INTRODUCTION: THE INTERPLAY OF ECONOMIC, POLITICAL, AND SOCIO-CULTURAL CHANGES IN ASIA

Filip Kraus, Kateřina Šamajová, Renata Westlake,
and Blanka Ferklová

*"Life is a series of natural and spontaneous changes.
Don't resist them; that only creates sorrow. Let reality be reality.
Let things flow naturally forward in whatever way they like."* (Lao Tzu)

The introduction demonstrates how the recent economic transformations of Asia led to political, social, and cultural changes that are, at least discursively, counterbalanced by a certain traditionalism and continuity in patterns of socio-cultural behavior. The introduction consequently introduces the structure of the book, which is divided into five thematic parts to indicate how the interplay of continuity and change in Asia produces and reproduces itself. As a result, the book begins with an excursion into various historically relevant studies on this phenomenon. The final part is organized according to different fields of study to demonstrate how economic and technological development triggers socio-political changes and transformations in contemporary art production.

Keywords: continuity, change, Asia, economy, society, politics, art

Asia is one of the most dynamically developing regions in the world. It is also a region well known for its rich cultural heritage and strong emphasis on traditional values. The current book contains chapters focused on a relatively limited number of topics, ranging from sustainable economic development and social changes to the art reflections of those changes in four Asian countries – China, Korea, Japan, and Vietnam. It attempts to understand Asia as a region where the economic, technological, and environmental changes are capable of influencing

various aspects of local societies, politics, cultures, or art. In the following sections, the nature of the different facets of the changes are sketched out in general while examples are provided of what we perceive as representational cases of these cultural and societal dynamics in the region.

The process of economic change in parts of Asia has already been known since ancient times (Fu 1981, 116). In modern history, however, the significance of economic changes is best demonstrated with the economic developments of Singapore, South Korea, Taiwan, and Hong Kong during the second half of the twentieth century. These emerging economies, known as the four "Asian tigers," laid the foundation for what is currently called "the East Asian Miracle" (Gulati 1992; Litsareva 2017, 75). At that time, these underdeveloped economies attracted foreign investment and established various labor-intensive, usually light industries (typically manufacturing of consumption goods and clothing industries). Later, the economies developed more capital-intensive industries, for example, the pharmaceutical industry in Singapore and the production of advanced computer chips in Taiwan, which further enhanced their economic performance. The improved economic situation typically triggered broader socio-political changes, and simultaneously spilled over into other economies in the region, such as those of the People's Republic of China, Vietnam, Malaysia, and Thailand (Nguyen 2017).

The rapid economic transformations described above inevitably led to political changes in the region (Fabrizio 2015). The originally absolutistic serfdom-based regimes changed only slightly under the colonial or semi-colonial systems (Benda 1965). With the end of the Second World War, however, the process of decolonization led to different outcomes (Cottrell 2014). Some of the countries re-established royal ascendancy of an at least symbolic nature. Other countries became authoritarian regimes. This process may be best demonstrated with the case of Korea, where the northern part remained a communist totalitarian state, but South Korea was transformed from a military totality to a politically open but socially conservative polity (Lee 1988). A similar development can be observed in Vietnam, having undergone a division which was forcefully revoked in 1975 after the country was reunified under the name Socialist Republic of Vietnam. But, as a result of its poorly executed centrally-planned economy, the socialist regime nearly collapsed economically. The bad economic situation triggered the launch of a political and economic reforms, known as Doi Moi Renovation. As a result, since 1986, Vietnam officially became a country with a market economy that was necessary to facilitate the economic transition of Vietnam into the developmental stage where it would be ripe for a new socialist revolution (Kiernan 2017). Such political and economic transformations also lead to changes in the social composition in East and Southeast Asian countries (Fabrizio 2015).

At the end of the nineteenth century, most of the societies in Asia were polygynous, with the patrimonial family model as the basis of its social organization (Faucon 2015). The majority of Asian women had obtained suffrage by the middle of the twentieth century, but in parts of Asia polygynous marriages were abandoned only in the late 1950s (Teele 2020). It was the opening of the job market to women, however, together with a certain degree of gender imbalance in East Asia, that changed the power relations in Asia (Asian Developmental Bank 2011).

