Editorial

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Asia's vast ethnic, linguistic, religious, and cultural diversity has been shaped by centuries of migration, empire, colonialism, nation-state formation, and global political-economic change (Croissant & Trinn, 2009; Mackerras, 2003). Yet diversity has rarely translated into equality. Across the region, ethnic minorities, Indigenous peoples, migrants, sexual minorities, and religious communities continue to experience marginalization through overlapping regimes of power embedded in state policies, institutional practices, dominant cultural norms, and epistemic hierarchies. These processes do not operate along a single axis. Rather, marginalization is produced through the intersection of ethnicity with gender, language, sexuality, religion, class, mobility, and historical positioning (Edwards & Roces, 2000; Jolley, 2022). Although these phenomena have expanded globally, a notable gap exists in understanding how these dynamics play out, specifically in Asia. This special issue, Intersecting Identities: Ethnicity, Minority Status, and Marginalization in Asia, brings together interdisciplinary scholarship that critically examines how these intersections shape lived experience, social exclusion, and forms of resistance across Asia and its diasporas.

Intersectionality serves as the conceptual and methodological backbone of this collection (Bauer et al., 2021; Misra et al., 2020). Moving beyond additive or categorical understandings of identity, the contributions demonstrate how power operates relationally and contextually, producing differentiated outcomes even within the same social groups. At the same time, the articles foreground agency, highlighting how marginalized communities negotiate, contest, and rework structures of domination. In doing so, the issue aligns closely with the Journal for Ethnic and Cultural Studies' commitment to critical, justice-oriented, and socially engaged scholarship.

Several contributions examine how contemporary technologies and institutions mediate inclusion and exclusion for marginalized populations. Empowering Migrant Communities through Machine Translation Literacy: A Pathway to Socio-Economic Inclusion situates language access at the intersection of migration status, labor precarity, and digital inequality. Drawing on a pilot training program for Myanmar migrant workers, the study moves beyond celebratory narratives of technology by critically examining participants' uneven familiarity with machine translation tools, privacy concerns, and usability challenges. By foregrounding reflective practice and observation, the article demonstrates that digital tools can only function as mechanisms of empowerment when accompanied by context-sensitive training that accounts for linguistic background, everyday needs, and structural vulnerability. The emphasis on machine translation literacy rather than mere access underscores how technological inclusion itself is shaped by power relations.

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Educational institutions emerge as critical sites where intersecting identities are negotiated and contested. Perceptions of Campus Climate on LGBTQ+ Students' Inclusion in Thai Higher Education employs a large-scale quantitative approach to reveal how perceptions of inclusion vary across regional, disciplinary, and identity-based lines. While the overall campus climate is perceived as relatively positive, the study problematizes narratives of linear progress by showing how LGBTQ+ students in southern Thailand—where religious and cultural conservatism is more pronounced—experience less favorable environments. The findings illustrate how sexuality intersects with regional culture, gender identity, and institutional context, reinforcing the need for geographically and culturally responsive approaches to inclusion rather than universalized models.

Education as a site of both marginalization and resistance is further explored in Recognizing and Embracing Ethnic Identity through Mother-Tongue Based and Intercultural Education for the Urak Lawoi Community, in Lanta Island, Krabi Thailand. Grounded in over fifteen years of participatory action research, this article demonstrates how Mother Tongue-Based Multilingual Education and Intercultural Education can strengthen ethnic identity, cultural confidence, and social inclusion within a complex interethnic setting. At the same time, the study critically reflects on tensions surrounding language maintenance, assimilationist pressures, and the sustainability of community-based initiatives. By situating education within broader struggles for recognition, the article highlights how schooling can function as both a mechanism of state control and a site of Indigenous self-determination.

Culturally rooted pedagogy and embodied knowledge transfer are further explored through an Arnis-based sports study in the context of Philippine higher education. "The 'double sinawali' of learning and targeted striking with the stick: Investigating the relationship between individual interest and study engagement in the indigenous martial art of arnis" examines how individual interest relates to student engagement in an indigenous martial art that is integrated into physical education classes at universities. Based on self-determination theory and expectancy-value theory, the study examines three dimensions of individual interest: positive emotions and willingness to resume, stored utility value, and stored performance value with knowledge-seeking intentions. Using a cross-sectional survey analyzed by multiple regression, the results show that personal meaning and knowledge-oriented goals are more strongly associated with sustained engagement than enjoyment alone. By highlighting indigenous practices as a legitimate locus of academic learning, the article underscores how culturally embedded curricula can increase motivation while contributing to the preservation of intangible cultural heritage.

Mobility and spatial governance form another key thematic strand in this issue. Trapped in Place: Changing Mobility Patterns and Lifestyles of Thai Moken examines how conservation policies, national borders, and development interventions intersect to constrain the mobility of a traditionally semi-nomadic seafaring community. Based on recent fieldwork, the study documents a gradual shift toward sedentarism and argues that the erosion of semi-nomadic practices threatens not only Moken identity but also their sophisticated ecological knowledge. The article powerfully illustrates how policies framed in terms of protection and development can produce immobility and cultural loss when imposed without attention to Indigenous spatial practices.

