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EAST ASIAN HISTORY AND CULTURE REVIEW

Introduction to “Cartographic Anxieties”

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Preamble

Russia and China laid to rest their territorial disputes in 2004,¹ after decades of hostility and the clashes in 1969 that led to the Sino-Soviet split (*Sovietsko-kitaiskii raskol*; *Zhong-Su jiaowu* 中苏交恶) and the hermetic closure of the border. As negotiations were proceeding apace, a rumor started circulating in Russia that some Chinese citizens were surreptitiously throwing rocks and sandbags into the Amur River in an attempt to increase Chinese territory by linking disputed river islands to their side of the river (Lomanov 2004). The majority of commentators were understandably dismissive of these claims—the image of a country as large as China trying to extend its boundaries in such a furtive manner elicited a certain degree of amusement. That so much effort would be expended for the sake of two small islands of no particular significance, and that such attempts should be perceived as a vital threat to Russia—an even larger country—seemed rather puzzling. Yet contemporary conflicts over precisely such minuscule and apparently worthless pieces of real estate are common. For example, the linchpin of the current conflict between India and Pakistan is the snowy expanse of the Siachen Glacier, a Himalayan area unfit for human life over which India and Pakistan have lost over two thousand soldiers since 1984—“97 percent of them killed by the weather and the terrain” (Krishna 1994, 511). This region was left unmapped at Partition, as neither side anticipated it would become a matter of contention. Given the area’s lack of strategic value, combined with its forbidding physical terrain and weather conditions, it was “mutually agreed that there was little need to go beyond map coordinate NJ9842 on the original cease-fire line” (Abraham 2014, 142).

Nations are eager to portray such territorial disputes as steeped in deep history, but struggles over exact lines of demarcation are, for the most part, very recent. The Paracel and Spratly Islands, currently at the center of an embattled dispute between China, Taiwan, Vietnam, Malaysia, Brunei, and the Philippines—and the subject of Edyta Roszko’s article in this special issue of *Cross-Currents*—were unoccupied, and largely unclaimed, until the end of World War II. If the borders of territories that are being disputed are particularly sensitive, even long-settled borders between friendly nations are subject to considerable scrutiny. A new concept of “movable border” has thus recently been introduced by the Italian government into national legislation to track in real time the minute changes to the Austrian-Italian border due to global warming and shrinking Alpine glaciers. A grid of twenty-five solar-powered sensors has now been fitted on the surface of the glacier at the foot of Mount Similaun; every two hours these sensors record data, allowing for an automated mapping of the shifts in the border.²

It is in such attempts that we really grasp the desire to contain and account for the nation’s tiniest fragments—even if said fragments are found in frozen, inaccessible, and uninhabitable locations. In fact, the point here is not concerned with human appropriation or utilization, but with definition; to be a fully sovereign nation, all borders must be defined and incontestable. In the case of Kashmir, disputed by India and Pakistan, the struggle is not to make use of the land at the border, but to reconcile the numerous demarcation lines that have been drawn on paper by multiple actors—specifically the “Line of Control” (LoC) on the western borders of the Himalayas and the “Line of Actual Control” (LAC), the de facto boundary between India and China. A definitive and unambiguous line of demarcation beyond map coordinate NJ9842 represents an ideal that both countries are slowly creeping toward, with the aid of new technologies such as laser fences, motion sensors, CCTV cameras, and a network of radars. Eventually, it is hoped, the border will be fully mapped, with every single inch accounted for. It will never be manned, nor is that the objective.

A similar desire for cartographic appropriation may be seen in the case of the Amur River islands over whose control China and the Soviet Union very nearly went to war in the 1960s. Since the last remaining Sino-Russian territorial dispute was finally resolved in 2008, the Russian half of Bolshoi Ussuriisky Island (known in China as Heixiazi Island 黑瞎子島) has

remained virtually abandoned, a *terrain vague*³ trapped between nostalgic longings for military grandeur and unrealized imaginings of golden futures.

Such cases illustrate just a few of the “cartographic anxieties” facing many, if not all, modern nations. First used by geographer Derek Gregory (1994) and political scientist Sankaran Krishna (1994) in two unrelated publications and with different intentions, this evocative term has a complex lineage and ambiguous positioning. For Gregory, it relates to the theoretical disorientation caused by the politics of geopolitical representation, while for Krishna it is tied to the ubiquity of cartographic metaphors that betrays the violence accompanying the enterprise of nation building.