In the region, the economic transformations started with labor-intensive industries dominated by men (Morris 1996). Only gradually, more capital-intensive modes of production requiring more profound changes in education were introduced, and the job markets across Asia become accessible to women (Litsareva 2017, 75). In this process, women were partially liberated from their commitments at home and started to compete with men in various, especially administrative, positions (Fang 2010). Currently, women are able to enter the job markets in great numbers, which leads to changes in the family and whole social systems (ILO 2011). But in Southeast Asia, the position of women is still far from being equal to men. In some countries, such as Malaysia, Indonesia, Philippines, and Singapore, polygyny has persisted (Alamgir 2014). Monika Arnez (2024, 3-5) shows that those problems are innate to Muslim societies, where not only women's bodies are strictly controlled. Equally controversial is criminalization of homosexuality, sex outside marriage, and cohabitation of unmarried couples by criminal codes of those societies (ibid, 3). At the same time, in some of East Asia's more developed countries a certain gender imbalance remained, partly due to Confucian traditions. But, with the changes in the local job markets, the women in East Asia became more independent than their counterparts in Southeast Asia (Booth 2016). Albeit far from ideal, in these societies, the position of women in society, politics, and the economy improved to the degree that many of them currently choose to live out of wedlock, and thus, men are forced to seek their spouses in neighboring countries (Raymo et al. 2015).

The list of social changes described above is not exhaustive. With the transformation of these economies to more capital-oriented modes of production, the job markets experienced a structural lack of workforce in the labor-intensive sectors (Litsareva 2017, 77). This, together with the traditional gender imbalance in some East Asian countries and political changes in the region, opened up a space for political, marriage-related, and economic migration within and beyond Asia (Ruhs and Martin 2008; Sun 2017; Asis et al. 2019). Chinese, Vietnamese, and Indonesian migrants currently form substantial immigrant communities in Japan, South Korea, and Taiwan or in the US, Australia, and many European countries (Chan and Koh 2017). The presence of the Asian diaspora is especially discernible in France, the US, Germany, and Australia, and can also be found in smaller

countries, such as the Czech Republic, where Vietnamese migrants used to make up the third biggest migrant community (Nožina and Kraus 2020).

In Max Weber's view, the various facets of changes described in the preceding section can be perceived as actions that trigger reactions of various social agents (Weber in Runciman 1991). In the present book, these reactions are regarded as a type of continuity, i.e., as a discursively expressed desire for social, economic or cultural stability that may be manifested as political and social conservatism or economic protectionism. This book will also demonstrate a much finer discursive deployment of power in a very Foucauldian sense (1978, 92–93). The chapters in the present book will not only analyze the major economic, political, and social changes, but will also analyze the much finer networks in which the relation of power is practiced. To demonstrate the discursive aspect of continuity and change in Asia, the book provides analyses of name-giving in Japan and its previous colony, Taiwan. There will also be a depiction of how women changed in the Korean movie industry and Japanese literature, or how socio-cultural values are preserved (or changed) in the Vietnamese diaspora. But the present book aims to demonstrate that there is always an inherent continuity entailed in changes, whose various facets will be detailed below.

Asia is undoubtedly well-known for its strong emphasis on the preservation of its cultural heritage and various traditions. In terms of nationhood, Asian societies take pride in their long history, the antiquity of their culture, and their vibrant religiosity (Illeto 2009). Chinese historiography portrays Chinese civilization as being 5,000 years old, which approximately corresponds with the Vietnamese worldview (Wu 2018). Other countries in the region also commonly put great emphasis on their traditional values. As a result of Asian traditionalism, Japanese Emperors, Cambodian, Thai, and Bhutan Kings, or the Sultan in Brunei, are still considered heads of their respective states, at least in the nominal sense.

Traditions in Asia are valued to such an extent that they become a political ideology itself (Nury 1996). In a more recent example from the 1990s, the leaders of Singapore established so-called "Asian values" as a political ideology, the primary aim of which was to define shared social norms for the whole of Asia (Cauquelin et al. 1998). The common perception that Asian nations possess similar values evaporated after the Asian financial crisis of 1997. The concept was utilized, however, to serve various purposes in different states. While in Singapore, the concept was used to "uphold the virtue of clean government, […] in Indonesia, they have been used implicitly to defend nepotism and crony capitalism" (Hoon 2004). It has also been used by authoritatively inclined leaders to suppress political opposition and restrict human rights in their respective countries (Sen 1997; Thompson 2004). Even in economically developed Singapore, so-called traditional Asian values were used to suppress the Western notion of human rights and legitimize the

prosecution of political opponents, such as Chia Thye Poh. Under the influence of "Asian values," the Singaporean political system developed into a peculiar form of parliamentary democracy, one with regular elections but manipulated parliamentary representation (Englehart 2000). The great respect for traditional values is also evident in even more pro-democratic Asian countries (Nury 1996; Thompson 2004). A certain conservatism in socio-economic and cultural thought can be observed in Japan, South Korea, and Taiwan (Cheong 2004), or political conservatism in Vietnam and China (Robinson 1996).

