
Asian Studies at Colgate

NEWSLETTER

Fall 2017

What's happening in Asian Studies at Colgate and Beyond



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- Student activities
- Meet Asian Study faculty
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Find us at: <http://www.colgate.edu/asian-studies>

From the Director

Just a few years ago, characterizing the period in which we live by such terms as “neoliberalism” or “globalization” seemed quite appropriate. Nowadays we are not so sure; these words do not sit comfortably with what we are seeing and experiencing, including the rise of protectionism, nationalistic sentiments, and segmentation at various scales. But, perhaps for those who grounded their research in particular places, things were never that simple anyway. Thinking about Asia in particular, neither “neoliberalism” nor “globalization” never really explained much of its realities without some qualifications. The state has played and continues to play a central role in shaping the political economies of many Asian countries, and globalization often meant a pressure to adopt and embrace Anglo-American ways of doing and thinking things.



This is not to say that we should discard terms and ideas that were developed primarily with “western” contexts in mind all together. Rather, studying Asia (and other ‘non-western’ parts of the world) helps to reveal implicit assumptions and biases behind such ideas. Professor Carolyn Hsu’s recent book on Chinese NGOs does that about the notion of “civil society” (see page 9). Similarly, Professor Aftab Jassal’s work shows that “spirit possession,” unlike in the “western” context, can be a positive form of worship in Hinduism, in which the body becomes a kind of a mobile temple (see page 5). In other words, knowing “other places” gives you a very concrete leverage to question and challenge dominant or taken-for-granted ideas and theories (“That sounds logical and everything, but I know that other ways are also possible”).

All this is to say that the Asian Studies Program, I hope, will provide the Colgate community with a space of engaging learning, critical scholarship, and rich conversations, which are borne out by the realities of Asia.

Daisaku Yamamoto



Why Study Asia?

Asia holds a unique and vital place within the globalizing world of the early 21st century. Home to an extraordinary range of linguistic and ethnic groups, this broad and dynamic region is rich in cultural and environmental diversity. In the spirit of liberal arts education, Asian Studies provides you with an intellectual space that accommodates and encourages your aspiration to engage with the whole of the place and people, rather than viewing them through a specific disciplinary lens alone. Our premise is that if you want to understand something about Chinese economy, for example, you cannot do so without knowing the country's historical experiences, geographical settings, political dynamics and its relations with other countries, changing social values and realities, evolving language, and so on. Engaging the many changes taking place in Asian societies today requires a diverse set of intellectual skills, which will prepare you to extend your career in and with one of the most dynamic world regions of our time.

Asian Studies Program at Colgate

Nine courses are required for the major, of which four courses must be at the 300 or 400 level.

The introductory course may count toward the five courses focused on a single subregion of Asia. Three other courses should be chosen from the list of Governed Electives and may address any region of Asia. Other courses may also serve as electives for this major if they are at the 300 or 400 level and if at least 40 percent of the course and of the student's work concerns Asia. Students must gain approval from the director of Asian Studies prior to taking these courses for them to count toward the major.

Majors are strongly encouraged to acquire proficiency in one or more Asian languages, although no more than three language courses at any level may count toward the nine courses required for the major. Normally, the nine courses will include courses from at least two of these three divisions: arts and humanities, social sciences, natural sciences and mathematics.

We also offer a minor in Asian Studies.

For more information visit us at: <http://www.colgate.edu/asian-studies>



Asia through Students' Activities at Colgate

Mid-Autumn Festival

On October 6, 2017 in ALANA, the Chinese Interest Association held the Mid-Autumn Festival to celebrate an Asian traditional occasion where family members gathered together to eat mooncakes and mark a harvest season. Colgate welcomed the students with a radiant full moon lingering over the pitch-black sky, and in turn, many students showed up to chat and mingle. The ceremony started with an opening speech about the legendary origin of the festival, originating as the people's custom of offering contribution to the moon after the wife of Chang E became a Goddess in the moon. Afterwards, people lined up to have mooncakes and eat Chinese food. After the food had been served, some students went outside to watch the moon while others stayed inside and



talked about how they celebrated the festival in their hometowns.

