
Special Issue

Textiles as Money on the Silk Road

In January 2013 we published our third special issue 'Perfumery and Ritual in Asia'. As I wrote in the Introduction to that group of articles, the Journal's broad remit, both in terms of historical period and geographical boundaries, affords us the privilege of exploring those elements of human activity that historically 'bind' or 'separate' different Asian cultures. By the beginning of 2013 we had already published two other special issues, one on a linguistic topic and the other on a politico/religious topic and so we felt it was appropriate to devote space to the exploration of 'material' culture, an equally powerful force in shaping a huge range of human interactions.

Our fourth special issue - 'Textiles as Money on the Silk Road' - demonstrates just how broad the range of such human interactions can be. Of course, before accepting these articles for publication the Journal conducted its normal peer-review process. As part of this consultation, it is not unusual for us to approach up to three or four different scholars on the merits of an individual article, particularly when we are seeking to appraise research that engages with several academic disciplines. It is, however, unprecedented to consult, as we did in the case of this special issue, a historian, an art historian, an archaeologist, a linguist and an economist for just one set of articles! Indeed, this impressive list of academic 'specialisms' demonstrates the significance of the research brought together here. The articles that make up this special issue are broad in the sense of their impact and relevance to many fields of exploration but they are also focussed in so far as the collection has defined its parameters clearly and presents a wealth of in-depth research from new perspectives. We are so pleased that Dr Helen Wang and Professor Valerie Hansen chose to publish with us and we feel privileged to be part of its production.

Many readers will be accessing this collection of papers through JSTOR and as a result of electronic searches. After much deliberation we decided to use the convention of given name first followed by family name for all authors, both Chinese and European. Our rationale is that this enables papers written by Chinese authors, to be easily accessible through indices and searches programmed to use western conventions. Readers will find however, that in the text of articles within this issue, Chinese authors are often referred to by their family name first, followed by their given name.

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Editor