Such conservative thoughts can resurface in various facets of social life. For example, despite historical experience, Confucianism still remains deeply rooted in Sinitic societies (Billioud 2007). In China, Taiwan, Vietnam, and South Korea, the still relevant ancestor cult resulted in a strong preference for a male heir in families over daughters, and it is still very active in shaping the social behavior of the people (Nguyen and Vu 2020). Vietnamese families typically have, for example, four to five children, and if there is a lack of a male heir, the men are able to divorce their wives (Becquet Guilmoto 2018). The same tradition left a strong gender imbalance in Taiwan, which is also a political entity that built its national identity on the premise of safeguarding traditional Chinese culture against the communist People's Republic of China (Chun 2017).

In the coastal and oceanic part of Southeast Asia, Islamic societies—some of them ruled by Sharia law—have survived to the present day. In such countries, the social norms, in particular, are largely based on old religious prescriptions and orthodoxies (Crouch 2016). Even other non-Muslim communities in the region appear, however, to be more traditionalist than their counterparts in other parts of Asia (Cheong 2004). Typical cases of this kind can be observed in Malaysia, Indonesia, and Brunei. The elites in Asian countries usually argue that socio-cultural traditions are designed to stabilize local communities and help avoid any of the side effects associated with rapid modernization that occurred in other parts of the world decades ago. With this rhetoric, traditions are utilized to suppress the individual rights of a significant part of local communities and diminish political opposition. The adherence to traditions and the continuation of the old socio-cultural practices frequently result, however, in the resistance of various social groups and ultimately lead to further socio-political and economic changes (Mulyani 2004; Kennedy 2002; Izzudin 2021).

It is precisely this eternal interplay of continuity and change in Asia, which leads to further development, a slowdown, or, in some cases, regression in various spheres of the socio-economic, political and cultural life, that we attempted to address in our book. To accomplish such a task in its complexity is far beyond the scope of the presented volume. But, at least, we were able to provide readers with various studies covering different areas of study. The topics presented by

this book include cases focused on changes in history, economy, international relations, identities, migration, social spaces, and gender-specific issues. In these cases, the book attempts to understand Asia as a region where economic, technological, and environmental changes are capable of influencing various aspects of local societies, politics, and cultures, or art. These changes are also accompanied by the desire of people for more stability and predictability, which is understood as a discursive and factual continuity in the book.

The present book wishes to be a more interdisciplinary contribution to the line of co-authored, edited, and single-authored monographs devoted to various aspects and sources of continuity and change in Asia. Among those books, we were particularly inspired by the works of Martin Andersson and Christer Gunnarsson (2003), who edited a book investigating correlations between changes in international institutions, economic development and its crises, or social transformation in Asia. We were also inspired by Erik Ringmar (2005), who edited a book comparing the economic rise of the global West with the East since the eighteenth century. The book argues that all the economic and social changes must be politically institutionalized, otherwise they would lead to a long period of stagnation. Ian Marsh and Takashi Inoguchi (2008) wrote a monograph examining differences in the impact of ongoing globalization, with its deeper economic integration, on public opinion, national, or supra-national identity, and political reactions to these changes in Europe and Asia. Ronald Hill (2002), in his monograph, maps the hidden connections, mutual dependencies, and influence between changing economic systems of the SEA, its people, and environment. Elizabeth Perry and Mark Selden (2000) edited a volume focused on how the political, social, and economic changes produce and reproduce conflicts and various kinds of resistance in Chinese society. Muthiah Alagappa (2004) organized a volume on political changes in correlation with an expanding civil society, democratization, and political changes in Asia. John Gillespie and Pip Nicholson (2005) edited a book on how, despite the economic and political changes in Vietnam and China, the two states legally sustain the socialist ideology and practices with economic changes, religious practices, and the international system. Abdul Rohman's (2023) monograph shows the complexity and historical reasons for continuity, discontinuity, and change in social movements of Southeast Asia. In the book, Rohman demonstrates that the social movements and their reasons, trajectories, and consequences, cannot be analyzed separately from past, present, and future economic, environmental, and social problems. An edited volume by Peter Nas (2005) is devoted to trends and agents in urban changes and urbanization in Asia. Caroline Turner (2005, 1) in her edited book, mapped "the dynamic developments in contemporary Asian art" and demonstrates correlations between social changes and their expression in Asian arts. Finally, Anthony Fung (2013) edited a book focused

on changes in Asian popular culture in its global continuity, discontinuity, and domestication of popular genres.

