

## Concepts and categories of emotion in East Asia

While travelling in China years ago, Giusi Tamburello went through a disconcerting experience when a man committed suicide, throwing himself under the train she was travelling in. What in reality was unusual, however, was not the situation itself, but that when asking a fellow passenger what had happened, the answer was given with a smile. As in the West situations like these are faced with grief and distress, the memory of the passenger's unexpected expression remained with her for long. Yet later, Tamberello learned that in the Far Eastern world emotional stress is confronted with a smile as a way of emotional reassurance.

Inspired on the seventh *May Symposia*, an annual conference held at the Lecce University to discuss the connections between values and emotions in East Asia, and edited by Giusi Tamburello herself, 14 scholars of distinctive experience and insight contribute to this title, exploring the concept of emotions and the behavioural patterns in the Far East as a definition of the peculiar characteristics of a culture. Particular attention is given to China and how its culture has influenced the surrounding area as a mean to understand how the process of cultural influence is today expanding to a global dimension.

Exploring the idea that the understanding of emotions is based on its specific culture, all 14 essays focus in one or more categorisations and definitions of emotions within a particular area or society. As emotions function as arbitrators connecting the body and society, these connote psychological, social, communication, and somatic processes, operating singularly, according to determinate circumstances and varying in its several perspectives. Therefore, due to its intrinsic heterogeneous characteristics, once emotions are reduced to a general classification, a complete reconstruction and description of the emotional experiences of a certain area is impossible. However, by acknowledging the variability of emotions, these still have some regular processes in their creation and transmission. For that reason, the categories that have been adopted should be seen as the several possibilities of understanding this continuously changing phenomenon. A clear distinction is made between different cultures and, apart from all terms in original language and their English equivalent, categories were created based on their affinities, being sometimes subdivided into groups.

The chapters in this volume include only some features of the general theme of classification of emotions, examining the specific emotions and the ways in which we can describe them. In *Phosphenes and Inner Light Experiences in Medieval Chinese Psychophysical Techniques: An Exploration*, Rudolf Pfister details the findings of an on-going study on the phosphene experience and other experiences of inner light. Yuet Keung Lo analyses the idea of *xin* in the *Analects* according to Confucius' self-professed spiritual odyssey on *Mind-heart and Emotions in the Analects*. Elisa Sabbatini's *Music as a Semiotic Mediator: A Philosophical Approach to Xunzi's Theory of Music* examines the ritual music practices as techniques designed to educate and transform human nature. In her contribution *Genji's Gardens: From Symbolism to Personal Expression and Emotion*. *Gardens and Garden Design in The Tale of Genji*, Mara Miler shows how the Japanese writer Murasaki Shikibu assigned gardens a complex task concerning emotions in her novel. Li Ma compares collective emotions as expressed by social protest, for instance, and personal emotions of a ruler such as the anger of a despot in *Rage and Indignation at the End of the Yuan and the Beginning of the Ming*.

Barbara Bisetto's *Fragments of Qing, The Qingshi leilüe and the Literary Categorisation of "Love" in the 17th Century China* approaches the problem of the categorisation of qing (a word with multiple meanings,

ranging from “basic facts” to “love”) in the late Ming Qingshi anthology. Tamara H. Bentley has written *The Rhetoric of Emotion in the 17th Century China and Japan* where she shows how the elevation of emotion by Li Zhi and the ambivalence about the new romantic stress on qing became an evident trend in a variety of late Ming texts. In *View of Emotions in Jin Ping Mei: Perceptions of the “Moods” and Their Expressions*, Tomoyuki Tanaka discusses the variety of different emotions depicted in *Jin Ping Mei*, a Chinese naturalistic novel composed during the late Ming Dynasty. Jianyu Zhou’s *A Review of Zhu Yizun’s Jingzhiju shihua* analyses the difference between essay and poetry drawn by Zhu Yizun, an author and poet of the Qing Dynasty and founder of the Zhexi School of ci poetry (song lyrics). *Emotions and Politics: “Rexue Ribao” and the May 30th Movement*, by Mara Caira, discusses the importance of emotions in giving rise in the 1925 Shanghai to the May 30th Movement.

Richard Bullen analyses the Japanese tea ceremony in *Freedom and Restraint in the World of Tea*, discussing between the rule-saturated nature of tea and the traditional aesthetic categories that have emerged to explain it. In *Intellectual Intersections between the State and the Public: A Question of Emotional Capital?*, Maurizio Marinelli focuses on the production, outcome, and consequences of the ‘public intellectual’ discourse in order to investigate how this category is used and why. In his contribution on *Concepts of Humorous Emotions in Javanese Shadow Theatre*, Arndt Graf describes the various dispositions and manifestations of the humour expressed by the clown-servant in the Javanese Shadow Theatre. Finally, Giusi Tamburello in her *Re-Creating Emotions in Chinese Poetry of the 1960s and 1970s* describes how contemporary poetry regains originality through the enrichment with metaphors, symbols, and expressions, thanks to the contribution of the young poets who were sent to the countryside during the Chinese Cultural Revolution.

## Concepts and Categories of Emotion in East Asia

Edited by Giusi Tamburello

Carocci 2012

Euro 32,00



This work is licensed under a [Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike 4.0 International License](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-sa/4.0/)