

Making and Mapping Psy Sciences in East and Southeast Asia

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The rich history of psy disciplines or psy sciences (psychology, psychiatry, psychotherapy, psychoanalysis) in modern society has been subject to different and sometimes conflicting interpretations. Major events, theories, and figures have been recorded and the meaning of their contributions explored to illustrate the ways in which various forms of psychological knowledge become important sources of self-understanding and self-actualization. Insights into the social and cultural history of psy sciences enable us to understand the interconnection between forms of knowledge and the social order to which they relate (Eghigian et al. 2007; Engstrom 2008). From a more radical perspective, Michel Foucault has famously written histories of rising human sciences so as to identify the construction of the self in relationship to the operation of the power/knowledge matrix since the nineteenth century. In *Psychiatric Power* (2006), for instance, he associates the development of psychology, criminology, and psychopathology to the functioning of disciplinary mechanisms in modern society. As he explains, the “psy-function was the discourse and the establishment of all the schemas for the individualization, normalization, and subjection of individuals within disciplinary systems” (85).

Following both the Foucauldian genealogical tradition and the aesthetic turn in the French philosopher’s later thought, the British sociologist Nikolas Rose brings into sharper relief the intricate connection between the proliferation of psy disciplines and the changes in governmentality and subjectification. In an era that values democracy and individual autonomy, a variety of new ways of understanding and relating to techniques of self have been invented, which have also become the inescapable means through which modern selves can be realized. Rose (1998) believes that the contemporary regulative ideal of the self can be “destabilized” and “denaturalized” by historical investigations into the mechanism of self invention.

Rose (1998: 11) makes clear that the regime of the self embodied in the explosion of Western psy sciences since the late nineteenth century is closely linked with

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“transformations in the exercise of political power in contemporary liberal democracies.” This historical acuity consequently raises conceptual and political questions concerning the growth of psy sciences in the non-Western contexts, especially if one takes into account the roles played by, for instance, cross-cultural interactions of dissimilar knowledge systems and the complexities of colonialism and globalization during the process (Ernst 2003). The four articles in this special issue can therefore be deemed one of the recent attempts to continue this historiographical task and explore some of the emerging agendas related to the development of psy sciences in the East and Southeast Asian contexts.

1 Recent Historiography of Psy Sciences in East and Southeast Asia

Before an introduction to the main themes of this special issue, recent development in English-language scholarship on the history of psy sciences in East and Southeast Asia is briefly reviewed with the aim of better positioning our research project. Yet, because one of the main concerns of the four articles is the ways in which emotional and mental disturbances have been conceptualized and managed in these specific social and cultural contexts, the following review puts more emphasis on historical studies of psychiatry and psychotherapy.

Given the fact that psychiatry and other psy sciences were, at least in their nascent stages, predominantly Western inventions, the history of the transfer of these bodies of knowledge and practice to other cultural settings remains a constant subject of interest. Key individuals, events, ideas, practices, and institutions in this process of transfer and interaction therefore have been subject to historical analysis (Blowers 2004; Rose 2012). For instance, Nancy Chen (1999) analyzes the meticulous translation exercises of modern psychiatry in China as a quest for modernity. She illustrates how medical terminologies, categories of mental disorders, and special orders in psychiatry are linked to the contexts of translation in which meanings and practices are adopted and utilized. Peter Szto (2014) uses the concept of “accommodation” to illustrate the design of the first psychiatric asylum in China in relation to its US predecessors. In addition, the shape of Chinese psychiatry in the first half of the twentieth century is said to be created, through a process of “cultural adaptation,” by an American version of German psychiatry (Li and Schmiedebach 2015). On the other hand, the agency of non-Western experts of psy disciplines, even under extreme political circumstances, has been subjected to increasing study in recent years (Gao 2015). Chinese psychologists in the Republican period, for example, managed to institute a form of psychology more adaptable to the indigenous conceptions of selfhood (Blowers, Cheung, and Ru 2009). Despite the internalist tendency of some studies in focusing on the growth of scientific ideas and practices, more investigations are urgently needed in this underdeveloped field of inquiry.

