

In This Issue

This special issue on “Geographies at Work in Asian History” features the scholarship of cultural geographers and historians. Their essays engage issues and problems central to understanding the relationships existing between and among space, place, and identity in early modern and modern Asia.

THONGCHAI WINICHAKUL traces the development of the idea of *siwilai* (the Thai word for civilize) in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. He finds that the emerging discourse about being civilized was configured not only by Thailand’s encounter with the West but also by its own internal historical dynamics.

KÄREN WIGEN details the different approaches involved in “local studies” and “native-place studies” in Showa Japan in order to highlight the changes and continuities in their conceptualizations over time. Especially striking is her account of prewar and postwar conceptualizations and of the similarities in interwar regionalism in Japan, Germany, and the United States.

SUMATHI RAMASWAMY utilizes the concept of “spatial fabulation” to explore the imaginative geography attached to the “lost continent” of Lemuria. She argues that this fabulation was constructed by Tamil literati of the colonial and modern periods in order to express a sense of loss and longing about a Tamil territory and nation that was no longer in existence.

MARK C. ELLIOTT examines the Qing geographical imagination as it related to the frontier region of Manchuria. He identifies the different approaches adopted by the Qing court toward this area and shows how each of these perspectives generated a separate geographical and political identity for the region.

MARCIA YONEMOTO assesses “geographical knowledge” in early modern Japan by evaluating the currency of a variety of texts and maps of that era. She argues that this knowledge was not monopolized by the state or the elite but was widely shared—a “spatial vernacular” that many were conversant with and understood.

TIM OAKES analyzes the ideological nature of elite constructions of regionalism in twentieth-century China. These elite notions, he suggests, are at work in shaping local and provincial identities as well as in configuring discourses of “Chineseness.”