

EDITORIAL

Editorial Foreword

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This is the last issue of the journal to be published with Cambridge University Press. I will therefore take this opportunity to thank Ann Avouris, Executive Publisher and Head of Journals North America at Cambridge University Press, for her dedication to and support for the mission of *The Journal of Asian Studies*. With her guidance and oversight, the journal has extended its global impact as a leading source of scholarly inquiry in the field of Asian studies. I also thank the production team at Cambridge University Press for their outstanding work, especially during the transfer of editorial responsibilities from the University of California, Irvine, to the University of Pittsburgh.

Change invites reflection. As *The Journal of Asian Studies* transitions from Cambridge University Press to Duke University Press, I am reminded of how peer review functions to expand horizons of inquiry rather than to simply reinforce established perspectives. Peer review involves “opening windows” to provide critical insight, even though it can seem like an exercise in gatekeeping. My responsibility is to open windows to challenge perspectives, and the most rewarding aspect of the editorial work I do is realized through collaboration: collaboration with the associate editors and a vast network of scholars to encourage excellence by means of reviews that provide incisive, constructive criticism.

Expanding horizons and encouraging experimental, creative work without compromising standards demands critical reflection on how collaboration works and how scholarly networks are operationalized to structure the peer review process. Very effective and efficient internet search tools using keywords make it simple to identify scholars with precise kinds of disciplinary and topical expertise. But this can result in sharpened perspectives that narrow the significance of arguments instead of highlighting points that connect well with broader concerns and interests. In other words, the efficiency of being able to identify scholars with comparable expertise from all over the world can make for expansive inclusion on one level, while it can also produce exclusion and tunnel vision on the level of peer review of any given manuscript. It is for this reason, among others, that the associate editors of *The Journal of Asian Studies* play a critical role, and why the diversity of the Editorial Board matters. Diversity has always mattered, but it matters now in a way that ensures expansive, networked inclusion rather than the identification of experts based on narrowly defined specialized skills and topical interests.

Diversity matters on multiple levels. It is both intrinsically valuable, and it is valuable as a means by which to not only open windows but see things in a new light. As an editor, I have learned that pragmatic and mundane considerations often limit perspectives. Peer review depends on volunteer service by overworked, and often underappreciated, colleagues at institutions that demand more and more alienating labor from them. Very often, prospective reviewers decline invitations because they have other overriding commitments, making it even more important to broaden perspectives to deepen the pool. Inclusive diversity creates the broadest possible network of shared expertise and works as a powerful counterweight to alienation within the structures of the academy.

In my experience, this is what organizations such as the Association for Asian Studies provide. The challenge for the Editorial Board of *The Journal of Asian Studies* is to reflect the diversity of AAS membership, and to encourage greater diversity within the structure of the association. During this period of transition from Cambridge University Press to Duke University Press, I am collecting data to better understand the range of diversity among the membership. The point is to develop strategies to reflect this diversity at all stages of the peer review process and to make changes to procedures to take full advantage of the range of expertise manifest in the membership of the AAS.

The articles in this issue reflect disciplinary, regional, and topical diversity within the field and show how concepts anchored in local contexts are informed by the global flow of ideas concerning identity, and both the insularity of identity as well as the porous boundaries that shape the dynamic of self/other identification. Identity is, of course, a highly mutable concept. As the articles in this issue show, however, the cultural politics of making identity seem immutable, as well as the formal politics of linking the identities of individuals and groups to ideological motivation, highlights interesting and important ways in which contested boundaries are negotiated.

To engage with the variety of forms in which ideas about China's classical past are incorporated into the present by individuals and institutions, Zhiyi Yang develops an argument for "Sinophone classicism." Sinophone classicism is a framework for understanding the global flow of ideas that are concretized through different media in contexts that are rendered fluid and flexible by technologies of communication and representation. The analytical value of understanding classicism from this perspective is that it provides a more nuanced and complicated way of appreciating, with *jouissance*, the invocation of literary and artistic references—an understanding that does not succumb to the monochromatic logic of crassly commercialized and purely utilitarian marketing for the purpose of either profit or nationalistic patriotism. Yang's argument is especially valuable in showing how those whose identity is implicated in the radical displacements that characterize the Sinophone world can experience the deeply meaningful resonance of classical aesthetics. Reflecting with sensitivity and sensibility on what might otherwise be expressed as cynical critique or dismissive intellectual snobbery, Yang provides a critical appreciation of forms of historical mediation that evoke passion and emotion even as they suggest the contrived artificiality of classicism as a construct of globalized modernity.