While the term “cartographic anxieties” is metaphorically loaded, it has remained under-theorized and is used to refer to very different situations. A state can experience anxiety when it is subject to the “cartographic aggression” (de Blij 2012) of another. Anxiety can also be found in the gap between state representations and the imaginaries held by the citizens of that state, or between a dominant majority and an ethnic, religious, or political minority (Cons 2016). Further, it can have different temporal resonances in that the gap can index the nostalgic mourning for past territorial grandeur (Callahan 2010; Cartier 2013), evoke a programmatic future (Fortna 2002), or offer poetic and corporealized visions of the nation-state (Ramaswamy 2010).

The five articles in this special issue explore various political and cultural reverberations of cartography, as well as the complex set of discursive practices in which it is embedded. The discussion framing these papers began as a panel at the 2016 American Association of Geographers’ annual meeting, which included four of the authors featured here (Akin, Billé, Roszko, and Saxer). The contributions focus on China and its neighbors from the perspective of different disciplines: anthropology (Billé, Roszko, Saxer), history (Akin), and history of art (Tsultemin). In addition to bringing a cohesive and coherent focus to the special issue, this geographic convergence is timely given China’s recent economic and political trajectory. In tracing and analyzing the cartographic tremors of a geopolitical formation in flux, the different articles offer an outline of the mechanics of “cartographic anxiety” and together contribute to a better understanding of the affective power of mapping.

Neighboring China

As I was chatting with a Korean friend and fellow anthropologist a few months ago, she confided, half jokingly, that contemporary China reminded her of a “tourist with a backpack in a souvenir store.” Awkward and clumsy, every time it turns around it can’t help knocking something over. This facetious analogy hits home on many levels. Its anthropomorphic imagery echoes a long-standing political tradition in which nations have been depicted as organic entities (see Billé 2014)—or “geobodies,” to use the felicitous term coined by Sino-Thai historian Thongchai Winichakul (1994). The image of an unwieldy presence also evokes the wide disparities between China and its neighbors. China’s sheer size, in terms of territorial footprint, economic power, and demographics, means that the country’s trajectory is ineluctably tied to that of its neighbors and that China’s future economic and political decisions are likely to reverberate far beyond its borders. With China now becoming more assertive and flexing its muscles in the South China Sea, its neighbors to the south—but also to the west and north—are growing increasingly concerned.

These tensions are also exacerbated by China’s traditional view of itself as a cultural core expanding outward (see Billé in this issue). While China’s contemporary management of borders does not differ significantly from that of other states, the relation between the center and the margins remains somewhat more fluid and quasi-imperial in the context of China. In the 1990s and early 2000s, numerous ethnographies were published about the political and cultural ties binding minority groups (*shaoshu minzu* 少数民族) to China’s political center (Blum 2000; Bulag 2002; Gladney 1991, 2004; Hansen 1999; Harrell 2001; Kaup 2000; Litzinger 2000; Schein 2000). This body of work illuminated the complex ways in which the Han majority gains cohesiveness through a dialogical opposition with its “less cultured” internal others, but it also tended to obscure the many fractures that exist on the ground. More recent work has challenged this established imaginary of China as a single expanding cultural core (see Tu 1991) and has also sought to foreground the fractured and multiple deployment of Han-ness (Billé 2009; Hansen 2005; Joniak-Lüthi 2016).

While this vast body of literature has considerably enriched our knowledge of China’s borderlands, the regions immediately neighboring China remain largely unexamined.⁴ This ethnographic gap is surprising given the economic and cultural transformations witnessed by

China over the last two decades and the intense repercussions these transformations have had on China's neighbors. For some Central Asian countries and eastern regions of the former Soviet Union, China's rise has led to nothing less than a complete geopolitical reframing, with Beijing replacing Moscow as political center of gravity and cultural benchmark (Billé 2016a). Transformations in China's other borderlands, such as in Laos (Nyíri 2016) and Myanmar (Egreteau 2016), have been just as dramatic.

