

Editorial Foreword 72.4 (November 2013)

OUR COVER

Our cover image is a photograph of two *maneki-neko*, beckoning cats who are bidding good fortune; they are inscribed with “*kizuna*,” the phrase that reminds us “we are all in this together.” The photo was taken in the Shizugawa village marketplace in the town of Minami Sanriku-chō in Tohoku, Japan by THEODORE C. BESTOR, who also authored this issue’s presidential address. Bestor took the photo in 2012 while working on disaster recovery projects; some of the results of those projects and further discussion of this image can be found in his address, beginning on page 763.

PRESIDENTIAL ADDRESS

This issue begins, as does every November issue, with a written version of the Presidential Address given at the annual spring meeting of the Association for Asian Studies. The author is anthropologist THEODORE C. BESTOR, and his topic is the ways that catastrophes can not only transform lives and locales, but also force a thorough rethinking of what scholars had long thought they knew about a topic and a place. Titled “Disasters, Natural and Unnatural: Reflections on March 11, 2011, and Its Aftermath,” it is a thought-provoking, soul-searching look at the events that literally shook Japan two-and-a-half years ago and continue, according to Bestor, to send metaphoric shock waves across the field of Japanese studies. Like so many Presidential Addresses, while it is about one part of Asia and comes from the perspective of a particular discipline, this one has much to offer scholars working on completely different parts of the continent in disciplines far removed from the author’s. When he asks whether events in the present can alter the past by unsettling notions of what we thought we understood, Bestor is probing an issue that, in my own field, I can imagine earlier generations of historians of China asking themselves at various points in the 1970s, first when Mao met Nixon and later when it began to become clear just how thoroughly the country had been torn asunder by the upheavals of the Cultural Revolution. Similarly, when he refers to mass media coverage of the tsunami reminding him of the curiously long half-life of some antiquated understanding of the culture he studies, and of misleading ideas from popular books remaining influential even after decades of thoroughgoing criticism of them by scholars, Bestor is referring to a phenomenon that specialists in other Asian settings, ranging from Bali to Bangladesh, will readily recognize.

ASIA BEYOND THE HEADLINES

The Presidential Address is followed by a pair of connected “Asia Beyond the Headlines” essays on Cambodia that can be seen as continuing the theme of dealing with catastrophe—in this case, the political repression visited on the country by the Khmer Rouge. The first of these, political scientist KHEANG UN’s “The Khmer Rouge Tribunal: A Politically Compromised Search for Justice,” explores the workings and impact of an organization given the Herculean charge of trying not only to punish those who have done great wrong, but also to shed light on a horrific “regime’s motives,” “promote national healing and reconciliation,” and by doing all this “serve as a model for a more transparent and fair system of justice.” Paired with it is a ground-level look at the quotidian aspects of the reverberations of political crisis, in the form of anthropologist EVE MONIQUE ZUCKER’s “Trauma and Its Aftermath: Local Configurations of Reconciliation in Cambodia and the Khmer Rouge Tribunal,” which offers a vivid account of such things as the way that villagers deal with living in close proximity to someone they see as having been responsible for terrible acts of violence during a past period of political terror.

A third and final “Asia Beyond the Headlines” article shifts attention from Southeast Asia to India and from violence to finance and bureaucracy. Written by RONOJOY SEN, who holds a doctorate in political science but has often worked as a journalist, it is titled “Going Beyond Mere Accounting: The Changing Role of India’s Auditor General” and explores the surprising surge to political “prominence” of an organization that had spent “most of its 150-year-plus existence” being seen as a “relatively unglamorous bookkeeping institution.” The key, Sen argues, lies in a “deep disenchantment with the political class” that has allowed and even encouraged organizations seen as less tainted than politicians and parties to “enter into areas that would normally have been in the legislative and executive domain.” In an addendum at the end of the issue, Sen provides an update on developments that came to light as we went to press.

