

SOUTHEAST ASIAN STUDIES

<https://englishkyoto-seas.org/>

<Book Review>

Fiona Kerlogue

Ayami Nakatani, ed. *Fashionable Traditions: Asian Handmade Textiles in Motion*. Lanham: Lexington Books, 2020.

Southeast Asian Studies, Vol. 10, No. 3, December 2021, pp. 466-470.

How to Cite: Kerlogue, Fiona. Review of *Fashionable Traditions: Asian Handmade Textiles in Motion* edited by Ayami Nakatani. *Southeast Asian Studies*, Vol. 10, No. 3, December 2021, pp. 466-470.

Link to this book review:

<https://englishkyoto-seas.org/2021/12/vol-10-no-3-book-reviews-fiona-kerlogue/>

View the table of contents for this issue:

<https://englishkyoto-seas.org/2021/12/vol-10-no-3-of-southeast-asian-studies/>

Subscriptions: <https://englishkyoto-seas.org/mailling-list/>

For permissions, please send an e-mail to:

english-editorial[at]cseas.kyoto-u.ac.jp



people read this book and enjoy experiencing “whiplash” as I did.

Iwasa Mitsuhiro 岩佐光広

Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, Kochi University

Reference

Iwasa Mitsuhiro. 2013. Aging and Dying in a Rural Lowland Area of Laos: A Consideration of Creating a “Good Death” Together. In *The Anthropology of Aging and Well-being Searching for the Space and Time to Cultivate Life Together* (Senri Ethnological Studies 80), edited by Suzuki Nanami, pp. 123–142. Osaka: National Museum of Ethnology, Japan.

Fashionable Traditions: Asian Handmade Textiles in Motion

AYAMI NAKATANI, ed.

Lanham: Lexington Books, 2020.

The idea of tradition has been challenged frequently since Eric Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger’s seminal work in 1983. This volume of 14 essays is based on studies of textiles from India, Japan, and Indonesia, and illuminates some of the factors influencing changes in production and consumption, whose forms and meanings have been more or less rooted in the past. Processes explored include those dubbed “heritagization,” “fashionization,” “souvenirization,” and “traditionalization”—awkward words which have come into being to explain complex phenomena. As with all volumes resulting from collating several different studies, there are considerable variations in approach, with a range of different disciplines supplying the tools of analysis. The result is impressive, and the book presents an extraordinarily varied and dynamic picture of resilience and creativity as well as, in some cases, marginalization and decline.

The volume begins with a chapter from Willemijn de Jong considering how weavers in the island of Flores in eastern Indonesia react to shifts in trade and fashion, and how aspects of handwoven clothing move from being viewed as traditional to fashionable and back again. Weavers not only seek inspiration from their surroundings, but are also both acutely aware of their markets and responsive to external forces. Designs are reinterpreted and need to be seen through the lens of fashion and a regional kind of modernity, of which tradition is a part.

Among the Hmong of Yunnan in China, ideas of fashion play into the longstanding practice of dressing in new clothes at New Year. Miyawaki Chie explains that where once a woman might spend all year elaborately embroidering an outfit to impress and attract others, now she can buy a ready-made ensemble. In the past, the home-embroidered items of clothing made for New Year were later worn “for best,” then became everyday wear until they were worn out and finally used

as rags; this progression is now redundant. But the drive to adhere to the norms of group identity while at the same time demonstrating novelty and style is still in play.

The long international history of the pashmina shawl is addressed by Monisha Ahmed. The goats' hair used in the shawls was traded for centuries between the Changpa of the upper reaches of the Himalayan and Karakoram mountains and Kashmiri weavers. Conflict, colonialism, and changing political relationships have had their impact on the trade; designs changed and responded to challenges in the market and to the taste of consumers. Ladakh has found a niche market for its own versions.

The role of UNESCO in "heritagization" is introduced in Nakatani Ayami's contribution, with particular reference to textiles from West Timor in eastern Indonesia. The listing of particular products as part of the cultural heritage of particular groups has ironically coincided with or perhaps resulted in traditional cloth-making—once embedded in the local context of social relations and ritual practices—becoming a group activity primarily for the purposes of income generation. Government subsidies and supplies of new materials contributed to design innovations, and textiles may now represent different identities.

