

Editorial Foreword

OUR COVER

This month's cover illustration includes a map of the South China Sea from page 118 of the May 1939 issue of *Le Monde colonial illustré*, courtesy of our author Gerard Sasges, and an illustration from Wikimedia Commons of a portion of a Qing scroll on display at the Hong Kong Maritime Museum.¹

IN THIS ISSUE

We begin this issue—and the seventy-fifth year of publication of this journal, which was launched in 1941 as *The Far Eastern Quarterly*—with two pieces on recent and current Chinese Communist Party leaders and their policies. This seems to be a particularly fitting moment to run such essays, since in the coming months it is likely that many scholars and journalists inside and outside of Asia will be reflecting on two upcoming anniversaries associated with a past Communist Party leader: Mao Zedong. I have in mind the fiftieth anniversary of the start of the Cultural Revolution (often said to have begun in May 1966, though other beginning points as far back as 1964 are sometimes asserted) and the fortieth anniversary of Mao's death (in September 1976—there is no question of how to date that event). The articles opening this issue focus not on Mao but rather on Xi Jinping (who has been head of the Party since November 2012 and head of state since March 2013) and Deng Xiaoping (the most powerful Chinese leader of the late 1970s through the mid-1990s, though never formally either chairman or president). Still, in both the passing references they make to similarities and differences between Mao and in the ways they approach broad issues of continuity and discontinuity between different eras, they provide much of value to those interested in putting the legacies of the events that took place four and five decades ago into perspective.

The first of this opening pair of essays is a contribution to our Asia Beyond the Headlines genre titled “Corruption, Anticorruption, and the Transformation of Political Culture in Contemporary China.” In it, political scientist MACABE KELIHER and sociologist HSINCHAO WU look at the high-profile drive to punish officials accused of taking bribes and otherwise misusing their positions of power that has been launched by Xi. The authors argue that, to make sense of this campaign, which has been assessed in widely varying ways by different scholars and journalists, it is crucial to note both the

¹“Piracy of the South China Sea” by triotriotrio, licensed under CC BY-SA 3.0 (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/3.0>), via Wikimedia Commons, https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File%3APiracy_of_the_South_China_Sea.JPG (accessed December 18, 2015).

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ways that it continues and the ways that it breaks from anticorruption efforts of Xi's immediate predecessors. While Xi's predecessors called corruption a scourge, they did not go as far, the essay claims, in targeting not just individuals but the "culture that enables" corruption "to fester." The authors insist that "rarely" in recent years have "initiatives" of this kind been "pursued with this amount of vigor," and claim that the "last time similar actions were part of a larger strategy to overhaul the political culture was in the Maoist period."

Following this *Asia Beyond the Headlines* commentary is a Trends essay by historian CHARLES W. HAYFORD that looks at three important recent biographies of the dominant figure of the post-Mao and pre-Xi era. Titled "Where's the Omelet?" (a play upon the famous phrase regarding the impossibility of making the eponymous breakfast dish without breaking eggs), it is subtitled "Bad King Deng and the Challenges of Biography and History" (signaling its interest in both a figure and a genre). Hayford offers both an assessment of a trio of specific works on Deng—by, respectively, Ezra Vogel, Michael Dillon, and the team of Alexander V. Pantsov and Steven I. Levine—and general reflections on the methods, aims, and status within historical studies of biographies, specifically those of famous and, in the eyes of some, infamous figures. Hayford brings in comments on popular and scholarly works on other Chinese leaders, such as Mao and Chiang Kai-shek. He also addresses the ethical and stylistic issues that can arise as authors grapple with telling the life stories and assessing the reigns of figures associated with violent acts of repression.

FORUM ON THE U.S. MILITARY PRESENCE IN NORTHEAST ASIA

This cluster of essays was the brainchild of sociologist SEUNGSOOK MOON, one of our Associate Editors, and begins with an introductory essay by her. It can be read as a sequel to the examinations of the seventieth anniversary of Japan's surrender that appeared in the last two issues. One legacy of the end of World War II was the creation of American military bases and the ongoing presence of U.S. troops in parts of Asia that were formerly part of the Japanese empire. The contributors explore varied dimensions of the ongoing American military presence in Northeast Asia. Following Moon's introduction comes CHRIS AMES'S "*Amerikamun*: Consuming America and Ambivalence toward the U.S. Presence in Postwar Okinawa," the italicized phrase in the title of which is Ryukyuan for "American things"; then HAN SANG KIM'S "*My Car* Modernity: What the U.S. Army Brought to South Korean Cinematic Imagination about Modern Mobility," which shifts attention from consumer items to popular culture; and then SARAH KOVNER'S "The Soundproofed Superpower: American Bases and Japanese Communities, 1945–1972," an effort to bring ideas associated with diplomatic and social history together in grappling with patterns of protest.