MATSURI, Japan Festival

After midterms at Colgate, the Japan Club held a Japan festival called Matsuri (祭) in ALANA Cultural Center on October 21, 2017. Upon setting foot in the building, the newcomers were welcomed by girls wearing kimono, a traditional Japanese attire, and were told that they could have dinner after playing games and winning tickets. A person who had never been to a Japanese festival could feel excited about the variety of entertainment: one could go straight to the right corner of the room to play hoop throwing, line up in the middle to play can shooting, or wait for his or her turn to play ping pong ball scooping and daruma otoshi, which featured a five-piece daruma doll that required the player to keep



the first piece on balance while knocking out the rest. Once the players had acquired the tickets, they could go to the room from far left corner to exchange them for dinner. The food stalls also presented various choices from the creamy and crunchy takoyaki to the sweet red-bean dorayaki. After playing and eating, students and Colgate staff lingered to talk and play video games. "This event is great, the organizers are nice, and the food is really delicious," an Asian freshman proclaimed as she waited in line for the takoyaki while the sophomore standing next to her made a comment: "More people came this year."

Meet Asian Studies Faculty

We are excited to welcome new faculty to the Asian Studies Program. Professor Jassal joined from Duke University, and Professor Mehl from the University of Chicago. Professor Albertson is with us this year on his sabbatical leave from Wake Forest University. Welcome to Colgate!

Professor Aftab Jassal (Religion)



How did you arrive at Colgate?

I did my PhD in the West and South Asian religions program at Emory University, where I wrote about ritual performance traditions in the Himalayan mountains of North India. After my doctorate, I became a postdoc at Duke University, in the Thompson Writing Program, where I became interested in teaching courses in Hinduism, healing, and rituals. I was excited to see the Colgate position open up as it seemed to be a perfect fit for my teaching and research interests. Over the years, I've heard many, many wonderful things about Colgate and Hamilton, and I'm very happy to be here to experience those things for myself!

Can you tell us a little more about your research?

I am really interested in how people in north India intimately live and interact with gods and goddesses. Their world is animated with these 'otherworldly' presences who do not exist in a realm separate to the normal or everyday, but rather actively shape local politics, kin relations, etc. In my research and book project, I examine how Hindu gods, goddesses, and ancestors are known, experienced, and made present in different ritual settings, through practices such as storytelling, divine embodiment, divination and healing, pilgrimage, and temple worship. One of my recent articles is about "spirit possession." Unlike in 'Western' contexts, in Hinduism, spirit possession is not a negative thing, but rather, is often a mark or sign of the deity communicating with his/her worshippers. There is something fascinating and powerful about how, in the process of spirit possession, the body

When I'm writing as a scholar in the west, I don't want the language of academia to drown out the particularities of the traditions that I am writing about.

of the spirit medium can become a site, a mobile temple, through which worshippers can come into direct contact with the divine, in the here-and-now.

What is the challenge of doing your research in the “western” intellectual context?

It’s a great privilege to be able to live and move between different cultures and traditions. Given my training both in a postcolonial context (India) and the US, it is impossible to escape the imperialism of Western and Orientalist categories of knowledge; one is always with them. However, there are very real issues around linguistic as well as cultural translation, and we have to be aware of the power dynamics between different languages, cultures, and communities. When I’m writing as a scholar in the west, I don’t want the language of academia to drown out the particularities of the traditions that I am writing about. So, for example, I make an effort to use indigenous terms as far as possible and resist translating them too quickly into more authoritative, English-language terms.

How has your experience with teaching at Colgate been?

I really enjoy my students here at Colgate—they are wonderful, curious, hard-working, and generous with each other. It’s great working with smaller, more intimate groups of students in a liberal arts environment, because there is always a lot of interesting back and forth, give and take. It’s really a pleasure, and I learn a lot from my students every day!

Professor Scott Mehl (East Asian Language and Literature)



What did you do before you came to Colgate?

I came to study Japanese because I read a novel in translation called *The Sound of The Mountain* in the second year of my undergraduate study. It was really fascinating and, for me at the time, incomprehensible and I thought that if I could learn Japanese I would be able to understand more of it. What I didn’t realize was that this experience would inspire a lifelong commitment. I went to Japan for a few years over the course of my graduate training. In time, I came back to the US and completed my Ph.D. in Chicago. I studied the formation of free-verse poetry in modern Japanese.

