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Introduction

Leisure is a constant, at least among higher organisms, if we define it as taking place in a space/time not dictated by vital needs such as sustenance or security.¹ Although leisure pursuits might be related to vital needs such as social status and/or procreation, these links are hidden in the “subjunctive” freedom of choice.² The distinct character of leisure allows for a definition of its margins that map the parameters within which the variety of these pursuits in their historical changes take place and delineate the difference to other pursuits. Although higher organisms share many features of their leisure pursuits, humans alone have left an easily decipherable linguistic and artifactual footprint that shows the diversity and historical change of human leisure and is thus accessible for research by humanities and social science scholars. This book therefore deals with human leisure.

Since the late nineteenth century, leisure in various European and North American settings has begun to attract some scholarly attention, although many scholars engaged with serious historical or social issues continued to consider it a lightweight topic associated with entertaining anecdotal documentation.³ Prompted by two factors, attention to leisure by authorities as well as leisure research has slowly increased since the early 1960s. These two factors were: first, the steeply rising economic importance of leisure-related goods and activities from smartphones to tourism during the last two decades, with many large cities (New York, Berlin, Paris) and entire countries (Italy, Spain, Thailand, among others) beginning to derive the bulk of their income from tourism; and second, the shifting relationship between work and leisure under “post-industrial” conditions. The separation between work and leisure characteristic of the early industrial age became less clear, and people increasingly defined themselves through

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- 1 Animal leisure has often been discussed under the rubric of “play.” See Gordon A. Burghardt, *The Genesis of Animal Play* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2005). For the summary, see 382–383.
 - 2 The term “subjunctive” is taken from the grammatical “subjunctive mood,” which is used in many languages to denote things that are not objective facts but wishes or hypothetical suppositions. It is used here instead of “subjective,” which comes with a whole load of assumptions about the “subject.” These are historical and not necessarily shared by all cultures. The term has been suggested by Robert Weller’s essay in this volume.
 - 3 The same prejudice has hampered research on animal play. “Serious scholars typically ignore play,” Burghardt, *Genesis*, 6.

their leisure rather than their work.⁴ The focus of these studies has been on contemporary urban developments and tourism. A “World Leisure Board” elevated leisure in 2000 to a fundamental human right.⁵

Modern state institutions, religious authorities, and foundations have begun to closely monitor the development of leisure habits among citizens and to enhance controls at the notoriously soft borders between leisure and illegal practices.⁶ They have also increased their efforts to proactively promote “healthy” or serious leisure pursuits, helped by a growing body of normative proposals for leisure of this kind from diverse religious groups and sociologists.⁷

At the same time, leisure scholarship has developed from its modest beginnings with a steep rise since the 1960s. It has used different methodologies for the study of leisure: sociological,⁸ anthropological,⁹ commercial,¹⁰

4 Robert A. Stebbins, “Serious Leisure: A Conceptual Statement,” *The Pacific Sociological Review* 25, no. 2 (April 1982): 254.

5 World Leisure Organization, “World Leisure Charter for Leisure,” (2000), accessed April 21, 2017, http://worldleisure.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/05/Charter-for-Leisure_WEB.pdf. First proposed in 1970, this charter is the result of several revisions.

