

## In This Issue

JULIA K. MURRAY focuses on the little studied pictorial biographies of Confucius in Ming China to elucidate their purposes and audiences. Derived from Buddhist and Taoist traditions, these narrative pictures proliferated during the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries when they were disseminated through a variety of media, including woodblock prints, paintings on silk, and incised stone tablets. She locates the emergence and spread of these pictorial biographies not only in a changing visual culture but also in developments relating to the state-supported cult of Confucius. In part the new visual rhetoric of these pictures was intended to shore up Confucianism and to combat a reinvigorated Buddhism by propagating a more deified imagery; in part the new visual rhetoric was aimed at providing alternatives to the use of icons in the temples of Confucius, a practice that had been banned in the early sixteenth century. Although powerful and familiar, pictorial narratives, as the author shows, were manipulated and viewed differently by different groups.

JOSEPH S. ALTER offers a novel reading of Mahatma Gandhi's writings on diet, sex, and hygiene. By arguing "that nonviolence was, for him, as much an issue of public health as an issue of politics, morality, and religion," this reading challenges previous studies that delink Gandhi's preoccupation with issues of health from his political ideas and agenda as well as works that treat those links together but only in terms of psychological and sociopsychological meta-interpretations. Alter also takes a different line on the Mahtama's conception of health by contextualizing it within the framework of what he terms "late imperialism," a framework which enables the author to view his subject's personal convictions "in the context of colonialism's impact on subject bodies." In other words, Gandhi's personal "experiments with truth," whether they centered on dietetics, celibacy, hygiene, and nature cure, cannot be separated from his search for truth, or from his belief in nonviolence, or his campaign for sociopolitical reform.

DEBORAH TOOKER interrogates models of premodern Southeast Asian political systems, specifically mandala and other spatialized concepts associated with the 'cosmic polity,' by arguing that they are constructed from the viewpoint of elite sources and the center. Consequently, they "reaffirm existing power structures." By drawing on present-day ethnographic fieldwork—namely, her work on the Akha, a tribal upland ethnic minority living along the Thai-Burmese border—she demonstrates that 'cosmic polity' approaches are constructed on an "encompassment model of hierarchy" and therefore overlook the possibility of contestations occurring within that hierarchy. Indeed, her study of the Akha and their specific notions of a supralocal political unit (*myan*), village polity, and household, shows that spatial codes are deployed differently in different contexts. As well as highlighting the links between spatial relations and power relations, her fieldwork leads her to emphasize the importance of understanding the "interrelationships between societies as parts of larger political-economic systems." Thus, she argues for a more practice-based approach to the understanding of spatiopolitical models.

PAMELA PRICE explores the culture of Tamil nationalism that has developed around the key ideas of revolution and rank. She traces this culture back to the

Dravidian movement whose roots date back to the nineteenth century. Centered both on creating a cultural revolution and on protecting Tamil interests against those of the central government, this movement developed a mass base between 1949 and 1967. Its political party, the Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam (DMK), as the author's fieldwork in Madurai District reveals, penetrated rural society deeply through its propaganda and organization. Its radical and novel notions of personhood and honor (*mānam*) fired the imagination of especially young men who responded favorably to its ideology connecting "existential issues of personal value and political meaning and the new nation which was envisioned." After the party came to power in Madras in 1967, however, earlier notions of status and rank gave way to a different conception of honor, one that privileged a new hierarchical order centered on the power and authority of an individual political leader. Not surprisingly, personality cults, focusing on the chief ministers of Tamilnadu, have emerged in recent decades.

TONY DAY seeks to pave the way for new lines of inquiry by viewing Southeast Asian states through the prisms of gender and family. He proposes these new frameworks as alternatives to the existing tendencies in Western historical writings to construct the state in terms of "structures." Such a preoccupation, he contends, "prevents us from inquiring into what goes on inside, outside, and between 'structures,' namely multiple relations of power" and from appreciating the "processual nature of families and states as historical agents." Yet he finds from his survey of an extensive range of secondary literature on diverse societies and time periods that family allegiances and gender relations were fundamental to the dynamics of political life and power relations. By probing and delineating the "interconnections between premodern families and states" and "broader issues of gender," he thus aims to advance "beyond overly Eurocentric and reified concepts of the state" in order to locate and reconstruct "Southeast Asian political practices and power relations."

The essays by Tooker and Day in this issue and earlier *JAS* articles by Craig Reynolds (54, 2), Victor Lieberman (54, 3), and John R. Bowen (54, 4), continue the ongoing debate about approaches, interpretations, and models in the field of Southeast Asian studies.