

## Editorial Foreword 75.3 (August 2016)

### OUR COVER

This month's cover illustration is provided by Sebastian Veg, who photographed the work while researching his article in this issue on Hong Kong's Umbrella Movement. The powerful poster highlights the generational dimension of the rift within Hong Kong society between the pro-establishment camp and the new generation of social activists and their sympathizers (symbolized by the yellow umbrella, which gave the 2014 movement its name; whereas the older man on the platform is wearing a blue ribbon, which identifies people hostile to the Umbrella Movement). The new generation has a strong attachment to political procedures and to Hong Kong's distinctive identity, including its political dimension. The drawing plays on a routine announcement in the MTR metro system and also suggests a disconnect between the routine of everyday life and the political tensions that underpin it.

### IN THIS ISSUE

We begin with a "Commentary" by HONG LIU and GREGOR BENTON, "The *Qiaopi* Trade and Its Role in Modern China and the Chinese Diaspora: Toward an Alternative Explanation of "Transnational Capitalism,"" which offers a rejoinder to arguments in "Overseas Chinese Remittance Firms, the Limits of State Sovereignty, and Transnational Capitalism in East and Southeast Asia, 1850s–1930s," an article by Lane Harris that appeared in the February 2015 issue of the *JAS*. The authors, who base their discussion on the same trade in remittance letters (*qiaopi*) that interested Harris, locate their approach within a broad series of moves "by scholars both in China and elsewhere" to identify "alternatives to modern capitalism that are, at the same time, robustly cosmopolitan, and for which modernity is multiple rather than modular." This framing of the issue differs markedly from and may be more productive than the one used by Harris, which they characterize as seeing overseas Chinese as involved in a "modern form of 'transnational capitalism' that relied on trust in a system of impersonal rules." We rarely publish responses to previous articles. In this case, though, due to both the quality of the submission and the fact that it came in at a time when the *JAS* has shown increased interest in debates that move beyond the borders of individual nation-states, while the Association for Asian Studies has been working to engage more fully with scholars working on economics and economic history, an exception to that general policy seemed in order.

## RESEARCH ARTICLES

The first article in this section, DAVID G. ATWILL'S "Boundaries of Belonging: Sino-Indian Relations and the 1960 Tibetan Muslim Incident," also illustrates the intriguing new directions that scholarship can move when borders are crossed—in this case those separating Chinese, Tibetan, and South Asian history. The specific event that interests Atwill involves an often overlooked group of people, Tibetan Muslims, "nearly one thousand" of whom decided in 1960 to declare "themselves to be Indian citizens by virtue of their Kahsmiri ancestry and petitioned the Chinese government to be allowed to emigrate to India." Locating this "event in the broader ideological movements of postcolonial Asia," he uses it to illuminate the paradoxes that can emerge in diplomatic contests that involve minority groups that present themselves as seeking liberation from subjugation and make claims that create tricky issues for governments, in this case those of both China and India circa 1960, that root their legitimacy in heading states that emerged from struggles carried out in the name of anti-imperialist liberation.

Following Atwill's use of postcolonial theory to analyze a Cold War-era incident comes RAVINDER KAUR'S "I Am India Shining: The Investor-Citizen and the Indelible Icon of Good Times," which offers an "against-the-grain reading of the highly publicized failure" of a 2004 campaign designed to "'uplift' the mood" of a country by playing on the idea of it rising from "developing nation" status into a more exalted status within "the global economy." Rosy slogans calling on India's citizens to "invest and gain from these excellent times" and be "part of the growing enthusiasm and make India stronger and shine even brighter" fell flat, Kaur argues, but this does not mean they should be ignored, even if they have been abandoned so thoroughly that to find traces of them in the online "universe" requires resourceful digital digging. The fact that this high-profile publicity drive, which came in an era of grand ambitions and grand spectacles, could not capture the imagination the way that its creators hoped it would, she says, can teach us much about India in the first years of the twenty-first century and by extension also provide a context for thinking about its present trajectory.

The next article, ethnographers MAX D. WOODWORTH and MICHAEL ULFSTJERNE'S "Taking Part: The Social Experience of Informal Finance in Ordos, Inner Mongolia," focuses on a different kind of story of early-twenty-first-century failure—the 2011 bursting of the "credit and property bubbles" that had grown to "enormous" size in a central Asian city. The authors draw on their ethnographic immersion in Ordos to explore the varied responses to the urban center's rapidly changing fortune, including toggling swiftly from making exuberant statements about what the continuing boom would bring, to expressing concern over the impact of the bust via wry jokes that underscore how many locals had overstretched themselves economically when it seemed the good times would go on and on. While zeroing in tightly on one specific locale, they offer a reading on living through an era of dramatic economic shifts that has relevance for other parts of the People's Republic of China as well.