RESEARCH ARTICLES

The rest of the issue, before our array of book reviews on topics from across Asia, is made up of four essays that deal with East Asia, Central Asia, South Asia, and Southeast

Asia, respectively. Between them, they engage with maps, songs, petitions, and many other sorts of texts, while also drawing in two cases on interviews. Temporally, they take readers from the seventeenth century to the present, while topically they explore everything from policies related to religious expression, to disputes over claims to islands, to the interplay between ethnic identity and environmental concerns.

First up is historian XING HANG's "The Shogun's Chinese Partners: The Alliance between Tokugawa Japan and the Zheng Family in Seventeenth-Century Maritime East Asia." This is both a close look at a particular seventeenth-century partnership between Japan's rulers and a powerful organization based on Taiwan and in southeastern China (whose most famous member was Koxinga), and an effort to use that example to argue for thinking about the Tokugawa "isolation policy" as more flexible and dynamic than it is often imagined to have been.

Next up is religious studies scholar BENJAMIN SCHONTHAL's "Environments of Law: Islam, Buddhism, and the State in Contemporary Sri Lanka." In it, the author begins with a 2005 petition protesting a very specific issue, "the fact that a local Assistant Superintendent of Police ... had refused to issue a new loudspeaker permit" for a mosque, which a group claimed violated its members' "rights to freedom of religion and equal protection under the law." The article then proceeds to place the issues at stake into historical context, while teasing out the ways that this "Kapuwatta Mosque case offered an opportunity for lawyers, journalists, and other commentators to reflect broadly on the role of the state in regulating religious life."

Following this is "Absent Maps, Marine Science, and the Reimagination of the South China Sea, 1922–1939," in which GERARD SASGES of the National University of Singapore puts one aspect of contemporary disputes over small Southeast Asian islands into historical perspective. More specifically, zeroing in on a body of water with islands over which no fewer than seven different nations now assert claims, he uses "cartographic representations" from the era of French colonial control over Indochina to "historicize the claims of one of the [current] dispute's participants, the Socialist Republic of Vietnam." His overarching goal is to suggest that "attention to the biographies of maps could be an effective means of deconstructing and denaturalizing many of the territorial claims that drive the dispute in the South China Sea today."

Finishing off the articles section is NIMROD BARANOVITCH's "Ecological Degradation and Endangered Ethnicities: China's Minority Environmental Discourses as Manifested in Popular Songs," an essay that focuses on the lyrics of Mongolian, Uyghur, and Tibetan songwriters. Much has been "written in recent years about the environmental degradation in China's ethnic minority regions," according to the author, but the emphasis in these works has tended to be on policies and material issues, whereas his essay "shifts the focus to the more symbolic realm of discourse and identity." His analysis of the words of individual songs is supplemented by "interviews with the musicians who created them."

—JNW

Selected Forthcoming Articles in *JAS* 75.2 (May 2016)

Reconciling Nations and Citizenship: Meaning, Creativity, and the Performance of a North Korean Troupe in South Korea

SUNHEE KOO

“World History,” “Itihāsa,” and Memory: Rabindranath Tagore’s Musical Program in the Age of Nationalism

SAURAV DASTHAKUR

Robert Bellah’s Search for Community and Ethical Modernity in Japan Studies

AMY BOROVOY

Beyond Internal Orientalism: Dance and Nationality Discourse in the Early People’s Republic of China, 1949–1954

EMILY E. WILCOX

Establishing Hồ Chí Minh’s Cult: Vietnamese Traditions and Their Transformations

OLGA DROR

Cosmopolitan Capitalism: Local State-Society Relations in China and India

KELLEE S. TSAI

Precarization or Empowerment? Reflections on Recent Labor Unrest in China

CHING KWAN LEE