

IJAPS, Vol. 7, No. 3 (Special Issue, September 2011)



INTRODUCTION TO SPECIAL ISSUE

POPULAR CULTURE IN ASIA

John Bratzel

President, Popular Culture Association

Popular culture is not new, but the formal academic study of popular culture is. It began about 50 years ago and the discipline has grown considerably during that time. Because East Asia has many diverse elements and cultures, all of which deserve serious examination, it is completely appropriate that there should be an academic organisation dedicated to its study. The first East Asian Popular Culture Association Conference* was held in Taipei from 1 to 4 September 2011. At that meeting, scholars from 18 nations delivered almost 100 papers including three presentations by prominent scholars who delivered keynote talks. The sessions were lively and thoughtful and included serious discussion of the issues that participants developed.

But not all the time was devoted to formal sessions. Attendees enjoyed a walking tour of the ShiDa night market as well as an all-day tour of the greater Taipei area to gain a better sense of the complex and beautiful culture of Taiwan. Good food and lively talk heightened the enjoyment of the conference.

I would be remiss if I did not congratulate Dr. Yin C. Chuang, the conference organiser, the International Taiwan Studies Center at the National Taiwan Normal University directed by Professor Ann Heylen as well as many others who worked diligently to make the meeting a great success. We all look forward to the next East Asian PCA Conference in Fukuoka, Japan.

This volume, which is an outgrowth of the conference, is special. It presents peer-reviewed papers from multiple discourses of East Asian popular culture, reflecting many different histories, different sets of formations, different conjunctures and contexts in contemporary Asia. The editorial focus of this special issue is politics. The aim is threefold: first, to re-explore the study of contemporary popular culture in Asia; second, to

* Details of the conference can be viewed online at <https://sites.google.com/site/2011eapca/home>

accentuate the politics of popular culture and the intersection between popular culture and politics in Asia; and third, to further examine the politics within popular culture by studying how politics is represented in popular culture in Asia.

Yin C. Chuang's paper, "*Kawaii* in Taiwan Politics," looks at how *kawaii* has infiltrated political culture in Taiwan, and explores how this cultural phenomenon is represented and reproduced in Taiwan politics. Jayson M. Chun's paper, "Learning Bushidō from Abroad: Japanese Reactions to *The Last Samurai*" explores the political and cultural meanings behind how the Japanese audience read this Hollywood-made Japanese epic. Masashi Ichiki's paper, "Embracing Victimhood: A History of A-Bomb Manga in Japan" examines how the feminine figure is used in Japanese comics to represent Japan as an A-bomb victim. Satoshi Ota's paper, "Ethnic Identity and Consumption of Popular Culture Among Young Naga People, India," focuses on the production and consumption of popular culture and the Naga people's awareness of ethnic identity as a minority in North East India.