Staying in the 2010s but moving to a different edge of the PRC, the next article is "Creating a Textual Public Sphere: Slogans and Texts from Hong Kong's Umbrella Movement," a work by literary scholar SEBASTIAN VEG that plumbs the meaning of more than 1,000 "artifacts containing texts" the author "photographed during several visits" to the three main protest sites of the eponymous struggle. Veg notes that discussions of the

Umbrella Movement—which was triggered by calls for a change in the way Hong Kong's chief executive is chosen but soon became a fight to push back against various threats to the city's ability to preserve the things that make it much freer than urban centers just across the border on the mainland—have highlighted its tactics and colorful visual symbolism. He argues, though, that it was also driven forward by slogans and documents and that a close reading of these texts, which mobilized “diverse cultural and historical repertoires,” offers insights into the “hybrid quality of Hong Kong identity and underscore[s] the diversity of sources of political legitimacy” in the onetime British Crown Colony turned Special Administrative Region of the PRC.

The issue's last stand-alone research article, before a closing forum, is historian Y. YVON WANG's “Shame, Survival, Satisfaction: Legal Representations of Sex between Men in Early Twentieth-Century Beijing.” Rooting her analysis in 1913–48 “police case records,” Wang presents Republican-era Beijing as an urban center in which “sex between men was neither rare nor secret to most denizens of the city,” and shows that we overlook important aspects of the topic if we approach it only through “sexological discourse and the world of Peking opera,” the tendency of previous works on the subject. “Testimonies in [the police] archives also make clear,” she writes, “how difficult it can be to separate sexual abuse from the need for survival and for erotic fulfillment.”

Closing out the issue, before our usual array of book reviews on varied topics and parts of Asia, comes a pair of research articles and a couple of commentaries that explore the social and cultural history of two very different devices—typewriters and sewing machines. The forum opens with THOMAS S. MULLANEY's “Controlling the Kanji-sphere: The Rise of the Sino-Japanese Typewriter and the Birth of CJK,” which looks at the special challenges the “non-alphabetic” nature of Chinese characters posed for “engineers at Remington” and other Western companies who could not adapt their machines via the sort of “selective mechanical adjustments” that had made their devices able to handle “more than one hundred other languages” running the gamut from Hebrew to Arabic. Showcasing material from his forthcoming book on the Chinese typewriter, Mullaney focuses on the way that character-compatible technologies of communication flowed between China and Japan as they were developed to overcome what European and American companies tended to see as the insoluble “problem” posed by a script without letters.

The other article in the forum, ANTONIA FINNANE's “Cold War Sewing Machines: Production and Consumption in 1950s China and Japan,” is concerned less with how a device was physically altered as it moved from the West to Asia than shifts in how it was used and the meanings associated with it. Building on the “‘consumption turn’ in the humanities and the social sciences” that began in the 1980s, as well as more recent moves to overcome the old notion that communist and noncommunist countries should be thought of only in dichotomous terms, Finnane limns similarities as well as differences in the ways that sewing machines were used and thought about in China and Japan in the middle of the last century, at a time when both were effectively one-party states, even if they stood on opposite sides of the Cold War era's main geopolitical divide.

These articles by comparatively minded specialists in Chinese history are followed by short commentaries by ANDREW GORDON and DAVID ARNOLD, scholars known for their work on Japan and India, respectively. Each draws on important books they have written

on closely related subjects—the history of the Singer company in Japan, in the case of the former, and various kinds of machines in South Asia, in the case of the latter.

—JNW

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## Selected Forthcoming Articles in *JAS* 75.4 (November 2016)

From Beijing to Palestine: Zhang Chengzhi's Journeys from Red Guard Internationalism to Global Islamism

JULIA LOVELL

Areas, Disciplines, and the Goals of Inquiry

SHELDON POLLOCK

Presidential Address: Great States

TIM BROOK

Amitav Ghosh among the Asianists

JULIA ADENEY THOMAS, PRASANNAN PARTHASARATHI, ROB LINROTHE, and

KENNETH POMERANZ

JAS at AAS: Contemplating the Cold War in Asia

AL MCCOY, MICHAEL BODDEN, SHAMPA BISWAS, and MICHAEL SZONY

The Power of the Brush: Epistolary Culture and the Creation of Political Community in Chosŏn Korea

HWISANG CHO

Buddhist Salvation Armies as Vanguard of the Sāsana: Sorcerer Societies in Twentieth-Century Burma

THOMAS PATTON