

Editorial Foreword

OUR COVER

This photograph by Ananth Krishnan, China correspondent for *The Hindu*, shows worshippers in front of the Id Kah mosque, in Kashgar, Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region, PRC before Friday prayers.

ASIA BEYOND THE HEADLINES AND TRENDS

This issue opens with four short pieces on contemporary issues. The first one encompasses the region as a whole, tackling an issue of planetary scope: climate change. The other three are a trio of interconnected works that have a much tighter focus, zeroing in on one country in the northeast corner of the continent, North Korea. Still, given the nature of North Korean politics, the discussions in these three contributions have implications that flow across borders, most directly to South Korea, but beyond that as well, thanks to the way that developments in Pyongyang are shaped by, and in turn shape, international affairs throughout and beyond East Asia.

This set of contemporary-minded essays begins with SO YOUNG KIM's "Public Perceptions of Climate Change and Support for Climate Policies in Asia: Evidence from Recent Polls," a piece that compares ideas about environmental issues in different parts of Asia and between Asia and other regions of the world. Written by a specialist in political science and public policy based in South Korea, it is the first "Asia Beyond the Headlines" contribution we have run that makes extensive use of public opinion polls. It is not pegged to any single breaking news story, but rather, like some previous forays into this new genre, offers insights into a topic that has been in and out of the headlines for some time.

One point of departure for Kim is the Copenhagen Climate Conference of late 2009. This gathering underscored the increased importance of Asian countries as producers of greenhouse gases and as key players in policy debates associated with global warming. An important source of disagreement at the meetings and in other related international gatherings has been over whether richer and less developed countries should be held to comparable standards when it comes to reining in pollution. One thing that makes Asia such a fascinating part of the world to analyze where climate change is concerned, as this essay makes clear, is that the continent contains countries that vary so widely not just in size but also in degrees of development. It is also, as Kim stresses, a region in which there can be wide disparities between what governments think should be done and what the populace feels is an appropriate course of action.

The next three essays, although also having links to stories in the news, are classified as a “Trends” forum, and is the Journal’s first experiment with combining under one heading a few short takes on recent developments in and publications on a specific locale within Asia. It begins with a brief “Introduction” by ROBERT OPPENHEIM, an anthropologist of Korea who serves as an Associate Editor of the JAS. He provides the readers with background information and general framing that prepares them for the two discussions to come. The first piece is by NAN KIM, a scholar trained in anthropology who currently teaches in the History Department at the University of Wisconsin – Milwaukee. Kim has worked on topics such as efforts to reunite families whose members have been separated, some living to the north and some to the south of the DMZ. Titled “Korea on the Brink: Yōnp’yōng and Its Aftermath,” it offers a poignant and concise assessment of the impact on individuals, families, and nations on the renewal of tensions between the two Koreas.

Kim’s piece is followed by a closely related review essay by CHARLES K. ARMSTRONG, which provides a spirited assessment of the strengths and weaknesses of recent popular and scholarly studies of North Korea. Between them, these three commentaries highlight the importance of moving beyond simplistic visions of North Korean politics, while also showing that study of the country has recently reached a new stage of maturity.

Articles

The first article in the main section of the issue is historian YUFENG MAO’S “A Muslim Vision of the Chinese Nation: Chinese Pilgrimage Missions to Mecca during WW II.” Making use of archival sources ranging from diaries to diplomatic cables, as well as published sources in Arabic, Chinese, and English, Mao presents a tale that is simultaneously transnational in its scope and one that adds a fascinating new dimension to discussions of the nature of nationalism in China. Of particular interest is her explication of the way that the “transition from the Qing empire to the Republic of China gave Sino-Muslim modernists an opportunity to promote an alternative vision of the Chinese nation state” with more room in it for followers of Islam.

