

Anna Iskra

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EDUCATION

2020 PhD in Anthropology (Contemporary Chinese Society). Hong Kong Institute for the Humanities and Social Sciences, The University of Hong Kong, Hong Kong SAR: "Healing the Nation through Self-Discovery: The Chinese New Age Milieu and the Politics of Emotion." Supervised by Prof. David A. Palmer.

2019 Visiting Fellow at the Department of Anthropology, Harvard University, Cambridge MA, United States. Mentored by Prof. Arthur Kleinman.

2006–2014 College of Inter-Area Individual Studies in the Humanities and Social Sciences (MISH), The University of Warsaw. Warsaw, Poland:

•Chinese Studies

- 2014 MA Dissertation: "Language Study as Nation-Strengthening. Crazy English Fever in China."

- 2010 BA Dissertation: "Analysis of Selected Chinese Characters as Applied to Language Humour and their Usage on Chinese-Language Internet Sites."

•Ethnology and Cultural Anthropology

- 2012 MA Dissertation: "Are we Studying the Same? Discussing Ethnology with Chinese Students."

- 2009 BA Dissertation: "The Search for 'Pure Islam' among Muslim Kists in Georgia."

ACADEMIC POSITIONS

2022- Postdoctoral Fellow, Faculty of Humanities, The University of Copenhagen. Collaborator in the project "Covid-19 and Global Mental Health: The Importance of Cultural Contexts." Individual project title: "The New Abnormal. Reimagining Mental Health during the Pandemic in the Chinese Psy-Counselling milieu."

2020-2022 Postdoctoral Fellow, Hong Kong Institute for the Humanities and Social Sciences, The University of Hong Kong. Collaborator in the project "Infrastructures of Faith: Religious Mobility on the Belt and Road." Individual project title: "Building Inter-Asia New Age Networks: O&O Academy and Chinese Spiritual Tourism to India."

GRANTS, FELLOWSHIPS, AND AWARDS

2022- Collaborator in the project "Covid-19 and Global Mental Health: The Importance of Cultural Contexts." Coordinator: Prof. Ana Antić. Funded by Novo Nordisk Foundation.

2019–2022 Collaborator in the project "Infrastructures of Faith: Religious Mobility on the Belt and Road." Coordinator: Prof. David A. Palmer. Funded under the Collaborative Research Fund Scheme 2018-2019 Exercise, Research Grants Council, Hong Kong [14,100 USD].

2021 Winner of the Eduard B. Vermeer Prize for the best article in 2021: "Chinese New Age Milieu and the Emergence of Homo Sentimentalis in the People's Republic," China Information.

2021 Laureate of the ICAS International Book Prize 2021 Accolade for Dissertations in the Social Sciences: Most Accessible and Captivating Work for the Non-specialist Reader Accolade, International Institute for Asian Studies (ICAS).

2019–2020 Award for Outstanding Research Postgraduate Student, The University of Hong Kong.

2015–2020 Postgraduate Scholarship (PGS), The University of Hong Kong [\$25,000 per year for 4 years].

2019 Lee Hysan-HKIHSS Fellowship for the stay at Harvard University as a Visiting Fellow [\$5,700 USD per month for 5 months].

2016, 2017 Sin Wai-Kin Junior Fellow (The University of Hong Kong), awarded twice [\$5100, \$6,400].

2012–2013 Confucius Institute scholarship for one-year non-degree Chinese language program at Yunnan Normal University, Kunming, China.

2010–2011 Chinese Government scholarship for one-year non-degree Chinese language program at Xi'an Jiaotong University, Xi'an, China.

PUBLICATIONS

2023 "Crafting Utopias for Spiritual Nationhood: Digested India in Contemporary Self-cultivation Practices in China." *Critical Asian Studies* 55(4): 604-631.

2023 "Be Soft Like Water, Little Woman': Cultivating Postfeminism in Postsocialist China." *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society* 48(3): 659-682.

2023 "Decolonizing Affect. Resonance as an Ethnographic Technique." *Ethos* 51(1): 130-145.

2023 "Crazy English: Nation-Strengthening and the Changing Politics of Selfhood in the Reform Era China." *positions: asia critique* 31(1):143-169.

2022 "Navigating the Owl's Gaze: The Chinese Body-Mind-Spirit Milieu and Circulations of New Age Teachings in the Sinosphere." *Nova Religio* 25(4): 5-31.

