I was the Taiwan Chair and Professsional Fellow at the International Institute for Asian Studies at Leiden University from February 1, 2022, to June 30, 2022. It was a wonderful experience for which I am truly grateful. There were three major aspects to my position: teaching, research, and outreach.

The course I taught titled “Taiwan Women’s World: The Voices of Taiwanese Women in Literature, Film and Politics” was for the Chinese Studies program at Leiden University. In the course, I had students think about Taiwan’s position not just in East Asia but with the United States and other parts of the world through the voices of Taiwanese women. Through works of fiction, diaries, travel memoirs, film, and political speeches created by famous and not-so-famous Taiwanese women, we considered why most histories of Taiwan focus on the male perspective and how the narrative of Taiwan’s history and culture might differ if we study it through the lens of those who tend not to control a nation’s narrative. Some of my students’ favorite reading assignments were San Miao’s Stories of the Sahara, Shawsan Yang Ryan’s Green Island, Henry Oian’s “The Season When Flowers Bloom,” and Li Hailin’s short story “Candie.” A fun final project for my students was to interview someone who had grown up in Taiwan. Some of the interviews will be posted for the “Made in Taiwan” project on the Leiden University Faculty of Education of the Republic of China, Taiwan fujinkai, and Cross-Strait Education of the Ministry of Education of the Republic of China.

My research project at IIAS examined the colonial journal Taiwan Fujin Kukai (台灣婦人界, Women’s World) which was written in 1934 and supported Taiwan’s colonial Japanese government in Taiwan. The journal, published between 1934 and 1939, was founded by Koga Chiyoko, the wife of a Japanese industrialist who worked for the colonial Japanese government in Taiwan. Her vision was to create a magazine for women of Taiwan that would be on par with the cosmopolitan women’s magazines coming from Europe. She felt that the challenges that women in Taiwan were different from those for women in Japan, and thus, a special journal needed to be created for women in Taiwan. My particular focus was on how the role of travel was depicted in the magazine and what part, if any, such a depiction played into Japan’s greater colonial agenda in Taiwan. Thanks to the time I had doing research at IIAS, I was able to revise an article titled “The World of Women’s Travel in the Japanese Colonial Journal Taiwan Fujin Kukai” currently under review.

The final aspect of my fellowship was outreach. The major form of which was a workshop I organized for the final day of my stay in Leiden. The workshop titled “The Art, Politics, and Economics of Solo Women Travelers to, through, and from Taiwan” was an extension of my research and teaching. Aside from my presentation on how travel is depicted in Taiwan Fujin Kukai, my colleagues also came to talk about their experiences as a solo woman traveler. Thanks to their informative presentations, we had a lively conversation with workshop participants, who included Leiden University graduate students, colleagues from the Chinese Studies program, IIAS colleagues, as well as members from the Leiden community and beyond. It was a wonderful way to end my time at IIAS.

Other outreach projects included a trip to the University of Vienna, where I met Professors Xueyu Shi and Jimena Espinosa at the Vienna Center for Taiwan Studies, and to Cambridge University, where I met colleagues in Japanese Studies to discuss my research on Taiwan Fujin Kukai. In the Netherlands, I was able to participate in the CinemAsia Film Festival, for which I am truly grateful. Although I have returned to the United States, I look forward to continued contact with IIAS through the Humanities Across Borders project directed by Aart Kwizra. I am now preparing my courses for Denison University, where I will be teaching this next academic year. I will be offering the same course that I taught at Leiden University on Taiwanese women. I am also working with the director of East Asian Studies at Denison University to create a course about East Asian (including Taiwanese) women filmmakers thanks to what I learned from my attendance at CinemAsia. The time I spent in the Netherlands doing research and meeting colleagues at various European universities has given me a rich source of material and ideas to add to my courses on East Asia as well as inform new directions in my research on Taiwan.

I want to thank the wonderful staff at IIAS who supported my research, and the IIAS Fellows who were great friends to have in a foreign land. I also am eternally grateful to the Ministry of Education of Taiwan for my attendance at CinemAsia. The time I spent in the Netherlands doing research and meeting colleagues at various European universities has given me a rich source of material and ideas to add to my courses on East Asia as well as inform new directions in my research on Taiwan.

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