The next essay, LEE HAIYAN’S “The Charisma of Power and the Military Sublime in Tiananmen Square,” is also a study of China and of nationalism, but the similarities end there. The author in this case is a specialist in literary and visual studies rather than history and her focus remains within China’s borders. It is not people working the margin, but what takes places in the symbolic center of the country, in the most famous and symbolically charged plaza of the capital city of Beijing, that interests Lee. An accomplished analyst of written texts, she proves herself to be equally astute in dissecting cinematic works, using the 1985 film *The Big Parade* as her main point of departure in a “geo-biography” of Tiananmen Square that foregrounds its importance as a site for parades and other rituals, particularly those carried out by members of the People’s Liberation Army. Part of the article’s strength is that it illuminates the process, which seemed so unlikely in the immediate wake of the bloodshed of

1989, whereby the PLA has been able to reclaim a role for itself “as the guardian of Chinese culture and defender of Chinese sovereignty”—a body associated with charisma as opposed to simply repression. Lee also reminds us of just how often in recent Chinese history a shared “nationalist mythology” has shaped the actions of both the state and those who speak out against those in power.

The next article, China-based historian DONG GUOQIANG and U.S.-based sociologist ANDREW WALDER’s “Local Politics in the Chinese Cultural Revolution: Nanjing Under Military Control,” takes up an event, the Cultural Revolution, which is often associated with rallies held at Tiananmen Square, the place where Mao spoke to massive crowds of Red Guards in the rallies that launched that tumultuous upheaval. Dong and Walder’s focus, though, as their title makes clear, is neither Beijing nor Shanghai, the other city that has attracted the most attention in publications on the Cultural Revolution. Instead, their concern is with Nanjing, a city where, they argue, decidedly local dynamics as well as national power struggles shaped the “mass political conflict” that swept the country in 1967 and 1968.

Following the article on the Cultural Revolution, anthropologist C. FRED BLAKE’s “Lamprooning the Paper Money Custom in Contemporary China” keeps us in the same country but takes us far from the realm of military parades and military clashes alike—indeed Blake’s subject takes us beyond the world of flesh and blood and material objects. Instead, the focus here is on rituals honoring the dead that find Chinese participants in filial ceremonies “replicating their material world of social things in paper in order to provender and avail the family ghosts, ancestors, and myriads of imaginary beings by the magic of fire.” Blake is interested not just in the meaning of burning representations of money and other objects, but in the various ways that people mock, parody, and otherwise make fun of activities that, as he puts it, can see “simulated wealth” go “up in smoke and ash” in a kind of “potlatch for the spirits.”

The issue’s final article, which is followed as always by a host of book reviews on all parts of the region, is a very different kind of look at spiritual themes: historian MITCH NUMARK’s “Translating *Dharma*: Scottish Missionary-Orientalists and the Politics of Religious Understanding in Nineteenth-Century Bombay.” Of central concern here is how members of one religious tradition imagine the beliefs and workings of another, especially as they have to navigate the challenges posed by translation. Numark encourages us to think anew about the ways knowledge of various kinds is formed and circulated in physical zones of encounter, including colonial settings such as Bombay in the 1700s and 1800s. In the process, he opens an intriguing new window onto the time when “a new vision of ‘world religions’ was coming into being” and “understanding *the religions of India*” was becoming “a major preoccupation of British colonial officials, Orientalist scholars, and Christian missionaries” alike.

—JNW

Forthcoming Articles in *JAS* 70:3 (August 2011)

Asia Beyond the Headlines

The Politics of Everyday Life in Twenty-first Century Myanmar

ARDETH MAUNG THAWNGHMUNG

Research Articles

A Sentimental Journey: Mapping the Interior Frontier of Japanese Settlers in Colonial Korea

JUN UCHIDA

Hatoko Comes Home: Civil Society and Nuclear Power in Japan

DANIEL P. ALDRICH AND MARTIN DUSINBERRE

Islam, politics and violence in eastern Sri Lanka

BART KLEM

Performing the Village Square in Interwar Japan: Toward a Hidden History of Public Space

HOYT LONG

That Ban(e) of Indian Music: The Harmonium and its Critics

MATTHEW RAHAIM
