

## Editorial Foreword

Sixty-five years ago this month, the newly formed Far Eastern Association, Inc., launched *Far Eastern Quarterly: Review of Eastern Asia and Adjacent Pacific Islands*. Fifteen years later, the organization renamed itself the Association for Asian Studies, Inc., and gave a new title to its quarterly, *The Journal of Asian Studies*. The Association for Asian Studies has self-published this quarterly journal ever since. It is time for some change. Beginning with Volume 66, Number 1 (February 2007), the Association will join with Cambridge University Press to publish *The Journal of Asian Studies* in both print and electronic formats. Our new partnership with Cambridge University Press promises us greater reach and visibility among a worldwide community of scholars and experts interested in Asia. On behalf of the Editors and Association Officers who have preceded me, let me thank the many scholars, staff members, and sponsoring institutions that made it possible for the Association to publish *The Journal of Asian Studies* for the past sixty-five years and whose devotion, incisive thinking, and hard work established *JAS* as the leading journal in its field.

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This issue of *JAS* presents the 2006 Annual Presidential Address and a cluster of articles that explore Chinese texts and textuality from the eighth through the early twentieth century.

### Oceans Unbounded: Transversing Asia across “Area Studies” 2006 AAS Presidential Address

BARBARA WATSON ANDAYA charts some key themes and episodes in regional maritime history and so reminds us that Asian history is a history of people, goods, and ideas in motion. Andaya makes a most persuasive case for bringing the seas and sea-oriented communities into our comparative framework for understanding and opening new perspectives on Asian histories and cultures. Indeed, including maritime environments and routes within our horizon of understanding helps us see beyond the centers and borders of those land-based societies whose narratives have dominated Asian historiography and area studies.

### Reading Chinese Texts

How might we grasp the past? CHRISTIAN DE PEE argues that a reflexive, dialectical hermeneutics is the only way to recover the ritual practices of eighth through fourteenth century China. It is in an engagement with the exegetical discourse of ritual manuals—where text and ritual practice coincide—that scriptural rites of the past may be mapped onto contemporary, postmodern discourses. PING SHAO conjures up the “internal alchemy” represented in the sixteenth century novel, *Xiyou ji* (*The*

*Journey to the West*), to reveal the Taoist philosophies informing the novel's story of conversion to Buddhism. At its root, *Xiyou ji* is a religious allegory in which the author rewrote the Buddhist Tripitaka legend with the intent of teaching Zhang Boduan's Taoist ideology. WEI HUA takes analytic stock of the *Caizi Mudan ting*, an unconventional edition and rereading of Tang Xianzu's *Peony Pavilion*. Intended for a female readership and banned for its erotic content, the *Caizi* shows us how people in eighteenth century China viewed sexual desire in light of Neo-Confucian moral orthodoxy. Hua persuasively argues that the exegetic and aesthetic functions of literary commentary in China had significant—and often very challenging—political and cultural implications. ELLEN WIDMER, like Andaya, reminds us of Asia-in-motion. Reading Shan Shili's *Guimao liuxing ji* (*Travelogue of 1903*), Widmer finds unique and revealing views on China's place in a changing, unsettled world. She deftly shows how Shan's work gives us an emblematic rendering of the predicaments faced by Chinese women at the beginning of the twentieth century as they imagined their future on a global stage.

—KMG