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Editorial

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EDITORIAL

Notes from the Editors

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This introduction provides a context for the papers that follow. It describes the historical and contemporary conditions that make Vietnam a unique society and culture. It discusses each paper and how it relates to contemporary issues on Vietnam.

Keywords: Vietnam; resistance; corruption; Communist Party; film studies; food studies; pilgrimage; anthropology

Welcome to the first issue of the *ASIANetwork Exchange: A Journal for Asian Studies in the Liberal Arts* under the co-editorship of Marsha Smith (Augustana College) and Hong Zhang (Colby College). We are grateful for the excellent work that Erin McCarthy and Lisa Trivedi have done over the past six years as they have taken the journal to an online peer-reviewed publication and fostered a new partnership with Open Library of the Humanities. We want to thank them for all they have done to help us transition to our new roles. Although we began this task with some trepidation, since we knew the quality of work Erin and Lisa have produced, we were thrilled with the possibility of imagining new ways in which to steer the journal in the upcoming years.

Many people have helped up during the transition. First and foremost, we would like to thank Gary DeCoker, Executive Director of ASIANetwork, and the current board of directors, who have been so supportive during this time. We also wish to thank Eriberto Lozada for his work in transitioning the journal emailing system over to the ASIANetwork platform.

We would like to welcome our new and continuing advisory board members: David Chandler (Monash University), Donald Clark (Trinity University), Lucien Ellington (University of Tennessee at Chattanooga), T. James Kodera (Wellesley College), Margaret Maurer-Fazio (Bates College), and Joshua Mostow (University of British Columbia). All are well-known scholars in their fields and many have been very active in ASIANetwork in the past.

We are pleased to announce our new editorial board members, who have graciously accepted our invitation to serve. Many of our new board members have already helped us in terms of initial screenings of articles, acting as blind peer-reviewers, or suggesting potential new reviewers for us. Our new editorial board members are scholars with diverse disciplinary training and regional areas of study, and have shown support for ASIANetwork in the past. Many have served previously as board members of ASIANetwork. We welcome Rob Daley (College of Idaho), Mark Dennis (Texas Christian University), Steve Emmanuel (Virginia Wesleyan University), Henry Kim (Wheaton College), Laura Miller (University of Missouri, St. Louis), Sherry Mou (DePauw University), Mari Nagase (Augustana College), Savita Nair (Furman University), Surain Subramaniam (University of North Carolina at Asheville), Anna Sun (Kenyon College), Yi Sun (University of San Diego), and Stephen Udry (Carthage College). We thank them for their willingness to serve on the editorial board.

Finally, we wish to thank Emily Burns Morgan for her excellent work in copyediting for this issue. This will be Emily's last issue and we are very grateful for the work she has done for us over the last four years.

Both Hong Zhang and Marsha Smith have been quite involved with ASIANetwork over the past ten-fifteen years. Hong Zhang recently served on the Board of ASIANetwork (2014–17) and has received a number of ASIANetwork grants. Marsha Smith also served on the ASIANetwork Board (2008–11) and will remain as the coordinator for the Marianna McJimsey Undergraduate Paper Competition. She was assistant editor of the previous ASIANetwork Exchange Newsletter from 2002–2005, and the editor from 2005–2008.

We are excited that our first issue of the *Exchange* is a special guest issue focusing on Vietnam: Memories and Meaning edited by Jack D. Harris (Hobart and William Smith Colleges). We believe that this represents the first time the journal has published an issue entirely on Vietnam. We know that you will enjoy this special collection of articles representing an interdisciplinary approach to understanding Vietnam through a wide range of topics including history, gender, food culture, film and the visual arts, memorials, the impact of war and its aftermath. These articles provide valuable scholarship as well as offering strong pedagogical approaches to the study of Vietnam that should be of great interest to our members. Also included is the 2017 Marianna McJimsey Undergraduate Award–winning paper by Karin K. Honarvar (Smith College, 2017) titled “Sunshine Bright Over Decades.” Karin's paper examines three case studies to argue that the core components of the Sunshine policy, first enacted in 1971, continue to influence Seoul's approach to North-South Korean negotiations today.

Marsha Smith and Hong Zhang, Editors

Introduction to the Special Edition on Vietnam

Vietnam has been and remains historically and geographically important, sitting as it does at the crossroads of many other cultures, and especially in the southern shadow of China. It is a country of repeated invasion, occupation, and colonization, and it is also a country of resistance, resilience, amalgamation, and of great endurance. Despite its history of suffering, Vietnam is a culture that is indefatigably future-oriented. Fortune is the dream and hope for a better future, and the Vietnamese have been denied that fortune and future for a very long time.