2021 "Chinese New Age milieu and the Emergence of Homo Sentimentalis in the People's Republic." *China Information* 35 (1): 89-108. Winner of the Eduard B. Vermeer Prize for the best article in 2021.

2020 Iskra, Anna, Winiger, Fabian, and Palmer, David A. "Remaking the Self: Spirituality, Civilization and the Chinese Quest for the Good Life in the Reform Era, 54-74." In *Handbook on Religion in China*. Stephan Feuchtwang (ed.). Cheltenham, Glos and Northampton, MA: Edward Elgar Publishing.

(forthcoming) "Emotional Release." Chapter for the edited volume *Keywords for Self-Development in Chinese Society*. Gil Hizi (ed.). Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press.

(in prep.) "The New (Ab)normal. Problematizing Mental Health in Lockdowned Shanghai."

(in prep.) "Gloominess as Resilience. Contesting Hegemonic Affective Regimes in Pandemic-Era China."

CONFERENCE PAPERS

2023 "'What Never Happened.' Viral Absurdity and Affective Dissonance in Pandemic-Era Shanghai"; "Money is Love. Cultivating Entrepreneurial Selves and Spiritual Businesses in the Chinese Body Mind Spirit Fever." *American Anthropological Association Annual Meeting*, Toronto, ON.

2023 "I Love Losing Face!" Crazy English, Nation Strengthening, and the Changing Politics of Chinese Middle-Class Selfhood." *Association for Asian Studies*, Boston, MA.

2022 "Decolonizing Affect. Resonance as an Ethnographic Technique." *American Anthropological Association Annual Meeting*, Seattle, WA.

2021 "Purging Tensions: Emotional Release Practices and the Embodiment of State Ideology in the Chinese Body-Mind-Spirit Milieu," *East Asian Network for the Academic Study of Esotericism (EANASE)* (online).

2021 "Building Inter-Asia New Age Networks: Balancing Heterodoxy and Patriotism in Chinese Spiritual Tourism to India"; "Healing the Nation through Self-Discovery: The Chinese New Age Milieu and the Politics of Emotion," *12th International Convention of Asia Scholars (ICAS)* (online).

2021 "Building Inter-Asia New Age Networks: Balancing Heterodoxy and Patriotism in Chinese Spiritual Tourism to India," *Association for Asian Studies (AAS) 2021 Annual Conference*. (online)

2019 "Mainland Chinese New Age Milieu and the Post-Maoist Balancing of Yin and Yang," *11th International Convention of Asia Scholars (ICAS)*, Leiden, The Netherlands.

2018 "Healing the Nation through Self-Discovery: The Body-Heart-Soul Fever and the Emergence of Homo Sentimentalis in the PRC," inaugural conference of the *East Asian Society for the Scientific Study of Religion*, Singapore.

2017 "Finding Happiness through Self-Discovery: Self-Help Movement in the People's Republic of China," *15th International Society for the Quality-of-Life Studies Conference*, Innsbruck, Austria.

2007 "Opposition Movements and Democratization in Georgia," "Future Continuous" conference. Budapest, Hungary.

INVITED TALKS

2023 "Pandemic-era Counselling in Shanghai. Viral Absurdity, Affective Dysphoria, and Mental Health in Crisis." *Medical Ethics and Humanities Unit*, The University of Hong Kong, Hong Kong SAR.

2023 "Gloominess as Resilience. Contesting Hegemonic Affective Regimes in Pandemic-era China." *Centre for the Culture and the Mind*, University of Copenhagen, Denmark.

2021 "Crafting Utopias for Spiritual Nationalism: Heterodoxy and Patriotism in Indian Guru Worship in China," *Interdisciplinary Lunchtime Seminar*, organized by the Hong Kong Institute for the Humanities and Social Sciences, The University of Hong Kong, Hong Kong SAR.

2021 "Feeling Social Change: The Chinese Body-Mind-Spirit Milieu and the Production of Emotion," public lecture organized by the Hong Kong Anthropological Society, Hong Kong Museum of History, Hong Kong SAR.

