

CROSS-CURRENTS



EAST ASIAN HISTORY AND CULTURE REVIEW

March 2014

Dear *Cross-Currents* readers,

We are pleased to introduce the tenth quarterly issue of the *Cross-Currents* e-journal.

The three research articles on colonial Korea that appear in this issue all developed out of talks originally presented at the 2013 *Cross-Currents* Forum in Seoul last summer. We would like to take this opportunity to thank all of the discussants at the Forum for their critical feedback. Special thanks are due to **Jung-Sun Han** (Korea University) and **Jun Uchida** (Stanford University), who helped a number of scholars develop their presentations into full-length research articles.

“Abuse of Modernity: Japanese Biological Determinism and Identity Management in Colonial Korea” by **Mark Caprio** (Rikkyo University) tells the story of the withdrawal of human anatomy as a scientific tool from the colonial production of ethnic differences between Japanese and Koreans. The article describes the decline and fall of the young and energetic professor Kubo Takeshi, who died in a state of disgrace and derangement for attempting to assert categorical connections between cranial measurements and criminality based on “race.” The Kubo episode tells a story of a failed attempt by a Japanese scientist to introduce a biological argument about Korean moral inferiority to the Japanese.

“Matters of Fact: Language, Science, and the Status of Truth in Late Colonial Korea” by **Christopher P. Hanscom** (UCLA) addresses the status of the fact in literary and historical discourses in late colonial Korea, focusing on the elaboration of the relationship between scientific and literary truths primarily in the work of philosopher and critic Sō Insik (1906–?). Drawing extensively on literary theory, Hanscom examines Sō’s strategy of critical engagement under the condition of Japanese colonialism.

“Stepping into the Newsreel: Melodrama and Mobilization in Colonial Korean Film” by **Travis Workman** (University of Minnesota) argues that the “fascist aesthetic” in the films he analyzes attempted to obscure all manner of social conflicts and political divisions by aestheticizing the nation-state and culture. *Cross-Currents* board member **Takashi Fujitani** (University of Toronto) noted at the 2013 Forum that the aesthetics of military mobilization—replicated or perhaps prefigured in the militarization of school life and aesthetics in prewar Japan, as well as to some extent in Korea—is especially important for Workman. At the same time, Fujitani added, Workman shows how the cinematic conventions carried over from pre-fascist cinema left

contradictions in the desire to have what Slavoj Žižek calls “capitalism without capitalism” or “capitalism without excess.”

A highlight of this issue is our English translation of a survey of Japanese scholarship from 2007 to 2012 on the Sino-Japanese War compiled by **Duan Ruicong** (Keio University). This essay, featured in the “Readings from Asia” section of the e-journal, includes an extensive bibliography and Duan’s own observations concerning principle trends and achievements in recent Sino-Japanese War research. It is our hope that English-speaking scholars will find this compilation to be a useful research tool.

This issue also includes three review essays. The first, by **Fa-ti Fan** (Binghamton University), discusses three new books connected by the theme of natural science: **Maki Fukuoka’s** *The Premise of Fidelity: Science, Visuality, and Representing the Real in Nineteenth-Century Japan* (Stanford, 2012), **William C. Summers’s** *The Great Manchurian Plague of 1910–1911: The Geopolitics of an Epidemic Disease* (Yale, 2012), and **Ian Jared Miller’s** *The Nature of the Beasts: Empire and Exhibition at the Tokyo Imperial Zoo* (UC Press, 2013). **George Lazopoulos** (UC Berkeley) writes about three recent works on Japanese historiography—**Jason Ānanda Josephson’s** *The Invention of Religion in Japan* (Chicago, 2012), **Hwansoo Ilmee Kim’s** *Empire of the Dharma: Korean and Japanese Buddhism, 1877–1912* (Harvard, 2012), and **Jung-Sun N. Han’s** *An Imperial Path to Modernity: Yoshino Sakuzō and a New Liberal Order in East Asia, 1905–1937* (Harvard, 2012)—that together “yield a composite portrait of Japan as viewed through the transnational lens that now characterizes historical studies more generally.” Lastly, **Geoffrey C. Stewart** (Western University) compares **Pierre Asselin’s** *Hanoi’s Road to the Vietnam War, 1954–1965* (UC Press, 2013) and **Lien-Hang T. Nguyen’s** *Hanoi’s War: An International History of the War for Peace in Vietnam* (UNC Press, 2012), works that focus, respectively, on the events on either side of the Ninth Plenum of the Vietnamese Workers’ Party in 1963.

For this issue’s photo essay—“Unreal Estate and China’s Collective Unconscious”—photographer and China scholar **Tong Lam** (University of Toronto) selected images of “a diverse range of ruinous spaces to tell an alternative history of contemporary China’s hysterical transformation.” These unfinished or abandoned projects are powerful empirical and figurative signposts of China’s high-speed growth. In his accompanying essay, “Apocalypse, or, the Logic of Late Anthropocene Ruins,” **Jason McGrath** (University of Minnesota) writes that “the revelation provided by these photos is at least in part that of the rather pathetic hubris of the human species in its fleeting age of planetary dominance, even in the case of China in the midst of head-spinning transformation.”

We hope you enjoy reading this issue. As always, we look forward to receiving your feedback. If you are attending the AAS meetings this year, please stop by the *Cross-Currents* booth (#317) to say hello. And, as always, be sure to register here on our website in order to leave comments for our contributors and join the conversation.

Sincerely,

Wen-hsin Yeh & Sungtaek Cho