FROM THE EDITOR

About JRCA

The Japanese Review of Cultural Anthropology (JRCA) is an English-language journal published by the Japanese Society of Cultural Anthropology, or JASCA (日本文化人類学会). The Japanese Society of Ethnology (日本民族学会) was founded in 1934 and has since grown into one of the largest anthropological organizations in the world, with a current membership of 1,762 scholars and students. It changed its name to JASCA in 2004.

JRCA was launched in 1998 as an independent occasional publication with the aim of introducing sociocultural anthropological research by JASCA members to the wider world in the form of review articles. In 2001, JRCA's status was changed to that of a supplementary volume to the Japanese Journal of Cultural Anthropology (『文化人類学』), formerly the Japanese Journal of Ethnology (『民族学研究』), the official quarterly journal of JASCA. Since Volume 3 (2002), JRCA has published original papers submitted in English, while retaining its initial purpose of publishing review articles of works originally written in Japanese.

JRCA used to be an annual publication until 2017, but starting with Volume 18, it has been published bi-annually. JASCA has received a grant to support its publication under the category of Enhancement of International Dissemination of Information, by the Japan Society for the Promotion of Science (JSPS) (grant no. JP16HP3004) to expand its output in the English language. This is a most timely and welcome development, as members of the younger generation of scholars are now actively participating in international scholarly meetings, symposiums and workshops. We are most grateful to the JSPS, and hope that this development will allow us to further disseminate the work of Japanese scholars to a wider audience.

This issue

This issue opens with the English version of 2020 Japanese Society of Cultural Anthropology Award Lecture delivered by Nahoko Uehashi,
followed by one submitted article, one review article, and sixteen extended summaries of articles published in the Japanese Journal of Cultural Anthropology (『文化人類学』) Vol. 85 (3-4). Uehashi is a renowned fantasy writer whose work is appreciated worldwide. She has been awarded by JASCA for “a series of writings using the knowledge and imagination of cultural anthropology, beginning with The Sacred Tree (Kaiseisha, 1989).” In her lecture titled “My Creative Writing Process and Cultural Anthropology: What Sparks the Flame of Mental Associations,” Uehashi tells us that at the root of her inspiration is the flame of imaginations, the spark of which is deeply connected with her experiences in cultural anthropological studies and fieldwork. It is extremely interesting to learn how her experience of living with Aboriginal Australians have inspired her to write stories of people who straddle different worlds, with sensitivity to multiple perspectives belonging to diverse social standings. The article submitted by Shijun Zhang, titled “Traveling Thangka Painters: Anthropological and Historical Approach towards the Multi-traveling Experiences of Tibetan Artists,” depicts the travel experiences of thangka painters and argues that it is their trans-regional and transnational travels that transformed thangka into Thangka Art. Zhang also points out that it was the shifting semantics of contemporary thangka on the move between sacred objects, cultural artifacts, and commodities, that facilitated this transformation. Zhang’s article is an important contribution that opens our eyes to the wide and dynamic context in which contemporary thangka is located. The book review by Makibi Nakano discusses Akira Goto’s Cultural Astronomy of the Japanese Archipelago: Exploring the Japanese Skyscape (Routledge, 2021).

Since 2019, we publish the extended summaries of articles of the Japanese Journal of Cultural Anthropology to introduce the findings and the results of anthropological studies in Japan to wider range of readers who do not read Japanese. The sixteen summaries published in this issue consist of six original articles, and ten articles, including two introductions, on the special topics on “Food as an Intersection of Culture and Body: From the Earth to Tongue” and “The Gift of Imagining/Creating Society: A Case Study of Contemporary Indian
Religions.”

The JRCA editorial committee invites individual papers and clusters of papers on special topics from all JASCA members. For details on submission procedures and schedules, please consult the instructions at the back of this issue. For further details, please also visit our website: http://www.jasca.org/publication-e/frame_jrca-e.html.