In Tamil Nadu, as Aarti Kawlra has found, the introduction of new technologies has allowed some entrepreneurs to introduce iconic imagery from authorized local heritage discourse into high-quality handweaving, "theme saris." The image of handweaving as a static tradition is challenged, the products expressing modernity, local heritage and, through the use of valuable materials worked by skilled artisans, high status.

Moon Okpyo's contribution begins with a meticulous examination of the development of the Nishijin silk-weaving industry, which adopted chemical dyes and European jacquard looms in the nineteenth century while still successfully maintaining its identity as a traditional industry. This was achieved through the retention of the system whereby different family businesses were responsible for different stages of the production process, allowing them to adjust and adapt to a succession of challenges. By the late twentieth century, however, these challenges had become almost overwhelming. State designation systems which might be employed to try to protect the industry under the banner of cultural heritage would be likely to raise prices and alienate existing customers. Heritagization, observes Moon, is a double-edged sword.

Kanetani Miwa's chapter, on the preservation of wisteria fiber textile-making in Kyoto, describes a relatively unusual phenomenon in which a local textile practice has been taken up by enthusiasts from outside the area. Partly because of the availability of the materials in the original place of manufacture, and partly because of the desires of these new practitioners, the skills of the craft are studied and passed on to others in the mountain district where it once flourished. While UNESCO discourse identifies communities as having a key role in safeguarding intangible cultural heritage, this case study raises questions about the nature of that "community."

Some of the many factors at play in sustaining textile practices and influencing the turns they

take are explored in Sugimoto Seiko's chapter looking at *tsumugi* kimono in Japan. *Tsumugi* was customarily woven using yarn extracted from floss silk, once considered inferior to reeled silk yarn because of its uneven texture and lesser sheen. Taken up by the publishing industry and linked to the Mingei (Folk Crafts) Movement, *tsumugi* has from time to time flourished when hand-made cloth has been marketed as more desirable than machine-made. This chapter, focusing on the role of fashion magazines, suffers more than others in the volume through an almost total lack of visual illustration.

Kubota Sachiko's study looks at the arts–crafts dichotomy in aboriginal women's weavings in Australia. Perceptions of these have shifted from a "craft" to "art" framework. Kubota's account describes the involvement of missions in the development of this work and initiatives to employ craft for income generation. Gender divisions in the types of product made have been reflected in differences in price, where weavings were accorded a lower value than bark paintings, for example, largely a male activity, which have been seen as explaining aboriginal attitudes to land. The interest of auction houses and the international art world is touched on, though the power relations entailed are not explained. In the end, this piece describes the shift in evaluation of aboriginal weaving but offers little in terms of explanation.

Two enterprises form the focus of Susan Rodgers' chapter on ikat in Bali—one business which meshes "dimensions of imagined heritage with up-to-date often internationalized fashion trends"; and another that seeks to "preserve village traditions" while alleviating village poverty. Rodgers laments both to different degrees and in different ways. The products of the business "Nogo" are made from pieces of *endek* cloth, hand-decorated with the *ikat* process but woven on semi-mechanized looms and used for modern globalized products. Their products evoke timelessness but the products themselves are fashionable, timely. "Threads of Life" markets high-quality, hand-crafted heritage art to well-off outsiders to help village women in outlying areas to generate an income while maintaining quality. Ethnic and island origins foregrounded in marketing hark back to an imagined past. Here aesthetics are emphasized over social structural elements of ritual cloth use. Rodgers suggests that indigenous voices are being left out—it would be interesting to find out through fieldwork whether this is indeed so.

Two chapters focus on textiles in Gujarat. Michele A. Hardy discusses changes in the context in which embroidery is produced by the Mutwa, a Muslim community of Muldhari (herdsmen) in Kutch. Development initiatives in the area following the Bhuj earthquake, particularly but not exclusively tourism, have led to changes in products and designs, and affected gender balance and involvement. The Rann Utsav festival in particular has eroded cultural identity and disrupted gender roles. While embroidery survives, it has lost its previous cultural significance, specifically in expressing important aspects of women's lives.

The Mata ni Pachedi dyed textiles of Gujarat produced for goddess rituals, especially in the city of Ahmedabad, were described and explained in terms of their production and use in the 1970s

and 1980s. Ueba Yoko, who has now looked also at the production of this type of cloth for visitors and collectors, considers how and why producers have adjusted their methods of production for these two different markets. Cloths made for local ritual use may be silk-screened and may use chemical dyes in an expanded color range. For these customers, the depiction of the goddess and her attributes is key. While their use may be “traditional,” the production methods need not be. Those buying the cloths for “aesthetic appreciation”—rather than ritual—seek what they see as traditional methods: color applied by pen (*kalam*) or woodblock, and natural materials such as myrobalan for tannin and alizarin mordant dyes. Collectors and tourists believe they are buying something authentic. So where does authenticity lie?