6 A masterly historical survey of the effort of European state authorities to mark the borders of legitimate leisure was compiled by none other than Henry Fielding (1707–1754), see his *An Enquiry into the Causes of the late Increase of Robbers etc., with some Proposals for Remedying this Growing Evil* (London: Millar, 1751). Since the late 1990s, countries in the European Union have conducted the Harmonised European Time Use Surveys, HETUS, accessed November 29, 2019, <https://www.h6.scb.se/tus/tus/>. For Taiwan, see Xingzhengyuan zhujichu 行政院主計處 [Statistical Office, Executive Yuan], ed. *Zhonghua Minguo. Taiwan diqu shehui fazhan qushi diaocha baogao. Xiuxian shenghuo yu shijian yunyong* 中華民國臺灣地區社會發展趨勢調查報告. 休閒生活與時間運用 [Republic of China. Investigation report about social development trends in the area of Taiwan. Leisure life and time use] (Taipei: Xingzhengyuan Zhijichu, since 2000). Since 2003, the US Bureau of Labor Statistics produces the *American Time Use Survey*, which specifies content and times of leisure activities, accessed April 23, 2017. <https://www.bls.gov/tus/>. For the PRC, the *Zhongguo jingji shenghuo da diaocha* 中國經濟生活大調查 [Macro-survey of Chinese economic life], conducted annually since 2012 by the CCTV Financial Channel, the PRC Bureau of Statistics, and the Central Post Office, contains a segment on leisure. For studies based on it, see Lou Jiajun 樓嘉軍, Yang Yong 楊勇, and Li Limei 李麗梅. *Zhongguo chengshi xiuxian wenhua fazhan yanjiu baogao* 中國城市休閒文化發展研究報告 [Research report on the development of leisure in urban China] (Shanghai: Jiaotong University Press, 2013), and Xiang Wei and Monika Stodolska, “Leisure in Urban China: General Patterns Based on a Nationwide Survey,” *Journal of Leisure Research* 47, no. 3 (2015): 373–387.

7 The “rational leisure” movement in nineteenth century England was an early expression of this. On the scholarly side, sociologists since Veblen’s time combined their study of leisure with critiques and proposals of reform.

8 Thorstein Veblen, *The Theory of the Leisure Class, an Economic Study in the Evolution of Institutions* (New York: Macmillan, 1899); Joffre Dumazedier, *Toward a Society of Leisure* (New York: Free Press, 1967); Alain Corbin, ed., *L’avènement des loisirs, 1850–1960* (Paris: Aubier 1995).

9 Johan Huizinga, *Homo Ludens: A Study of the Play Element in Culture*, (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1949). First published in Dutch in 1938, the English edition was translated anonymously from the 1944 German edition.

10 Alessandro Arcangeli, *Recreation in the Renaissance. Attitudes towards Leisure and Pastimes in European Culture c. 1425–1675* (Houndmills: Palgrave Macmillan,

conceptual,¹¹ cultural,¹² administrative,¹³ gender,¹⁴ management,¹⁵ and urban.¹⁶ While the overwhelming majority focused on Europe and North America, a slowly growing number addressed other regions, such as Asia¹⁷ and Africa,¹⁸ or specific religious or ideological environments, Buddhist,¹⁹ Christian,²⁰ or Muslim.²¹ Handbooks have been produced to summarize leisure theory or management experiences,²² specialized associations of leisure and tourism research have formed with directories to list them; finally, specialized journals and book series with a leisure focus have been launched.²³