Are you working on a book right now?

I am, and it's about modern Japanese poetry. Many readers all around the world are familiar with the shortest form of Japanese poetry—the seventeen-syllable haiku. Other readers will also have heard of the slightly longer tanka in thirty-one syllables, which was for centuries the aristocracy's preferred poetic form. But for most Japanese readers today, the idea of “poetry” means longer lyric poems that are generally meter-free: in other words, free verse. How did free verse come to such a position of prominence in the field of Japanese literature? What were the social and political contexts that contributed to the rise of free verse in Japanese? And how did the first Japanese free verse poets overcome the literary establishment's often vehement resistance? The search for answers to these questions adds depth to our picture of contemporary Japanese culture—these are the questions that drive my current project.

What does teaching at Colgate feel like?

I enjoy it very much. The students are motivated and enthusiastic about Japanese culture and language. This semester I'm teaching first-year language and third-year language, and in the spring semester I'll teach CORE Japan and will continue with third-year language. I find language teaching energizing, and I enjoy bringing Japanese poetry into the classroom. The haiku, for example, can be ideal material for teaching a grammar point, because it offers great stylistic richness in a text short enough to read deeply in a few minutes' time.

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Any challenges in teaching?

It's a constant balancing act to make sure what we cover in the language classroom is effectively complemented by the assignments students complete outside of class. The need for ongoing, regular recalibration makes every class a challenge.

Why should Colgate students study Asia?

There are the statistical arguments. Roughly one in four human beings is from this geographical entity we call Asia (though it's problematic to define what Asia is, as we know), which would suggest Asia's global importance. For me, though, answers to this question are more culturally motivated. Students who attend North American universities often have a foundation of knowledge about European cultures, but the emphasis on the West can result in lopsided perspectives. One reason to study Asia is to help counteract that lopsidedness.

Professor Nick Albertson (East Asian Language and Literature)



I'd like to know how you got to Colgate

I was first exposed to Japanese language and culture when I was eleven. My parents took us as a family to Japan and we spent 5 months in Kyoto. I fell in love with the culture and the language, and with Kyoto especially - I love that city; we spent a lot of time going to shrines and castles. When I was in high school, I started taking Japanese language again at Smith College, and then I spent my junior year of college in Kyoto. A couple of years after college, I went back to Japan again and taught English in middle and elementary schools up north in Morioka. After the two-year contract, I decided that I wanted to do graduate school and I went to the University of Chicago. This year, I'm on sabbatical from Wake Forest University

and that's why I'm at Colgate. I'm teaching Japan Through Literature and Film this semester.

What is your main research interest?

I do poetry from the 1890s and the early 1900s. My book project especially focuses on five different poets who are often called 'romantic poets'. I'm going to do some close reading of the works, looking into the way they write about nature and the supernatural. It's a time of cultural and linguistic shifts when they stopped using Chinese literature as their touchstone and started using more Western works, which were becoming more popular.

What's your impression of teaching at Colgate?

I'm really impressed. The students are very engaged, and they really try hard. We have really interesting conversations about the material that we are reading and watching. I'm still finding new things out as we go through and it's just a real joy for me.



Meet the Author

Professor Carolyn Hsu (Sociology and Anthropology) talks about her recent book on Chinese NGOs

Can you tell us a little bit about this book?

Non-governmental organizations are a new phenomenon in the People's Republic of China. In the 1990s, there were almost no NGOs in China. Now there are almost 700,000 legally registered organizations in China, plus scholars estimate there are several million more unregistered NGOs. The sector has exploded. I've been studying them since 2004. I started because somebody had pointed me to a big government-organized NGO (GONGO) in China and said: "Why is nobody doing research on it?" This is really an interesting, innovative organization and therefore I went to China to study it... I found that despite having ties to the government, it much more independent than you'd expect. I also discovered there were also lots and lots of small grassroots NGOs emerging all over China. The Chinese state was set up assuming that there would never be NGOs in the country. So this book looks at the rise of this phenomenon: why would a generation, growing up completely unfamiliar with NGOs, decide they would start an NGO? How can NGOs thrive in a country where the political system is hostile to them, and where the laws are written to suppress them? For example, most Chinese NGOs were legally prevented from raising funds domestically. Even if they were legally permitted, they have to deal with an entire country of people who have no tradition of supporting NGOs financially at all. Yet, despite all these obstacles, the NGO sector has flourished.

