queerness in post-martial law Taiwan. These case studies provide insights into multivalent understandings of “Buddhism” and “Taiwan” within Taiwanese Buddhism.

Dr Jens Reinke holds the position of Assistant Professor of Buddhist Studies at the Buddhist Studies Seminary of the Vrije University Amsterdam in the Netherlands. His research primarily focuses on the development of contemporary Chinese Mahayana within today’s global context. Centering his attention on Taiwan, Jens Reinke investigates modern and contemporary Buddhist translocative entanglements shaped by Western colonialism, processes of Asian nation-state building, increased global integration, and ethnic Chinese migration. Through this exploration, he sheds light on the emergence of non-Western modern Buddhist religiosities. Notably, his recent book titled *Mapping Modern Mahayana: Chinese Buddhism and Migration in the Age of Global Modernity* (De Gruyter, 2021) presents a multi-sited ethnography centered around the Taiwanese Buddhist organization Fo Guang Shan. *Mapping Modern Mahayana* was recognized as a “Groundbreaking Work in the Study of Chinese Religions” by the Society for the Study of Chinese Religions.

Professionalization of Taiwanese Literature: Quantitative Approach

Táňa Dluhošová

Oriental Institute of the Academy of Sciences of
the Czech Republic, Czech Republic

Modern Taiwanese literature provides a compact and ideal case study for examining the processes of consolidation within the literary field over time. These processes involve the establishment of internal principles that determine the recognition of literary works and the authority responsible for approving these principles. Additionally, the predispositions known as *habitus* play a crucial role in shaping who can become a writer. Building upon Pierre Bourdieu's theory of the literary field, this presentation aims to reconstruct the synchronous internal principles of the literary field by focusing on two key aspects: the *habitus* of writers and the role of publishing houses in the professionalization of writers and the field. The examination of *habitus* involves understanding the process of negotiating positions and creating a diachronic model, particularly regarding the professionalization of literature and the factors that contribute to an individual's status as a writer. These factors include education, employment, group affiliations, and literary awards. To conduct this analysis, two datasets compiled by the National Museum of Taiwan Literature are utilized: the database of literary magazines (台灣文學期刊目錄) and the biographical database of writers (台灣作字作品目錄). These datasets provide valuable information on 33,029 publications and 2,330 writers born between the 1870s and the 1990s.

Dr Táňa Dluhošová is the director at the Oriental Institute (Czech Academy of Sciences) and acted as the director of its Research Center at the Academia Sinica (in years 2015–2017, 2019). She studies, among other things, the post-war Taiwanese literary scene by applying Digital Humanities methods; censorship; language and ideology; and Taiwanese elites. The first monograph focused on the topic of identity formation in Bai Xianyong's short stories (Dharmagaia, 2016) and the second analyses the early post-war literary field in Taiwan (Academia, 2020). Her articles have appeared in *Journal of Asian Studies*, *European Journal of East Asian Studies*, *Journal of Current Chinese Affairs*, *Modern Chinese Literature and Culture*, *Archiv orientální*, *Studia Orientalia Slovaca*, the *Bulletin of Taiwanese Literature* (National Chengchi University, Taiwan), and in *Digital Humanities: Between Past, Present, and Future* (2016).

Roundtable Discussion/Concluding Remark

In this roundtable, we will critically review the trajectory of Taiwan studies, examining how it has navigated the interstices of Sinology, Asian studies, international relations, literary studies, global history, and many other relevant disciplines. What lessons can be drawn from multidisciplinary approaches adopted in the past? Looking forward, the roundtable will invite participants to consider the future prospects of Taiwan studies. Drawing on insights shared throughout the workshop, how can Taiwan be more effectively incorporated into comparative or transregional research initiatives in the short term? What strategies could enhance academic collaboration and exchange both within academia and beyond in the medium term? To what extent are innovative methodologies and interdisciplinary perspectives necessary to maintain the relevance and dynamism of Taiwan studies in the long term? By posing these questions, we seek to engage the audience in a reflective dialogue on the challenges and opportunities facing the studies of Taiwan, in the hope of devising a progressive pathway that enhances its global academic and practical impact.

Chairs: Professor Leonard Blussé and Dr Ronald Po

Leonard Blussé, Professor Emeritus in the Institute for History at the Leiden University, is a distinguished historian with a focus on Asian-European relations. Having authored, co-authored, or edited more than twenty books since 2000, Blussé also founded the journal *Itinerario* and initiated the Crayenborgh College guest lecture series, marking it as the first honours class in a Dutch university. Elected a member of *Academia Europaea* in 2010 and awarded the 13th Fukuoka Prize in 2019, Blussé's extensive body of work and his active role in academic development have significantly propelled forward the fields of international relations, maritime history, and Taiwan studies. Notable publications include *Visible Cities: Canton, Nagasaki and Batavia and the Coming of the Americans* and *Bitter Bonds, A Colonial Divorce Drama of the Seventeenth Century*, to name a few.

Ron Po is a historian of late imperial China from the fourteenth to the early twentieth centuries. Since completing his doctorate at Universität Heidelberg in 2013, he has taught in Germany, the United States, and Canada, and is currently an associate professor of the Department of International History at the London School of Economics and Political Science. He is the author of *The Blue Frontier: Maritime Vision and Power in the Qing Empire*, *The Placid Ocean: Qing China and the Asian Seas* (in Chinese), and *Turning the Tide: Historical Actors and Social Memories in Late Qing China* (also in Chinese). In 2019, he was elected a Fellow of the Royal Historical Society.

**For queries, please contact
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