

## Editorial Foreword

### OUR COVER

Boxes of eye makeup return our gaze in a photograph by Lewis Koch, made in a shop in Agra, India, in 1995. The photo is from Koch's series *Notes from the Stone-Paved Path: Meditations on North India*. Photograph courtesy of the artist.

### BANDITS AND KINGS: MORAL AUTHORITY AND RESISTANCE IN EARLY COLONIAL INDIA

In an essay based on his 2007 Presidential Address to the AAS, ANAND A. YANG tells us about the banishment of the *poligars*, the “little kings” who for fifty years led the armed resistance to the British colonial state's expansion into the Tirunelveli District of South India. As it began to prevail in the so-called Poligar Wars, the British colonial government executed many of the *poligars* and redistributed their possessions to loyal landholders. Seventy-three surviving *poligars* were banished in 1802 to the penal colony at Penang, a British colonial settlement on the west coast of the Malay peninsula. There, the princes struggled to distinguish themselves among the convict population. Yang's story of the banishment and ultimate release of the *poligar* prisoners seventeen years later highlights the coercive power and moral authority of the colonial regime and reminds historians that histories are not contained within national boundaries alone but reach across vast regions of Asia.

### INNOVATION IN LATE COLONIAL INDIA

Our next three essays concern colonial India as well and ask about innovation in a time of dramatic political, religious, and economic change. ROSINKA CHAUDHURI takes us into debates about creativity, truth, and language as the discipline of history emerged as a modern discursive form in late colonial Bengal. She examines the storm of comment that followed the publication of Nabinchandra Sen's patriotic poem *Palashir Yuddha* (The Battle of Plassey) in 1875. In its narrative logic and its “appearance of truth,” the poem resembled the emerging scientific discourse of Indian history and historiography, and so it not only set off sharp debate but also summoned critics and writers into a struggle over the boundaries and legitimacy of genres. Indeed, Bengalis and other colonial subjects found themselves debating how the “nectar” of creativity might serve or detract from the construction of modern, historical truths in a time of nationalist aspiration.

TITHI BHATTACHARYA charts for us the refiguration of religion and of public and private spheres through a look at innovations in the Durga Puja festival in nineteenth-century Calcutta. Bhattacharya argues that a nationalist and deeply gendered Hindu revivalist rhetoric linked public political discourse to private domestic practices. The figure of the goddess Durga, says Bhattacharya, came to combine nationalist desire and political agency with familial discourse and the image of mother, especially as Durga Puja became a part of “civic sensibility.” In this transition, she sees not just a secularization of religious language in which Hinduism is brought into public political life but also the emergence of a Hindu religious “community,” along with new forms of urban identity.

Our third article on innovation takes up the question of creativity and change in traditional craft industries, a form of economic activity that earlier scholarship has portrayed as the antithesis of the modern methods of industrial production that were emerging in the late colonial era. TIRTHANKAR ROY finds that traditional industries were able to adapt to changing market conditions through craftsmanship and the capacity of individual artisans to innovate. Departing from historical approaches that emphasize the collectivities of caste and community, Roy returns to the major sources on artisan history in colonial India to ask why observers—who were inclined to see artisans as undifferentiated groups—noticed specific innovative individuals. He argues that it was individuals, not collectivities, who propelled a system of knowledge “in motion” and who negotiated its conflicts—especially between “innovators” and “non-innovators”—and its challenges, particularly those having to do with the authority to determine the appropriateness and limits of innovation.

#### **CUSTOM, CLASS, AND POWER IN KOREA, 1862–1945**

Our next group of articles examines ideas about popular protest, customary law, and gender ideologies in late Chosŏn and twentieth-century colonial Korea. SUN JOO KIM offers a study of the popular tax-resistance movement in Chinju, the most influential of the popular revolts that broke out across the Korean peninsula in 1862. Kim argues that the uprising at Chinju went beyond a simple tax revolt. She finds that the expansion of commerce and the introduction of a monetized economy brought distress to the peasantry in everyday life as balances between the Chosŏn state, Chinju elites, and local farmers became upset. Kim’s eclectic approach shows us that neither acute class consciousness nor administrative corruption were the driving forces behind the popular rebellions of the period. Rather, protest sprang from the imbrications of class, village community, and dynastic structure at a time of shifting economic conditions.

VLADIMIR TIKHONOV shows us how the standards of masculinity in traditional, neo-Confucian Korea were divided along class lines but nonetheless came to inform the gender ideologies of Korea’s nationalists at the close of the nineteenth century. Elite visions of manhood emphasized discipline and adherence to moral, whereas commoners stressed the role of fighting prowess. Both understandings of manhood, Tikhonov argues, helped indigenize European middle-class ideals of

“nationalized” masculinity and informed the nationalist call for the “reformation of bodies” (*yukch’e kaejo*) and the pursuit of masculine excellence.

Nationalist scholars of legal history in Korea have argued that the Chosŏn dynasty had a body of customary law that was suppressed and distorted by the Japanese authorities during the colonial occupation. MARIE SEONG-HAK KIM points out, however, that custom as a judicial concept was absent in premodern Korea, and she goes on to make the case that Korean “customary law” was the invention of Japanese colonial jurists. She shows how Japanese authorities re-ordered Korean practices into a modern framework for civil law. Her broader claim is that nationalist historiography in Korea needs to give way to pluralistic understandings of the country’s legal foundations.

#### IN TRIBUTE

Following consultation with the AAS Board of Directors, we have decided that obituaries should no longer appear in the *Journal of Asian Studies* but should find timely publication in the Association’s *Asian Studies Newsletter* instead. The Association’s four elective area Councils may commission special tributes to deceased Asianists for publication in *JAS*. *JAS* will publish these commissioned tributes on an annual basis in the November issue. We publish three this November.

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### Forthcoming Articles in *JAS* 67:1 (February 2008)

#### *Gender, Rights, and Resources in Vietnam*

Wandering Ghosts of Late Socialism: Conflict, Metaphor, and Memory in a Southern Vietnamese Marketplace

ANN MARIE LESHKOWICH

Gender, Property, and the “Autonomy Thesis” in Southeast Asia: Succession in Early Modern Vietnamese Law

NHUNG TUYET TRAN

#### *Buddhism, Morality, and the Nation-State: Views from Sri Lanka and China*

Resisting the Global in Buddhist Nationalism: Venerable Soma’s Discourse of Decline and Reform

STEPHEN C. BERKWITZ

Worry for the Dai Nation: Sipsongpanna, Chinese Modernity, and the Problems of Buddhist Modernism

THOMAS BORCHERT

The Spiritual Land Rush: Merit and Morality in New Chinese Buddhist Temple Construction

GARETH FISHER

*Muslim Identity and Cosmopolitanism in Southwest Asia*

Tribe, Diaspora, and Sainthood in Afghan History

NILE GREEN

Muslim Cosmopolitans?: Transnational Life in Northern Pakistan

MAGNUS MARSDEN

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