

Editorial Foreword

The 2021 volume marks the octogintennial of the founding of the *Journal of Asian Studies*, which was originally called the *Far Eastern Quarterly*. In its eighty-year history, the *JAS* has served as the flagship journal of Asian studies in the English language. The publications in the *JAS* have historically reflected the theoretical, methodological, intellectual, and political concerns of the time—from the conceptualization of area studies in the shadows of World War II in 1941 to its critiques and contributions in the age of pandemics in late capitalism in 2021.

Research in any discipline necessarily emerges in the context of the zeitgeist. New ideas, solidarities, and collaborations are regularly introduced and debated, while older ones are recast anew to address the critiques of the time. The ruptures of the COVID-19 pandemic have forced every individual to rethink the meaning of the human condition. This will certainly influence the conceptualization and direction of scholarship in the future. The robustness of any theory is measured by its ability to travel spatially and temporally. The universality of the pandemic remains to be fully understood, especially given the divergence of experiences within states and societies. The fact that the *JAS* received many more submissions in 2020 than in previous years suggests that this process has already started.

This issue begins with DURBA MITRA's analysis of the concept of endogamy as a foundational idea for studying modern South Asia that served an important purpose of obscuring the place of female sexuality in key nineteenth- and twentieth-century debates on caste. ERIK MUEGLER examines sixteenth-century inscriptions in northern Yunnan, which provide important insights for rethinking the histories of sovereignty and Ming colonization of southwest China. HUWY-MIN LUCIA LIU studies nationalized funeral institutions in the People's Republic of China, arguing that the Chinese state's funerary practices established a civil governance of death by removing ideas of the self and identifiers from the dead in the name of producing citizen-subjects. HEKYOUNG CHO considers the proliferation of media in Korea known as webcomics and posits that the global media ecosystem is in the midst of a radical transformation for the production of digital art and culture in the twenty-first century.

The issue also includes a forum titled "Migration in Early Medieval China." The essays feature interdisciplinary approaches to the study of migration in the fourth to the sixth century CE. The authors argue that the early migrations occurred in the context of a concatenation of events that led to diverse and dynamic transformations of the state, environment, society, economy, and culture in early medieval China. The contributions by EVAN NICOLL-JOHNSON, XIAOFEI TIAN, WEN-YI HUANG, and JIN XU draw on a range of primary sources that provide new insights for interpreting the normative understandings of the movement of people in China—and their global implications.

—Vinayak Chaturvedi