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- 2003); Warwick Frost and C. Michael Hall, *Tourism and National Parks, International Perspectives on Development, Histories and Change* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2009); John Tribe, *The Economics of Recreation, Leisure, and Tourism* (Amsterdam: Elsevier, 2011).
- 11 Rhona and Robert N. Rapoport, "Four Themes in the Sociology of Leisure," *The British Journal of Sociology* 25, no. 2 (June 1974): 215–229. B. G. and Nancy C. Gunther, "Leisure Styles: A Conceptual Framework for Modern Leisure," *Sociological Quarterly* 21, no. 3 (Summer 1980): 361–374. Chris Rojek, *The Labour of Leisure. The Culture of Free Time* (London: Sage, 2010).
 - 12 Josef Pieper, *Leisure, the Basis for Culture*, trans. Alexander Dru with an introduction by T. S. Eliot (New York: Pantheon Books, 1964). Originally written in 1947, a 1998 retranslation is also available.
 - 13 Fielding, *An Enquiry*.
 - 14 Betsy and Stephen Wearing, "All in a Day's Leisure': Gender and the Concept of Leisure," *Leisure Studies* 7, no. 2 (1988): 111–123. Valeria Freysinger et al. eds., *Leisure, Women, and Gender* (State College: Venture Publishing, 2013); Betsy and Stephen Wearing, "All in a Day's Leisure': Gender and the Concept of Leisure," *Leisure Studies* 7, no. 2 (1988): 111–123.
 - 15 George Torkildsen, *Leisure and Recreation Management* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2005).
 - 16 June Wang, Tim Oakes, Yang Yang, eds., *Making Cultural Cities in Asia, Mobility, Assemblage and the Politics of Aspirational Urbanism* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2016).
 - 17 Catherine V. Yeh, *Shanghai Love. Courtesans, Intellectuals and Entertainment Culture, 1850–1910* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2006); Adrian Athique and Douglas Hill, *The Multiplex in India: A Cultural Economy of Urban Leisure* (New York: Routledge, 2010); Jing Wang, ed., *The State Question in Chinese Popular Culture*, special issue of *positions: east asia cultures critique*, 9, no. 1 (Spring 2001); Di Wang, *The Teahouse: Small Business, Everyday Culture, and Public Politics in Chengdu, 1900–1950* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2008). Charles A. Laughlin, *The Literature of Leisure and Chinese Modernity* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2008); and the historical essays in leisure in China in *Leisure and Chinese Culture: A Symposium*, ed. Charles A. Laughlin, *The Chinese Historical Review* 23, no. 2 (2016).
 - 18 Paul Tiyanbe Zeleza, *Leisure in Urban Africa* (Trenton: Africa World Press, 2003).
 - 19 Justin McDaniel, *Architects of Buddhist Leisure. Socially Disengaged Buddhism in Asia's Museums, Monuments, and Amusement Parks* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2016).
 - 20 Troy Messenger, *Holy Leisure: Recreation and Religion in God's Square Mile* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1999).
 - 21 Patrick Haenni, *L'Islam de Marché* (Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 2005).
 - 22 Chris Rojek, Susan M. Shaw, and A. J. Veal, eds., *A Handbook of Leisure Studies* (Houndmills: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006). Gary S. Cross, *Encyclopedia of Recreation and Leisure in America* (Farmington Hills: Charles Scribner & Sons, 2005).
 - 23 Examples for the journals are *Loisir et Société/Society, Leisure; Leisure Sciences, Leisure Studies*, and the *World Leisure Journal*. Among the series one might mention the Springer/Palgrave series *Leisure Studies in a Global Era*, and *Routledge Studies in Contemporary Geographies of Leisure, Tourism, and Mobility*.

Several major issues remain. The overwhelming majority of published research on leisure deals with Europe and North America and the entirety of the theoretical conceptualizations assumes that the particular experiences of people in these two regions reflect the typical experiences of mankind altogether. The history and sociology of leisure in the rest of the world and the very intense transcultural interactions linking them were given short shrift and the theoretical concepts as well as methodological conventions of the Europe- and North America-centered studies were applied to other contexts without further contextualization or justification. Most important among these methodological conventions is an assumption that the nation-state is the natural framework of analysis, even though the transcultural element is always present and often dominant in leisure pursuits. Other neglected issues of importance are the history of leisure outside of Europe and North America; the role of state and religious authorities in the control and management of leisure; the relationship between the providers of leisure and those pursuing it, as well as between the rules of the money economy and those of the leisure economy; the role of leisure in cultural and social change; and finally, the often unstable margins of leisure that differentiate it from other pursuits. The studies in this volume set out to explore these marginalized areas, so as to bring these perspectives into the mainstream of leisure research.

These lacunae are not trivial. The prevalent focus on Europe and North America in leisure studies unwittingly implies a situation where the inhabitants of the north are consuming the leisure that is to a substantial degree provided by what is sometimes referred to inaccurately as the Global South. This focus repeats a feature common in fields such as sociology, economics, political science, and psychology of elevating Euro-American people, as well as societal structures and processes, into the standard against which all other regions present deficient modes not intrinsically worthy of detailed study and conceptualization. In the process, it neglects the extensive circular exchanges in leisure goods and practices and has furthermore become dated as some of the original tourist destinations such as Japan or China have themselves become engines driving international tourism, and as innovations in leisure-related goods, services, and management are increasingly developed outside the old metropolises.

