

A Kitchen Named “East Asian STS” (a.k.a. “Editing, Cooking, and Transforming,” Part 2)

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Tell me what you eat, and I'll tell you what you are.

Jean Anthelme Brillat-Savarin (1755–1826), politician and gastronome

Let me first remind readers of Professor Chia-Ling Wu's farewell remarks in our previous issue (10, no. 3); they end with a touching sentence: “If we are what we eat, I hope EASTS has nourished us and even transformed how we understand East Asia, as well as science and technology.” But that's not why I've placed this well-known quotation at the beginning of this article. For those of you who watched *Iron Chef* (*Ryori no tetsujin*, 料理の鉄人), that famous cooking show in the 1990s, this phrase might conjure up happy memories of times when, on Friday or Sunday nights, people enjoyed nothing but food in all its glory. In the “Kitchen Stadium,” where not just chefs but also critics and commentators were invited by the host, Chairman Kaga, these “food fanatics” were pushing the boundaries of knowing what we are through food—cooking, eating, commenting, sharing.

Looking back over the first decade of *EASTS*'s history, I think Professor Wu's cooking and sharing metaphor is truly appropriate for this East Asia-based journal. *EASTS* started with a metaphor of travel, offered up in the title of Professor Daiwie Fu's position paper “How Far Can East Asian STS Go?” (1, no. 1: 1–14). As its journey to establish “a distinctive EASTS study” proceeded, *EASTS* became engaged with outstanding scholars both in and outside of East Asia proper. As nicely summarized in Professor Fu's farewell note, “Past and Future,” in 2012 (6, no. 4: 437–39), some of the work has been on universal STS themes, paying particular interest to local problems and guided by different disciplinary threads, while some scholars, in East Asia after finishing their academic training in prestigious STS programs in the United States or Europe, have looked for intellectual connections between the global and the local. The travel metaphor still works, but keen readers will be amazed by the breadth of the intellectual landscape of STS about East Asia that has been explored by *EASTS*; *EASTS* has gone far and deep in appreciating its beauty and complexity.

Here, then, is where a culinary metaphor is called for. Echoing Professor Wu's chopsticks and rice cooker image, I can't help but bring up *Iron Chef* again. Aiming to “realize a dream in a form never seen before,” *EASTS*, just like the show, welcomes

authors—or “intellectual chefs”—from around the world to demonstrate their scholarship on specific themes or topics. On the other side stands the editorial team, the “Iron Chefs” who specialize in different genres of cuisine. *EASTS* has benefitted from having so many renowned scholars serving on our editorial board, in particular as associate editors. We are delighted that the sociologist Hee Je Bak and the historians Francesca Bray and Sean Hsiang-lin Lei, who were originally our editors, are joining the anthropologist Michael Fischer and the historian of science Togo Tsukahara to serve as our associate editors for the next three years.

On *Iron Chef*, the invited chefs would challenge the resident chefs in the Gourmet Academy, but what made the show so exciting was not who beat whom at the end but the competitive process whereby such creative ways of treating food were featured. In its first six years, *EASTS* published sixteen special issues; under Professor Wu’s editorship it added eight more. These issues, like the featured foods and ingredients on *Iron Chef*, constitute the backbone of this journal.

Even so, *EASTS* does not limit itself to being a journal for “Asian fusion” STS. In fact, since this journal’s beginning we have continued to reflect on what STS is for East Asia and what East Asia means for STS through conferences, panels, and forums. If we review those issues published over the past three years, we see not just “local” themes such as Asian medicine being introduced but also theory-laden ones, such as traveling comparisons (7, no. 2) and making knowledge spaces (9, nos. 2 and 4). Readers might have been surprised by the ways *EASTS* approached India via the Tibetan diaspora and Ayurvedic pharmaceuticals (7, no. 3; 8, no. 1), and we expect to have more boundary-crossing issues in the years to come. In addition, *EASTS* is always proud of its book reviews, which are edited by a group of excellent scholars led by Prof. Honghong Tinn. Like the running commentaries on *Iron Chef*, our reviewers are not just conveying information on related scholarship but also are actively showing possible ways of doing East Asian STS by making connections. *EASTS* has made itself the gateway to East Asian STS literature, and it will continue this mission with book reviews and review articles.