Considering both the importance of institutions in the provision of treatment and care of mentally ill persons in modern times and the greater availability of archival materials in institutional settings, the histories of mental hospitals and asylums have continually attracted scholarly attention. Institutional care of the insane has been linked to the way in which modernity and civilization were understood by various social agents in the East Asian contexts (Ma 2014). Archival materials have also been

used to untangle the intricate relationship between psychiatric construction and indigenous experience of mental and nervous illnesses (Baum 2013; Edington 2013b; Shapiro 2014a, 2014b; Wu 2014). Stages of institutional development of psychiatry in twentieth-century China do not negate the fact that the care of the insane has mainly been the family's responsibility (Pearson 2014). Perhaps most interesting, the case-books of a private hospital (Oji Brain Hospital) in early twentieth-century Tokyo provide Akihito Suzuki with a window through which several major issues in the historiography of psychiatry can be reexamined, for instance the importance of the rise of new therapeutics (Suzuki 2003a) and the interaction between family and state in terms of provision of mental health services (Suzuki 2003b). One of the recurring themes in the above-mentioned studies is consideration of the voices and views of patients, their families, and society at large propagated by Roy Porter (1985) three decades ago, which helps subvert the tradition of institutional history carved by Foucauldian scholars and pays heed to the specific contexts in which meanings of diseases and discomforts have been negotiated.

This sociohistorical and postcolonial emphasis on multivalence, conflicts, and interactions also appears in recent historical researches into the relationships among psychiatry, colonialism, and imperialism. For instance, Hans Pols (2007a) brings forth the efforts through which Western psychiatric constructions of the native mind in the Dutch East Indies were contested by indigenous physicians and medical students. Claire Edington (2013a) underscores the active role played by native families in framing mental illnesses in French Indochina. Theodore Jun Yoo's (2016) recent book notices the persistence and strength of traditional modes of conceptualizing and managing socially disruptive behaviors in colonial Korea despite the advent of modern psychiatry and scientific governance. Yet, the cultural hegemony of psy disciplines in exerting colonial and imperial influence still has special historical and political resonance in East and Southeast Asia, whether in the American Philippines (Anderson 2006), the colonial East Indies (Pols 2007b, 2011), British Burma (Saha 2013; Jacobson 2014), semicolonial China (Wang 2014), or imperial Japan. A series of Janice Matsumura's articles, for example, cogently demonstrates the close connection between the rise of the psychiatric profession and the consolidation of Japan's national and imperial order (2004a, 2004b, 2010). These new researches either reiterate the points made by previous studies on colonial psychiatry or develop new observations in terms of biogovernmentality and race/class making. However, recent examples contest prevailing discourses of colonial or postcolonial psychiatry. Sebastiaan Broere (2015), for instance, points out that in the Dutch East Indies Chinese formed the majority of inmates not because they were the main unruly subjects to be tamed but because they were better informed with psychiatric knowledge.

Another inspiring and promising development is the scholarly interest in the development of psychiatry and mental illnesses in the non-Western countries in which "culturally" specific systems of healing and self-cultivation persisted or even continued to dominate. Since the pioneering work of Arthur Kleinman (1980) on psychiatry in Taiwan and China from the 1970s onward, the role of culture has been highlighted in the historical writings of psy sciences in East Asia. Yu-Chuan Wu (2012) documents the process through which neurasthenia was transformed into a disorder of ki in early twentieth-century Japan via a variety of bodily technologies that incorporated both Japanese and Western values and practices. The case of the seeming replacement of

