

THE ASIA PACIFIC JOURNAL OF

anthropology

‘Rebirthing’ TAPJA

Speech by Mandy Thomas, Vice-President of the AAS, presented on October 4 at the 2002 AAS annual conference held at the ANU

I'm here to rebirth the Asia Pacific Journal of Anthropology which was reincarnated from a glorious past life just two years ago.

This journal began in 1977 with the unpretentious title of *Canberra Anthropology*. This may well sound like a somewhat uninspiring set of associations but 1977 was a time of extraordinary excitement in anthropology in Canberra, with much ground-breaking work being undertaken particularly in indigenous Australia, South-East Asia, Melanesia, and the Pacific. Much of the research published in the journal was from local anthropologists but also from the many visiting fellows and international colleagues at the departments of Anthropology here.

The question answered by this journal today is how a journal of Asian and Pacific Anthropology coming from Australia might be different from that coming from the US or from Europe. The original title 'Canberra Anthropology' indicated that this journal showcased academic research arising from a positioning outside the other two big C's in Anthropology - outside Cambridge and outside Chicago, as well as outside all the other Anthropology departments in the UK and Europe. What is clear is that not only our regional location but the very different cultural and political space of a country literally on the margins brings to anthropological research a definitive shift in approach and outlook.

The newly emerged, reincarnated or, as Jeremy Beckett suggested 'trans-substantiated' *Asia Pacific Journal of Anthropology* is still very much a reflection of the vigour and diversity of Anthropology at the ANU. The new title is indicative not just of the fieldsites of research undertaken here, but also of the connections and networks developed over years of collaborative work and international linkages of many of ANU's anthropologists. The journal is not focused only on Asia/Pacific but accepts papers for peer review from anthropologists working on theoretical issues, on disciplinary questions and from diverse regions of the world.

The notion of Asia-Pacific then is a statement not about area studies but rather is concerned with the inflections of region and transnational academic connections in ethnographic research. Here Asia-Pacific then is not the object of study but in a sense becomes the *method*, a way of engaging in scholarly debate, a focus of research interest NOT determined by US or British anthropology. What is apparent in the two years of operation is that this journal has consistently published articles by Asian-Pacific scholars themselves working and living in Asia-Pacific contexts. What I hope will distinguish the journal in the future is the movement of the journal much more into Asian and Pacific universities, cultural institutions and anthropology and cultural

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studies departments, both physically being read there, but also having many scholars within Asia and the Pacific contributing articles.

This issue is a terrific read, its got a beautiful and evocative cover, and I thoroughly recommend it. The highlight of the issue is undoubtedly the publication of the Anthony Forge Memorial Lecture given last year by Donald Tuzin. The essay explores the legacy of that great ANU anthropologist of art, Anthony Forge, who exemplified the idea that research could be done differently when explored not through the lens of the Anthropology of Africa or Latin America but through our local and regional contexts.

It's important to say that the Journal is an indicator of the dedication and hard work of the team of editors led by Kathy Robinson and Patrick Guinness with the editorial assistance of Luke Hambly. I'd also like to acknowledge the 20 years of dedication to the editing of the journal under its former title. This difficult work was shared by many at ANU and led by Michael Young who also worked tirelessly behind the scenes to develop the International Advisory Group so that it would reflect the sets of connections and networks established through anthropologists at the ANU. The journal is involved also in important mentoring work with younger researchers and postgraduate scholars.

The Asia Pacific Journal of Anthropology forms a key and contrasting role in the stable of five successful and diverse anthropology journals in Australia. I'm delighted to re-launch the Asia Pacific Journal of Anthropology, and I encourage you all to submit papers. I wish the publication every success.

Please charge your glasses - to TAPJA!