Vietnam has long been a country of identifiable and not always unified regions with foundations that go back to ancient times. Deeply influenced as a tributary state and subject to Chinese culture on and off from the second century BC to the tenth century AD; occupied by the French (1884–1945), in particular the French colonization of Cochin China in the southern region; and most recently affected by the American War and its aftermath, resistance and the devastations of combat have had lasting impacts on Vietnam and the Vietnamese people. The wars of liberation, first against the French from 1945–1954, and then against the Americans until 1975, reshaped and unified Vietnam, born from great human loss and war horrors. It has taken many years and hard work for Vietnam to recover from the devastations of war, despite the divisiveness and failures of the Communist regime. Since *Đổi Mới* (the renovation) in 1986, Vietnam has experienced, first painfully slowly and then painfully quickly, an expanding market economy, broadening prosperity, and a flourishing of art and literature. The country is consciously shifting, for better or worse, from an agricultural to an industrial economy, and it is open for business, and for tourism. It very much seeks to join the international community.

However, contemporary Vietnam is not a settled place—there are substantial areas in which political ideology, autocracy, corruption, and muted regional strains conceal conflict and contradiction. Still—finally—Vietnam is not at war with invaders or its neighbors. There has been considerable wealth building and a burgeoning middle-class as a result of the market economy, although many poor rural and urban Vietnamese have not shared that wealth despite socialist rhetoric and a communist bureaucracy. Vietnam remains a complex and dynamic society that is struggling to understand itself as it engages in global economic and political systems.

The following papers seek to understand contemporary Vietnam through varied lenses: anthropology and history, history and gender, gender and films, regions and food, and war and its aftermath. The careful reader will discern overlaps that reveal much about Vietnamese narratives, the stories told in the anthropology, history, visual arts, memorials, and food that reflect both an imagined and real Vietnam.

Lady Borton's paper surprises in its intimacy and understanding of the critical roles Vietnamese women played in the wars for liberation over the millennia. Starting with the Trung Sisters, historical generals of 40 C.E., and concluding with the more recent French and American wars, Borton shows how, in a Confucian society where women were and continue to be subordinated, "When the enemy invades, even the women must fight." And fight they did, often using subservience and traditional gendered roles to provide the difference between victory and defeat. Remarkably, Borton has captured the first person narratives of the women warriors who participated in the resistances and wars with France and the United States. These voices, woven into a keen historical narrative, bring us closer to understanding the thinking and feeling of these women of courage and conscience.

Roy Tamashiro's evocative paper takes us to the Son Mĩ Memorial and Museum, examining how the Vietnamese have commemorated and memorialized this gruesome event. Amidst this horror of memory he examines how the Vietnamese have used remembrance, ritual, and pilgrimage to heal and reconcile rather than blame. Of course, there is much for which to blame the American forces that mercilessly killed the innocent people at Mĩ Lai. However, bearing witness, Tamashiro tells us, can provide pathways for individual and societal healing, perhaps especially for American soldiers of the "Vietnam War."

Gordon Gray's paper moves us several years beyond the French and American Wars as he also considers the imagery and presentation of Vietnamese women, this time in the imagination of post- *Đổi Mới* films. It is a wonderful segue from Lady Borton's history of the courage and devotion shown by Vietnamese women in the liberation and defense of the country. Gray takes us into the arena of film representation and illustrates how these visual depictions self-reflexively present Vietnamese women as tenacious and resilient.

Nguyen Phong provides the reader with an excellent short biography of the French anthropologist Gustave Emile Dumoutier, one of the earliest French scholars to study Vietnam and the Vietnamese. Dumoutier has been all but forgotten, regardless of the fact that he is one of the founders of Hanoi's premier luxury hotel,

The Metropole. In addition, the French, amidst their brutality to the Vietnamese, were instrumental in the invention and creation of Vietnam's anthropology, archeology, several of its best museums, its phonetic alphabet, its water and sewer works, and, through Dumoutier, the foundations of Vietnamese Studies.

Finally, Chris Annear and Jack Harris reflect on Vietnam's history, geography, and politics using food studies as the framework, exploring and critiquing contemporary claims of a unified and national Vietnamese cuisine. Via an examination of contemporary cookbooks, the authors conclude that strong regional variety is an essential aspect of Vietnamese cooking, and that this regionalism reflects the historical and cultural dichotomies that are a reality of Vietnamese society. They go on to explore how a food studies approach provides effective conceptual tools for students to learn, through taste, about Vietnamese society, its cultures, its social structures, and its people.

What we learn from all of these essays is that contemporary Vietnam cannot, and must not, escape its history. Vietnam is now unified and independent, and its extraordinary story is embodied in its resistance to domination. In its resilience and endurance, its absorption and adaptation of colonial experiences, and its expression of a varied social and cultural past through food and custom, Vietnam is ever hopeful about the future. In this edition, we share those stories toward a more fulsome understanding of this irrepressible country.

Jack D. Harris, Guest Editor

Competing Interests

The authors have no competing interests to declare.

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