The articles in this special issue aim to contribute to the emerging scholarship on these borderlands through a focus on cartographic practices. In recent years, official maps issued by the Chinese government—notably the new “vertical map” that includes much of the South China Sea (on which more below)—have riled many of China's southern neighbors, reigniting deep-rooted anxieties about sovereign control of remote peaks and far-flung islands. Collectively, these articles present an outline of the current geopolitical landscape of a region of increasing strategic importance. By giving precedence to the affective force harnessed and exerted by maps, this special issue also seeks to make a critical intervention into the literature of border studies, notably by unpacking the useful but somewhat nebulous notion of “cartographic anxieties.”

Cartographic ...

Historian David Ludden has famously argued that the cartographic imagination has had such a defining influence that space now only makes sense within national maps: “All histories of all peoples have come to appear inside national maps, in a cookie-cutter world of national geography, the most comprehensive organization of spatial experience in human history” (2003, 1058). Maps are now such an integral part of how we apprehend the world that it is difficult to imagine life without them. They have effectively become “second nature” (Strandsbjerg 2010, 11). Yet map reading is far from intuitive, and the skills necessary to interpret maps need to be formally acquired (Hewitt 2011, 167). As cartographer Denis Wood reminds us, the predominance of maps is in fact very recent; almost all of them have been made in the last hundred years, and the vast majority in the past few decades (2010, 20). That rulers of vast territories, from Charlemagne to Genghis Khan, from Egyptian pharaohs to Roman emperors, were able to rule without maps is simply unimaginable today (Wood 2010, 17–18).

As historian David Buisseret has pointed out, whereas in 1400 very few people except navigators used maps, by 1600 maps had become indispensable to those in a wide range of

professions (1992, 1). The sudden proliferation of maps at a crucial historical juncture prompted Wood to assert that maps do not originate in “some primal instinct ‘to communicate a sense of place, some sense of *here* in relation to *there*,’ but in the needs of nascent states to take on form and organize their many interests” (2010, 8, italics in the original). This was greatly facilitated by the emergence of what historian and political scientist Benedict Anderson (1991) called “print capitalism,” the printing revolution having allowed for the first time thousands, and perhaps tens of thousands, of people throughout Europe to have access to maps.

A frequently cited work is that of Winichakul (1994), who authored one of the first case studies tracing the complex processes whereby a non-European nation, in this case Siam, emerged politically and cartographically between 1850 and 1910. Traditionally, several types of maps had coexisted in the country, the most prominent being the Traiphum map, a symbolic representation of Buddhist cosmology. Diagrammatic guides for military campaigns and maritime commerce that were practice-oriented and secular in nature also existed. While the Traiphum map dominated over other spatial understandings, the maps collectively formed a complex set of knowledge and practices rather than discrete categories (Winichakul 1994, 28). The overall picture they represented was not unlike that of medieval Europe, in the sense that sovereignties were multiple and overlapping and, consequently, Siamese subjects were bound primarily to a specific lord rather than to the state. And since the Siamese court’s concerns were located primarily in tax-paying subjects rather than in territory, borders were seen as a matter for the local people to decide. In fact, the question of boundaries is completely absent from the 1826 treaty with Britain (Winichakul 1994, 64), since sovereignty and borders were not coterminous for the Siamese court (1994, 77).

In Siam, as elsewhere,⁵ maps gradually became the dominant visual narrative. As Wood has written, a nation requires firm boundaries in order to be recognizable as such (2010, 32). In addition to having a flag, an anthem, and a currency, possessing well-defined borders is an essential constituent of this national tool kit. The precise locations of these boundaries may be disputed by neighbors, but these differences of opinion do not appear on national maps. On maps created for domestic (and sometimes international) use, there are no question marks, no blank spaces, no territorial overlaps, no *terrae incognitae*. To be recognized as a nation among nations, to gain commensurability, it is imperative that its contour appear incontestable and timeless. That this outline has become central to the nation’s emergence and continued existence is evident

through its iconic and quasi-totemic use. Detached from its geographic context and turned into a “logomap” (Anderson 1991), the national contour is routinely employed as a powerful emblem of the nation. Unsurprisingly, Anderson places the logomap on a par with the census and the museum as a critical practice at the root of the emergence of the nation.

