

Editorial Foreword

OUR COVER

The cover illustration is an untitled photograph by Rahoul Contractor (1953–85) taken during the early 1980s in the town of Mundra, Kutch, in western India. An elderly photographer poses beside a portrait of himself as a young professional. (Reproduced with the permission of Mr. Contractor's family.)

TAMIL MODERN

Our first two essays take us back to the 1930s as Tamil artists and audiences become crazy about “the modern” and the new. STEPHEN PUTNAM HUGHES looks at how the music recording industry and the gramophone transformed Tamil drama and cinema and gave rise to a new mass culture of film songs. Tamil film songs summoned a new community of music listeners, but not without refashioning class distinctions of musical taste and striking some members of the listening public as a menace to Karnatic classical performance. PAULA RICHMAN treats us to a study of the *Narata-Ramayana*(?)—a quirky, bewildering, and subversive sequel to the *Ramayana* written by Tamil author Pudumaippittan (whose name means “one who is mad about newness”) during the late 1930s and 1940s. Full of spoofs and political critiques and presented as an Indian Sinologist's translation of Sanskrit fragments unearthed in China, the text brings philology, political power, nationalism, religious convention, and utopian versions of the past under playful scrutiny.

ACTIVIST POLITICS ACROSS ASIA

Democratization in Asia has sparked debates about civil society and the alliances and discourses that animate political activism. ANNE SCHILLER explores the organizational rationalization and reform of an indigenous ethnic association in East Kalimantan, Indonesia, noting how the reforms have challenged the trajectory of identity politics at the regional and national levels. ANN FRECHETTE offers an ethnographic look at Tibetans in exile and their struggle to interpret democratic values in light of the dilemmas of self-governance outside the homeland and the tensions between popular participation “from below” and leadership “from above.” The strains and contradictions of coalition movements take center stage in KATHERINE H. S. MOON's analysis of an anti-American campaign in South Korea. She finds that gender politics in South Korea's civil society organizations have resulted in both the mainstreaming of women's concerns and the

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subordination of those concerns to a masculinist-nationalist agenda. Democratization, Moon argues, is not a gender-neutral process.

POSSESSING PUBLIC SPACE

The final essay in this issue looks at the way public space is occupied and its past apprehended. JOSEPH ALLEN takes us to a small urban park in Taipei City and points out its sights, moods, and rhythms: a bronze horse, a shrine, a playground, a music pavilion, skateboarders, the ruins of a temple, gay men looking for casual sex; desire, nostalgia, “Chineseness,” modernity; daytime, nighttime, the traces of a Japanese colony looking forward and looking back, and the glances of everyday people lost in thought.

—KMG

Forthcoming Essays in *JAS* 66:2 (May 2007)

Medical Histories, Medical Regimes

Of Germs, Public Hygiene, and the Healthy Body: The Making of the Medicalizing State in Thailand

DAVISAKD PUAKSOM

Drugs, Consumption and Supply in Asia: The Case of Cocaine in Colonial India, ca. 1900 to ca. 1930

JAMES H. MILLS

Critical Methods in Tibetan Medical Histories

FRANCES GARRETT

Islam in Asia

Javanese Women and the Veil in Post-Soeharto Indonesia

NANCY J. SMITH-HEFNER

Reading China's Past

“A Story about Hair”: A Curious Mirror of Lu Xun’s Pre-Republican Years

EVA SHAN CHOU

Erlitou and the Formation of Chinese Civilization: Toward a New Paradigm

SARAH ALLAN
