Introduction

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Asian Review 2010 explores social, political, and cultural development in Asia from linguistics and literary texts. Authors with diverse interests in historical, cultural, and linguistic analysis in East Asia, South Asia, and Southeast Asia discuss how socio-political context, class, and gender are related. The collection of essays for this volume is intended to bring together researches on historical changes and social values during formative and dynamic moments of change in Asia from the traditional period to the present time. Within this broad time frame, this volume aims to appeal to an equally diverse readership.

This volume starts with Patchanee Tanguyenyong’s analysis of eighty-seven poems from the Tang dynasty, which is regarded as “the golden age of Chinese poetry.” Patchanee proposes that Tang poetry plays a vital role in nation-building and ideological construction in Chinese society. These poems can be perceived as discourse responding to the state’s effort to maintain power, construct national ideology, and reaffirm Confucianism and Han culture.

Another aspect of Chinese society is shown in Usama Mahapasuthanon’s study of novels written by women writers and published in the Post-Mao period. The author pays close attention to the changing attitudes towards marriage and sexuality which are closely connected social changes in Chinese society in the Post-Mao period, especially the issues of women and marriage. If Patchanee’s paper shows us how the state’s ideology and power is constructed in traditional China, then Usama’s representation of Chinese novels reveals how traditional values and ideological patterns are deconstructed in the Post-Mao period.

Not only in China, the topic of gender is also debated in Japanese society. In his study of Noh plays, Winai Jamornsuriya proposes that Zeami, Japan’s most famous playwright, reveals his

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cconcern about the plight of women who had to endure unfulfilled love and unequal status in fourteenth century Japanese society. It is also interesting that female characters portrayed in Noh plays are not passive, but they take action to search for their husbands or lovers.

Gender inequality, especially in the political sphere, is the main focus of Orathai Piayura’s examination of Thai political culture and sexuality through media and literary works. The author argues that the depiction of women as successful politicians in novels is merely a fantasy of women. She even steps forward to argue that these political novels can be comparable with erotic novels by female authors for both are a fantasy world of women, political and sexual.

Siriporn Sriwarakan’s study of Indian children’s literature reveals that sexual discrimination is a big issue in Indian society. Thus, children literature serves as government tool to solve this problem by raising awareness and eliminating bias against women among young people.

The next paper by Kimloan Vu-Hill examines social changes in Vietnamese society during the early twentieth century through the analysis of Khái Hùng’s novels. This period is seen as a transitional period in Vietnam from traditional to modern society. Under the influence of western culture, traditional values and Confucianism were challenged. Khái Hùng’s novels give a vivid picture of the conflict between the old and the new in Vietnamese society in this period, mainly through the struggle of women.

The last paper in this volume deals with Thai students’ usage of Chinese second person pronouns, “ni” and “nin.” In this study, Seubpong Changboonchu finds that a person’s native language and culture are important factors in the usage of a foreign language. The author employs qualitative and quantitative methods to prove this assumption with Thai students’ learning of Chinese second person-pronouns.

Again, it is hoped that this issue of Asian Review will, from linguistic and literary angles, help strengthen the knowledge of Asia.

Montira Rato
Guest editor