In her fascinating work on Indian cartography, cultural historian Sumathi Ramaswamy (2001, 2008, 2010) retraces through national representations the emergence of “map-mindedness” in India. As she illustrates, Indians in both the colonial and postcolonial period “succumbed to the lure of cartography” (2008, 825), echoing the contemporaneous developments seen in Thailand, China, and elsewhere. While she recognizes that modern patriotism requires important technologies of persuasion and that, undeniably, the map of the national territory is an especially compelling one (2008, 824), Ramaswamy poses a question fundamental to the core concern of this special issue:

How does the scientific map with its representation of “India” as abstract, empty and dead social space foster the sentiment of belonging and possession which is so crucial to the imagined community of the nation? How is it possible for the citizen-subject who obviously stands abstracted from the nation-space, viewing it from a point *outside*, to come to see this space as his “homeland,” *inside* which he belongs... [H]ow can the citizen-subject feel moved enough to give up his life for a map? (2001, 100)

Ramaswamy argues that the logomap constitutes a profoundly unhomely representation of the nation “emptied of quotidian meanings and local attachments and, most consequentially, voided of prior sentiments of longing and belonging” (2008, 824). Her assessment thus closely echoes geographer J. B. Harley’s analysis of the logomap as a “socially empty space” and his more general point that maps tend to privilege space over place (1988, 66). For Ramaswamy, this very lack explains the emergence of what she refers to as “barefoot cartography”—that is, late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century practices that contrasted with the instruments of surveillance, measurement, and inscription of modern cartography. These alternative practices supplemented, and frequently disrupted, state cartography with anthropomorphic, devotional, and maternal images (2008, 828) and typically portrayed the national logomap as a woman, often a mother or goddess. These images—circulated in the form of cartoons, newspaper mastheads, posters, and calendars—were for the average Indian citizen the first encounter with a cartographic representation of the nation (2008, 829). Ramaswamy argues that these practices

lastingly invested the national contour with patriotic affect, even as they were often transgressive and paid “scant regard to national borders and boundaries” and occasionally subversively undid or dissolved those borders and boundaries (2001, 98). Unlike the rational and abstract bounded entity confined to a fixed graticular grid on the earth’s surface (2001, 99), these barefoot cartographies were able to harness emotions and evoke imaginaries as well as a sense of enchantment.

While Ramaswamy’s argument is convincing, it does not fully account for the continued affective investment in the national shape given that the modern logomap has now largely displaced earlier barefoot cartographic practices. That Indian attachments to the national borders remain as strong as ever would in fact suggest that the logomap can, and indeed does, act as an apt vector of patriotic sentiments. This hypothesis appears to be supported by ethnographic data from other cultural regions where earlier anthropomorphic maps have also been supplanted by the abstract logomap without incurring any significant loss of affective investment.

Interestingly, the Cartesian logic of a national territory tied to a fixed grid means that small islands or peaks such as the ones described at the beginning of this introduction have gained a significance they did not enjoy before. Unlike in the premodern period when, as described by Winichakul in the context of Thailand, nations were defined by monarchs ruling from the center, the modern period is characterized by an emphasis on borders and edges. This vision of the political world could not be more different from the maps preceding the advent of the age of nationalism. A wonderfully visual comparison by philosopher and social anthropologist Ernest Gellner makes this explicit:

The first map resembles a painting by Kokoschka. The riot of diverse points of color is such that no clear pattern can be discerned in any detail... Look now instead at the ethnographic and political map of an area of the modern world. It resembles not Kokoschka, but, say, Modigliani. There is very little shading; neat flat surfaces are clearly separated from each other, it is generally plain where one begins and another ends, and there is little if any ambiguity or overlap. (1997, 139–140)

With every last piece of territory claimed and accounted for, a similar logic is increasingly being applied to nonterrestrial spaces. In the Arctic, this terrestrial logic has proved problematic given that it is made up entirely of ice rather than land. Should a flag be planted at the North Pole, it would be planted “not on solid, spatially fixed land but on a mathematically determined spot

marked on a maze of mobile and shifting ice floes” (Steinberg, Tasch, and Gerhardt 2015, 40). Eager to partake in this strategic and resource-rich environment, a number of countries have nonetheless sought to extend the logic of territorial sovereignty to such unstable geographies in creative ways. Russia’s 2001 official submission to the United Nations Commission, for instance, claims that the Lomonosov Ridge, an underwater ridge of continental crust in the Arctic Ocean, constitutes an extension of the Russian landmass and that, as a result, Russia enjoys “exclusive rights to seabed minerals beyond the 350 nautical mile cut-off point that normally would apply” (Steinberg, Tasch, and Gerhardt 2015, 20).

