

## Editorial Foreword

CHRISTINE R. YANO'S Presidential Address, "Global Asias: Improvisations on a Theme (a.k.a. Chindon-ya Riffs)," leads off the final issue of an extraordinary year, reflecting the creativity of academic work during an extended global crisis and setting out some important ways to think critically about Asian studies for the future.

Beyond challenging regionalism and nationalism, and without lionizing a binary analytic that discovers the global in the local at every turn, Yano focuses on new ways to think about connectivity, the nonlinear global flow of cultural formations around the world, and the mutations and permutations of meaning that take shape in the spaces of emergence. Pluralizing Asia as "Asias" transforms a two-dimensional map of regional delimitation into a multidimensional sphere of linkages. A variety of Asias are manifest in the movement of people and ideas, and in the social life of things in the connections between different parts of the world. Yano uses the example of Kyu Sakamoto's song that became known worldwide as the chart-topping single "Sukiyaki" in the 1960s to highlight the tensions, contradictions, and affective power that are emergent in Global Asias. Riffing on another aspect of performativity, and on the instrumental plasticity of *chindon-ya* musical processions to create new experiences while invoking old connections, Yano calls for an institutional change in the structure of Asian studies—one that encompasses the diasporic articulation of various Asias.

The articles in this issue provide a critical perspective on historiography and social practices that reflect historically informed cultural sensibilities. Many of these sensibilities have global resonance.

Against the backdrop of emerging forms of mediated public culture and social movements in early twentieth-century China, KEREN HE analyzes the anti-American boycott of 1905. Through an examination of mediated representations of the activist Feng Xiawei's suicide protest in Shanghai, He highlights tensions and anxieties at the intersection of nationalism, democratic idealism, and transnational activism. Focusing on the early twenty-first-century New Right movement in South Korea, SUNGIK YANG critically examines the relationship among politics, historiography, and nationalist discourses. Yang shows how a historiographical revolt in the 1980s enabled the Left to lay claim to a new articulation of Korean nationalism that had been the province of the Right. In turn, this provoked political discourses that blur postnationalist neoliberalism with claims to represent the legitimate authority of the South Korean state.

In a comparative study of the political economy of early colonialism, MATTHIAS VAN ROSSUM and MERVE TOSUN reexamine the role of *corvée* capitalism and the exploitation of labor as a strategy deployed by the Dutch East India Company to control global commodities. They focus on the establishment of *corvée* labor regimes, arguing that they should be understood as a means to strengthen and expand colonial control rather than as a sign of weakness or a remnant of the precolonial period in South and Southeast

Asia. Drawing inspiration from a growing literature on sound studies, DAYTON LEKNER tunes us in to the affective politics of the aural in campaigns intended to inspire revolutionary activism during the Maoist era. Lekner's analysis focuses on the Hundred Flowers and Anti-Rightist Campaigns of 1956–58. This shows how soundscapes that cross the boundaries of spoken language, music, and noise can be harmonized with what is written and prescriptively codified, thus providing a counterpoint historiography to enable an appreciation of what is sensory and evocative in the amplified rhetoric of discordant ideology.

Engaging scholarship that examines the intersection of gender, citizenship, and public space, BENJAMIN HEGARTY analyzes nonbinary gendered activism in Jakarta. Taking the strategic ambiguity of *wadam* as a point of departure, Hegarty examines the paradoxical logics of nonconformity in the cultural politics of modern Indonesia. Based on this perspective, we gain an appreciation for how historically constructed experiences of self-consciously embodied being are manifest in precarious forms of legality, in situated senses of national belonging, and in contestations concerning the grounds of morality in public space. MICHAEL CHLADEK'S essay provides another perspective on the historical construction of gendered identity by analyzing the correlation between monastic Buddhism and masculinity in the context of Thailand. Engaging with and problematizing sexually inflected stereotypes anchored in gendered histories that produce and reproduce binaries, Chladek's analysis shows how the discourses and everyday practices of monks articulate a form of exclusive monastic masculinity.

This issue concludes with a forum titled "Global Asias," inspired by and in direct conversation with Yano's Presidential Address. The four essays that make up the forum developed out of a Presidential Roundtable organized for the Association for Asian Studies Annual Conference in 2021, with generous funding from the Luce Foundation and enthusiastic support from the project director for Asia, Helena Kolenda.

The essays in the forum engage with a challenge at the heart of Global Asias—how to bridge and produce analytic synergy among Asian studies, Asian American studies, and a broad range of interdisciplinary approaches to the study of diasporic histories and transnationalized, mobile communities. How should we understand the ways in which these communities bring together and braid new strands of identity shaped by migration, colonial displacement, missionizing, Cold War geopolitics, nationalism, and various neoliberalisms currently taking shape in the shadow of an emergent Asian century? As all four essays in the forum make clear, to think through the possibilities of Global Asias is to think toward a kind of academic politics of knowledge that is fully invested in crossing borders to bring about structural and institutional change. Border-crossing work in this mode not only entails building new kinds of bridges and constructing new gateways, but also reimagining the categories that established structures of entry and transcendence tend to reproduce.

In the first essay, TINA CHEN works to shape a new perspective on Global Asias that explicitly resists the tendency toward bounded resolution dictated by established paradigms. She argues for analytic creativity that engages with dissonance, challenges the mapping of the mind by standard geographies, and invites us to a consideration of non-aligned relationality that is circuitous, dynamic, and holistically cartographic rather than determinedly linear.

ANDREW WAY LEONG'S essay creatively troubles, with a playful seriousness of purposes, what can be the incipient triumphalism of building bridges across emptied spaces created by imperial logics, or bridge building that seeks to cross over the rubble left by the incomplete collapse of empires and their derivative forms. He reminds us of the perils involved in transcendental thinking about magnanimous interconnections that does not also engage with the material realities beneath the bridges: fluid, reconstituted shape-shifting substances that further erode and are deposited in the global flow of knowledge defined by sandbars of local connectivity and coalition building.

EIICHIRO AZUMA highlights a critical problem in the binary distinction between Asian studies and Asian American studies by focusing on the Pacific as a space of ambiguous classification, distortion, and displacement. As Azuma points out, the case of the Pacific—an oceanic region that is both Asia and America, as well as neither—is nevertheless partitioned by disciplinary approaches that seek to make it one thing or the other. Using the example of Japanese studies and Asian American history, Azuma challenges us to understand how disciplines that come together in this space of overlap and connection can chart a course of interdisciplinarity that does not reproduce distinctions. Azuma also draws attention to race and questions of racism that are of central concern in understanding the institutionalization of Asian American studies and Asian studies.

Finally, SONIA RYANG'S essay engages with the problem of how imperial histories have institutionalized racism in the academy and bracketed race and racism in ways that reflect power and forms of discrimination both in terms of disciplinary structures and discursive formations within disciplines. Recognizing tensions between ideographic and nomothetic approaches that push and pull disciplines and area studies in different directions, Ryang proposes a dynamic transnational Asian studies approach that highlights the necessity of building collaborative projects—the collective enterprise of bridge building—that manifest diversity and draw together and blend epistemologies.

—Joseph S. Alter