

REDEFINING AREA: THE PHOTO DATABASE FOR INTEGRATED AREA STUDIES

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Data for the Photo Database for Integrated Area Studies (PDIAS) were collected at field stations in Asia and Africa as part of 21st Century Centers of Excellence (21COE) for Integrated Area Studies projects. Researchers and students collected photographs and data that provide first-hand information on daily human uses of natural resources and the environment. Such observations and materials meet the overall program objective of examining “Human–Nature Coexistence in a Globalizing World.”

The PDIAS data are both geo-referenced and referenced to various thematic maps (e.g., topographic, land-cover, and soil maps) in specific areas. Users of the PDIAS can locate data by choosing a map location or by conducting a descriptive word search. These features enable users to more readily find information and also facilitate understanding of the concept of “area.” Furthermore, various standardized thematic maps covering Asia and Africa provide common platforms for quantitatively comparing human–nature relationships in different areas, allowing redefinitions of area.

An area can be viewed as a place where the Earth’s physical histories and human histories meet in a specified context. The results of global-scale scientific studies should be accumulated and re-evaluated in local area contexts. In this way, integrated area studies can play an important role in synthesizing knowledge and actions related to future sustainable uses of natural resources.

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