Exploring the historical trajectory of leisure in different cultural environments around the world is a crucial element in developing a general understanding of the social dynamics of leisure in the tension between an identity-supporting path-dependency and the relentless incorporation of new elements from abroad, above, and below. The studies in this volume mostly focus on recent history and the present day. For these periods the old pathways of transcultural exchange linking the Arab and Turkish realms, Persia, South Asia, Central Asia, and East Asia, as well as the closer connections between, for example, Central, South, and Southeast Asia or within East Asia, have become far less important than those of all these regions to the "West." The links between the regions and countries of Asia

are now centered on elements that have to do with this new overarching connection. The contributions in this volume reflect this shift by focusing on the multiple ways in which leisure in modern China, Indonesia, and Japan is engaged with the “West” in an approach that predicated a study of leisure that accounts for the global transcultural interaction and exchange in this field.

Leisure studies have largely focused on the pleasures associated with it. The anomic side of leisure, with its vast grey economy of providers ranging from dealers of drugs and other intoxicating substances to gambling sites or brothels, has received little attention. From the perspective of the state’s interest in social order and the religious authorities’ interest in moral order, however, this grey domain is in urgent and constant need of policing as well as efforts to crowd out these anomic pursuits by healthy leisure. It follows that these authorities are important actors in the field of leisure and deserve study.

Leisure is situated in a life world in which it is set off, competes with, and interacts with other domains such as religion, work, family, natural environment, or state action. These domains come with their own particular rules and the study of the complex relationships and interactions with them along the borderlines of leisure is crucial for the delineation of the elements defining leisure.

Finally, leisure is the main port of entry and exchange for new forms of social interaction, taste, and values, which makes it the testing ground for social change.

The present volume sets out to contribute to the exploration of these crucial but neglected aspects, with case studies on Asia where these are in prominence. It is the result of two workshops at Boston University and a conference at Heidelberg University, focused on “Leisure and Money,” “Leisure and the State,” and “Leisure and Social Change” respectively. It brings together scholars whose work bridges the divide between historians, social scientists, and theorists, and it challenges both empirically and theoretically many of the hidden assumptions, routines, and conceptualizations dominating the bulk of received leisure studies. As a series of first forays into largely uncharted territory, it is intended to stimulate further research, but most certainly will not and cannot claim to offer anything approaching completeness in the coverage of regions, issues, historical trajectories, or theoretical frames. The imbalances in coverage—such as a lamentable lack of studies on the Indian subcontinent or mainland Southeast Asia or the strong presence of China-related articles—are in part due to differences in the different scholarly traditions. While anchored in the particular issues and sources they explore, and set in their vastly different historical, geographic and socio-cultural context, the chapters in this volume interact as they test the contested and unstable margins of the frames that set off leisure from other pursuits. They do so in conversation with theoretical conceptualizations and empirical research.

This volume is organized into three parts. Part one “The State’s Leisure Agenda” offers two papers (Tim Oakes and Catherine V. Yeh), which address the interaction between the state and local actors in managing and shaping leisure. It offers case studies of the efforts a highly invasive state (Tim Oakes on the People’s Republic of China) and a largely dysfunctional one (Catherine V. Yeh on the Republic of China during the 1910s and 1920s) in harnessing leisure for an agenda of civilizing the population, of the state’s dependency on local elites, and of the disconnect between the given state’s normative powers and the willingness or unwillingness of its populace to go along. The methods used draw on anthropology, government studies, history, sociology, and geography (Oakes) as well as on cultural history, theater studies, transcultural studies, literary studies, and hermeneutics (Yeh). The disputed margin is that between the normative agenda of the state’s management of leisure, and the subjunctive agency that is a core feature of leisure pursuits.

