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Editorial Foreword

Our Cover

Asia, as it appears on an Arabic map of "The Islamic World and the Routes to Mecca" published in 1911 (1329 AH) in Muḥammad Labîb al-Batanûnî's *al-Riḥla al-ḥijâziyya*, 2nd edition (Cairo: Maṭba`at al-Jamâliyya).

The Cultural Politics of Song

How should we connect popular expressive forms to power? Our first two essays take very different approaches to answering this question. In his account of the "Trịnh Công Sơn phenomenon," John C. Schafer foregrounds biographical particulars and the appeal of humanist themes to explain the popularity of a Vietnamese "antiwar" singer and pop composer. In Schafer's view, Trịnh Công Sơn's capacity to evoke themes from Buddhism and French philosophy allowed him to movingly address the dilemmas of the human condition, beginning with his mournful songs of the 1960s and 1970s. Although the Republic of Vietnam banned these songs, they continued to circulate in cassette form among middle-class listeners. Following reunification in 1975, the Socialist Republic of Vietnam was uneasy about the sentimental lyrics of this Southern songwriter. Schafer argues that Sơn was able to adapt his music to the needs of the socialist state. By the mid-1980s and 1990s, Trịnh Công Sơn emerged as a national figure, treasured for his lyrical expressions of hope, longing, and love. In Schafer's analysis, Trịnh Công Sơn's lyrics have an intrinsic appeal that transcends political goals and constraints.

E. Taylor Atkins sees no such transcendence in the case of "Arirang," a folk song that is considered quintessentially Korean yet has become immensely popular in Japan. To the contrary, Atkins situates the transnational appeal of this song in the cultural and political strains of the colonial encounter between Korea and Japan (especially during 1910–45). In Atkins' view, the song's status as an emblem of Korean national identity depended on Japanese imperialism and mass culture. For Koreans, the song expressed sorrow, indignation, and resistance in the face of Japanese subjugation. For Japanese—anxious over the transformative effects of modernity—"Arirang" revealed "uncomfortable truths about Japan's abandonment of traditional lifeways." The history of this song, then, gives us a penetrating look at colonial modernity in Asia, especially with respect to the colonial and imperial relationships that shaped cultural production and consumption across Northeast Asia.

Placing Southeast Asia in the World circa 1900

The circulation of newspapers, gazetteers, and atlases across the globe in the late nineteenth century opened up new vistas for (and about) Asia's reading publics. Michael Laffan suggests that Islamic print capitalism made it possible for readers in Cairo and Mecca to learn about Muslim Southeast Asia and its colonial subjugation. Reports in the Arabic press led some to see Southeast Asia as "another Andalusia" that would inevitably be lost to European and Christian encroachment. Meanwhile, for "Jâwî" and Malay students and pilgrims in the Middle East, Arabic papers brought them news of their homelands, as well as questionable characterizations of their region, their religiosity, their command of Arabic, and their need for reform. Whether written by Arabs or Southeast Asians writing in Arabic, newspaper reports on Southeast Asia and Asia played an important role in the emerging public spheres within the Muslim world.

Helen Creese tells a story about the indigenous response to print capitalism and Western styles of modernity in precolonial Bali. Creese examines three Balinese texts: the *World Atlas Kakawin*, a poetic treatise on world geography that draws on Old Javanese epic tradition, a Malay atlas, and images of the European winter; the *Treatise on the Realm of France*, a reflective and critical geopolitical text that draws on gazetteers and newspapers; and the *Tale of the Russo-Japanese War*, a historical poem inspired by newspaper reports and tantric sex manuals, written around 1904–5 by an author calling himself I Kontol, or "Mr. Penis." These quirky, curious texts are Balinese reworkings of material from foreign printed sources, and they represent attempts to translate and come to terms with the modern by inscribing it within familiar textual genres.

Legacies

This issue of *JAS* introduces "Legacies," the rubric for what I hope will be an appealing series of occasional essays and studies exploring the intellectual history and influence of our field. Our first essay is by William T. Rowe. Rowe reappraises the historiographical assumptions underlying the writings of Owen Lattimore, whose work on Inner Asia, China, and Japan was crucial to his vision of comparative history and the understanding of global processes. "The larger subject of Lattimore's historiography," Rowe observes, "is a single, intelligible global process." Lattimore was interested in the structures and forces that organize human history as a "vast universal tragedy"—not individuals or political regimes, but the interrelations among environment, society, culture, race, and economy. Although Lattimore's writings could be reductionist and orientalist at times, he stands out as someone whose deep acquaintance with Asia allowed him to challenge "the unity of history" and to pioneer a comparative "world history."

Trends in Research

JAS often features "state of the field" essays. We publish one here under the rubric of "Trends in Research." Tobie Meyer-Fong assesses the growing field

of scholarship on publishing culture in late imperial China. She notes that the field has moved away from an interest in the history of print technologies; instead, the recent trend is "to write histories of the *Chinese* book as a social and cultural artifact, as a political force, and as a site of localized reading practices." If the studies remain China centered in their approach and do not yet inform a comparative world history of the book, their emphasis on the book and its place in circuits of consumption and exchange sheds light on the social and cultural forces in late imperial China and on the social position of that period's readers and publishers.

Review Essay

Most book reviews in *JAS* are quite short—perhaps 800–1,000 words—and must remain so. Yet as scholars, we often hunger for lengthier essays that engage with several books or with a broad and monumental study that seems destined to push our conversations in new directions. I have invited our book review editors to commission essays of this kind from time to time, and we are pleased to include in this issue David Shulman's review of Sheldon Pollock's recent book, *The Language of the Gods in the World of Men: Sanskrit, Culture, and Power in Premodern India* (University of California Press, 2006).

—KMG

Forthcoming Articles in *JAS* 66:4 (November 2007)

AAS Presidential Address

Bandits and Kings: Authority in Colonial South Asia
Anand A. Yang

Innovation in Late Colonial India

History in Poetry: Nabinchandra Sen's *Palashir Yuddha* and the Question of Truth
Rosinka Chaudhuri

Tracking the Goddess: Religion, Community, and Identity in the Durga Puja Ceremonies of Nineteenth-Century Calcutta
Tithi Bhattacharya

Out of Tradition: Master Artisans and Economic Change in Colonial India
Tirthankar Roy

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Custom, Class, and Power in Korea, 1862–1945

Taxes, Local Elite, and Rural Populace in the Chinju Uprising of 1862
Sun Joo Kim

Masculinizing the Nation: Gender Ideologies in Traditional Korea and in the 1890s–1900s Korean Enlightenment Discourse
Vladimir Tikhonov

Law and Custom under the Chosōn Dynasty and Colonial Korea: A Comparative Perspective
Marie Seong-Hak Kim

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