

In This Issue

ELLIS S. KRAUSS analyzes the changing nature of Japanese television news in the period between the 1960s and mid-1980s when commercial television stations emerged to challenge the dominance of the public broadcasting agency, NHK. He shows how private television stations, especially TV Asahi's "News Station," undermined the dominance of NHK by developing a new content and style aimed at providing viewers a more entertaining news program. The growing competitive market in television news, he argues, had significant political consequences because it generated an "information pluralism" that reshaped the character of Japanese democracy.

KENNETH M. GEORGE focuses on the political events surrounding the production of the *Al-Qur'an Mushaf Istiqlal*—The National Independence Illuminated Qur'an—in the early 1990s to explore the interrelationships of religion and power in contemporary Indonesia. Through a critical reading of Jürgen Habermas's concept of the public sphere, he shows how the public sphere created in conjunction with the illuminated Qur'an project is dominated by the state working together with an Islamic elite. Thus, he illustrates the difficulties of and limitations in developing an egalitarian public sphere in an authoritarian state, an analysis that insists on a reconsideration of Habermas's notion of a unitary public sphere.

"Ever since Malthus," WILLIAM LAVELY and R. BIN WONG state, "it has been conventional to cast the Chinese and European preindustrial demographic systems as opposing archetypes. . . ." They interrogate and challenge this dichotomy by examining its foundational propositions: that China had relatively weak preventive checks in comparison to Europe, that its population growth was largely governed by mortality and higher than that of Europe, and that its higher population growth contributed to a lower living standard than that of Europe. The data and answers they offer not only challenge the conventional Malthusian contrast of population dynamics in late imperial China and early modern Europe but also suggest new ways of conceptualizing China's population growth and economic development.

ARJUN GUNERATNE provides a critical reconsideration of assumptions about the cultural and linguistic underpinnings of ethnicity by investigating the case of the Tharus of southern Nepal and northern India. He argues against theories that have insisted on the importance of cultural symbols as the basis for ethnic identity by demonstrating that the Tharus—although lacking a common set of symbols—have constructed an identity for themselves that is more politically than culturally based. Thus, ethnicity cannot be viewed as a cultural phenomenon; "its genesis and development must be sought in the socioeconomic conditions—such as class relationships, the state, and the processes of modernization . . ."

ADRIAN VICKERS reviews five books on violence in the Indonesian state, specifically as it pertains to killings in Bali in the mid-1960s. His analysis of these works reveals that current research casts a different perspective on the "Edenic image" of Bali as well as on the interrelationships existing between the colonial past and the postcolonial present, both the period of Sukarno's Guided Democracy and the current phase of the New Order government.

RALPH C. CROIZIER surveys the field of modern Chinese art history by evaluating two recent publications—one issued in the United States and the second in China. He also draws attention to a third work that highlights the “new” art by chronicling the history of oil painting in Shanghai. All three books are indicative of a new discourse about art that is emerging out of the changing political, social, and cultural context in which art is produced today’s China.