utsu (constraint), a traditional emotion-related medical concept, by a more biomedical idea of neurasthenia during the same period is used by Keiko Daidoji (2012) to delineate the resilience and creativity of Japanese traditional doctors in negotiating their ways in an era of medical reformation. The story of the modern transformation of *utsu* also becomes a main theme of Junko Kitanaka's *Depression in Japan* (2012), in which she underlines the importance of taking into account the cultural contexts—for instance, the Japanese “somatism”—in which nervous and mental illnesses are experienced. The collection edited by Christopher Harding, Iwata Fumiaki, and Yoshinaga Shin'ichi (2015) follows a similar line of thought and produces a fine demonstration of the dialogues as well as tensions between psychotherapies, religious practices, and philosophical ideas of different cultural and epistemological origins. From anthropological perspectives, the volume edited by Kleinman et al. (2011) examines a range of moral conflicts emerging during the process of China's social and economic transformation—including alternates of diagnoses, suicide, and emerging disciplines—which give notable weight to our apprehension of psy sciences in the Chinese state. Last but not least, Harry Yi-Jui Wu (2016) discusses the formation of manufactured mental disorders (*bei jingshenbing*) and its social roots regarding the disjunctively developed modern constitutions in postsocialist China. Taking their cues from recent scholarship in the history of the body, medical anthropology, and/or cultural psychiatry, the aforementioned studies examine the ways in which the intersection of different bodies of knowledge and practices has helped to shape not only the East Asian conceptions of psychical and emotional disturbances but also the experiences.

2 Transnational Studies of Psy Sciences

Another development in recent historical studies of psychiatry and its sister disciplines has been an increasing attention to the various factors involved in the production and circulation of knowledge. From the 1990s, for instance, historians began to venture a broader framework to account for the international movement of people, ideas, and institutions together with the emergence of nation-states (Tyrrell 2007; Iriye 2012). The term *transnational* was employed to contrast the approach of unidirectional globalization and the homogenization of the world. Such effort has been gradually extended from politics and society to tackle areas of science, technology, and medicine (STM). For the past decade, historians of psychiatry have also begun to engage with broader scopes of inquiry by looking not only at psy sciences in single sites but also at the connections of multiple areas, predominantly nation-states, regarding the systematic comparison, transfer, shared history, and *histoire croisée* (crossed history) of theories, practices, and various agency (Ernst and Mueller 2010). Joy Damousi and Mariano Ben Plotkin (2009) coedited the volume *Transnational Unconscious*, which has as its main theme the circulation of psychoanalytic thoughts and practices in non-Western countries and is the first collective effort in which the term *transnational* was employed in the history of psy sciences. In that volume, however, the transit of knowledge is mainly construed through a diffusive model in which European ideas traveled to South America. In the collection edited by Roelke, Weindling, and Westwood (2010), historians began to emphasize the exchanges between psychiatrists based in Germany, Britain, and the United States during the first half of the twentieth century,

with special reference to the transfer of ideas and practices and the migration of medical practitioners across the boundaries of particular nation-states. Their scope, unfortunately, did not extend to Asia. In Waltraud Ernst and Thomas Mueller's *Transnational Psychiatries* (2010), contributors question present scholarship on colonial psychiatries and whether there should be a broader framework to account for the very diverse nature of psychiatry observed in those various recent case studies in which the voices of subalterns, the drawbacks of modernity, and the development and transformation of identity are emphasized. For example, *Kitanaka* (2010: 21) observes a "sharp departure from traditional medical knowledge" regarding the emergence of new psychiatric ideas in Japan's modern neuropsychiatry. In a similar vein, *Suzuki* (2010) notices an overdevelopment of innovative psychiatric theories compared with conventional modern psychiatric theory and treatment as a scientific imperative matter in the interwar period. Interestingly, the enthusiasm and eventual failure of a Western-born psychiatrist who practiced in Japan during the Meiji period are also described in *Akira Hashimoto's* (2010) recent study. In *Warwick Anderson, Deborah Jenson, and Richard C. Keller's* (2011) collection, historians attempt to examine the degree to which colonialist discourses on psychoanalytic subjectivity dominated transcultural interaction in this specific branch of psy science, particularly on the subject of trauma, in the era of globalization.

