

[Area Studies]

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Theory and Fieldwork in Area Studies

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Since its recognition as a first-level discipline in China in 2022, Area Studies, an interdisciplinary field dedicated to comprehensive, regionally focused scholarship, has sparked lively scholarly debate over its academic mission, core concepts, and methodological directions. It was against this intellectual backdrop that the Institute of Area Studies at the College of Science & Technology, Ningbo University was established. From the outset, the Institute has embraced a dual vision: to pursue the kind of “grand theorizing” and rigorous academic research that responds to national strategic needs in an era of profound global transformation, while also remaining deeply committed to grounded, micro-level inquiry: testing, enriching, and refining our existing analytical frameworks through close engagement with specific historical trajectories, cultural practices, institutional dynamics, and industrial changes. The five essays in this special feature take up this challenge, each offering a distinct perspective on how this dynamic interplay between theory and fieldwork unfolds within the context of Asia-Pacific Studies, spanning diverse domains such as disciplinary development, intellectual history, cultural transmission, digital governance, and county-level economies.

In “Reflections on Developing Area Studies Programs in Local Application-Oriented Universities,” Ying Jianhua tackles a central yet often overlooked question in the current wave of disciplinary expansion. Moving beyond conventional academic discourse, the essay adopts the lens of “locality” and “application-orientation” to examine how Area Studies can take root in regional contexts and contribute meaningfully to local socioeconomic development. It not only enriches the theoretical foundations of the field but also illustrates, through concrete cases, how theoretical insight and institutional practice can mutually inform and strengthen one another, offering valuable lessons for curriculum planning in regional colleges and universities.

He Yang’s “Intellectual Resonance Under Shared Crisis: Cultural Mutual Aid Between Chinese Reformists and Anti-Colonial Intellectuals in Southeast Asia” transports readers to the turbulent intellectual landscape of modern Asia. Drawing on meticulous archival research, the essay uncovers a largely forgotten history of cross-

border intellectual exchange, revealing how shared experiences of national crisis fostered a transnational “resonance field” and a network of mutual support that transcended geographic and political boundaries.

Cao Huanhuan’s “From Export to Co-Creation: Localized Innovation of Chinese Tea Culture in ASEAN, the Reconstruction of Intangible Cultural Heritage, and Pathways for Tourism Integration” traces the journey of a quintessentially Eastern cultural symbol across borders. Moving beyond simplistic narratives of “cultural export,” the essay draws on rich trade data to show how tea culture has been dynamically reimagined through interaction with local knowledge systems in ASEAN, integrated into heritage preservation frameworks, and woven into tourism development strategies: highlighting the transformative potential of cross-cultural co-creation.

Gu Xiang’s “Governing Cross-Border Data Flows Under RCEP: A Case Study of Ningbo’s Intelligent Manufacturing Enterprises Going Global” zooms in on the interface between international legal frameworks and on-the-ground business practices. Through the lens of Ningbo-based manufacturers expanding overseas, the essay reveals the tensions, compliance challenges, and strategic adaptations that emerge when abstract regulatory principles encounter real-world operational needs. It offers valuable empirical insights into the rapidly evolving landscape of digital governance in the Asia-Pacific region.

Song Yi’s “Seeking and Responding to Change: Cixi’s Foreign Trade Since Reform and Opening-Up” uses the microcosm of a county-level economy to illuminate the broader story of China’s grassroots integration into global markets. By tracing four decades of development through distinct phases, the essay shows how endogenous drives for transformation and institutional capacities for adaptation have worked in tandem. Notably, the sustained engagement with Southeast Asian markets emerges as a defining thread throughout Cixi’s foreign trade history: one that encapsulates the region’s dual logic of proactive exploration and responsive adjustment.

Together, these five contributions: spanning disciplinary reflection, intellectual history, cultural studies, digital governance, and local economic analysis, illuminate the multiple meanings of “theory and fieldwork” within Area Studies. The productive tension and dialectical interplay between these two poles are precisely what sustain the field’s vitality and continued relevance. We hope this collection inspires further scholarship that builds robust theory from grounded inquiry and advances Asia-Pacific Studies in both depth and scope.