JAS AT AAS: GLOBAL CAPITALISMS IN ASIA

These four opening essays are followed by our latest “JAS at AAS” forum, which, like its predecessors, brings together pieces that were presented at a special panel, in this case a roundtable devoted to “Global Capitalisms in Asia,” that was convened as part of the annual meetings and organized by this periodical’s editorial team. In this case, the forum is comprised of a dialog between a pair of anthropologists, both of whom work at the interstices between their discipline and other fields, ranging from economics to religious studies. The first piece is JOHN OBSURG’s “Global Capitalisms in Asia: Beyond State and Market in China,” which examines, from multiple perspectives, the way that several waves of market-oriented reforms have transformed Chinese social and cultural life and created a hybrid and hard-to-describe economic system. Paired with it is DAROMIR RUDNYCKY’s “From Wall Street to *Halal* Street: Malaysia and the Globalization of Islamic Finance,” which opens a unique window onto equally novel but less frequently headline-garnering economic developments, such as the “conspicuous growth of Islamic financial services” in cities such as Kuala Lumpur, the “main arteries” of

which are now filled with ads that “seek to lure” passersby to sign up for “Bank Islam credit cards.”

RESEARCH ARTICLES

The first regular research article in the issue, also by an anthropologist, is AGNIESZKA JONIAK-LÜTHI’s “The Han *Minzu*, Fragmented Identities, and Ethnicity,” which explores the fissures, rooted in factors such as native place and occupation, that make China’s majority ethnic group much less homogeneous than it is sometimes imagined to be. Based on interviews with present-day members of the Han ethnicity, which is said to include over 90 percent of China’s population, it demonstrates that today, as in the past, this category is very far indeed from being a massive, coherent bloc.

The next research article, which moves us from China to South Korea and from anthropology to history, is HWASOOK NAM’s “Progressives and Labor under Park Chung Hee: A Forgotten Alliance in 1960s South Korea,” a study of an unusual “militant shipbuilding union” that gained a great deal of public support during the Park Chung Hee period, which is often associated with both economic development and strong political control. The author argues for the need to locate activities such as those of this union in the “fluid terrain between the top-down dreams of the Park regime and the bottom-up aspirations of Park’s contemporary South Koreans.”

This look at South Korea is followed by a very different sort of historical essay, “Exchange and the Protection of Java’s Antiquities: A Transnational Approach to the Problem of Heritage in Colonial Java” by cultural historians MARIEKE BLOEMBERGEN and MARTIJN EICKHOFF. The authors’ concern is with how the meanings of “site-related objects” change as they move through space and control of them passes to different people and institutions. Drawing on theorists of exchange, such as Marcel Mauss, they place contemporary debates about heritage and ruins into a valuable long-term perspective by focusing on case studies from the time around 1900.

The issue closes with two fascinating articles that take us back to China, focusing by turns on the activities of emperors in imperial times and the treatment of political outcasts in the 1950s. The first of this final pair of essays, literary scholar KEITH MCMAHON’s “The Institution of Polygamy in the Chinese Imperial Palace,” argues that rulers took on multiple wives as a form of duty, for the need to do everything possible to “extend the patriline” was viewed as “following a hallowed directive.” Closing the issue—or, rather, the part that precedes our usual array of thoughtful reviews of new books dealing with varied parts of Asia—is historian AMINDA M. SMITH’s “Thought Reform and the Unreformable: Reeducation Centers and the Rhetoric of Opposition in the Early People’s Republic of China,” which looks at how, early in its period of rule, the Communist Party dealt with “individuals accused of activities like prostitution, begging, and petty crime” as it tried to figure out and codify just who did and did not constitute “The People,” a crucially important category in the new political order.

—JNW

Forthcoming Articles in *JAS* 73.1 (February 2014)

Reflections

Partition: The “Pulsing Heart that Grieved”

GERALD LARSON

Idols in the Archive

MANAN AHMED ASIF

Research Articles

Conflicting Nostalgia: Performing *The Tale of Ch'unhyang* (春香傳) in the Japanese Empire

NAYOUNG AIMEE KWON

Islamic Reform, the Family, and Knowledge Networks Linking Mecca to Southeast Asia in the Nineteenth Century

FRANCIS R. BRADLEY

Vishalyakarani as *Eupatorium ayapana*: Retro-botanizing, Embedded Traditions, and Multiple Historicities of Plants in Colonial Bengal, 1890–1940

PROJIT BIHARI MUKHARJI

Magic, Shōjo, and Metamorphosis: Magical Girl Anime and Challenges of Changing Gender Identities in Japanese Society

KUMIKO SAITO

“Affluence of the Heart”: Wastefulness and the Search for Meaning in Millennial Japan

EIKO MARUKO SINIAWER

Corpse, Stone, Door, Text

ERIK MUEGLER

Nationalist China’s “Great Game”: Leveraging Foreign Explorers in Xinjiang, 1927–35

JUSTIN JACOBS