In the existing studies on transnational psy sciences in Asia, many have focused on the ways in which globalized theories or practices of psychiatric or psychological sciences have been passively disseminated and practiced in local contexts. Yet, as mentioned above, evidence is found that East and Southeast Asian specialists in psy disciplines have taken active roles in forming and transforming local sciences. For example, in another article by *Hashimoto* (2013), a dreamed-of "German world" aspired to by Japanese doctors shaped the formation of Japanese modern psychiatry. Employing a transnational and comparative perspective, he thus paints a more nuanced picture of the favorable way in which German and Japanese psychiatrists interacted in the first decades of the last century. Furthermore, *Howard Chiang's* (2015) study on *koro* points out that the categorization of the disease as a culture-bound syndrome in the fourth edition of the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders* was achieved by Chinese-speaking but Western-trained psychiatrists appropriating an idea from traditional Chinese culture into a global Anglophone psychiatric taxonomy. In *Yoo's* (2016) above-mentioned account, on the other hand, stiff resistance to Western medicalized approaches to mental illness and a preference for traditional "folk" interpretations continue to persist in contemporary Korea. Moreover, a series of articles written by the anthropologist and psychiatrist *Sing Lee* (1998, 1999, 2001) scrutinizes the process by which China first developed its own psychiatric diagnoses in response to the immense mental health problems during the reform and opening-up period and then integrated its own disease classification system into the international one.

All these examples attest to the painstaking negotiations between East and West in the context of colonial encounters, as well as that of postcolonial nation-state building and the struggle for modernity. In this sense, these scholarly developments have given rise to new understanding of the relationship between the making and mapping of psy knowledges. The production, circulation, and reception of these bodies of knowledge and practice involve long and complex processes of coordination of meanings, power

structures, and modes of subjectification that call for detailed historical and geopolitical examination. By investigating different subjects concerning the making of psy sciences in nineteenth- and twentieth-century East and Southeast Asia, the four articles in this special issue highlight the social, political, and epistemological implications of the transnational mobility of psy knowledges in their local and very often contested settings.

3 Geopolitics, Governmentality, and Psy Sciences

Geopolitics has long been an inseparable constituent of the history of psy sciences. It is associated with the construction of ideal citizenship best suited to fulfill the rationale of governmentality in different colonies or nation-states. The four articles in this special issue not only reiterate or extend the remarks made in abundant existing case studies but also raise alternative criticisms according to the unique contexts they respectively explore. As to how unique these contexts are, one has to take into consideration the discussion of transnationality offered in the next section. Although Kah Seng Loh's article narrates a straightforward history of mental illnesses and their management in colonial Singapore, Loh provides an argument beyond conventional colonial histories of psychiatry. He discusses how, in mental asylums, ideal subjects were engineered during a process in which British colonizers were exerting power in Singapore to turn a historically free port into a colony. In Singapore, racial categories created in the asylum also reflect the superiority of European identity. Loh's study shows that such a tactic, derived from the rational system of governance, tended to simplify the sociocultural heterogeneity of the open port city, resulting in difficulty of control. Wen-Ji Wang's article, by contrast, analyzes the emergence of neurasthenia as a psychiatric and neurological diagnosis in a context where colonial sovereignty was absent. This clinical category was created in response not only to the scientific internationalism of the time but also to the struggle for a modern Chinese state among agents of psy sciences.

Christopher Harding's inquiry into religion-psy relationships in modern Japan depicts an utterly dissimilar picture. He examines the theories and practices of psychiatry and psychotherapy in modern Japan in the contested field of multiple interests. In Harding's analysis, the traditional Japanese self was reshaped alongside the introduction of psy sciences and the formation of the modern state. A forceful negotiation is observed between traditional religion and modern psychiatric science concerning the cultural self to be governed. Harry Yi-Jui Wu reveals in his article how psychiatry as a former colonial accomplice was absorbed into the rationale of global north-south developmentalism propagated by a postwar international organization. From these four articles we are able to witness and discern alternative viewpoints to existing discussions about the geopolitics of psy sciences and their governmentality in colonial and postcolonial contexts.

