

Letter from the Editors

Before you lies a very special issue, entitled *Canton and Nagasaki Compared*. The research articles in this collection came out of a transcontinental collaboration which dates back to 2007. Its most recent conference compared the port cities of Canton (Guangzhou) and Nagasaki between the seventeenth century and the first half of the nineteenth century. The resulting contributions were collected and edited by Haneda Masashi from the University of Tokyo's Institute for Advanced Studies on Asia, and Leonard Blussé from Leiden University and the Nanyang Research Institute in Xiamen. The articles represent both longstanding and ongoing research projects on these two port cities, and bring together work from Japanese, Chinese, Thai, French, and Dutch scholars. For further details, we refer to the introductory note by Haneda Masashi in the next pages.

This issue is divided into four parts. "Shipping Networks and the State" looks at larger trade systems, both in the context of regions integrated by maritime trade networks and in terms of the European trading companies, and at the attempts of states to gain control over the traffic of goods and people. This latter issue is taken up further in the section "Managing Trade Flows," which examines international relations between the governments involved as well as non-state investors and other actors. The section "Mediating Trade: Interpreters and Translators" zooms in on the individual ports, and uses these as a lens through which to examine the myriad communities, languages and cultures that travelled and traded there. By focusing on the brokers between local and arriving groups, these articles shed light on day-to-day transactions in port. The final section, called "Urban and Cultural Life," expands further on the theme of the everyday in port cities by looking at the ways in which life was transformed—or in some cases, not transformed—by the influx of people, objects, texts, and ideas.

Due to the large number of research articles, the editors have elected to publish this last issue of 2013 without a book review section. We hope our readers can forgive this unusual state of affairs and promise our readers a big review section to feast your eyes on in the new year.

The Editors