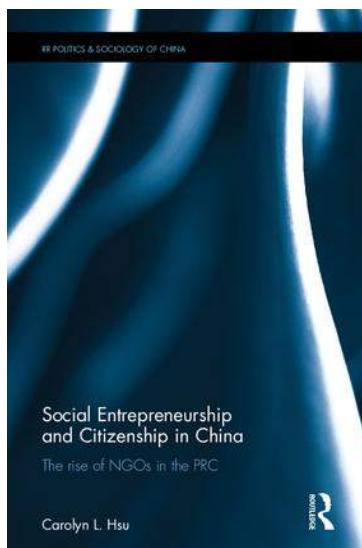


Does the rise of NGOs in China mean that civil society is growing there? What are the political implications of that?

NGOs are empowering Chinese citizens politically in China, but not in the way you might expect. Western scholars and journalists are always looking for civil society in China because they think it is a sign that democracy will

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eventually arise there. There are a lot of reasons to question whether that model really works in the non-Western world. When Western scholars go to China with a checklist of requirements for “civil society,” they never find it. For example, for an NGO to count as really promoting civil society, it should be genuinely autonomous from the government. Chinese NGOs often have very close, entangling relationships with state officials, so they fail the checklist test. (In reality, Western NGOs don’t meet this requirement either, as many are dependent on state funding and contracts, but somehow this doesn’t change the checklist.). I would argue that the checklist is a problem. By focusing on it, scholars fails to see the ways that citizens are creating new ways of mobilizing and organizing in China, some of which involve alliances with state actors. . China is not meeting the checklist of democracy, but it doesn’t mean that citizens are unable to shape government behavior or shape policies.



What are some of the challenges of writing this book?

I think the hardships are all the hardships of the social science where you have to go where your research subjects are. I traveled to many different regions of China, mostly rural areas. Also, overseas research is always more complicated once you have kids.

What are you working on now?

I am working on a continuation of this project. I am interested in this question of different forms of citizens’ empowerment in addition to the NGOs. There are protests happening, there are neighborhood organizations coming up; I would like to see how these different forms of mobilization are related.

Carolyn L. Hsu. 2017. *Social Entrepreneurship and Citizenship in China: The rise of NGOs in the PRC*. London: Routledge.



Events on Asia at Colgate

Dan tranh zither performance by Van-Anh Vanessa Vo

On September 22, Colgate hosted a dan tranh zither performance by **Van-Anh Vanessa Vo**. Throughout the show, the audience were led into the vibrant and delightful wonder of Vietnamese culture, with avant-garde pieces of music following the Vietnamese musician's nostalgic introduction. "We don't express our emotions very much. Vietnamese traditional music is a mirror through which you see yourself." Van-Anh said, as her hands glided on the instruments in the room. While the graceful notes of dan bau zither captivated people in the theater, the playful tones of dan tranh zither moved the audience to perform along with the instrumentalist, imitating the fishing practice of Vietnamese people.



A little of that human touch: Why Anthropomorphize?

On September 28, Professor **David Haberman** (Indiana University) visited Colgate (sponsored by Phi Beta Kappa), and delivered a lecture on anthropomorphism, which means the attribution of human characteristics to nonhuman entities. Haberman discussed the particular case of a sacred Hindu site to prove that anthropomorphism is more than a custom of human narcissism. At Mount Govardhan, people anthropomorphize stones as a way of establishing intimate connections with the divine being. Through adding the eyes to the stones, humans make these stones'



inner nature open up and echo the human agency, thereby becoming part of the human home. In his ethnographic study, Professor Haberman reveals how a native woman living near the Hindu site has a Govardhan stone which she awakens with songs and make food for everyday. "It enables me to feel the connection." She says, adding that she also has a stone in her heart. Through such personal contacts, people pay more homage to the supreme Hindu god Krishna, whose embodiment lies in Mount Govardhan.