Moreover, the specificity and the importance of the region that this special issue focuses on merit a few more comments. In recent science, technology, and society (STS) research, proliferating case studies have been offering new horizons and dialogue spaces to reexamine the role of STM from East and Southeast Asian perspectives. As argued by [Anderson \(2002\)](#), Asia offers new approaches and fresh topics that

add to the heterogeneity of the field of STS and could potentially be deemed a critique method. In addition, by examining the circulation of knowledge and the situatedness of technosciences in Taiwan, [Wen-yuen Lin and John Law \(2015\)](#) explore how modes for knowing are produced by East Asian latecomers. They claim that intellectual legacies of science and technology in these countries are contingent on political, economic, and cultural contexts. Therefore, the so-called latecomer thesis of science and technology development should be reframed—alternative knowledge spaces for better understanding science and technology from East and Southeast Asia are necessary. In addition, by collecting examples of scientific and technological progress carried out in developing countries, [Sheila Jasanoff and Sang-Hyun Kim \(2015\)](#) conceptualize “dreamscape” as the space in which developing countries shaped their identities as postwar modern states with their sociotechnological imaginaries. In such spaces, science and technology are advanced for public purposes, collective futures, and the common good, as aspired to by scientists and technocrats. Scholars from more sociological and anthropological perspectives have also employed alternative frameworks to account for the distinctive features of medical policy in East Asia that reflect the complex relations among scientists, medical professionals, pharmaceutical industries, and policy makers ([Chen 2013](#)). The four case studies in this special issue in a sense coincide with the call made by this recent scholarship to look closely at the role of agencies in science and technology.

4 Circulating Psy Knowledge, Mapping East and Southeast Asia

As mentioned earlier, closely associated with one of the antiessentialist trends in the fields of history of science, history of medicine, and STS is the emphasis on the idea of science, medicine, and technology as fluid and flexible productions generated from historically and socially specific spaces in which their identities and meanings are negotiated and subject to change. Instead of outlining the universal features of scientific theories, an increasing number of researchers place great weight on tracing the processes through which knowledge and practice have actually been organized, produced, and circulated. In so doing, boundaries between disciplines, periods, and geographical categories are redefined and made porous ([Secord 2004](#); [Simon and Herran 2008](#)), and the dynamics of knowledge production in its relationship to society are brought into sharper focus ([Anderson 2002](#); [Raj 2013](#)).

Mindful of this development, we take up the transnationality of knowledge and practice as one of the shared concerns of this issue, placing it especially in the East and Southeast Asian contexts. The multifaceted geopolitical identity of British Singapore as a colony, trading port, and coolie town in which people, goods, information, and knowledge were in constant circulation makes its history of mental illness interesting to explore. In his article in this issue, Loh paints a nuanced picture, highlighting the contradictions in the colonial mental health policy in and of itself, as well as the local and transnational factors that rendered the transit of psychiatric knowledge and practice a tortuous and difficult process. He looks at the linkage between Great Britain and Singapore as its colony: the context in which the colonizer exercised its biopower was that of a society that spanned multiple routes and manifold historical courses of immigration. Loh’s article demonstrates, by considering more subtle temporal and

spatial variants of the context studied, that so-called transnationality could be long and drawn out or without end. Wang's article paints a picture of the manners in which psy sciences were introduced to different locations in China and found their own developmental niches. In this case study on neurasthenia in Republican China, the combination of imperialistic influence and indigenous nationalistic aspirations for scientific modernity provided the epistemological and material conditions in which the movement of psy knowledges was made possible. During the very process of producing diverse bodies of mental health knowledge along different theoretical lines, the rising Chinese psy specialists were setting out competing landscapes for the future of their ailing nation. Dominated by an idea of scientific internationalism, some of these specialists were nevertheless discriminating enough to question the universality of Western scientific knowledge and, accordingly, to develop their own more situated bodies of knowledge and practice of coordinating social interactions.

