

# Communications

## LETTER FROM THE EDITOR

At this point of severing seven years of work with the *Journal of Asian Studies*, I wish to make a public expression of my thanks to many people and present a few observations.

Over these seven years, I have requested literally thousands of persons in this country, in Canada, in Taiwan, in Japan, in Malaya, in Singapore, in Australia, in Thailand, in the Philippines, in South Korea, in India, in Pakistan, in Israel, in France, in West Germany, in Austria, in Sweden, in the Soviet Union, in the United Kingdom, and in Latin America, to undertake reviews of books or evaluations of manuscripts, or simply to give me advice and counsel. These have been persons in universities, museums, government service, business, industry, religious orders, and also those with no apparent connection. Almost everyone called upon has responded, and I have relearned the lesson that wisdom and expertise is by no means confined to the university. I have had that continuing magnificent support that has sustained every editor since our founding in 1941 and which, I know, will continue for my successors.

There are those whose consistent good advice and ungrudging help has been a prime support and a consolation. I refer especially to three groups: the Advisory Editorial Board, and in particular Professor Ramon Myers, the Associate Editor, and Professor Ainslie Embree, the Assistant Editor for South Asia; secondly, the Secretariat of the Association, particularly Professor Richard Park, our Association Secretary and Mrs. Victoria Spang, our Comptroller; thirdly, Mr. George John Perlingieri, my Editorial Assistant, and Mrs. Cindy Gaylor, my secretary for a number of years.

If I have omitted anyone who deserves my thanks, it is by inadvertence, because so many people make the *Journal* go, that one fallible human memory is apt to forget temporarily all of the acts of courtesy and kindness that come one's way.

I had thought of giving a few no thanks, but after reflection I have decided it would be unworthy. The occasional acts of rudeness or selfishness or pomposity or invincible ignorance with which one meets serves to add savor to the post and also serves as a reminder of the unselfishness and courtesy of the many.

In my lifetime I have seen too many myths rise to dogma and then disappear, too many facts proven and then disproven, too many interpretations accepted and then cast aside, not to have arrived at the working principle that scholars, all of us, live with and by each other and the health of our profession and of our students demands not merely learning and erudition but also wisdom, patience, tolerance, and forbearance. These admirable characteristics seem to be in shorter supply today than they were some years ago. I come from a student generation that had so little available to it that the one thing we knew for certain was how little we knew. Perhaps the one thing we accomplished was the asking of the right questions. The easy availability today of sources and resources which should make for considerable thought seems instead to have bred, here and there, a strange kind of intellectual self assurance. Of course, this may arise from the fact that many of the most confident do not really avail themselves of those sources which should enrich their understanding. But whatever the reason, we have lost some of that introspection, humility, and good humor which seemed so current not too many years ago.

Having read through hundreds of manuscripts, I am of the opinion, as are my associates, that somehow in the period from about 1955 to the present, a certain amount of quality control has been lost by the profession. What this has been due to, if true, I can-

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not say for certain. But, there is no doubt that there is an increasing tendency to concentrate on methodologies with no idea of what they relate to nor is there any idea of how to ask the proper questions. Scholarship seems to have been buried beneath a great sepulchre of method largely created by committee. A good deal of the uneasiness which I feel and which I know is shared by my elderly colleagues is well reflected in the research note of Professor Eide, seen in the November 1971 issue of the *Journal*. It would be a mistake to read Professor Eide's note or my few remarks as a call to return to the past. We are instead, looking to the future and calling for a return to the true roots of scholarship. For, to paraphrase Johan Huizinga, Is all this labor of the machinery of scholarship not a waste of energy unless it all points back to a central and humane core of knowledge?

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