

Editorial Foreword 77.3 (August 2018)

OUR COVER

Our cover image features nine bamboo slips bearing the circa fourth century BCE *Cheng Wu* text discussed in Edward L. Shaughnessy's article in this issue of the journal. The slips are currently housed in the Tsinghua University Center for Unearthed Documents Research and Protection.

IN THIS ISSUE

This issue opens with two pieces on China that focus on very different time periods and have been written by very different scholars. The first is by a specialist in the study of that country's distant past, while the second is by a sociologist whose focus is on the early part of the twentieth century. These two pieces are followed by articles authored by a group of scholars based in varied disciplines—history, literature, and political science are all represented—and working in varied parts of Asia, with Japan, Vietnam, and Korea each highlighted.

“Of Trees, a Son, and Kingship: Recovering an Ancient Chinese Dream” begins the issue by analyzing documents written on bamboo slips more than two millennia ago. Its author EDWARD L. SHAUGHNESSY's contribution is a sophisticated foray into textual analysis, inspired by recently discovered bamboo-strip manuscripts that he notes “have been hailed as ‘revolutionizing our understanding of early Chinese thought.’” There are, he notes, ways in which the article may interest those concerned with China's present as well as its past. The first is that interest in dreams has been sparked by current leader Xi Jinping's frequent references to the “Chinese Dream”; the second lies in the increased efforts by China's Communist Party, since the death of Mao Zedong in 1976, to emphasize the importance of traditions and to highlight the significance of documents with real or imagined roots in the very distant past.

The second article traces developments in the first decades of the twentieth century. JEFFREY WENG, in a piece titled “What Is Mandarin? The Social Project of Language Standardization in Early Republican China,” uses “archival sources on the design and promulgation of Mandarin from the 1910s to the 1930s” to tease apart the ways that early twentieth-century language reformers strove to “remake their society's language situation to further national integration.” Weng notes that their vision looked forward: “the way the language was standardized reflected the nature of the imagined future society it was meant to serve.”

Following this comes another work on the same period, but with a focus on Japanese views about and handling of mental illness. Written by historian YUMI KIM and titled

“Seeing Cages: Home Confinement in Early Twentieth-Century Japan,” it considers, among other things, the role that “visual technologies” played in defining the category of “the mentally ill” and encouraging specific approaches to people seen as fitting into that category.

Staying in Northeast Asia and also staying in the same general time period, the next article switches gears in terms of discipline to focus on literature, specifically a work that the author describes as “Korea’s first mature novel”: Yi Kwangsu’s *The Heartless*. Written by ELLIE CHOI, the article is titled “Memories of Korean Modernity: Yi Kwangsu’s *The Heartless* and New Perspectives in Colonial Alterity.” Choi argues that the novel can be read as a “paean to the enlightenment” and lends itself well to a reading attentive to the way it handles space and identity. She also claims that Yi’s novel is as “celebrated” in its context as Natsume Soseki’s *Kokoro* and Lu Xun’s *The True Story of Ah Q*, which were written at roughly the same time, but that it had gotten less attention from scholars and had its status “obscured” within “world literary studies” due to the “author’s later collaboration with the colonial state.”

Following this is a third article on Northeast Asia, this time about contemporary issues. A collaboration by three social scientists—WONJAE HWANG, WONBIN CHO, and KRISTA WIEGAND—it is titled “Do Korean-Japanese Historical Disputes Generate Rally Effects?” Its starting point is the assertion that “rally-round-the-flag effect theory” is the description for how “external crises, especially territorial disputes with other states, can easily stimulate nationalist sentiments among citizens, increase internal solidarity around leaders, and hence positively affect political leaders’ popularity.” One of its main claims is that, as expected but not previously demonstrated, presidents of South Korea “are likely to enjoy higher levels of popularity when they engage in historical disputes with Japan.”

Closing out the issue are two articles on Vietnam, one of which goes back to the nineteenth century, while the other looks at developments during the decades immediately following World War II. In the first, “Books without Borders: Phạm Thiện Duật (1825–1885) and the Culture of Knowledge in Mid-Nineteenth-Century Vietnam,” KATHLENE BALDANZA explores the work of Phạm Thiện Duật, a scholar who engaged with a range of works, including “foundational classical Chinese texts” and works written in his own era in both his own country and China, and interprets this eclecticism as showing that “he took himself to be participating in a literary culture that transcended Vietnam.” She argues that he and other scholars like him should be seen as “autonomous contributors to a community of inquiry that transgressed political boundaries.”

The second article on Southeast Asia and last in the issue is PHI-VÂN NGUYEN’S “A Secular State for a Religious Nation: The Republic of Vietnam and Religious Nationalism, 1946–1963.” The author claims that “spirituality was a fundamental element” of Vietnamese politics in the wake of World War II, but this has often been overlooked due to the emphasis scholars have put on the “security and land reforms” of the period. To fully understand how the struggles of the time turned out, the article argues, it is crucial to bring religion into the picture, including the failed effort by some actors to create a “religious alliance against communism” by allowing for a great deal of “religious freedom and diversity,” while opposing atheism.

—JNW

Selected Forthcoming Articles in *JAS* 77.4 (November 2018)

Presidential Address

Palimpsests of the Past: Oral History and the Art of Pointillism
KATHERINE ANN BOWIE

JAS at AAS: The Market, the Media, and the State in Asia II

JEFF KINGSTON, NGUYEN THU GIANG, K. ANIS AHMED, AYNNE KOKAS, and
TYRELL HABERKORN

Research Articles

God, King, and Subject: On the Development of Composite Political Cultures
in the Western Himalaya, circa 1800–1900
ARIK MORAN

Inhabited Pasts: Monuments, Authority, and People in Delhi, 1912–1970s
DEBORAH SUTTON

Clearing, “Wasting,” and Regreening: An Environmental History of Bare Hills in
Central Vietnam
DAVID BIGGS

Brushing with Organized Crime and Democracy: The Art of Making Do in South Asia
LUCIA MICHELUTTI and ASHRAF HOQUE