Harding's article, presenting an analytic framework for understanding "religion-psy dialogues" in Japan, reiterates the point that these encounters were so transformative that the resulting technologies of self-cultivation eventually developed transnational and transdisciplinary characteristics. Interestingly, the strength of religious and philosophical traditions was such that the unequal power distribution often seen in cases of transnational circulation of knowledge in the modern age seldom happened in Japan. Harding's treatment of the situatedness and orientation of religion-psy relationships provides a powerful counteranalysis regarding the seemingly taken-for-granted dissemination of knowledge in works tackling the globalization of psy disciplines. Such a reflection offers a possible explanation for contemporary Japan's highly developed psychiatric discipline that nevertheless has not hurried toward integration with Western frontiers of psychiatry. According to the article by Wu, both the legacy of colonial science and the postcolonial pattern of production of scientific knowledge are crucial for the understanding of the simultaneous situatedness and transnationality of the psychiatric epidemiology envisioned by the World Health Organization in the postwar era. The continuities as well as discontinuities between colonial and postcolonial productions of scientific knowledge and scientific expertise help one call into question the seemingly transformative and self-transformative power of migrating knowledge in a global context. Furthermore, it is interesting to note that, during the interaction in which Taiwanese and Western psychiatrists collaborated to make psy knowledge circulate, different visions of Asia and of its relationship to the rest of the world were presented and debated.

5 Conclusion

From the 1970s onward, the psy sciences were witness to blustering confrontations from a New Age movement heavily informed by Asian philosophy. Nowadays, yoga practices and mindfulness training have been integrated into mainstream psychotherapy. Nevertheless, such trends toward East-West admixing are in fact not at all new. Through the following four case studies, this special issue provides empirical data complementing the abundance of new scholarship on the history of psy sciences in East and Southeast Asia. By offering alternative scopes of inquiry, especially from the perspective of a region less frequently explored, it also answers the call of students

of STM to look into the multidirectional transfer of ideas, the shared/crossed history of theories, and the movement of agency (Ernst and Mueller 2010). We have seen that psy sciences in the region, as in other non-Western areas, have a complex nature, as attested by existing research achievements on geopolitics, colonialism/postcolonialism, and transnationality, including theories themselves, the agency of scientific disciplines, and the contexts discovered. As for the attempt at writing transnational histories, these studies not only demonstrate that the East-West binary was in reality absent but also tease out various modes of connection among regions, including the translation of terms and concepts, and the movement of agency, situatedness and orientation regarding the formation of relationships. In addition, these four case studies respond not only to the long-standing theoretical tension in the psychiatric disciplines over whether a universal, global unconscious exists but also to the historical analyses in Anderson, Jenson, and Keller's (2011) volume concerning the assimilation of universalist ideology in psy sciences in non-European states. By observing the more agile role the studied regions have played in the transformation, appropriation, resistance, and even production of psy sciences, these articles further reflect the necessity to reframe both the latecomer thesis and the notion of "dreamscape" developed by STS scholars as mentioned above.

A further disclaimer for this special issue is that we do not intend to answer the question of whether or not transnational history is a kind of method or approach. Such a controversy awaits further comment, criticism, and deliberation by historians employing new approaches, emphasizing different perspectives, and excavating fresh topics with more case studies. Instead, by showcasing this frontier research on psy sciences, we attempt to fill the gap between the urge invoked by historians two decades ago to study the transnational, and the fact that existing historical works on psy sciences in East and Southeast Asia still remain largely comparative or receptive of global intellectual diffusion. We therefore invite the vast range of expertise to explore with us how East and Southeast Asia, with their similar colonial/postcolonial historical contexts and sturdy local knowledge systems and cultural autonomies, can be construed as a category or a subject regarding their transnationality in the broadly defined field of STM. It perhaps provides an opportunity to be attentive to the fact that Asia could potentially form the basis of a new critique of modernity in the field (Chen 2010; Anderson 2013). Lastly, we believe that better stories can only be told by excavating more archives that document the movement of scientists, by conducting multisite ethnography, and by analyzing institutions and schools of thought related to the core agenda of this special issue, while at the same time remaining vigilant in a world of persistent change.

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