Similar tactics have been adopted by China (and five other southeast Asian nations) in the South China Sea. By claiming uninhabited islands, reefs, shoals, and mere “rocks,” China is attempting to use these “terrestrial anchors” to extend its exclusive economic zone (EEZ).⁶ It has even laid claim to submerged shoals, such as the James Shoal, at a full 22 meters below the sea.⁷ As Edyta Roszko illustrates in her article in this issue, the language adopted by China to refer to these maritime extensions is clearly framed by a land-based imagination. Echoing narratives of development in Xinjiang and other remote borderlands, terms such as “opening” (开发), “protecting” (保护), and “developing the ocean economy” (发展海洋经济) are now being applied to maritime contexts (Roszko, this issue). The sovereign encompassment of the South China Sea as an integral part of the nation-as-territory is perhaps nowhere clearer than in the recent decision to change its official map (see map 1). While islands previously claimed by China were shown in a cutaway box, the new “vertical map” places them in direct visual equivalence with the mainland. In the new map, the land, islands, and claimed waters in the South China Sea are all featured on the same scale in one complete map, with the sovereign area clearly identified by a nine-dash demarcation line. As the Hunan Map Press editor-in-chief, Lei Yixun, told the state media agency Xinhua News, this new map helps “correct misconceptions that territories carry different weights, and fosters a raised territorial awareness and marine consciousness with the public” (Floracruz 2014).

Such deployments of territorial sovereignty illustrate the extent to which the cartographic imagination has become prevalent in modern conceptualizations of nationhood. They also foreshadow an extension of the territorial logic into other kinds of spaces located beyond states’ formal control and management, such as rocks in the ocean or peaks at high altitude.

Cartographic anxiety emerges here in the attempt to reconcile the abstract principle of territorial sovereignty with spaces that are materially resistant, such as water or rarefied atmospheres. Ultimately, cartographic anxiety marks the very symptom of the “nation-state”—a disquiet inhabiting the fault line between “nation” and “state,” two distinct entities a hyphen has long attempted to stitch together.



Map 1. China’s new “vertical map.” *Source:* Hurun Map Press, Xinhua.

... Anxieties

Unlike fear, which constitutes a primarily physiological response to a specific and identifiable threat, the term “anxiety” tends to refer to a general sense of unease—a “fear without object,” as psychologist Pierre Janet ([1932] 2005) has phrased it. And whereas fear is a sporadic

and intermittent response, anxiety denotes an insistent but imprecise disquiet pertaining to the realm of the uncanny. Cartographic anxiety is thus more than simply a matter of territorial disputes with neighbors, although the latter are certainly anxiogenic in their own right. Essentially, as I use the concept here, cartographic anxiety arises from the perceived misalignment between a political imagination of separateness⁸ and the reality of a cultural, ethnic, and economic continuum on the ground—an unease that can be both assuaged and amplified by cartographic practices, in the sense that “cartographic anxieties are as much constitutive as they are symptomatic of modern ways of seeing” (Painter 2008, 357, paraphrasing Gregory 1994).

The theoretical deployment of the phrase “cartographic anxiety” in this special issue’s articles is somewhat narrower than that of Gregory (1994) or Pickles (2004), both of whom see it as symptomatic of the crisis of geopolitical representation. The five contributors to this special issue are less concerned with the meta-practices of geography than with the political and cultural apprehension of maps and the diverse ways in which they are wielded for political, ethnic, and cultural motives. The anxieties indexed by the authors are similarly multiple, reflecting the various objectives pursued by cartography, such as cultural coherence, ethnic cohesiveness, or timelessness.

