In This Issue

KEITH W. TAYLOR focuses on conflicts involving five regions over a period of five centuries to interrogate twentieth-century interpretations that emphasize the unity and continuity of Vietnamese history and culture. His examination of specific episodes of regional conflicts among the Viet peoples between the fifteenth and nineteenth centuries indicates that there were many different ways of being Vietnamese, whether such identities were expressed in regional terms or in some other fashion. Absent the connections and coherencies imposed by later historians, the pre-twentieth century history of Vietnam speaks to different issues and themes than is imagined in a national and nationalist history. The author raises fundamental questions about complex identity issues and nations and nationalisms.

ERIK MUEGGLER looks at grief and mourning in a northern Yunnan highland community in southwestern China by tracing the relationships existing between the "work of grief" and the "work with hemp." By interweaving economic history with interpretations of Chinese folk religion, and by drawing on his ethnographic fieldwork among the so-called Yi groups, he underscores the ties that bound the production and marketing of hempen cloth with the nature of grief and mourning in the community. For the very materiality of hemp—both in the sense of sensuousness and in the sense of value—makes it a medium for understanding the way certain Yunnan highlanders grieve for the deceased. Thus, he links the material and political aspects of labor with the affective domain of grief.

QIN SHAO analyzes teahouse culture in Nantong county (Jiangsu Province) in early Republican China as a public space located in and contested by the emergence of bourgeois culture. The author takes issue with early-twentieth-century idealizations of teahouses by identifying their multiple functions in their communities. To the "new cultural elites," however, teahouse culture was decadent and therefore a threat to the new social and political order that they were attempting to establish. Consequently, these elites sought to replace teahouses with new kinds of public spaces that redefined the concept of leisure and promoted new kinds of public venues. Thus, teahouses were venues at which many of the tensions of modern China were manifested and reflected.

HSU PI-CHING dissects several types of jokes from collections published in early-seventeenth-century China to explore and expose tensions in late Ming society. Humorous and hyperbolic in tone, the jokes that Hsu considers are of both the comical and satirical kind, the comical jokes poking fun at socially inconsequential matters and the satirical jokes highlighting the "vulgar culturalism and social disruption" of the times. Aimed at any number of targets in society and government, these jokes had a liberating as well as a constraining effect: liberating because they were subversive in their aim at turning the world upside down and constraining because they ultimately functioned as a 'safety valve' for the tensions of society.

DAVID GILMARTIN seeks to relocate the 1947 Partition of the Indian subcontinent (into India and Pakistan) from its present place in the historiography to a more appropriate location in the larger and longer historical narratives of South

Asian history. This move entails negotiating the gaps existing in the historiography: between the "high politics" approaches to the Transfer of Power and the popular accounts of Partition in 'history from below' and in recent fiction. He proposes a new line of inquiry that draws its cues from the current literature on the construction of identities in colonial India, a new approach that he argues will show that "the tension between multiple realities and the production of shared moral meaning [lie] at the very heart of the partition story" and that "the very tension between multiple constructions of identity and the search for moral community itself defined the partition event."