

Editorial Foreword

OUR COVER

This month's cover illustration—a collage of images associated with song and dance—highlights the fact that three pieces we are publishing in this issue have a connection to music. This was not due to planning on our part, but merely to agreeable happenstance. Still, we thought it worth celebrating this conjuncture of authorial interests, in pieces that deal with Central Asia, Northeast Asia, and South Asian contexts, respectively, on the front as well as inside of the issue. All of the images are from figures inside these pages, except for the photo “Rabindranath Tagore at his painting desk, Government School of Art, Calcutta 1932.” That figure is open source from Wikimedia Commons (https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Rabindranath_Tagore_at_his_painting_desk,_Government_School_of_Art,_Calcutta_1932.jpg).

IN THIS ISSUE

We begin with two essays that focus on disturbing events in different periods and different parts of Southeast Asia. In the first, which takes the form of a “Trends” essay, University of British Columbia historian JOHN ROOSA offers a fifty-years-on look back at the killings of 1965–66. How, he asks, have different parties remembered, written about, pondered the significance of, and tried to stifle discussion of and investigation into the scope and meaning of this violent series of events? What is novel about the scholarly work that is now being done on the traumas of the mid-1960s, and the ways those traumas are being represented in other formats? These are the kinds of questions he explores, in a piece that begins with discussion of a controversial 2012 documentary film, *The Act of Killing*, that was unusual both in the techniques it used and the centrality in it of scenes in which perpetrators of violence talk about what they did.

This is followed by an “Asia Beyond the Headlines” essay that takes the reader from the 1960s up to the present and from Indonesia to Thailand, zeroing in on the most recent of several military coups that have taken place in that country. Written by anthropologist CLAUDIO SOPRANZETTI, currently a fellow at All Souls College in Oxford, it is framed as an analysis of the latest in a series of swings “of the pendulum between dictatorial conservatisms and democratic rule,” each moving between these poles in a novel way; it can be read in part as a sequel to the very first contribution to this particular topically minded JAS genre: Duncan McCargo's “Thai Politics as Reality Television,” which we published in February 2009.

RESEARCH ARTICLES

The rest of the issue, before our array of book reviews from across Asia, is made up of seven research articles. These deal with different places (the Korean peninsula, China, Vietnam, Japan, and India) and address a broad spectrum of topics (from labor unrest to veneration of a political leader to, as already noted, music). They make use of methods and theories associated with a host of disciplines, for the contributors include historians, anthropologists, a scholar of literature, a sociologist, a political scientist, and specialists in the study of performance. The contributors are based in various kinds of institutions (from public universities to Princeton) and in wide-ranging locales (different regions of the United States, Hong Kong, New Zealand, and India). As varied as the articles are, there is an overlap worth noting concerning one pair—two articles in which social scientists explore the working of twenty-first-century capitalism—as well as one trio, the musically minded one. After this pair and trio come two final unrelated essays that deal, respectively, with a famous American sociologist and a much more famous Vietnamese revolutionary. Here are brief descriptions of the seven articles in the section.

The section opens with UCLA sociologist CHING KWAN LEE's "Precarization or Empowerment? Reflections on Recent Labor Unrest in China." Following up on her very influential 2007 book on Chinese workers, *Against the Law: Labor Protests in China's Rustbelt and Sunbelt*, the author questions some of the assumptions at work in more optimistic recent writing on the subject, while also exploring the value in the PRC context of the concept of the "precariat," a term that stresses the need to think of classes in terms not only of their relationship to the means of production but how precarious a group's situation is within contemporary capitalist systems. As this issue went to press, the author noted that "the arrest of NGO activist Zeng Feiyang and his colleagues in December 2015, accused of illegal incitement of strikes, attests once again to the institutional precariousness and political disempowerment of labor in China."

Next comes "Cosmopolitan Capitalism: Local State-Society Relations in China and India" by political scientist KELLE S. TSAI, currently based at Hong Kong University of Science and Technology (on leave from Johns Hopkins). The author "departs from conventional usages of both state and society by focusing on the local state in combination with a less territorial conception of society" (that makes increased space for transnational actors and phenomena), while tying together case studies of three pairs of Chinese and Indian locales (e.g., one case study is of the dual sites of China's Guangdong Province and the Indian state of Kerala).