Roszko’s article focuses on the South China Sea, a region of increasing strategic and geopolitical importance where the national interests and claims of six Asian nations intersect. Perhaps nowhere else is China’s desire to stretch “the short, tight, skin of the nation over the gigantic body of the empire” (Anderson 1991, 86) more visible than in this maritime region. By using rocks and shoals as footholds—occasionally expanding the tiniest reef into a full-size island⁹—to solidify (in the sense of *treating as solid*) the fluid geographies of the South China Sea, China¹⁰ is engaging in cartographic aggression. Roszko persuasively shows in her article that this cartographic violence also extends beyond interstate territorial disputes. Just as new official cartographies reframe geography in line with state ambitions, they disrupt and render invisible the personal and professional networks that previously crisscrossed these labile geographies. As Roszko demonstrates, these cartographic state narratives have hardened previously fluid networks into distinct “Chinese” and “Vietnamese” populations.

The power of maps in creating national publics is the theoretical fulcrum of the articles focused on Mongolia and contributed by Uranchimeg Tsultemin and myself. Tsultemin’s article shows how the production of ethnographic paintings depicting Mongols as a distinct ethnic

group living in a distinct territory prompted and helped foster sentiments of national affiliation and loyalty. Tsultemin's case study illuminates the crucial role premodern maps were able to play in Mongolia's pursuit of autonomy and independence from China in the early twentieth century. The power of maps in projecting a sense of nationhood is also the central theme of my article, though the focus in that piece rests on the power of competing maps to undermine ideas of national independence and sovereignty. Like the article by Roszko, these two contributions illustrate the force of cartographic imagination in framing, channeling, and bolstering national attachments. At the same time, maps also obfuscate other forms of social organization that do not align with national categories, such as religious affiliations, ethnic and linguistic categories, or even divisions that take place on a vertical axis (Weizman 2007). Previous geographic entities such as defunct states create specific forms of anxieties insofar as they cannot be represented in modern political cartography. They nonetheless survive as liminal spaces (Sidaway 2010), palimpsests (Szmagalska-Follis 2008), and "phantoms" (Billé 2016b).

One place where such phantom spaces feature prominently is history books, where the outlines of former empires coexist with contemporary logomaps. Such "cartographic spectacles" (see Saxer in this issue), too ancient to constitute cartographic violence or be threatening to neighboring states, continue nonetheless to exert power and lend historical weight and grandeur to their successor states. These affective geographies stir up sentiments of melancholy and nostalgia; occasionally, the evocative force of past logomaps can even be stronger than contemporary representations, especially when older incarnations are suffused with power and glory. These past incarnations are sometimes harnessed by state-driven nationalist discourse to elicit and foster patriotic sentiments, and old phantoms can be reactivated surprisingly quickly, as the recent events in Crimea have shown. Previous logomaps, such as those of unpartitioned India, undivided Yugoslavia, or the unbroken Soviet Union, evoke aspirations of unity, progress, and social harmony, which are no longer extant but have not been entirely abandoned either. In the context of postsocialist Russia, as historian Alexander Etkind writes, the work of mourning remains incomplete and unsuccessful, the loss lastingly incorporated into the subject (2014, 155–156). Past borderlines retain an explosive power liable to "tear apart the present" (Harris 2009, 4), all the more potent because their lifespans—longer than those of humans—"elicit, evoke, or emit possible alternative futures" (Bryant 2014, 683).

The articles in this issue by Martin Saxer and Alexander Akin both tap into this fertile liminal zone between former splendor and promising futures. Saxer's use of "cartographic spectacles" echoes the phenomenon of "cartographic exhibitionism" that international relations scholars Laurence Broers and Gerard Toal define as a nation's desire to "project and display enlarged national territorial images" (2013, 18). Saxer's ethnographic focus on competing cartographic representations at the Tajik-Afghan border illustrates the visual capacity of cartography to reinvent a former buffer zone separating the Russian and British empires at the height of the nineteenth-century Great Game into a future transit hub between China, Afghanistan, and Central Asia. He argues that this "spectacle of maps" created at different scales is crucial to understand the strategies, ambitions, and productive uncertainties that frame the role and position of the Pamirs in the wider world. In his study of the *Da Ming Hunyi* map, Akin also explores the use of cartography to attain specific political objectives. His article shows how, in order to deflect criticisms of neocolonialism in Africa, China has recently repurposed an old Ming dynasty map as evidence of a distinctly Chinese approach to global relations based on benevolence and mutual respect. Cartography here constitutes the archival trace of the long-standing relations between China and Africa, just as it confirms the uninterrupted existence of China as a nation-state.

