

An *EAA* Interview with the 2017 Franklin R. Buchanan Prizewinner Anne Prescott for *East Asia in the World: An Introduction*

This is our twenty-first consecutive interview with the recipient of the AAS Franklin R. Buchanan Prize. This year's winner is Anne Prescott, who is the Editor of *East Asia in the World: An Introduction* (Routledge, 2015). The text offers students a fresh, comprehensive, multidisciplinary entry point to East Asia, with an emphasis on the globalizing processes the region is undergoing. A review of *East Asia in the World: An Introduction* appears on page 62.

Anne Prescott has been studying Japan since she began playing the koto as a sophomore at Cornell College in Iowa. She spent eight years living and studying traditional Japanese music in Japan and received her PhD in ethnomusicology from Kent State University. In addition to her work as an East Asia Outreach Specialist, she has taught at Augustana College (Illinois), Indiana University, and the University of Illinois. She is currently the Director of the Five College Center for East Asian Studies, housed at Smith College, Northampton, Massachusetts.



Lucien Ellington: Anne, congratulations on winning the Franklin R. Buchanan Prize for *East Asia in the World: An Introduction*. Although there are introductory texts that provide readers with content from a variety of academic disciplines about specific East Asian nations, this is the first textbook on East Asia I can recall that does this for the region and also includes extensive content on the historic and contemporary globalization, and global impact of East Asia. How did you become involved in this project? Since the book is part of a series, what constraints, if any, did you have in conceptualizing the structure of the book, and where in this process did you have creative freedom in moving the project forward?

Anne Prescott: Thank you very much, Lucien. The book series was originally conceived of by M. E. Sharpe, which was sold to Routledge before the East Asia volume was published. In 2012, the series editor, Valerie Tomaselli, attended the Committee on Teaching about Asia (CTA) panel at AAS, which I was chairing. After the conference, she emailed me about the book series and asked if I might be interested in working on the East Asia volume. The idea was for each book in the series to come out of an area studies center, in my case the Five College Center for East Asian Studies, with faculty members from that center contributing case studies, as well as introductory material.

By the time Valerie got to me and the East Asia volume, the basic outline for each of the books in the series, including page counts for each of the introductory chapters and total number of pages, was in place and couldn't be altered. But I had the freedom to decide how to interpret the individual topics in that outline. The easiest place to do this was in the case studies, as the only restriction was that they should somehow demonstrate globalization or global impact. With the introductory chapters, I tried to find interesting hooks for the readers. For example, in my outreach work, I often have people ask me how you use a computer in East Asian languages. They're fascinated by that process. So in the language chapter, I incorporated information on word processing in Chinese, Japanese, and Korean. I also included screenshots from a tablet computer to illustrate my points.

A couple of the other volumes already had their case studies titles and authors in place by the time I began to pull the East Asia volume together, so I was able to see what kinds of topics those volumes were featuring. This prompted me to think long and hard about what kinds of East Asia-related writings might be of interest to students with various interests and

from different backgrounds. What would entice them to delve deeper into East Asian studies? I also wanted to include writings that demonstrated commonalities and unifiers in East Asian history and cultures, while at the same time not ignoring the unique aspects of the cultures and countries. I have to credit my liberal arts training for helping me think outside the box in this regard. From there, it was just a lot of emailing people to see who was willing to contribute to this project.

Most of the contributors to the book are faculty members of the Five Colleges (Amherst College, Hampshire College, Mount Holyoke College, Smith College, and the University of Massachusetts—Amherst). Jerry Dennerline wrote a fabulous historical overview—100-plus years of CJK history in thirty-five pages. Not an easy feat, and it took some gentle persuading, but he did an admirable job. After that piece was in place, I started contacting faculty members about the case studies. There were, of course, many people who were not able to contribute because of previous publishing commitments, teaching loads, and other situations. But I was pleased that once people were on board, they embraced the objectives of the project and came through in a timely manner—at least most of them, most of the time. Five Colleges faculty member contributors include Jina Kim (now at Dickinson College), Joshua Roth, Junko Oba, Bruce Baird, and Vanessa Fong.

To fill the remaining spots, I asked our faculty members if they could recommend any alumni who were doing interesting work that might enhance this project, and Suzanne Gottschang (Smith College) recommended Maris Gillette. Suzanne's father, Thomas Gottschang, contributed a great piece on East Asian economies, but that was coincidental; she wasn't the one who suggested him. The final pieces fell into place when Jacques Fuqua agreed to write about Korea, and Jeff Richey contributed a case study on Confucianism. I have to thank you, Lucien, for suggesting Jeff Richey. Neither Jacques nor Jeff had any formal ties to the Five Colleges, so I'm particularly grateful for their contributions.

