

## Editorial Foreword 76.1 (February 2017)

### OUR COVER

The photo on the cover shows one of the main actors in a ritual drama called “Chasing the Yellow Demon,” which is performed most Chinese New Years in the Hebei Province village of Guyi. The photographer is Sim Chi Yin, a Singaporean working for the New York-based photo agency VII. She traveled with the author, Ian Johnson, to document the ritual’s recreation by villagers.

### IN THIS ISSUE

The issue opens with “Chasing the Yellow Demon,” the latest contribution in our series of “Reflections” essays, which include a first-person element and blur the line between academic writing and other genres. The author, IAN JOHNSON, an advising editor to the *JAS*, is best known as a journalist and a contributor to the *New York Review of Books*, but has also written for the *Journal of Daoist Studies*. His essay, which engages with scholarly debates via reportage, recounts a trip to rural China that was inspired by reading historian David Johnson’s accounts of village rituals of the past and wondering what evidence for their persistence or revival could be found in the present.

The rest of the issue, aside from the section given over to our standard set of book reviews, is made up of eight research articles. In terms of geography and chronology, these take the reader from Qing dynasty China to nineteenth-century Bengal and from late twentieth-century Mongolia to contemporary Indonesia, with two contributions on Cambodia in recent times. In terms of discipline, literature, anthropology, political science, and religious studies are all represented. The authors of the articles are based everywhere from Canada to Kansas and Boston and Brooklyn to Taipei and Guangzhou. In short, it is another issue that highlights the breadth and range of work that falls under the broad rubric of Asian studies and the varying locales in which first-rate scholarship is being done.

The first research article, “‘Anything Can Be Used to Stimulate Child Development’: Early Childhood Education and Development in Indonesia as a Durable Assemblage,” is by anthropologist JAN NEWBERRY. Based on fieldwork conducted in Yogyakarta in the aftermath of an earthquake, and zeroing in on “healing programs aimed at the young,” it explores change and continuity in forms of social welfare and community organization in the wake of a crisis.

The next piece, “On the Boundaries Between Good and Evil: Constructing Multiple Moralities in China,” is the result of a collaboration between anthropologists based in the

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United States and South China. Its authors, ROBERT P. WELLER of Boston University and KEPING WU of Sun Yat-sen University, explore “three contrasting versions of the relationship between good and evil in contemporary China,” looking in turn at how the divide is imagined and dealt with by a spirit medium, by members of a charismatic Christian group, and in official state and religious discourse.

Following this is LISA J. ARENSEN’s “The Dead in the Land: Encounters with Bodies, Bones, and Ghosts in Northwestern Cambodia,” which discusses the Khmer Buddhist ideas about how remains should be handled. The author’s fieldwork seeks to uncover, among other things, how a community deals with ritual practices associated with death and burial being “disrupted” in a war-torn land, and the “ramifications” of these “interrupted processes for both the living and the dead” in a particular village.

A second study of the same country comes next. ANGELIKI ANDREA KANAVOU and KOSAL PATH’s “The Lingering Effects of Thought Reform: The Khmer Rouge S-21 Prison Personnel” looks at how ordinary people who became perpetrators of horrific acts “relate today to their role in the genocide” that took place in Cambodia in the mid- to late 1970s. The study makes use of “testimonies, archival material, and semi-structured interviews” to elucidate the complex emotional legacy, including a “lingering obedience orientation toward authority” among “guards and interrogators” at an infamous prison.

Readers of the issue are taken next to South Asia via BRIAN A. HATCHER’s “Translation in the Zone of the Dubash: Colonial Mediations of *Anuvāda*,” a work that looks largely at texts produced in the middle of the nineteenth century. His main focus throughout is on Bengal, but he draws on studies of other parts of Asia in developing his approach to issues of translation. Specialists in Chinese studies may find interest in his engagement with Lydia Liu’s “theory of translingual practice,” while scholars of the spread of Islamic texts across South and Southeast Asia may similarly find interest in his engagement with Ronit Ricci’s *Islam Translated*.

Moving forward in time about a century and across space to Central Asia, the article following this is PHILLIP P. MARZLUF’s “Literacy under Authority: The Mongolian Cultural Campaigns,” an essay that, like the one before it, is concerned with language. In this case, the focus is not on translation but on how “the socialist Mongolian state infiltrated the private spaces of Mongolians and shaped their attitudes toward” various “desirable social goals,” including the ability to read and write, during cultural campaigns carried out in the 1950s and 1960s. The author relies heavily on oral histories to support his claims.

The last two articles in the issue deal with China at very different points in its history. The first, political scientist DANIEL KOSS’s “Political Geography of Empire: Chinese Varieties of Local Government,” seeks to understand how the Qing dynasty (1644–1911) strove to construct “standards” that would “reduce complexity and allow the state to deal with diversity”—something that the rulers of heterogeneous polities often have to do when their goal is to “foster the state’s cohesion and empower central authority.” It is important to make sense of the specific strategies used by the Qing to address this issue, Koss claims, in order to understand how the dynasty governed, bring the Chinese case more fully into the mix in the field of comparative politics, and appreciate the legacies that these strategies had that extend past the fall of the dynasty.

The second China article, and the final piece in the issue before the book reviews, NICOLAI VOLLAND’S “Clandestine Cosmopolitanism: Foreign Literature in the

People's Republic of China, 1957–1977,” argues that there were limits to the extent to which the country turned inward during the era of High Maoism. “Chinese readers had access to foreign literature through a variety of channels,” even “during the most xenophobic” part of Mao Zedong’s time in power, Volland notes, interpreting this as evidence of “deeply ingrained cosmopolitan practices that belie a nationalistic surface rhetoric.” China turned inward, but only to a degree, he argues. “Access to foreign literature was limited, but the flow of transnational culture never stopped”; appreciating this suggests the need for a “reevaluation of Chinese socialist cultural consumption and production from a transnational perspective.”

—JNW

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## Selected Forthcoming Articles in *JAS* 76.2 (May 2017)

### *Asia Beyond the Headlines*

The Anniversary of a Massacre and the Death of a Monarch

TYRELL HABERKORN

### *Research Articles*

From *Yomihon* to *Gōkan*: Repetition and Difference in Late Edo Book Culture

JAMES R. REICHERT

Reading and Writing Material: Kōda Aya’s *Kimono* and Its Afterlife

MICHIKO SUZUKI

Pork-Barrel Politics and Electoral Reform: Explaining the Curious Differences in the Experiences of Thailand and Japan

JOEL SAWAT SELWAY and RAY CHRISTENSEN

Locations of Authenticity: S. W. R. D. Bandaranaike of Sri Lanka and the Search for Indigeneity

HARSHANA RAMBUKWELLA

The Conservative Animal: Bhudeb Mukhopadhyay and Colonial Bengal

SATADRU SEN

### Catastrophic Asia

TIMOTHY OAKES, BRIDGET HANNA, MAGDALENA STAWKOWSKI, OWEN B. TOON,  
ALAN ROBOCK, MICHAEL MILLS, LILI XIA, ALĀNA WILSON, SIERRA GLADFELTER,  
MARK WILLIAMS, SONIKA SHAHI, PRASHANT BARAL, RICHARD ARMSTRONG,  
ADINA RACOVITEANU, DONNA GOLDSTEIN, and EMILY YEHL