To help the reader navigate the complex nature of continuity and change in Asia, the individual studies were divided into five parts: 1) History, 2) Economy and Politics, 3) Society, 4) Gender and Gendered Practices and 5) Art and Literature.

The part on **History** consists of three chapters. In the first chapter, Kateřina Šamajová shows how, in times of crisis, the Chinese bureaucratic apparatus used so-called *bencao* (本草) treatises, a concept known as part of what we today call traditional Chinese medicine. These works, the authority of which derives from their legendary origins, were used by Chinese administrations to stabilize societies in times of famines. Over time, *bencao* gained a wider acceptance among Chinese scholars and established itself as templates for future Materia Medica works. They were also used to codify the Chinese concept of the Five Grains (五谷 *wu gu*). In this process, the concept became part of the official state doctrine, centered around Confucianism and agricultural society.

In the second chapter, Yuko Takahashi presents a study of the Korean A-bomb Victims movement. To deal with the devastating and society-altering effects and fight for their own recognition and rights as innocent victims of the atomic bomb, the Korean victims used their traditional national identity to distinguish them-selves from their Japanese counterparts. This A-bombed nationalism, however, stimulated a sense of atonement among Japanese citizens, especially Japanese atomic bomb victims. A-bomb nationalism of the Korean victim has become a model, within which the citizens of the two countries can face a common past, but work together in a new improved relationship.

In the concluding chapter of the historical part, Jasper Roctus investigated how traditional Western imported religion, Protestantism, influenced Chinese leaders at the beginning of the twentieth century, when they created their own concept of Chinese nationalism and revolution. The author emphasizes Sun Yat-sen's per-sonal understanding of the main tenets of Protestantism, identifying it as an early formative force in Sun's vision of China as a national state. This chapter shows how traditional religious thought, when transplanted into a new socio-cultural sphere, may become an inspiration for change, in this case, a new form of local modernity and political revolution.

The second part of the book contains three chapters focused on **Economy and Politics**. Its first chapter, written by Damien Ng, studies media reflections on the US-Asia economic competition and how the Western media shaped public opinion about it. The author uses Van Dijk's concept of macro-rules to analyze topics that prevailed in the headlines of newspaper articles in reaction to the so-called trade war between the US and Japan in the late 1970s. He then applies Van Leeuwen's socio-semantic inventory of social-actor representation to under-

stand how different media depict political actors in the discourse of their articles. Damien Ng also attempts to derive implications for the ongoing US-China economic rivalry. The study concludes that while the coverage of Japan in Western newspapers was generally unfavorable to Japan, the discourse was restricted to economic issues. In the case of China, however, the topics included discussions about politics, Chinese military expansion, human rights, and challenges to US hegemony. In this way, the chapter depicts a shift in Western media reflections concerning the US-Asian trade war from economic issues to political ones.

The inner changes in civil society in China are addressed in the following chapter written by Taru Salmenkari. In her research, the author analyzes the agenda of various, usually urban middle-class dominated, environmental NGOs in China, and demonstrates their way of promoting new, usually imported, concepts of green and sustainable agriculture. This chapter demonstrates that, due to the middle-class structural dominance in Chinese civil society, the green movements usually only address middle-class concerns, often ignoring or even silencing the interests of the rural people they represent. In the case of environmental NGOs and the promotion of new green concepts in Chinese agriculture, the economic costs to rural residents are often neglected. In this scenario, the rural population resists the green programs and turns to the state to seek help. In this sense, the author proceeds to the question as to what extent the rise of environmental NGOs in China can alleviate systemic problems and social inequalities, or is able to promote nature-friendly environmental programs.

