Doing Research on the History of Madness in China

The tight connection between Western imperialism and philanthropic medical work is well recognized. I shall argue that the Asylum for the Insane in Canton was a striking symptom of the imperialistic attitude, an attitude which could be termed one of 'double-intrusion' because of the obvious attempt to teach the Chinese what is 'normal' and what is 'abnormal'.

By Angelika C. Messner

On the other hand, judicial discourse on madness in China shows that since early times it has been considered a kind of weakness. In the West, a similar special concern for the insane is not paid before the nineteenth century. This is not to be confused with the special attention given to it within the Chinese context mentioned above: while in the West based on the 'pathetic' conception of madness - medical authority became juridical authority. At the same time, this was never true of China, where the family remained the main care of any of its afflicted members. Perhaps more than in other fields of historical research, exploration into the history of madness in China demands a highly reflective and clearly formulated methodological basis. Mindful of the fundamental challenge posed by any attempt to privilege the norms of agency and responsibility (based on Foucauldian theory), we should nevertheless be aware that Foucauldian results reflect a European Weltanschauung and are based on the given 'dichotomy between cairo and imago', which cannot be applied to a system as heuristic as the Chinese history of madness.
CENTRAL ASIA

The Orientalist Johan van Manen (1879-1944) can be regarded as the founder of Tibetology in the Netherlands. His legacy comprises 2050 Tibetan manuscripts and block-printed 300 South Indian palmleaf manuscripts in Sastkari, as well as 510 objects including Tibetan Buddhist scroll-paintings. Yang Enlong describes a 16th century tanka on oblivion. - [p. 10]

INSULAR S. W. ASIA

At the IAS annual lecture, Professor James Scott argued that the oldest state project in the world is fixing its population in space. He illustrated this with the Malay distinction between full people and half people. Through more a centrifugal than a dichotomy, the cultural divide between hill and valley has increasingly become an experienced and lived essentialism. - [pp. 36 & 43]

SOULIA

The Kern Institute in Leiden possesses an impressive collection of nineteenth and twentieth century photographic images on an undated arkology of South and Southeast Asia. A project has now been launched to preserve the prints and to make them accessible to the public. Gerda Themar-de Boer reports. - [p. 19]

SOUTHEAST ASIA

W.S. Randria, Indonesia's most celebrated poet, playwright, and theatre director, wants his art to be contextual. "I do not make films, which can be put into storage. Theatre is in the here-and-now." Earlier this year Randria was a guest of the IAS. Matthew Cohen seized the opportunity to interview him about his life and the circumstances that influenced his work. - [pp. 22 & 23]

SOUTH ASIA

Though continuity and change might be a cliché, the contemporary Philippines demonstrates that clichés sometimes have validity. However, the country's growing army and its post-colonialism, the increasing problem of pollution, and renewed challenges to government authority suggest that change may soon catch up with continuity. Paul A. Rodell reports on his recent visit to the country. - [p. 27]

EAST ASIA

David and colleagues have indicated that there are considerable advantages to diasporic Chinese business in the use of trust-based, low-term relationships and networks. In view of the current financial crisis that has struck many regions in Asia, these scholars are now prepared to ask how far have networks been crucial to survival, success, and new beginnings since the crisis? - [p. 29]

Pink Pages

A preliminary evaluation of the IAS after its first six years of existence.

IISH NEWS

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