Keywords: Area Studies; Interdisciplinary Research; Theory and Fieldwork; Disciplinary Development; Micro-Level Inquiry

區域國別學的理論與田野

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區域國別學作為一門致力於對特定區域進行綜合性研究的交叉學科，自 2022 年正式躋身我國一級學科目錄以來，其學科使命、核心範疇與方法論探索便成為學界熱議的焦點。在此背景下，寧波大學科學技術學院區域國別研究院應運而生。區域國別研究院成立後我們既希望有『仰望星空』的宏大理論構建和學術研

究,以回應『百年未有之大變局』下的國家戰略需求;也希望有『腳踏實地』的深耕細作的微觀研究,在具體而微的歷史脈絡、文化實踐、制度運行與產業變遷中,檢驗、豐富乃至修正我們既有的認知框架。在此,我們從學科建設、思想史鉤沉、文化傳播、數字治理與縣域經濟等不同維度切入,共同詮釋了這對核心範疇在亞太研究場域中的生動實踐與辯證關係。

應建華的《地方应用型高校區域國別學科專業建設幾點思考》,直面當前學科建設熱潮中的核心命題。文章敏銳地跳出傳統學術話語的藩籬,從『地方性』與『应用型』這一獨特視角出發,深刻探討了區域國別研究如何向下紮根、如何有效服務於地方經濟社會發展。這不僅是對區域國別學理論體系的有益補充,更以具體案例揭示了理論構建與辦學實踐之間相互滋養、彼此賦能的可能路徑,為眾多地方高校的學科布局提供了寶貴鏡鑒。

何楊的《共同危機下的思想共振:近代中國維新派與東南亞反殖知識分子的文化互助研究》,將我們帶回思想激蕩的近代亞洲。文章以紮實的史料鉤沉,挖掘了被主流敘事所遮蔽的知識分子跨國交往史,生動展現了民族危機如何催生出一個跨越地理邊界的思想『共振場』與『互助網』。

曹歡歡的《從輸出到共創:中國茶文化在東盟的本土化創新、非遺價值重構與旅遊融合路徑》,以一片東方樹葉為媒介,細膩描繪了傳統文化符號在跨語境傳播中如何歷程『再創造』與『意義新生』。文章以詳實的貿易數據為支撐,超越了簡單的『文化輸出』敘事,聚焦於『共創』機制下茶文化如何與東盟地方知識、非遺保護體系及文旅融合路徑發生深度互動。

顧鄉的《RCEP 跨境數據流動治理研究——以寧波智造企業出海現狀為例》,將敏銳的目光投向宏大貿易協定的制度文本與微觀商業實踐的真實接口。通過『寧波智造』這一製造業出海的前沿窗口,文章深刻揭示了抽象的規則框架在田野層面遭遇的現實挑戰、企業的合規焦慮與策略性調試。這為我們理解亞太地區方興未艾的數字治理複雜圖景,提供了紮實的實證支撐和深刻的政策啟示。

宋易的《求變與應變:改革開放以來的慈溪對外貿易》,以縣域經濟為精密切片,書寫了一部中國基層社會融入全球化的鮮活歷史。文章將四十餘年的發展歷程劃分為四個階段,揭示了『求變』的內生動力與『應變』的制度韌性如何共同作用。值得注意的是,對東南亞市場的持續開拓與深度融入,貫穿慈溪外貿發展的始終,成為其『求變』與『應變』能力的集中體現。

綜上,本專欄的五篇文章,從學科建設、思想史、文化傳播、數字治理到縣域經濟,共同演繹了『理論與田野』在區域國別研究中的多重意涵,它們之間的良性循環與辯證互動,正是區域國別研究保持生機與活力的源泉。我們期待這些研究能啟發更多學人,在深耕田野中構建具有解釋力與生命力的理論,以紮實的學術探索,共同推動亞太區域研究走向更深、更廣的境界。

關鍵詞: 區域國別學;交叉學科;理論與田野;學科建設;微觀研究

(Editors: Derrick MI & JIANG Qing)