In both Saxer's and Akin's articles, cartographic anxiety is future-oriented and programmatic rather than defensive or deflective. As Saxer argues in his contribution, the ambivalent reading of anxiety—toggling between negative and positive meanings ("anxious *about*" as opposed to "anxious *to*")—is inherent to the notion, and it is in fact this very gap that cartography seeks to both seal shut and pry open. This uneasy positioning is particularly overt in the case of contemporary China. As the contributors to this special issue illustrate, Chinese anxieties are both multiple and mutable. On the one hand, China is experiencing considerable resentment about the territories it has lost through unequal treaties during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries (see Callahan 2010). On the other hand, it increasingly indulges in "cartographic exhibitionism" in its attempts to secure a wider territorial footprint and weave truly global networks (Nandy 2015).

Taking the ambivalence of cartographic practices as their primary analytical focus, the case studies showcased in this special issue offer a timely snapshot of regional geopolitics in formation. Through their shared focus on China and its immediate borderlands, the contributions

offer unique insights into that country's evolving place in the region, as well as into the economic, political, and cultural repercussions this evolution will have for its neighbors. Looking at cartography from the disciplines of history (Akin), anthropology (Billé, Roszko, Saxer), and history of art (Tsultemin), these authors also make a valuable theoretical contribution to the fields of geography, border studies, cartography, and political science by unpacking the useful but nebulous and under-theorized concept of cartographic anxiety.

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Notes

- 1 It took four more years, until 2008, for the border to be officially delineated.
- 2 For more information on this fascinating project, see <http://italianlimes.net>.
- 3 The French notion of *terrain vague* is particularly difficult to translate. It refers to an urban area that is both abandoned *and* slated for future development, a decaying space awaiting eventual gentrification and inclusion in the city's fabric. Unintegrated socially, *terrains vagues* are also zones of danger, violence, and illicit activities. See de Solà-Morales Rubió (1995) for a fascinating discussion of this term.
- 4 A notable exception is the recent edited collection by Martin Saxer and Juan Zhang (2016), in which every chapter is devoted to a specific continental neighbor of China.
- 5 While Winichakul presents a cartographic evolution that recalls the experiences of other nations, both in Asia and elsewhere, it should nonetheless not be seen as a general blueprint. Kären Wigen (2010) has shown, for instance, that the cartographic history of Japan differed in significant ways from that of Siam.
- 6 According to BBC correspondent Bill Hayton, "UNCLOS [the United Nations Commission on the Law of the Sea] defines three kinds of maritime feature: 'islands' that can support human habitation or economic life; 'rocks' (including sandbanks and reefs above water at high tide) that cannot support either; and 'low-tide elevations' which, as the name suggests, are only dry at low tide. Although the exact definitions of 'human habitation' and 'economic life' were left unspecified, each type of sea feature was endowed with certain inalienable rights. Islands are regarded as 'land' and generate both a 12-nautical-mile territorial sea and a 200-nautical-mile EEZ. Rocks generate a 12-

- nautical-mile territorial sea, but no EEZ. Low-tide elevations generate nothing at all unless they are within 12 nautical miles of a piece of land or a rock, in which case they can be used as base-points from which the territorial sea and EEZ can be measured” (Hayton 2014, 112–113).
- 7 Hayton reports that “Chinese naval ships en route to anti-piracy patrols off the coast of Somalia still make a diversion to the shoal to demonstrate Chinese sovereignty over it. But since there isn’t any dry land there on which to erect official monuments, they have to drop them over the side of their ships instead. There’s now a small collection of Chinese steles lying on the seabed below” (2014, 116).
- 8 Cartographic anxieties tend to be linked to national representations insofar as the nation constitutes the dominant visual model of group allegiance. However, the concept has also been successfully applied in the context of regions (Painter 2008; see also Saxer in this issue) in spite of the absence of a logomap for these territorial entities.
- 9 Fiery Cross Reef (*Yongshu jiao* 永暑礁) has, for instance, grown in stunning fashion “from a single coral head that peaked a mere meter out of the waves” into an island “attaining a size of over 200 hectares of reclaimed land—roughly equivalent to about 280 football pitches” (French 2015).
- 10 Even if China is not the only nation involved in terraforming—Vietnam has also carried out land reclamation on Sand Cay Island (*đảo Sơn Ca*) (see Watkins 2015)—the extent of its activities remains unmatched.

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