



RISING ASIA
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LETTER FROM THE EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

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Songs After the War in Vietnam

The journal hits the spot with a monograph-length special issue on the “Postwar Music in Vietnam and the Diaspora: Fifty Years Since National Reunification and the End of the Vietnam War.” Serving as Guest Editor is Tuan Hoang of Pepperdine University, California, who has marshalled four excellent research articles by specialist scholars in the field. We are publishing the issue at an appropriate moment marking the fiftieth anniversary of the reunification of the two halves of Vietnam. Tuan, who has served as a valuable Editorial Board member of *Rising Asia Journal* since the very first issue, writes an Introduction explaining the history and culture of the music of the postwar period. In the first research article, Jason Gibbs of San Francisco Public Library explores the Vietnamese songs created and sung in reeducation camps. In the second article, Tuan explores the exilic nostalgia in the music of Vietnamese refugees overseas. In the third article, Vinh Phu Pham of Bard Early College, New York writes about the making of the video show *Paris by Night* and its impact on audiences in Vietnam and the diaspora.

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Finally, in the fourth article Minh X. Nguyen of the University of California, Riverside, turns his attention to Bolero in post-socialist Vietnam. The entire team of the guest editor and the authors have been thinking about and working on this special issue for a couple of years at least, testifying to their labor of love. The entire RAJ/RAF team joins me in a round of applause for Tuan, Jason, Vinh, and Minh for their excellent contribution, plowing the unexplored parts of this topic, and adding substantially to the literature on the war.

In the regular sections of the journal, Senior Singapore Journalist Asad Latif, who is our flagship commentator, writes about the current upheaval in Bangladesh that saw the overthrow of Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina Wazed. Asad explains that India had good reason to support a regime that, for all its faults, kept Bangladesh in the Indic sphere, to which it belongs historically. The author argues that India is striking a balance between an assertive Indira Doctrine that was cast in the long aftermath of the imperial Monroe Doctrine, and the benign Gujral Doctrine which was so pacifist as to fail to make much headway in South Asia. The Modi Doctrine, Asad explains, seeks to combine power and goodwill in a calibrated strategy that leaves none of its neighbors in doubt that India is the regional power. The author adds that by employing power and persuasion, India must uphold a status quo that has served the sub-continent well since the horrors of Partition in 1947. And, Bangladesh is a test case of the responsibilities that come with India's regional role.

In a deeply-analyzed literary essay, Jackson Mattocks of Dalhousie University, Halifax explores the "intolerance and tolerance" that Japanese and Trinidadian immigrants experienced in North America and Canada. The author explores David Chariandy's novel *Soucouy-*



ant and David Guterson's novel *Snow Falling on Cedars*, each narrative focusing on immigrant minorities who were subjected to various degrees of tolerance in their respective host communities. These novels show that while tolerance does not necessarily promote care for immigrant minorities, it does set a precondition of peace, amity, and politeness through which care and empathy might arise. Through studying these novels, Jackson argues that while it is certainly an imperfect position, tolerance is desirable insofar as it allows people, who might otherwise share an uninhibited animus for one another, the possibility to empathize with each other.

In *The Rising Asia Review of Books*, Salikyu Sangtam of Tetso College, Nagaland reviews *Stone Masters: Power Encounters in Mainland Southeast Asia*, edited by Holly High (Singapore: National University of Singapore Press, 2022). The reviewer explains that the book—whose central object of the study is stones—is best seen as an exercise in comparative ethnology of regional similarities in cosmology, ritual practices, materiality, and myth across the region. The book helps in identifying universal patterns as well as unique cultural traits across mainland Southeast Asia, by examining cases from Myanmar, Thailand, Laos, Cambodia, and Vietnam. The reader is introduced to stones of various sorts, ranging from megaliths, statues, and city pillars to termite mounds, mountains, and stupas. These stones are manifestations of local or territorial-centric occult potency that require, and perhaps even demand, constant negotiations for efficacious social life.

Pfokrelo Kapesa of the University of Allahabad reviews Chen Tienshi Lara's *Stateless*, translated by Louis Carlet (Singapore: NUS Press, 2023). The book is an auto-ethnographic work in which the author uses her own experience and those of others she met in the course of her

research on statelessness. Lara's narrative is based on the experience of stateless people to provide a human and people-centric understanding of the issue of statelessness. While the book largely explores the notion of statelessness and what it means to be stateless, the author questions the justness/rightness of the concepts of citizenship, nationality and the nation-state in determining the fate of real people. In the Epilogue Lara argues that such abstract concepts of nationality, nation-state and citizenship as regulating systems are not only unjust but also untenable in the long run as they are far removed from ordinary people.

Aniruddha Babar of Tetso College, Nagaland reviews S. Jaishankar's, *Why Bharat Matters* (New Delhi: Rupa, 2024). The author, India's Minister of External Affairs, navigates the complex landscape of contemporary geopolitics, offering readers a comprehensive analysis of India's strategic significance. The book delves into key initiatives such as Neighbourhood First and Act East, which have redefined India's approach. The author provides context and focus, helping readers understand recent developments and strategic decisions shaping India's international relations. However, *Why Bharat Matters* is not without its controversies, particularly surrounding India's use of the term 'Bharat' in official G20 communications. This move sparked debate and accusations of ethnic nationalism, with critics questioning its implications for India's secular identity. While the author advocates for grounding India's foreign policy in its cultural values and beliefs, the controversy underscores the complexities of identity politics in contemporary India and its impact on international relations. The discourse surrounding the utilization of 'Bharat' in diplomatic contexts reflects the ongoing tension between nationalist aspirations and the preservation of India's pluralistic ethos.



R*ising Asia Journal* remains committed to its coverage of all aspects of Asian societies, as our current issue demonstrates. In our future issues, we will both deepen and broaden our examination of burgeoning Asia.