

## Editorial Foreword

### OUR COVER

Top: The 2010 World Expo Shanghai Construction Site Photo by Gilles Sabrie in the Viking Penguin book *Shanghai: A History in Photographs, 1842–Today*, by Liu Heung Shing & Karen Smith, available in bookstores soon. Used by permission from the publisher.

Bottom: Shanghai Prep. Photo by Anna Greenspan <http://www.wakinggiants.net/photos/photos.html>. Used by permission.

The core of this issue, as is typical for the *Journal of Asian Studies*, is made up of research articles that explore a broad range of topics, from rumors about Ninja attacks in Indonesia to musical trends in Japan, and from the politics of art patronage to shifting marriage patterns in India. These are written by academics in a variety of fields, including history, anthropology, and political science. And they focus on disparate locations, including South Asia and northeast China. In addition, the issue ends with an array of book reviews. It begins, however, with a series of short pieces that, in varying ways, break from *JAS* tradition. They compose an experimental forum that takes our recently launched “Asia Beyond the Headlines” genre in a new direction, stretching it out from a single-essay format to a multiauthor exchange.

The main essay in this forum is Chinese historian SUSAN R. FERNSEBNER’S “Expo 2010: A Historical Perspective,” and it is similar in length and style to the “Asia Beyond the Headlines” essays that we have been carrying since February 2009—though this is the first by a cultural historian. It is followed, as previous works in the genre were not, by a trio of brief comments that bring in other issues and other settings. One of these is the work of a member of Fernsebner’s discipline, but the other two are not, and one of these, in a break with at least recent precedent for this publication, is by a journalist rather than an academic—though admittedly, as would be expected, one with a decidedly scholarly bent. The title of the forum is “Transnational Extravanzas,” and though it begins with a look at China’s role in two World’s Fair-like events (a 1910 national exhibition and the 2010 World Expo that is still, as I write this foreword, in its first week), it does not focus only on that country. By way of the three commentaries, the forum takes readers to India—where a large, though not quite Olympics-scale international multisport competition will take place in October—and even further afield, in another break with common *JAS* practice, to South Africa, where the World Cup finals were held this summer.

The inspiration for the forum is twofold. First, hosting large-scale spectacles has been an important part of China’s resurgence to global centrality, something that was revealed most clearly by the Beijing Games and is being foregrounded

once more by the Shanghai Expo. There is value in putting this development into context, in a fashion that combines the expertise of a scholar with a concern for breaking news. Whereas most “Asia Beyond the Headlines” essays to date have focused on the immediate past, “Expo 2010: A Historical Perspective,” takes us back a century to give us what might be called an “Asia *Behind* the Headlines” point of view—an angle that we will continue to explore.

The second inspiration for the forum is that it has become clear that events such as the 2008 Games (China’s first Olympics) and now the 2010 Expo (China’s first World’s Fair, which began on May Day and will run until October 31) are part of a larger phenomenon that is multinational. Namely, there has been upsurge in the frequency with which ambitiously imagined and intensively promoted (hyped, indeed) mega-events (to borrow a term used most often by sociologists) are being held outside Western Europe and North America. From the mid-1800s through the early 1900s, when World’s Fairs were the most important international extravaganzas and the Olympics trailed behind them in significance (a relationship that was turned upside down in the middle of the twentieth century), these spectacles were held almost exclusively in Western European cities or, a bit later, in North American ones (the Old World’s monopoly on international exhibitions was broken in 1876, when an impressive one was held in Philadelphia to mark the centennial of the founding of the United States, and the first New World Olympics came in 1904).

Important shifts in this early pattern during the mid- to late 1900s, with the Summer Olympics in Tokyo in 1964 and the Osaka World Expo in 1970 (the first events in these two traditions to be held in Asia) standing out as important precedent-setting gatherings. Recently, however, there has been a noticeable increase in the number of such events that are being held in what is sometimes called the “Global South”—and the trilogy of Shanghai, New Delhi, and South African. Such overlapping of mega-events is unprecedented.

