

ASIANetwork EXCHANGE

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From the Editors

15th Annual Conference Highlights

Life Experience and Innovative Scholarship— Classroom Experience and Innovative Pedagogies

The April 2007 ASIANetwork Conference held in Lisle, Illinois, was noteworthy for its emphasis upon the personal and the pedagogical. Stirring recollections by invited speakers **Bardwell Smith** and **Wendy Doniger** drew attention to the many ways in which personal and

professional growth are often intimately intertwined. **Dorothy Ko** delivered a provocative and controversial talk on the nexus between foot binding and women's empowerment in traditional Chinese society. And panel sessions discussed pedagogical and curricular approaches to the teaching of Asian Studies that were as eclectic as they were innovative.

Many of the articles in this issue of the *ASIANetwork Exchange* reflect the spirit of the 2007 Conference. Wendy Doniger, one of the most important historians of religion in our times, has summarized her keynote address in a printed version that gives testimony to the importance of parents and teachers, as they offered her support throughout her eminent career. In so doing, they not only fostered her commitment to consistent intellectual engagement over five decades, but allowed her to help re-define one of our most important fields of study.

We also see in the various articles in this issue other authors who are similarly questioning traditional disciplinary boundaries in creative ways. Whether it be through the use of material culture such as film, music, anime, and manga, to introduce our students to concepts intrinsic to the humanities and social sciences in ways that are personally accessible, or through the use of reflective reading and discussion to question conventional assumptions on the nature of Mao's historical legacy, our contributors demonstrate how it is possible to use creative methods and resources to strengthen their curricular and pedagogical choices in the teaching about Asia. They offer insight as to how we can use the tools of literary analysis in re-conceptualizing the nature and interpretation of the media as text, and they demonstrate how the many tools of analysis used within the social sciences and the humanities can be integrated throughout one's teaching.

The enthusiasm and willingness of our authors to question disciplinary convention and to utilize creative ways of stimulating out students' imagination about Asia can serve as an example for all of our colleagues throughout the academy interested in improving undergraduate education. We are very pleased to present their findings in the following pages.



Youth from Southern Philippines dance the Singkil.

(Photo by Roxie Ransom)

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