In a penetrating, broadly contextualized analysis of Hyakuta Naoki's best selling 2012 novel *A Man Called Pirate*, David Leheny explores the many ways in which history, national anxiety, and biography intersect. The main character in Naoki's novel is modeled on Idemitsu Sazō, a heroic mid-twentieth-century oil baron who embodied the spirit of Japanese determination and dedication to defy global forces. Leheny examines the fictionalized representations of Sazō's character in various media—film, manga, and printed text—showing how these representations and the cascading cross references among different media animate feelings of anxiety: anxiety concerning the present and the future that involve reimagining the past and how sentimentalized identity and national character converge in heroic narratives designed to transcend time. Particularly noteworthy is Leheny's adept demonstration of how literature and popular media serve to produce a space of imagination in which national and personal identity converge, and how this emotional convergence feeds into the agenda of nationalism and conservative political interests.

In a carefully delineated reevaluation of the Indian nationalist leader Lala Lajpat Rai, Vanya Vaidehi Bhargav provides an important reminder that highly politicized concepts such as Hindu nationalism and pan-Islamism need to be understood in historical context. These concepts were being formulated in more flexible, complicated, and nuanced ways in the early twentieth century than is allowed for by their current radicalization and by attendant forms of essentialization. These contemporary forms make it difficult to appreciate nuances of nationalism as expressed and worked through by public intellectuals and political leaders such as Rai in the context of colonial hegemony. Building carefully on recent literature that problematizes simplistic secular/religious binaries, Bhargav makes a convincing argument about how a vision of anticolonial nationalism takes shape through a kind of ecumenical understanding of diversity—diversity as the framework for expressing the value of religion as the substance of imagined communities that extend beyond specific beliefs and practices. In conjunction with this argument, Bhargav reminds us how nationalism defines artificially rigid boundaries around what was imagined by Rai and others of his generation as nothing less than a reconceptualization of modernity beyond the important but narrow boundaries of postcolonial independence.

Building on significant work by historians on the question of how Jürgen Habermas's concept of the public sphere is relevant to understanding debates and arguments in colonial societies, Sujay Biswas focuses on the problem of intersubjectivity, shared life worlds, and communicative rationality in India, with specific attention to Mohandas K. Gandhi's public debate with the Mahajan of the

Modha Baniya caste community. Gandhi's excommunication from the community on grounds of defilement as he left for England, and the question of subsequent repurification and restitution, provides a vivid case illustrating how intersubjectivity and rationality, defined in terms of the rigid social boundaries of caste, produces a distinctive framework for a public sphere. But this arena of debate is fractured along lines that are, in essence, political and economic in ways that problematizes the extent to which caste values define shared identity, in the sense articulated by Habermas. Both Gandhi and the Mahajan were, in many ways, both talking to each other but also talking past each other in a public sphere bisected and fragmented by material concerns on the one hand, political interest on the other, and fetishized notions of untouchable purity and pollution.

Combining ethnographic interview methods and archival research, Brian Spivey problematizes the politics of ethno-national identity formation in late twentieth-century China by examining the case of the Uyghur student movement of 1985. Based on extensive interviews with participants and a critical analysis of records concerning agitation in Xinjiang, Spivey provides a strong case for understanding how the student movement defined a pivot point in China's accommodationist policies. His fine-grained documentary history makes clear that ethnic identity formation does not presume separatism as an ideological stance taken against the state, and that histories that characterize the student movement as separatist misrepresent the logic of political activism. In broader terms, this article shows how dramatic, student led movements such as the June 4, 1989, protests in Tiananmen Square can be better understood against a historical backdrop that problematizes rather than synthesizes identities into essentialized categories that reinforce state interest, priorities, and ideologies.