The commentators for the forum include KALYANI MENON-SEN, an India-based activist and specialist in women’s studies and urban development whose essay is titled “Delhi and CWG2010: The Games Behind the Games”). PALLAVI AIYAR, a journalist who lived in Beijing during its Olympic year and now lives and reports from Brussels, offers a contribution titled “From 2008 to 2010: Big-Ticket Spectacles in China and India.” Finally, DILIP MENON, a scholar of Indian history who has taught in New Delhi and recently moved to Johannesburg to run a new African center for South Asian studies, is represented here by “An Ordinary Country.” This group of contributors approach the topic at hand from a variety of contrasting yet complementary perspectives, bringing in issues ranging from forced relocations to shifts in the status of different countries in an era of globalization.

Moreover, as the snippets of biographical information provided here illustrate, they are scattered around the globe. This reflects very nicely the Association for Asian Studies’ concern with internationalization. It also fits in well with the robustly transnational nature of the genres of spectacle that the forum addresses.

Following the forum comes MARK J. RAVINA’s “The Apocryphal Suicide of Saigō Takamori: Samurai, *Seppuku*, and the Politics of Legend,” a study of the

rise of a political myth and the strange stories that circulated after a famous Meiji's figure's death. It is in part a whodunit—Ravina argues that we are dealing here with murder rather than suicide—and in part a study of the interplay of fantasy and nationalism.

Violence and imagination also figure centrally in “The Great Rumor Mill: Gossip, Mass Media, and the Ninja Fear” by NICHOLAS HERRIMAN. The setting in this case is East Java in the late 1990s, and the author's concern is with uncovering and explicating the different roles that rumors circulating through oral and written forms played in creating an atmosphere of paranoia.

Following Herriman's article comes “Inauthentic Sovereignty: Law and Legal Institutions in Manchukuo” by THOMAS DAVID DUBOIS. Revisiting a short-lived state that has been the subject of much attention lately, the author uses the case of law and legal institutions to cast new light on the enduring question of how best to assess the complex place of Manchukuo within the Japanese empire, as a political entity that was neither autonomous nor a straightforward colony.

Legal issues remain the concern in next article, NARENDRA SUBRAMANIAN's “Making Family and Nation: Hindu Marriage Law in Early Postcolonial India,” though now, as the title indicates, it is country that has ceased to be part of an empire that is the object of attention. The author's concern is with the interplay between local traditions and globally circulating ideas, and the essay places the Indian experience into comparative perspective, through attention to the dilemmas faced by legal reformers in postcolonial settings around the world.

We stay in the same country but turn to quite different issues in “Egalitarian Developmentalism, Communist Mobilization, and the Question of Caste in Kerala State, India” by J. DEVIKA. The author's aim is to complicate and, indeed, undermine some aspects of the standard vision of the “Kerala model” by highlighting the workings of various forms of elitism.

After two articles on India, the issue closes with two on Japan, each of which is concerned with modes of expression. First, we have LAURA HEIN's “Modern Art Patronage and Democratic Citizenship in Japan,” in which the central figure is Wakimura Yoshitarō, a fascinating economist and supporter of the arts who, according to the author, was “committed to taming capitalism” and envisioned museums as spaces that could foster an egalitarian ethos.

This issue ends with SHAWN BENDER's “Drumming from Screen to Stage: Ondekoza's *Odaiko* and the Reimaging of Japanese Taiko,” which includes some striking visual materials. The author's goal is to shed light “on the potent mixture of folkloric instrumentation and modern sensibility that distinguishes contemporary taiko drumming,” a combination of local and imported motifs that influences the clothing worn by performers as well as the music they play.

—JNW

## Forthcoming Articles in *JAS* 69:4 (November 2010)

Presidential Address: Asia's Religious Resurgence: A Southeast Asian Perspective on Religious Fervor in a Pluralist Age

ROBERT HEFNER

Respecting Different Ways of Life: A Daoist Ethics of Virtue in the *Zhuangzi*

YONG HUANG

The Transformation of the Shari'a under the British Raj: Legal Orientalism and the Search for Authenticity

ELISA GIUNCHI

Blank Spaces and Secret Histories: Questions of Historiographic Epistemology in Medieval China

JACK CHEN

Making Space for Islam: Religion, Science, and Politics in Contemporary Malaysia

DARREN C. ZOOK

Asia Redux: Conceptualizing a Region for Our Times

PRASENJIT DUARA

Rape on Trial in Early Colonial India, 1805–1857

ELIZABETH KOLSKY

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