In the tourist towns of Anatolia in Turkey, where sales of handwoven rugs have declined, a new trend has emerged: patchwork rugs. Tamura Ulara explores how these “light” versions of traditional rugs (in terms of impression, weight, maintenance, and price) represent a “fashionalization” of handwoven carpets. They are reconfigurations of old rugs for the export rug industry. Old unwanted carpets are bleached, overdyed, their surfaces trimmed, then cut into fragments and stitched together. Following on from the development and then decline of the carpet restoration business, this process resulted in a worldwide trend in the early twenty-first century. Sellers have an ambivalent attitude, lamenting the stagnation in the market for handmade traditional rugs but relying on this trend to survive. The Internet was essential in making these patchwork rugs globally available. A further development—dubbed an example of “fast-fashionalization”—is the production of imitation patchwork carpets.

In the final chapter of this volume, Aoki Eriko chose to look at the way handwoven textiles are used in a part of Flores where handweaving is not undertaken. Here the deep embedding of textile production in social structures observed by anthropologists in textile-producing areas is not found, though textiles do feature in gift exchange. They are appraised in a different way in such villages. Aoki argues that they have a degree of significance which could be explored using different theoretical stances, though this reader remained unconvinced.

For anyone interested in the changes taking place where hand-made textiles are produced, this book offers a range of insights into the processes at work. The authors have all produced intelligent, thoughtful studies that are well worth reading. Taken together, they provide a picture of artisans responding to the rapid social, political, and environmental circumstances in which they find themselves. A multitude of questions are raised, though answers are harder to find. Reluctantly I have to point out two major defects. The first, common to so many academic publications, is the lack of illustrations. Authors and editors need to recognize the need for images in their studies, and publishers need to recognize the important role of visual explanations in work of this nature and in this disciplinary area. Second, there was a need for a native speaker of English with good editorial skills on the production team. Several chapters suffer markedly from this absence. Overall, however, the book makes a valuable contribution to knowledge about the interplay between

“tradition” and “fashion” in textile production in the modern world.

Fiona Kerlogue

SOAS Centre of Southeast Asian Studies, University of London

Origins and Evolution of Environmental Policies: State, Time and Regional Experiences

TADAYOSHI TERAO and TSURUYO FUNATSU, eds.

Cheltenham and Northampton: Edward Elgar Publishing, 2021.

Since the 1990s, the Institute of Developing Economies (IDE)—one of the established social-science research centers in Japan specializing in studies of developing countries—has initiated various collaborative research projects relating to environmental problems and policies in Asia and other regions (Terao 2013). The research results have been regularly published through research reports, articles in scholarly journals, books, and other publication forms, but many of them are written in Japanese. Hence, not all the knowledge and insights accumulated through these projects have been shared with global readers who are concerned with environmental issues in developing countries. To fill this gap, *Origins and Evolution of Environmental Policies* clearly shows the scholarly achievements obtained through the IDE’s research projects over the past decade on environmental policy formation in East and Southeast Asia.

The volume raises two research questions: Why were appropriate measures not taken until industrial pollution and environmental problems became so serious?; and Why were the possible measures not fully implemented, even though the problem had existed for a long time and possible measures were known? (p. x). Through case studies, the author of each chapter carefully examines the process of environmental policy formation, particularly in the early stage, and identifies major structural factors that have hindered the pursuing of effective environmental policy and administration in the country. Four case studies in East and Southeast Asia are provided: environment pollution and health policy in China (Chapter 3); air pollution control policy in Taiwan (Chapter 4) and Thailand (Chapter 5); and water management in Southeast Asia (Chapter 6). The volume also includes the case of the United States (Chapter 7) and Germany (Chapter 8), aiming for comparative analyses between developed and developing countries.

There are three approaches this book has adopted to analyze environmental policy formation in East and Southeast Asia. First, it takes a path dependence approach that stresses the historical backgrounds of policies. The basic idea is that “newly formulated policies are often framed by existing public policies” (p. 4). Second, it compares the formulation process of environmental policy between developed and developing countries. Finally, it emphasizes on the role of the state