Friday Night Film Series: Under the Sun

Asian Studies co-sponsored a controversial film by the Russian director Vitaly Mansky who was originally invited by the North Korean government to make a film about one girl and her family in the year she prepares to join the Children's Union, but who was eventually accused of his 'sneaky' filming. The screening was followed by a faculty panel.

Asian Studies Faculty beyond Colgate

Professor **David Robinson** (History) appeared on television, PBS's NOVA on the "Secrets of the Forbidden City" (aired October 18, 2017). The program featured how the Forbidden City, the world's largest and most extravagant palace complex, withstood centuries of earthquakes. You can view the program at: <http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/nova/ancient/forbidden-city.html>



Professor **Daisaku Yamamoto** (Geography and Asian Studies) spoke at the "That Day in 1945: Effects of the Atomic Bombs on Post-WWII Japanese Culture" event on October 28 at Syracuse University. Yamamoto was a guest speaker along with the keynote speaker Keiko Ogura, Hiroshima survivor.



Upcoming Event

Shift Happens: Sharing Stories from the Borders of the Humanities

Professor **John Crespi** (East Asian Languages and Literatures) will give a talk at the Arts and Humanities Colloquium on Tuesday, November 14 at 4:00 pm. Lawrence Hall, 105, Robert Ho Lecture Room.



Voices of Alumni

Li Jian (class of 2017)



What I like the most about Asian studies major is its multidisciplinary approach. Instead of taking classes from only one department, I was able to explore my interests in history, political science, economics, language courses, etc. For example, I took three years of Japanese, Chinese economy, and Asian politics. These courses complement each other and gave me the ability to think in different perspectives and dimensions, which I believe is the very essence of a liberal arts education.

While every course I took was an incrementally step toward establishing my holistic conception and understanding of the society, the most indispensable component is arguably studying Japanese language. Studying a new language is a completely new experience because it opened the gate to a whole new world. Japanese became an essential tool of understanding more deeply the culture, of communicating with the people in the culture, of challenging my old ideas. I was able to use the language in my other courses to do research and to gain insights that would be impossible without the language.

Born and raised in China, I chose Asian studies because I wanted to challenge what I have known about my country. I had doubts about what I learned at school and questions about what I saw on the street every day. By studying it, I consolidated my identity and saw more clearly who I am. This building of self-consciousness is one of the most important gifts I received from Colgate.

Maddy Clough (class of 2017)

Maddy is working at USAI, a foreign policy NGO in DC, whose mission is to strengthen the relationships between the people and governments of the US and Asia. She recently came back from her first congressional delegation where she worked directly with the Chinese National People's Congress to bring 10 congressional staffers to China. Here is what she experienced:

We started in Beijing where the delegates had the chance to meet their Chinese counterparts and learn about the structure of China's Congress. In addition to meetings with Chinese officials and think tanks, the delegates explored the city and immersed themselves in Chinese culture - an essential aspect of

every trip USAI takes. I took the staffers to see the Forbidden City, the Great Wall, the National Museum of China and the Silk Street Market. The day we saw the Great Wall was quite unusual because it POURED all day – very uncommon for Beijing, even in monsoon season! Despite the rain, the Great Wall was amazing. Slippery, yes, but mist surrounded us so the only thing in sight was the 2,000-year-old wall. The usually packed wall was empty and we got to explore to the quiet patter of rain. Plus, after a day in the cold rain (also uncommon for a summer in Beijing!) it felt incredible to step into the warmth for traditional Peking Duck and Hot Pot.

After Beijing, we traveled West to Yunnan Province where the staffers got to see another piece of China. Stepping off the plane, people’s hearts were racing with excitement...and lack of oxygen in the over 10,000-foot-high city! The local government ordained us with white silk scarves and on the way to the hotel, we saw other Tibetan and Buddhist cultural icons like a giant white stupa, welcoming us to Shangri-La. I was very glad to have taken Professor Sullivan's course on Tibetan Buddhism! I was able to explain many of the traditional symbols and imagery we saw around the city. The next morning we climbed to even higher altitudes to China’s national park in the mountains of Shangri-La and later on pushed the city’s huge 6-person prayer wheel in Dukezong Ancient Town.