Gendered dimensions of mobility are explored in Intersectionality and Female Solo Travel: Rethinking Motivations Amidst Conservative Gender Norms. Focusing on Iranian women, the study employs constructivist grounded theory to reveal how motivations for solo travel are shaped by intersecting constraints related to gender norms, religious regulation, political context, and life stage. By distinguishing between "solo travel by default" and "solo travel by choice," the article challenges universalized notions of empowerment and highlights how even brief moments of unaccompanied movement can carry profound meaning in

restrictive contexts. This contribution underscores the importance of situating mobility within culturally and politically specific regimes of gender control.

Historical and linguistic dimensions of marginalization are addressed through manuscript-based and archival research. Germans in Kazakhstan's Virgin Lands: Religious Assimilation/Segregation in the Atheistic Society (1950s–1960s) situates religious identity at the intersection of ethnicity, ideology, and state power. Drawing on archival documents and reports from the Council for Religious Affairs, the article shows how Soviet anti-religious policies constrained religious practice and facilitated latent processes of assimilation among smaller German religious communities. At the same time, it reveals diverse adaptive strategies, complicating binary understandings of assimilation versus resistance and highlighting the uneven effects of state secularization.

While the study of Germans in Kazakhstan's Virgin Lands examines religion at the intersection of ethnicity and state ideology, the following article shifts the focus to contemporary transnational migration. Navigating Marginalization through Religion: Intersectionality and Shifting Positionalities Among Myanmar Migrant Workers in Thailand examines how Myanmar migrants experience layered marginalization shaped by nationality, legal status, and cultural difference. It shows that, despite legal precarity and institutional vulnerability, shared religious identity with the Thai majority functions as a flexible resource that enables migrants to negotiate partial inclusion and recalibrate their social positioning. Together, these contributions underscore the ambivalent role of religion as both a site of constraint and a medium for navigating unequal power relations across diverse Asian contexts.

State power and recognition emerge as central concerns in Impact of State and Policy on Marginalized Groups: Untold Stories of Non-Recognition of Bangladeshi Ethnic Communities. Using ethnographic methods such as storytelling and participant observation, the study foregrounds Indigenous voices that have been systematically excluded from constitutional recognition and policymaking. By linking non-recognition to language loss, cultural erasure, and socio-economic marginalization, the article positions recognition as a deeply political process and calls for structural reforms, including a dedicated ministry and inclusive census practices.

Questions of conflict, security, and gendered resistance are explored in Grassroots Security: The Meira Paibi Movement and the Intersection of Gender, Ethnicity, and Conflict in Manipur. Drawing on feminist security studies and securitization theory, the article examines how Meitei women redefine security through everyday practices of resistance, care, and moral regulation. While highlighting the movement's challenge to militarized patriarchy and state violence, the study also critically interrogates its internal contradictions, including the reproduction of moral conservatism and maternalistic authority. This nuanced analysis resists romanticized depictions of women's activism and underscores the ambivalent nature of grassroots power.

Finally, the issue extends beyond Asia geographically while remaining anchored in Asian identities. Intersectional Positionality and Lived Experiences of Asian International Teacher Educators in U.S. Academia, grounded explicitly in Crenshaw's framework of intersectionality, examines how race, language, nationality, and gender shape professional marginalization in U.S. higher education. Through narrative inquiry and thematic analysis, the study reveals how participants resist invisibility and epistemic marginalization by drawing on non-Western epistemologies and cultivating equity-oriented pedagogies. The article highlights the transnational circulation of racialized power and positions Asian international educators as critical epistemological bridges.

In alignment with the mission of the Journal for Ethnic and Cultural Studies to advance critical, interdisciplinary, and socially engaged scholarship, this special issue underscores the urgency of interrogating how marginalization is produced through intersecting systems of

power, including colonial legacies, nation-state governance, neoliberal policy regimes, and epistemic exclusion. Collectively, the contributions challenge essentialist and depoliticized understandings of ethnicity and minority status, instead revealing marginalization as historically contingent, structurally embedded, and actively contested.

This issue also calls for critical reflection on the politics of knowledge production itself. Whose voices are legitimized within academic discourse? Which languages, methodologies, and theoretical traditions are privileged? The studies assembled here demonstrate the importance of ethically grounded, community-engaged, and historically informed research that resists extractive practices and centers marginalized perspectives. Future scholarship would benefit from deeper comparative and transnational analyses, sustained engagement with decolonial, feminist, and critical race theories, and closer attention to emerging forces such as digital governance, climate-induced displacement, and shifting labor regimes.

It is our hope that this special issue will inspire continued critical inquiry, amplify marginalized voices, and support collective efforts toward equity, recognition, and culturally sustain futures in Asia and its diasporas.

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