

Notes from the Editors

This issue marks an exciting new departure for both ASIANetwork, as an organization, and for its journal, the *ASIANetwork Exchange: A Journal for Asian Studies in the Liberal Arts*. As a consortium of one hundred and sixty colleges and universities seeking to strengthen the role of Asian Studies within a liberal arts context, ASIANetwork has used its journal as a critical means of promoting the field since December 1992. In the many years since its first publication as *The Asian Exchange*, editors including Marianna McJimsey, Anne Prescott, Ben Nefzger, Marsha Smith, and, most recently, Thomas Lutze and Irving Epstein, have worked hard to establish the publication as a critical tool of ASIANetwork members. We are mindful of the hard work that each of the previous editors of *ASIANetwork Exchange* has done for the publication and hope that our own term as co-editors will leave the publication in a strong position within our field.

Before we go on to share some of the exciting new things about the *ASIANetwork Exchange*, we would like to express our gratitude. We would like to thank Cathy Brown at Hamilton College for helping us to use the graphic identity of the organization in such a powerful and pleasing manner for the journal. We would like to thank Craig Rice for making the journal's new design work in electronic form. We would like to acknowledge Roberto Dosil and his team at the Canadian Centre for Studies in Publishing, for the design of the website and article layout. We would also like to acknowledge both Hamilton College and St. Lawrence University for supporting us in this endeavor. Without the foresight of our respective administrations, which recognize editing a journal in the field to be a critical part of both our service to our field and our professional development, we would not have the chance to pursue this remarkable opportunity. We would like to thank the board of directors of ASIANetwork and its Executive Director, Teddy Amoloza, for their confidence and support as we have developed and implemented our vision for the journal. Most of all, we would like to thank Thomas Lutze and Irving Epstein, who preceded us as co-editors and have set a very high standard to which we aspire. Tom and Irv have inspired us to imagine that we could embark on such an undertaking and have generously shared their wisdom and experience. We want them to know that our conversations and correspondence have been critical to our own approach to editing the journal. It is to Tom and Irv, therefore, that we dedicate our first issue as co-editors.

With the publication of this issue, the ASIANetwork Exchange also introduces its new mission and vision statements:

The mission of the *ASIANetwork Exchange* is to highlight the central role of reflective research to teaching about Asian societies and cultures. The *Exchange* shares information useful to educators in liberal arts settings through the publication of original research and media reviews in order to provide materials to assist teachers in their own professional development and to deepen the understanding of Asia among campus communities.

The *Exchange* serves the unique needs of teaching at a liberal arts college, both to the specialist and non-specialist. The journal intends to make research and peda-

gogy about Asia accessible to a broader audience of faculty and students. As a scholarly journal dedicated to peer review, the *Exchange* provides a format and forum for the publication of current research that interrogates Ernest Boyer's four categories of professorial scholarship: *discovery* (disciplinary research), *application* (applying scholarship to address societal issues of concern), *integration* (interdisciplinary collaboration), and *teaching* (pedagogical innovation). In serving teachers and students of Asia in the liberal arts, the editors of the *Exchange* seek out ever new ways to promote and advance scholarly innovation in the field(s) of Asian Studies.

The mission and vision for the journal are the product of many productive and exciting conversations over a number of years with Tom Lutze and Irv Epstein during their tenure as co-editors, the board of directors, and at least two recent iterations of the publicity committee. These statements express both the organization's and journal's commitment to continue promoting Asian Studies in the liberal arts, and will provide the journal with guiding principles as it continues to grow. As editors, we seek to encourage quality scholarship in Asian Studies in ways that are meaningful to the ASIANetwork membership and beyond. We wish to continue the journal's commitment to publishing pedagogically relevant content and also to encourage the publication of short scholarly articles so that the journal reflects the multiplicity of ways our members engage in Asian Studies. It is our hope that the journal will develop much in the way the annual conference has, becoming a place that showcases the best work of the scholar-teachers who make up our membership.

Since its early days, ASIANetwork has pursued its goal of supporting the study of Asia in the liberal arts curriculum in a number of important ways, including through publication. Our most basic responsibility as co-editors is to make sure that this legacy is maintained and continues to grow. In seeking ways to further the reputation of the *ASIANetwork Exchange*, we have established both an advisory board and an editorial board. The purpose of the advisory board is to help the co-editors establish long-term goals for the journal that better position its reputation in our field and to develop concrete steps to accomplish these goals. We are fortunate to have secured the participation of a number of leading scholars of Asia on our Advisory Board, including several with longstanding ties to the organization. We are pleased to recognize the following scholars as members of our advisory board: Donald Clark (Trinity University), Lucien Ellington (University of Tennessee at Chattanooga), Carol Gluck (Columbia University), Rita Kipp (Marietta College), Barbara Metcalf (University of California, Davis), Henry Rosemont Jr. (Brown University), and Hal Roth (Brown University, Contemplative Studies Initiative).