Lucien: In my opinion, the book is edited and written in such a way that anyone interested in East Asia would enjoy and learn a great deal from reading it, but in your opinion, for what educational settings do you see the book being particularly useful?

Anne: The original intention of the series was for these books to be used in 100-level postsecondary classes, but with my background in K–12 outreach, I knew that this book could be useful for AP high school classes or

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as a resource for high school teachers. I specifically gave instructions to the contributors about reading levels and how to make their work accessible to nonspecialists. Some were very familiar with writing in that way, but it might have been a struggle for others. But they were all committed to making the book accessible to an audience that would include upper-level high school students.

I've had informal feedback about how the book is being used, and I feel great that it has had an impact beyond what even I imagined it might have. For example, it's being used in English classes at a university in Japan, in a 400-level university East Asian music class, and in high school world history classes. One reader recently told me that the Korea case study was useful in creating a lesson in response to current events on the Korean peninsula. I've also heard from high school teachers that the introductory chapters in particular are valuable because that gives them a single source that they can depend on for a broad overview not only of East Asian history, but also culture and language.

I also hope that both high school and college students might find something in the case studies that grabs their attention. One of my goals was to showcase a variety of disciplines so that students can see that area studies isn't limited to history or language—it's anthropology, art, music,

and economics. What you thought was just a quirky, fun thing to do can intersect with East Asia. And not only that, examining a topic in history or culture from a different angle yields greater insight because of the unique approach.

Lucien: *In addition to editing the book, you wrote five of the seventeen chapters. My personal favorites were "East Asian Languages" and "Debunking the Myths." Since our aspiration is that every time EAA is published, readers with little or no background in Asia find our publication and learn from it, can you elaborate a bit on why you think both these chapters might be helpful to this segment of our readers?*

Anne: I think knowing some of the basics of how a language works is a huge help to understanding the culture and history of the people who speak it. You don't need to be able to actually speak the language to learn a lot from it. Teachers and students are sometimes hesitant to tackle East Asia because they think the languages are "impossible." I hope that readers will come away with a sense that there's nothing to be afraid of! As I said before, I often get questions about using computers in East Asian languages, so I thought that most readers would find that information interesting, and perhaps this bit of knowledge would be the perfect "entry agent" for techies.

The "Debunking the Myths" chapter was really fun—I crowdsourced ideas on Facebook. And there were no shortage of suggestions and personal experiences! As an outreach professional, I deal with this topic almost on a daily basis. It frustrates me to no end that people think they "know" about China, Japan, or Korea based on a movie they watched or their cousin's ten-day tour of China. My goal was not only to debunk specific myths, but also to raise awareness that it's not just a one-way street—all cultures are guilty of this. I hope that readers will use these few pages as a starting point for considering—or reconsidering—what they think they know.


Lucien: *The nine case studies you include in the text could not be more diverse in the most genuine sense of the term! One joy in being an editor is continually learning from authors. At the risk of putting you on the spot, especially given some of the excellent authors you recruited, based upon what you didn't know about a topic or topics before working with the case studies portion of the book, what case study or case studies particularly proved personally insightful for you, and why?*

Anne: First of all, I really enjoy reading work by cultural anthropologists, so it should be no surprise that the two case studies that are the most intriguing to me are both by anthropologists. I love reading about fieldwork, and Maris Gillette's "Globalization and Deindustrialization in China's (Former) Porcelain Capital" was really fascinating in the way that it wove together history, culture, economics, and art. It made me remember that globalization and all its associated issues have been around for a long time, and the center of globalization discourse hasn't always been the West. For example, dumping products on the market is not a new practice. Of course I knew this, but today, Western culture and products are nearly always at the center of conversations about globalization. It was a great reminder to me that I need to stop and consider alternate viewpoints and realities. I was also inspired to look at some of Maris's other work and learn even more about not only the globalization and economic angles of China's porcelain industry, but the artistic side as well. And after working with this chapter, I had to add some new destinations to my travel wish list!

The other chapter I really enjoyed is Beth Notar's "From Flying Pigeons to Fords: China's New Car Culture." Again, it's a fieldwork-based study, and a unique way to look at serious issues of economic development, globalization, and leisure time. And on another level, it was just fun! I hope that it might inspire some readers to say "Hey, I can do something a bit quirky and fun and still make a valuable contribution to learning."

Lucien: *Anne, thanks for the interview!* ■

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