Iron Chef is a timed, stylized, and well-planned program, and so is *EASTS*. Despite its commitment to being original and creative, *EASTS* is, after all, still a young journal. I am grateful that I joined the journal when it was forming in 2006 and that I had the chance to grow with it. I was Professor Fu’s book review editor and later the convener of book review editors. During Professor Wu’s term, I served as an editorial board member. *EASTS* has perhaps one of the largest editorial boards among academic journals, but in my opinion this creates more value than it does difficulties. Through this board I had a chance to meet and discuss issues in person with our associate editors, editorial board members, and advisory editors—all experts in their field. I also had the chance to learn that a serious journal like *EASTS* can take manuscripts that possess great intellectual potential and brilliantly transform them into influential pieces by working closely with their authors. Yes, accidents and unforeseeable conflicts can occur in the “invisible” community that is *EASTS*, but just like the famous Korean stage comedy *Nanta* (난타, sort of an Asian version of the Blue Man Group in a cookery setting), our editorial team can always turn challenges into opportunities (for the list of current editors, please visit <https://www.dukeupress.edu/east-asian-science-technology-and-society/>).

And so I feel an enormous responsibility as your new editor in chief. I would like to portray myself neither as *Iron Chef's* Chairman Kaga nor the legendary garçon Sengoku Takeshi, who bought a run-down restaurant back to glory in the widely seen Japanese TV drama *The King's Restaurant* (*Osama no resutoran*, 王様のレストラン 1995). Instead, I'm the manager of a kitchen named "East Asian STS." As a journal that aims to be academic in almost all good senses of the word, *EASTS* cannot function without its associate editors and editorial board members and without the advisory editors and book review editors, the dutiful juries and commentators, and, last but not least, our assistant editor, Yen Ke, and the editorial office she so ably operates.

Organizationally, I am responsible to Taiwan's Ministry of Science and Technology, which has sponsored *EASTS* since its conception. For its generosity and its respect for our academic autonomy I feel grateful. Duke University Press has been working with *EASTS* since 2011. It is a pleasure to work with such a world-renowned publisher in terms of manuscript editing and journal marketing. I would like to mention in particular the design of *EASTS* covers, which have become a powerful, nonverbal means to promote STS and East Asia. We would like to thank Duke University Press for being a permanent feature of *EASTS*, and I hope such a working relationship can continue.

Yes, *EASTS*, like a good kitchen, sends out only good food. It has been serving it up for ten years now. Thanks to the efforts of previous editors in chief, I don't need to justify the need for this journal by referencing only East Asia; attracting submissions from well beyond the boundaries of East Asia, we pay equal attention to STS in the broader framework. And with no intention of being an STS version of the recent popular food series *A Bite of China* (*Shéjiān shàng de zhōngguó*, 舌尖上的中国), we know what it is we're cooking and what it is we're eating.

So we should not feel at all worried if our journal could be placed under "Food and Drink." Furthering Professor Wu's call, we can be proud of this distinction if by "food and drink" we mean an interactive scholarship that's essential to people's lives and bodies, is able to promote new visions, and nourishes efforts for the betterment of the technoscientific world. *EASTS* cannot achieve all that without support from every one of you reading this article. Do, please, read and enjoy *EASTS*, and become one of its contributors.

Just like *Iron Chef's* Chairman Kaga, let me give a hearty cry of encouragement: "*Allez cuisine!*" (Go, kitchen!).¹

¹ Although it was a famous announcement that excited the audience and viewers of the show, this phrase is in fact not correct French and its meaning is confusing. It can be understood, in French, either as "à la cuisine!" (to the kitchen!) or as "Allez cuisiner!" (Go, cook!). Even so, I like this ambiguous phrase for the enthusiastic spirit Chairman Kaga wanted to convey, so I quote this phrase here exactly. Thanks for the discussion between us and our copy editor Liam James Brown, from the UK, who has been working for *EASTS* since 2014 and knows this Asian show well.