Our dance duo begins with EMILY E. WILCOX's "Beyond Internal Orientalism: Dance and Nationality Discourse in the Early People's Republic of China, 1949–1954." In this, the author, a scholar of dance in the University of Michigan's Department of Asian Languages and Cultures, argues that the "internal Orientalism" framework often applied in discussions of ethnic minority performances in the PRC may be misleading when trying to make sense of the early years of the country when concerns with "external threats" to the new state's existence "loomed large," "long-standing ethnic stereotypes were perceived as a vulnerability to national security," and, as a result, these derogatory views of minority groups were "targeted for reform through new policies of state multiculturalism."

The second piece concerned with dance performance and ideas about nationality is by University of Auckland anthropologist SUNHEE KOO, and is titled “Reconciling Nations and Citizenship: Meaning, Creativity, and the Performance of a North Korean Troupe in South Korea.” It combines “ethnographic data with performance analysis” to explore the ways that the travels and shows of an artistic group offer a novel window onto the flow of ideas, people, images, and modes of expression across the DMZ.

Our pieces on performance are rounded out by SAURAV DASHTHAKUR’s “‘World-History,’ ‘*Itihāsa*,’ and Memory: Rabindranath Tagore’s Musical Program in the Age of Nationalism,” which approaches music and the nation in a very different way. The author, who is in the English Department of Visva-Bharati University, argues that Tagore’s “musical program ... offers an aesthetic blueprint of a more inclusive indigenous modernity in the subcontinent” than that proposed by many others of his day.

We move back to Southeast Asia with Texas A&M historian OLGA DROR’s “Establishing Hồ Chí Minh’s Cult: Vietnamese Traditions and Their Transformations,” which looks at the veneration of a man who, almost a half-century after his death, remains the most potent representation of the Vietnamese Communist political system. The author emphasizes Ho’s own role in the formation of the cult surrounding him, while also exploring other issues, such as the way that pre-Communist Vietnamese traditions, along with patterns of veneration of Communist leaders in other countries, fused in the deification of this Southeast Asian leader.

The section ends with an essay by Princeton anthropologist AMY BOROVOY on Robert Bellah, an American sociologist famous in some circles as lead author of *Habits of the Heart*, but best known in Asian studies for a much earlier work, *Tokugawa Religion: The Cultural Roots of Modern Japan*. Titled “Robert Bellah’s Search for Community and Ethical Modernity in Japan Studies,” it combines discussion of the role Bellah’s “engagement with Japan” played in his development of a “communitarian critique of American individualism,” with broader reflections on the intersections between ideas about modernity and modernization within Cold War-era American and Japanese social science theories and analysis of Japan’s past and present.

—JNW

POSTSCRIPT

While this issue was being prepared, the Editorial Office learned, to our great sadness, of the unexpected death of Barnard Bate, a valued Associate Editor specializing in South Asia, whose name appears on the masthead of this issue, and who made valuable contributions to *JAS* in his time on our board. His energy, thoughtfulness, intelligence, and generosity will be deeply missed by all of us.

Selected Forthcoming Articles in *JAS* 75.3 (August 2016)

Commentary

The Qiaopi Trade and Its Role in Modern China and the Chinese Diaspora:
Toward an Alternative Explanation of “Transnational Capitalism”

HONG LIU AND GREGOR BENTON

Research Articles

Boundaries of Belonging: Sino-Indian Relations and the 1960 Tibetan Muslim Incident

DAVID G. ATWILL

“I Am India Shining”: Investor-Citizen and the Indelible Icon of Good Times

RAVINDER KAUR

Taking Part: The Social Experience of Informal Finance in Ordos, Inner Mongolia

MAX DAVID WOODWORTH and MICHAEL ULFSTJERNE

Cold War Sewing Machines: Production and Consumption in 1950s China and Japan

ANTONIA FINNANE

Controlling the Kanjisphere: The Rise of the Sino-Japanese Typewriter and the Birth of
CJK

THOMAS S. MULLANEY

Commentary on Thomas S. Mullaney, “Controlling the Kanjisphere,” and Antonia
Finnane, “Cold War Sewing Machines”

DAVID ARNOLD

Commentary on Thomas S. Mullaney, “Controlling the Kanjisphere,” and Antonia
Finnane, “Cold War Sewing Machines”

ANDREW GORDON

Creating a Textual Public Space: Slogans and Texts from Hong Kong’s Umbrella
Movement

SEBASTIAN VEG

Shame, Survival, Satisfaction: Legal Representations of Sex between Men in Early
Twentieth-Century Beijing

Y. YVON WANG