

## Editorial Foreword

### OUR COVER

Tulsidas Borkar playing the harmonium. Photo by Rajar Parrikar. Used by permission.

### AN OVERVIEW OF THE ISSUE

One goal of the *Journal of Asian Studies* has always been to showcase diverse approaches to varied parts of Asia, so it is natural for a volume to include essays by scholars who work in a range of disciplines and focus on a host of specific settings. Due to many factors, the same cannot always be said of individual issues—but it certainly can of this one. Readers will find included here essays by, in turn, a political scientist who specializes in the study of Myanmar, an ethnomusicologist working on India, a pair of Japan specialists (one trained in history, the other in political science), a cultural historian interested in Korea when it was part of the Japanese Empire, a geographer whose focus is Sri Lanka, and a scholar of Japanese literature. No issue can bring in every discipline and every region, but the diversity here still seems well worth flagging.

### ASIA BEYOND THE HEADLINES

This issue opens, as many recent ones have, with a look at a contemporary issue: everyday politics in Myanmar, the country formerly known as Burma. Written by political scientist ARDETH MAUNG THAWNGHMUNG, who is based in the United States but draws here on her fieldwork experiences in Myanmar, the essay stresses the importance of taking an expanded view of the “political” when dealing with repressive states. Without denying the importance of the struggle by Aung San Suu Kyi and others to bring about systemic change, the author insists we also pay attention to “efforts by Myanmarese citizens to carve out space for independent, meaningful action” via activities that “stop short of being outright forms of dissent.”

### RESEARCH ARTICLES

The first article in the main section of the issue is ethnomusicologist MATTHEW RAHAIM'S “That Ban(e) of Indian Music: Hearing Politics in the Harmonium,” which explores the political debates swirling around a musical instrument that is

ubiquitous in South Asia. Harmoniums are used to “accompany nearly ever genre of vocal music” in India, Rahaim notes, including “devotional singing among Muslims, Hindus, Christians, and Sikhs.” And yet, contrary to what one might imagine, it has not been “embraced as a symbol of musical nationhood, as a common thread that unites the diversity of Indian musics.” Quite to the contrary, it has frequently been seen as the “embodiment of everything Indian music is not,” as something that is “dangerously *un-Indian*.” In exploring the basis for this contradiction, Rahaim provides readers with a wealth of information about how this omnipresent “portable reed-organ” has been and still is used in India, as well as the debates that have swirled around the notion that it is too “Western” to be treated as conveying an “Indian” sound, no matter how it is played.

The next article, “Hatako Comes Home: Civil Society and Nuclear Power in Japan” was accepted for publication last year on the basis of its high quality. One thing that gave it special appeal was the skillful way that the authors, historian MARTIN DUSINBERRE and political scientist DANIEL P. ALDRICH, combine discussion of a television drama with exploration of municipal debates about development late in the twentieth century, and shifts between the 1940s and 1970s in popular memory of World War II. That remains a compelling aspect of the essay, but now, in the light of the renewed attention that Japanese nuclear power plants have received in the aftermath of the tsunami that devastated the country in March, the piece has a special kind of topical relevance. Much has already been written that strives to place Japan’s current crisis into historical perspective—for one elegant example of such writing, see JAS Associate Editor Jordan Sand’s April 28, 2011, contribution to the “Diary” feature in the *London Review of Books*, which looks back to responses to an 1855 tsunami—and we expect to deal with this topic in future in these pages. “Hatoko Comes Home,” though, runs now as a fascinating example of a scholarly work that, while written with the past in mind, has inadvertently acquired a “Beyond the Headlines” dimension.

The third article in the main section of the journal, JUNUCHIDA’S “A Sentimental Journey: Mapping the Interior Frontier of Japanese Settlers in Colonial Korea,” is set firmly in the past. And yet, it opens with a striking question that could be asked of many contemporary settings—and is indeed asked about Myanmar in this issue’s “Asia Beyond the Headlines” piece, albeit with regard to a tightly controlled setting that is not a colonial one. “In what ways,” Uchida asks, “can we talk about colonialism without reducing complex local human interactions to relations of power, dominance, and hegemony?” Her strategy for working through this issue is to draw on recent work on the history of emotions and sentimentality, in order to explore “the role of affect and sentiment in shaping cross-cultural encounters in late colonial Korea.” Using memoirs and oral histories of “young Japanese settlers who grew up in Seoul,” she forays into “‘murky worlds’ of emotions, desires, beliefs, dispositions, and perception” with fascinating results.

The issue then moves from a far northern to a far southern part of Asia, with “Islam, Politics and Violence in Eastern Sri Lanka,” a piece by BART KLEM, a doctoral student in political geography studying at the University of Zurich. In his “case study of the Muslim community in Akkaraipatto on Sri Lanka’s war-ridden east coast,” Klem tries to solve the puzzle of why, despite the hostility

they face on many fronts, “Sri Lankan Muslims...continue to be internally divided.” While focusing tightly on one setting, the author places his finding within a broad comparative framework, drawing at various points on recent studies of Islamic populations in different parts of the world.

Closing out the issue—or, rather, the section of it that precedes our regular array of book reviews—is HOYT LONG’S “Performing the Village Square in Inter-war Japan: Toward a Hidden History of Public Space,” which examines the writings of Japanese provincial writer Miyazawa Kenji (1896-1933). Placing his discussion in dialogue with previous theoretically minded work on public space by everyone from sociologist Richard Sennett to historian Dipesh Chakrabarty, Long highlights the value of being attentive to “public space as an object of the literary and theatrical imagination,” especially in the kinds of rural settings that often get left out of accounts of civic life.

In this issue, we are happy to include a book review essay, an occasional feature in these pages. BRUCE FULTON provides us with a review of a number of English translations of Korean novels, providing guideposts to readers and those interested in using the works in a classroom setting. Our thanks and appreciation to him for his contribution and to our book review editor for Korea, Seungsook Moon, for commissioning this piece.

—JNW

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## Forthcoming Articles in *JAS* 70:4 (November 2011)

### *Asia Beyond the Headlines*

East Timor Ten Years On  
GEOFFREY ROBINSON

### *Trends*

Blogging Alone: China, the Internet, and the Democratic Illusion?  
JAMES LEIBOLD

Response to “Blogging Alone” Technology and Its Contents: Issues in the Study of the Chinese Internet  
YANG GUOBIN

### *Roundtable Discussion*

Victor B. Lieberman’s *Strange parallels: Southeast Asia in Global Context*, volumes 1 and 2  
VICTOR B. LIEBERMAN, JOHN WILLS, LEONARD ANDAYA, ERIC TAGLIACCOZZO, VICTOR H. MAIR, RAMYA SREENIVASAN, CAROLYN CARTIER, AND ROBERT HELLYER

*Research Articles*

The Portrait's Journey: The Image, Social Communication and Martyr-Making in Colonial India

KAMA MACLEAN

Pagodas and Prophets: Contesting Sacred Space and Power among Buddhist Karen in Karen State

YOKO HAYAMI

*Presidential Address*

Environment, Law, and Democracy in India

K. (SHIVI) SIVARAMAKRISHNAN

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