In the last chapter of the part focused on the economy and politics, Marco Zappa examines two special economic zones (SEZ) in Southeast Asia, namely Thilawa SEZ in the Yangon region, Myanmar, and the Van Don SEZ in the Quang Ninh province, Northeast Vietnam. His chapter is a preliminary analysis of how, after the Covid 19 pandemic, the sustainability of economic development in the two regions was reset. The author revealed that over-reliance on fossil fuels, vulnerability to disruptions in global supply chains, and the possibility of environmental pollution in combination with reliance on tourism may undermine the current governmental policies on sustainable economic growth in the two SEZs. In other words, the chapter shows that, despite the local policies designated to promote sustainable economic development in the two SEZs, there are too many external factors that may easily lead to a profound decline in its economic performance.

The third part of the book focusses on **Society**. In the first chapter, Aran Romero-Moreno examines the dynamic discourse surrounding the changing concept of civilization in contemporary China. By analyzing various billboards, banners, textbooks, and video clips collected in urban spaces of Nanjing in 2017–18, the author elaborates on the concept and usage of civilization (*wenming*)

in government campaigns. Civilization serves here as both a macro-sociological and micro-sociological normative concept, used to classify Chinese citizens and spaces. The author identified a four-layered typology corresponding to different levels of civilization and thus the affinity of the people and places to the system. It is obvious that, in this typology, the low-income groups of people and places, are classified as less civilized, compared to those with a higher income.

The second chapter focuses on recent developments in the migratory process between urban and rural places in Japan. In the chapter, Anthony Scott Rausch observes various agents in Japan's internal migration from urban to rural areas and argues that universal social tensions exist around which the dynamics of continuity and change in Asia are contested and re-contested. To demonstrate the dynamics of continuation and change, he traces several agents such as local incentives for young people to relocate from urban to rural areas, regional tax equality, and tax citizenship programs that allow for a more equal re-distribution of tax revenue (helping less populated areas develop public spaces and make them attractive for those who may live in such places), or regional newspapers and local think tanks promoting the re-location of people in the same direction.

Migration is also the theme in the following chapter, written by Filip Kraus and Mai Thi Thu. The authors analyze four main inter-generational conflicts in the Vietnamese diaspora living in the Czech Republic and demonstrate that the first-generation Vietnamese economic migrants remained firmly interwoven into their transnational business networks which are based on family and kin. These networks give them a sense of basic social security, while simultaneously keeping them mentally in a Vietnamese socio-cultural milieu. To ensure a smooth functioning of the transnational family business, the parents count on the help of their children. The children have already internalized, however, socio-cultural values innate to the host society and only rarely respect the wishes of the parents. This produces various inter-generational conflicts over the children's education, their ability to share the parents socio-cultural environment, and the Czech romantic/marital partners.

The last chapter in this part, written by Jeehwan Park, depicts changes in social movements protecting day-laborers in working-class districts of Osaka. This study demonstrates the general trend to transform these social movements into state agents, protecting the homeless and aging day-laborers, and creating various forms of public space for these people. The worrying message of the chapter is that despite all the security measures of the postwar Japanese social models, day-laborers have become a special stratum of society that was sacrificed for the smooth functioning of the system. This chapter demonstrates that the so-called "Asian economic miracle" is based on empty promises and a false sense of social security. It is resulting in the rise of another kind of *lumpenproletariat*, as in nine-

teenth century England and Germany, and only future changes will show, whether the contemporary socio-political policies can revert the negative consequences of continuing this deceptive economic model.

The fourth part of the book is devoted to **Gender and Gendered Practices**. It contains four chapters, beginning with Mariana Grajdian's study of changes in Japanese masculinity. She observes that, as a result of downward social mobility, the traditional model of Japanese masculinity, the so-called "corporate samurai" (i.e., the one who fully provides for his family) is gradually being replaced by new concepts of *otaku* (i.e., one neglecting his appearance while focusing on narrowly defined and imbalanced consumption, and reluctant to deal with other people), and *herbivore men* (i.e., one who rejects the old-generation masculinity, does not associate with women, and refuses to have intercourse with them). Instead of living an active life as a corporate samurai, *otaku,* and *herbivore men* are living in safe spaces of online social networks, using online dating apps or sites, as well as games or pornography, to meet with the opposite sex. The author interprets the tendency as Japanese men's outlet for releasing anger, frustration, and incomprehensible feelings of inadequacy, loneliness, or powerlessness. These figures of masculinity represent a profound change in the social behavior of Japanese men, which is caused by the rapidly changing economic conditions around them.

