

ASIA-PACIFIC SOCIAL SCIENCE REVIEW

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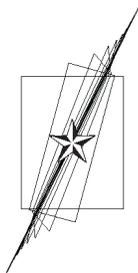
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Romeo B. Lee

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From the Editor

The heightened level of concrete scholarship demanded of academics throughout the world, including those in Asia Pacific, has led to a deluge of research manuscripts being submitted for publication consideration in journals. The massive number of journal submissions is an indication that academics have indeed taken on the invigorated “publish or perish” challenge very seriously. Overall, the writing and publishing enterprise among academics would be healthy for their own professional growth and maturity as well as beneficial for their students, the future generations of academics, and other audiences.

The Scopus-listed Asia Pacific Social Science Review (APSSR) has been a long-standing publication partner of academics in the region. Over the years, the APSSR has considered and published several hundreds of research manuscripts from academics whose data and arguments are as diverse and colorful, even awe-inspiring or thought-provoking, as the sociocultural settings from which they were drawn. We seek to strengthen this partnership role to further deepen our impact not only among academics but also among policy makers, program managers, and development specialists.

Beginning 2017, we will have a series of Special Issues of the APSSR, with ASEAN Integration as the overarching theme. The Special Issues will feature manuscripts discussing evidence having wider meanings and implications for the regional integration. Although the ASEAN is a highly promising regional bloc, the paths and processes towards its integration would be undoubtedly intricate. By raising research-based issues and challenges, the APSSR—via its featured manuscripts—hopes to elevate the breadth and depth of discourses and actions on ASEAN integration. Come March 2017, the first Special Issue will be out.

This December 2016 edition of APSSR covers a plethora of topics, as to be expected. Our Research Articles (n=5) discuss Hindu idol worship, dog meat eating, social capital and mental health, youth witnessing violence, and agrarian policy legitimation. In addition, our Research Briefs (n=4) focus on work-life balance, contract farming, women’s political representation, lesson study approach, and gay identity. Our Book Review is centered on a paperback published by (Nordic Institute of Asian Studies (NIAS)) Press, which is entitled “End of Empire: 100 Days in 1945 that Changed Asia and the World.” Let me share my thoughts on some featured topics.

Human behaviors are diverse. While most of these behaviors are widely socially acceptable, others are not. For example, dog meat eating is a human behavior that is only practiced by the numerical minorities in the region. Even in countries (e.g., China) where it has been reported as an integral part of sociocultural lifestyle, dog meat eating is a behavior of the few. I grew up in rural Philippines, and my father, in a drinking spree with his friends, offered me a slice of meat which I readily took and ate with gusto. I later learned that the food piece came from a street dog. My mother was so livid of my father’s as well as my involvement, in this dog meat eating experience. On hindsight, I realized how dog meat eating could easily spark conflict between my parents, which, overall, accurately mirrors our frail social support for, or our hostility towards,

the said behavior. Macario B. Lacbawan (Johann Wolfgang Goethe University, Germany) discusses the phenomenon of dog meat eating in the Philippines. In his article entitled “Assembling Barbarity, Dirt, and Violence: A Provisional Note on Food and Social Analysis,” Macario tends to also underscore the lack of broad social acceptability of dog meat eating in the Philippines, by implying that the behavior is polarizing and contentious. He points out that the “ready-made analytical frame” that is used for and against dog meat eating (300,000 dogs are slaughtered each year for their meat) is anchored on binary oppositions revolving around law versus culture; and tradition versus “modernity”. In his article, Macario offers “an alternative explanation of how different social actors assemble dog eating into an object of conflicting symbolic interpretation”. A great read. I would be interested to see how this alternative frame would play well, down the line, into the grand scheme of the current discourse, and most importantly, how it would positively or negatively impact on dog meat eating as a human behavior.

Censorship boards in the region tend to frown more on media showing too much sex and less on those showing too much violence. Research reveals, however, that violent media could also impact negatively on viewers, and hence, there have been calls that it should be tempered. If violence on media has adverse outcomes on individuals, violence in the real world—where individuals do witness and experience the phenomenon in their social groups, neighborhoods and communities—could have devastating effects also. Studies indicate that witnessing violence is statistically associated with problems related to behaviors and emotions, and cognitive functioning and attitudes. Many of us who have come from violent family environments would be able to confirm these problems, including their long-term impact. Indeed, violence has been recognized as an issue requiring urgent attention and action; however, relevant data, which are sparse in the region, are needed to better understand and act on the problem. Penchan Pradubmook-Sherer and Moshe Sherer (Mahidol University, Thailand) offers her contribution to unraveling violence particularly that witnessed by Thai youth. She reports on the prevalence of having witnessed violence among the youths in Bangkok and in other study sites, including those in violence-struck southern Thailand. In particular, using a large data set, she mentions that high numbers of Thai youths (60%-90%) have witnessed violence at home in school, and in the community. Data have tremendous policy, programmatic and research implications for Thailand as well as enlightening for other countries in the region.

There are many other provocative development issues that are raised or implied in our present edition’s manuscripts. For example, we have issues revolving around mental health and social capital (Harris Hyun-soo Kim, South Korea) and gay identity construction (Mark Stephan Felix, Thailand), which are both largely unexplored especially in Southeast Asia. I leave it up to you, given your adventurous spirit, to scour our features and find and appreciate these additional issues, which could be meaningful in professional and personal terms.

It’s Christmas 2016! Let me greet all of you a blessed yuletide season and a bountiful new year. You shall hear from me soon, in March 2017, for our maiden Special Issue.

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