2019 "Healing the Nation through Self-discovery: Chinese New Age milieu and the Politics of 'Psy-Venting,'" *Friday Morning Seminar on Culture, Psychiatry, and Global Mental Health*, organized by the Harvard Medical School, Department of Global Health and Social Medicine, and Weatherhead Center for International Affairs. Harvard University, Cambridge, MA, United States:

WORKSHOPS

2023 Research workshop "International Forum on Chinese Indigenous Psychology and Mental Health." Simon Fraser University, Shaanxi University of Chinese Medicine, The Second Affiliated Hospital of Shaanxi University of Chinese Medicine. Xi'an, China.

2023 Research workshop "Capitalist Virtue Ethics?: Ethnographic Explorations." The University of Cologne, Germany.
2021 Interdisciplinary workshop "Spiritual Crisis and Moral Transformation in Contemporary China." The University of Rochester, Rochester, NY, United States.

2021 Fudan-Harvard-Yenching Institute Second Training Workshop on "New Media and Gender Studies," online.

2018 Asia Network Faculty Enrichment Program, organized by Hong Kong-America Center. Fieldtrips to religious sites in Hong Kong SAR, Shenzhen, and Guangzhou; research presentation.

2016 Advanced Interdisciplinary Training Workshop "Humanities, Social Sciences and Medicine in East Asia," organized by Harvard Yenching Institute, The University of Hong Kong, Peking University and Nankai University. Nankai University, Tianjin, China.

RESEARCH EXPERIENCE

2022-2023 Online and in-person fieldwork research for the postdoctoral project "The New (Ab)normal. Reimagining Mental Health during the Pandemic in the Chinese Psy-Counselling Millieu."

2020-2022 Online fieldwork research for the postdoctoral project "Building Inter-Asia New Age Networks: O&O Academy and Chinese Spiritual Tourism to India."

2016-2017 Fieldwork research in Shenzhen, China for the PhD dissertation "Healing the Nation through Self-discovery: Mainland Chinese New Age Milieu and the Politics of Emotion."

2013 Fieldwork research in Shenzhen, China for the MA dissertation in Chinese Studies: "Language Study as Nation-Strengthening. Crazy English Fever in China."

2012–2013 Fieldwork research in Xi'an, China for the MA dissertation in Ethnology: "Are we Studying the Same? Discussing Ethnology with Chinese Students."

2007, 2008 Fieldwork in Georgia for the BA thesis in Ethnology: "The Search for 'Pure Islam' among Muslim Kists in Georgia."

TEACHING

fall 2021 Lecturer (Instructor of Record) and Teaching Assistant, CCGL9064 Body Politics: Local Worlds, Global Processes, The University of Hong Kong.

spring 2021 Lecture "Gendering Bodies" for CCGL9064 Body Politics: Local Worlds, Global Processes (Dr. Priscilla Song and Dr. Laura Meek), The University of Hong Kong.

spring 2021 Teaching Assistant, CCGL9064 Body Politics: Local Worlds, Global Processes (Dr. Priscilla Song and Dr. Laura Meek), The University of Hong Kong.

2017, 2018 Teaching Assistant, CCHU9014 Spirituality, Society and Social Change (Prof. David A. Palmer), The University of Hong Kong.

2015 Certificate of Teaching and Learning in Higher Education (CETL), The University of Hong Kong.

SERVICE ACTIVITIES

2022 Coordinator and Moderator of the Reading Group for the project "Covid-19 and Global Mental Health: The Importance of Cultural Contexts," The University of Copenhagen.

2021 Coordinator and Moderator of Lunchtime Seminar Series, Hong Kong Institute for the Humanities and Social Sciences, The University of Hong Kong.

2020-2021 Member of the University of Hong Kong Anthropology Network: participation in the anthropology writing group and promotion of anthropological events.

2012 Interpreting for a speleological expedition organized by Polish Mountaineering Association in Enshi Tujia and Miao Autonomous Prefecture, Hubei province, China. Active participation in cave exploration and karst forms survey.

2010 Warsaw Center for Family Help. Research and evaluation of Individual Integration Programs for immigrants.

PROFESSIONAL MEMBERSHIPS

Member of the American Anthropological Association

Member of the Association for Asian Studies

Member of the Task Force on Indigenous Psychology, Division 31 (Society for Humanistic Psychology), American Psychological Association

SELECTED PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE

2011-2019 Mandarin-Polish-English translator and interpreter

2011 Intern at the Embassy of the Republic of Poland in Beijing

LANGUAGE SKILLS

- Polish (native)
- English (proficient)
- Mandarin (proficient)
- Russian (proficient)
- Spanish (proficient)
- Cantonese (intermediate)