Part two, “The Margins of Leisure,” contains four studies that focus on the borders framing leisure and their historical shifts. Robert Weller draws on the methodologies of anthropology and history of mentalities to explore the common elements increasingly linking leisure and religious practices, as well as the evolving “subjunctive” elements that set the two apart. Eugenio Menegon, relying on a rich body of hitherto unexplored materials from the Propaganda Fide Archives, studies the thinking behind the strategy of different European Catholic orders in the eighteenth century to have their China missionaries devote a large part of their time not to preaching the gospel, but to producing high-luxury leisure goods such as clocks and automata as gifts for the Chinese court and its entourage. Although such leisure pursuits were disdained from a doctrinal perspective, they were legitimized as a way to secure the goodwill necessary for their missionary work to be tolerated. His approach is that of the cultural historian who is aware of and engages with the transcultural dimensions and tensions inherent in the processes studied. Sarah Frederick’s and Nancy J. Smith-Hefner’s case studies take up Veblen’s “leisure class” approach to analyze the social function of leisure pursuits rather than the subjunctive mode of those engaging in it. Sarah Frederick explores the tenuous borders between leisure and “vicarious labor” in the acquisition of modern and westernized cultural skills such as piano playing for girls in her study of the interwar Japanese adaptations of the American novel and film *Stella Dallas*. The tension here comes from the message for the girls’ mothers to show their love by creating the leeway for their daughters to acquire these skills while not letting their own lack of them get in the way of the girls’ advancement. Basing her work on anthropological field research among young adults hanging out in shopping malls in Yogyakarta in Java and the study of advice handbooks for their behavior from Muslim religious writers, Nancy Smith-Hefner explores the way in which these malls serve as a “leisurely” social training ground in urban “gaul” behavior for students from the countryside, a behavior that might open the way to a white-collar

job and the transition from window shopping to actual consumerism. Instead of the state authorities or films with a didactic message, religious teachers intervene here to regulate what they see as the anomic potential in these leisure pursuits for young people without blocking the acquisition of “gaul” career skills.

The two papers in part three, “Leisure as a Contact Zone,” focus on the tension between the openness of leisure pursuits for transcultural imports and the urge to secure an ultimate cultural authenticity even in the very international environment of East Asian treaty ports. Lai Yu-chih focuses on the processes and tensions of transcultural interaction in art at work in the extensive incorporation of Japanese paintings in Chinese painting manuals on sale in Shanghai during the last decades of the nineteenth century that were conceptualized and published by an Englishman, Ernest Major. The pressure for authenticity already showed in the selection of the type of Japanese paintings that were included, but eventually extended to the point of a selective redrawing of Japanese paintings before they were included. Rudolf Wagner deals with the complex relationship between provider and consumer of leisure products in the context of transcultural interaction. His case study examines the strategy implied in the publishing practice of the British-owned Shenbao guan Chinese-language publisher in the Shanghai International Settlement. Principally a provider of Chinese leisure products from a settlement that was staging itself not just as an international commercial center but also as a paradise of leisure, this publishing house still had to establish its cultural credibility as a provider of Chinese leisure products by publicly insisting that it was guided by commercial rather than missionary or political motives. The agency in making or breaking his enterprise was thus, via the market, completely in the hands of the Chinese readership. While very explicitly making use of the most advanced Western technologies and management methods, the British manager made sure to select and present them through forms and formats attractive to literate Chinese audiences. Emulations of his highly successful approach by other publishing ventures ended up turning the Shanghai International Settlement into the Chinese media capital for decades to come.

In the process of the joint discussions, Rudolf Wagner and Catherine Yeh, two of the contributors to this volume, have sketched a set of “frames” of leisure that took up the results of the case studies as well as the critical discussions with the other participants of the workshops and conferences while engaging with available conceptualizations derived from European and North American cases. The resulting theoretical forays try to make the best of the existing studies while also trying to overcome the limitations coming with a Europe- and North-America-centered nation state approach and to incorporate the results of the empirical case studies presented here.

The case studies contained in this volume hope to contribute to the discussion of some critical issues in leisure studies as outlined above. The book comes out at a time of a rapid social transformation in Asia which

is accompanied by dramatic changes in lifestyle and behavior as well as steeply rising transcultural interaction in leisure and other fields, but also by a growing nervousness about a loss of cultural and religious authenticity and ideological control. The studies engage with the present in a historically informed way, critically connecting with the developing field of leisure studies as well as with developments in different parts of Asia.

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