In addition, we hope to continue to strengthen the quality of the journal by establishing a constructive and reliable blind peer review process for our members. Toward that end, we have established an editorial board with members who are representative of the organization both in terms of disciplinary training and geographical area of expertise. The editorial board assists the co-editors in the initial screening of submissions for their suitability for the journal, as well as facilitates the identification of appropriate reviewers for each submission. We are pleased to recognize the following scholars as members of our editorial board: Timothy Cheek (University of British Columbia), Ben Dorman (Nanzan University), Steve Emmanuel (Virginia Wesleyan College), Pat Giersch (Wellesley College), Jih-un Kim (Webster University), Siti Kusujarti (Warren Wilson College), Darrin Magee (Hobart and William Smith Colleges), Mary-Ann Milford (Mills College), Brandon Palmer (Coastal Carolina University), Marjorie Rhine (University of Wisconsin--Whitewater), Laura Ring (University of Chicago), and Paul Watt (Waseda University).

One of the most exciting changes introduced with this issue is our decision to move the journal to an online, open access format. This change makes the journal more accessible to those in our membership and beyond. The new digital format will make the journal accessible not only to our members and their students, but also to scholars and students in Asia where resources for library journal subscriptions may be more limited. It is our hope that the new format will also help us increase the readership of the journal, as well as make it that much easier to use the *Exchange* material in the classroom. Articles can be downloaded separately or an issue can be downloaded as a whole, making it easier for us, as scholar-teachers, to access and for our “digital native” students to find and use. The new online format also opens possibilities in the work we publish. Authors will not face the same restrictions in publishing high quality images with their articles and they also can now include hyperlinks and video clips in their articles. With our new format, ASIANetwork has joined an international movement of digital scholarship that enacts the spirit of exchange embodied in the journal’s title and our organizational mission. We encourage our readers to learn more about the principles of open access and public knowledge. We are very excited about these new possibilities and look forward to serving ASIANetwork as co-editors of its journal.

IN THIS ISSUE

A key supporter in the development of ASIANetwork has been the Freeman Foundation. We open the issue with **Van Symons’** moving memorial of this great friend of ASIANetwork, Mr. Houghton “Buck” Freeman.

Rafia Zakaria’s Plenary Address/Hot Topic at the 2011 annual conference in Chicago, “Sharia in America: Why Bans are a Bad Idea,” was a moving and thought-provoking talk that challenged both our ideas about the promise of legal rights for women in the United States as well as women’s rights in divorce in Muslim societies such as Pakistan and Jordan. It also asked us to consider the limitations of secular feminism and the possibilities of religious feminism, not only in Muslim societies, but also in the West. A revised version of Zakaria’s talk appears here along with some suggested readings that will be of use for faculty and students.

Carol Brash’s “Classical Chinese Gardens in Twenty-first Century America: Cultivating the Past” presents a brief examination of three tracts of American real estate that have been transformed into Chinese-style gardens. Hybridization is unavoidable when transferring a cultural icon, especially one so layered in meaning as the garden in China. Each re-presentation serves a specific function at its particular site and also creates and perpetuates symbolic meaning that goes beyond the individual site to connect to other sites past and present. In each case, the re-presentation demonstrates adaptations and continuations in function and meaning. The three sites used to illustrate the range of adaptations were chosen for their diversity in several areas: the defining and re-inventing of authenticity, their sizes and locations, the type of installation, their origin story and funding, the reflexivity of the institution about the changes made, and programs to produce meaning for the viewers. In their commitment to preserve, recreate, and sustain the past, these institutions have transformed the physical form of the garden. **Kathryn Hagy’s** “Little Brother, Little Sister: Contemporary Art in Nepal” examines works from the last decade by six Nepalese artists. When visiting Kathmandu, Nagy discovers that, like the ancient sculptures, paintings, and temple architecture that exist on every corner, the art of contemporary Nepal is everywhere as well. Her article explores how today’s artists align themselves between their contemporary context and their country’s ancient arts. What is the conversation about globalism

and its impact on artists? How do artists deal with social pressures and do these pressures directly affect the content of their work? Through her in-country research and subsequent study and interviews with artists, Nagy reveals an energetic art scene that draws much of its inspiration from a local context, whether it affirms or protests against that context to some degree.

Surain Subramaniam's "Assessing Political Dynamics in Contemporary Malaysia: Implications for Democratic Change" focuses on the 12th General Election of 2008 and the opportunities and challenges it presents for liberal democratic change in Malaysia. Subramaniam argues that democratization in Malaysia is already occurring, albeit at a gradual pace, as it is pushed by the new political forces of civil society actors, recently empowered opposition parties, and the Internet-based media. The political competition between status-quo and reformist forces in Malaysian society are simultaneously shaping and contesting the boundaries of this emerging democratic space. . Some institutional changes have expanded the parameters of democratic space, although the entrenched dominant institutions of the ruling regime continue to wield sufficient amounts of institutional capacity to subvert any consolidation of these democratic changes for now.

Avery Morrow's article on "Tree Ordination in Thailand" discusses how western scholarship perceives the ordination of trees as monks as proof of the power of Buddhism to spur ecological thought. However, a closer analysis of tree ordination demonstrates that it is not primarily about Buddhist teaching, but rather an invented tradition based on the sanctity of Thai Buddhist symbols, as well as those of spirit worship and the monarchy. Tree ordinations performed by non-Buddhist minorities in Thailand demonstrate a political commitment rather than a religious one.

Erin McCarthy (St. Lawrence University) and Lisa Trivedi (Hamilton College)