In the second chapter, Ivona Barešová and Petr Janda describe differences, changes, and remaining similarities in naming practices in Japan and Taiwan. The authors demonstrate that, at present, parents in Taiwan and Japan use rather different name selection methods that are further transformed in each society. In Japan, name-giving usually proceeds from the sound to the graphic form of the name, while in Taiwan, it is typically based on the symbolism of the Chinese characters and the sound is only considered secondary. Similar tendencies in the naming process in Japan and Taiwan reflect broader social trends in both societies, such as the growing independence of the nuclear family.

In the third chapter of this part, Madhu demonstrates that the traditional social exclusion of the untouchable caste (Dalits) in India was exacerbated during the Covid 19 pandemic. In this period, many of those from the Dalit caste lost their jobs and were forced to accept job positions exposing them to the risk of infection and which offered only very low wages. Under these conditions, the traditional caste system of social distancing became seemingly reasonable. In particular, the unequal status and treatment of Dalit women, both in terms of their caste and their status as women, revealed consolidation of the Indian caste system during COVID-19 and enhancing patriarchal control over the lives of Indian women in general.

The final chapter of this part, written by Yuko Ogasawara, deals with changing gender dynamics in Japan. The chapter examines the causes of an increasing

number of women who continue to work throughout their child-rearing years and the implications of this trend for gender relations in Japan. Unsurprisingly, the primary reason for this is associated with the dismantling of traditional gender relations in contemporary Japan and the support of Japanese firms that promote the work-family balance of their employees. Surprising, however, is that the changes in the pattern of Japanese women participating in the job market are accompanied by a stronger commitment of women to traditional mothering and housewife roles.

The last part of the book is devoted to **Art and Literature**. In the first chapter, Giorgio Strafella and Daria Berg map the use of so-called artificial intelligence (AI) in two very different fields of art, namely ink painting in a "traditional" style and modernist novel writing. The use of AI in these arts is indeed groundbreaking itself, but the most shocking is the changing nature of the public discourse surrounding AI and its abilities to produce creative works. The authors conclude that in foreseeable future, AI will not be able to substitute for human painters or novel writers. According to their findings, the so-called AI can be already given some kind of creative autonomy in ink paintings, but it will take a long time before AI will be able to produce a coherent work of literary fiction. In contrast to the findings of the two authors, we can see that the recent public discourse deeply believes in AI ability to write various scholarly and artistic texts.

The second chapter, written by Andrea Szilagyi, is devoted to changes in the description of Japanese women in Yone Noguchi's (1875–1947) fictional diaries, short novels, and magazine articles published before 1906. Yone Noguchi initially depicted Japanese women in his novels in a similar way as did contemporary Western authors who viewed these women as traditional, passive, weak, uneducated, and obedient Asian beauties. In his later writings, however, especially in his fictional diaries, the depiction of Asian women changed significantly to sophisticated, educated, and self-confident women who were independent of their male counterparts. The two opposite characters were re-unified in his journal articles where he depicted Japanese geishas not only as representatives of traditional Japanese culture, but also as modern educated women pursuing their careers. One could argue that he viewed the geisha figure as an embodiment of the contemporary Meiji era in Japan – an era which had traditional roots, but which also employed modernity.

Gabor Sebo also deals with the depiction of women and womanhood, this time through the eyes of Korean cinematography. He analyzes movies from various periods of this film tradition and depicts contemporary transformations in the aesthetics, gender, and womanhood between 1936 and 1961. The traditional depiction of Korean women as objects in the hands of foreign colonizers and their male Korean compatriots during the colonial time was replaced by images of

oppressed wives, liberated dancers, and dismissed concubines during the Korean War. Their depiction developed further into that of successful women envied by men, or unfaithful war widows, at least in the context of classical Confucian conventions, in the postwar era. It is obvious from the chapter that, especially during the colonial and war periods, women were unable to become independent of their male counterparts, but these were also periods of constant rebellion against the male-dominated social space.

The final chapter of the book, by Zhenru Zhou, investigates the twentieth-century history of the Dunhuang Library Cave. By analyzing Mogao Cave 17 and its transformations since its "discovery" in 1907, the author shows that, in order to preserve the original spirit of the place, many new objects appeared and changed the *genius loci* of the cave. She identifies five new objects in the form of inscriptions, statues, and steles. Those objects not only changed the spirit of the place but also became part of its cultural heritage. In this process, the change was blurred by its opposite figure, namely its continuation, to the degree that we lose our ability to recognize what was original and what has been changed.

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