I heard from many of the delegates that they hadn’t realized China could be so mountainous and so rural. What an important lesson to see the diversity of such a large country! The delegates really started to see how similar China is to the US in its geographic and cultural diversity. They were even more amazed to find that 25 ethnic minorities live together completely harmoniously in Yunnan Province.

The trip was a whirlwind and I can’t wait to help host more in the future. We hope to expand and start taking trips to Southeast Asia in 2018.

(Photo: Maddy in the front row, second person from the left.)



Abroad and Beyond

Studying Abroad with Asian Studies

The Asian Studies Program strongly encourages majors to participate in Colgate study groups and in approved programs in India or other locations in Asia. Faculty of the program serve as directors of study-abroad programs in China, Japan, and Korea.

China Study Group spends approximately four months in Shanghai, Taiwan, and Hong Kong, in intensive language training and firsthand observation of recent cultural, political, and economic changes.

Japan Study Group, based in Kyoto, provides lodging with Japanese families; intensive language training; and instruction in Japanese politics, economics, business, religion, art, linguistics, and literature.

Korea Study Group, hosted by Yonsei University in Seoul, serves the academic needs of students interested in educational studies and Asian studies.



Approved Programs

- China Shanghai CIEE Shanghai: China in a Global Context
- India Pune Alliance for Global Education: Contemporary India
- India Bodh Gaya Antioch Buddhist
- India Dharamsala Emory Tibetan Studies Program
- India New Delhi SIT India: National Identity and the Arts
- India Madurai South India Term Abroad (SITA)
- Japan Kyoto Antioch Japan and Buddhist Traditions Program
- Japan Hirakata City Kansai Gaidai
- Sri Lanka Kandy ISLE Program (Bowdoin)



New Courses in Spring 2018

FROM EMPERORS TO ANIME: PICTURES IN CHINA AND JAPAN

ARTS 246

Taught by Padma Kaimal

TR 2:45-4pm, 114 Little Hall



This class looks at pictures from China and Japan, from prehistoric times to the present, from painting to prints, anime, moving images, and installation art. Learn what contemporary Asian art draws from Asia's past. Learn how to read a handscroll. Practice ink calligraphy with the real tools.



Ethnographic Fictions: Travel Writing, Bearing Witness and Human Rights

ENGL 431

Taught by Nimanthi Rajasingham

W245-515, Lawrence 109

This course will help students navigate fiction's complex relationship with representation and reality. It will scan a broad spectrum of texts, beginning with 18th- and 19th-century European novels, and continue onto contemporary writings from the postcolonial world. Students will discuss the complex ways in which fiction documents the social world, produces historical archives, bears witness to trauma and violence, and memorializes loss, but also rejects and/or makes readers critically aware of realism's positivist impulses. This course will also guide students in reading theoretical texts on the topic.



Explore Asian Studies

Courses Offered in Spring 2018

ARTS 246 A	From Emperors to Anime
CHIN 122 A	Elementary Chinese II
CHIN 202 A	Intermediate Chinese II
CHIN 222 A	China through Literature & Film
CHIN 222L A	Required Film Screening
CHIN 304 A	Readings in Social Issues
CHIN 406 A	Readings in Modern Literature
CORE 138S A	Advent of the Atomic Bomb
CORE 165C A, B, C	China
CORE 167C A	Japan
ENGL 202 A, B	Justice/Power-Postcolonial Lit
ENGL 431 A	Ethnographic Fictions
HIST 263 A	Cities of the Silk Road
JAPN 122 A, B	Elementary Japanese II
JAPN 202 A	Intermediate Japanese II
JAPN 302 A	Advanced Japanese II
JAPN 455 A	Advanced Grammar-Japanese
POSC 330 A	Post-Mao China & World Development
POSC 368 A	American Foreign Relations with China
RELG 232 A	Health & Heal in Asian Religions
RELG 285 A	Buddhism Traditions
RELG 321 A	Religion in Modern India



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Russian and Eurasian Studies

Art and Art History

Geography, Russian and Eurasian Studies

Japanese

History, African and Latin American Studies

Sociology

Religion

Art and Art History, University Studies

Economics

History, Middle Eastern and Islamic Studies

Economics

Japanese

Political Science

Political Science

Educational Studies

English

History

History, Peace and Conflict Studies

Political Science

Economics

Religion

Chinese

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Geography, Asian Studies

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