

Editorial

Welcome to the third volume of the Irish Journal of Asian Studies (IJAS).

In this issue of IJAS we present a number of selected papers that were written and submitted following the 2nd international conference of the Irish Association for Asian Studies (IAAS), which took place at University College Cork (UCC) on June 9th and 10th 2017. It was organised by Dr. Kevin Cawley, head of UCC's Department of Asian Studies and secretary of IAAS. The conference focused on the theme of "Asia: Transcultural Interactions – Past, Present and Future". For two days, international scholars from different areas of the field of Asian Studies interacted in lively discussion. In total 18 individual papers explored transcultural relationships in areas as varied as linguistics, literature, museum studies, and human trafficking. The success of the conference and of this journal was made possible by the generous grant awarded to Dr Kevin Cawley by the One Asia Foundation, and we would like to express our gratitude on this occasion.

The first article by Marcos Centeno provides an interesting exploration of the circulation of newsreel images of the Pacific War and asks how Spanish newsreel accounts of the actions of the Japanese empire impacted the image of Japan in Spain. The questions Centeno asks are not only of historical interest, but are increasingly relevant in the context of contemporary discussions of transnational attempts to influence media coverage or "fake news" in social media. The article deepens our understanding of the impact and power of images and those who control their circulation, by exploring how the Spanish news media ultimately used existing images from the Pacific War to create propaganda material in the interest of the Spanish dictatorship under Franco.

In the following four articles the focus shifts from images, to the written and spoken language. They present a sociolinguistic investigation of East-West identity; a typological study on a pattern widespread in the South East Asia linguistic area; an empirical study on the second language acquisition of *chengyu* (four-character idioms stemming from Chinese literary sources and spread in the East Asian cultural sphere); and finally, an introduction to the word recognition process in different writing systems. These studies, while focusing on a language specific instantiation, highlight different distinctive phenomena encompassing the Asian cultural sphere.

From a sociolinguistic point of view, Naoko Hosokawa deals with a number of related questions pertaining to the impact of language on images and identity in the context of nationalism. This is explored in reference to the omnipresent *nihonjinron* discourse, reminding the reader of problematic elements of essentialist views of Japan that continue to influence writing and discourse on national identity. By examining different examples of interactions between 'East' and 'West' in various historical contexts, such as the Tokugawa Period and the Pacific War, Hosokawa offers new insights to shape our understanding of the debates on language and identity in Japan.

Carlotta Sparvoli addresses an areal feature in South East Asia, namely, the pattern of meanings expressed via morphemes whose etyma means "come to have" (a phenomenon that

is paralleled to the English usage of ‘get’). She focuses on Modern Standard Chinese, highlighting the strong situational nuance of the possibility markers, suggesting that the expression of success, feasibility and permission are semantically oriented to the situation. In addition, she provides a wide range of examples showing the reduction of agentivity of the postverbal acquisitive morpheme, a feature that can account for the frequent occurrence of the latter in combination with the modal *néng*.

Sergio Conti explores issues related to the second language acquisition *chengyu*, a repertoire of formulaic expressions possessing a wide range of cultural references. Extensive linguistics analyses on the *chengyu* repertoire are available, but acquisitional studies based on quantitative and accurate data are still quite scarce. Conti presents the results of two small-scale experiments, aimed at investigating Italian learners’ general knowledge, main interpretation strategies, as well as comparing the effectiveness of direct and indirect instruction in *chengyu* teaching. In this way, evidence is provided of the need for indirect and inferential instruction combined with a character-centred approach.

Yun Zeng provides a description of the main findings in the field of word recognition, with reference to the Chinese writing system. After an introduction presenting the most influential models from the point of view of psycholinguistics, Zeng presents different typological classifications from a number of writing systems, encompassing different Asian writing standards. She describes three major decoding routes (grapheme-to-phoneme, morpheme-to-phoneme and grapheme-to-morpheme) thus underlining that not only, as anticipated in the Saussurean famous claim, the alphabetic visual shape can be read as “ideograms”, but also, Chinese characters can be processed through a phonological mediation.

The journal concludes with two book reviews of recent publications, relevant to the focus of this edition. Kevin Cawley reviews *Korea’s Great Buddhist-Confucian Debate – The Treatises of Chǒng Tojǒn (Sambong) and Hamhǒ Tŭkt’ong (Kihwa)* by Charles A. Muller. This text presents important treatises from East Asia’s intellectual history and demonstrates the attempts by Neo-Confucians to undermine the religious underpinnings of Buddhism in Korea, followed by a Buddhist rebuttal which is more inclusivistic in nature, and indeed even embraces transculturalism. Till Weingärtner reviews *Early Cinema in Asia*. This volume, edited by Nick Deocampo, goes far beyond drawing together papers which research the history of cinema all over the Asian continent. By considering the impact of colonialism and the relevance of cinema for the construction of national identities in the postcolonial period, it offers valuable information contributing to our understanding of contemporary Asia in an ever globalising world.

The papers collected in this issue represent just a narrow selection of the various themes and approaches scholars continue to explore and utilise to investigate questions of transnational relations within Asia, and with countries in other parts of the world. This issue highlights some of the most important contributions that the IAAS international conference and academic interactions inspired by the debates and discussions taking place in Ireland can generate.

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