

Introduction

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The first issue of our third volume sees *Asia Pacific World* lead off with two invited papers in the field of Cultural Anthropology, on two very different themes. Emeritus Professor Joy Hendry contributes a venturesome piece on rethinking Japan's place in the development and diffusion of Pacific cultures. She takes a close look at shared cultural traits between Japan and Oceania, where some aspects of Japan's culture are found to be similar to those of Polynesia, at least to those that are shared across Polynesia, and seeks ways in which scholars might consider Japan to be part of that same *moana*, a vast cultural area encompassed by the Pacific Ocean. Hendry compares, among other things, housing construction, gift exchange, indirect communication, body art, language similarities, representations of ancestral spirits, and community relationships. Her field of comparison is broad, as befits a position paper for *Asia Pacific World*. In her words, it "spreads as far as the theories of the grand navigational skills of the Polynesians that took them north to the west coast of Canada, south as far as the Easter Islands, and—now quite well accepted with the evidence of DNA—as far *west*, not east, as Taiwan, just a string of Okinawan islands away from Japan." Her hope is that the paper might inspire exciting new avenues of research that could offer new ways of thinking about Japan and the origins of its culture. Let us engage in this debate!

The second paper, by Roy Ellen of the Centre for Biocultural Diversity at the University of Kent, provides an overview of and commentary on recent research into swidden agriculture in Southeast Asia, thus fulfilling APW's other main reason for inviting position papers as leads for its first few volumes. Reviews of research are critical elements in establishing the corpus of knowledge that is, or will become, Asia Pacific Studies, and this paper gives a solid start to the subject area of cultural anthropology. Swidden agriculture, closely related to slash-and-burn and shifting agriculture (but a less prejudicial term), is a type of cultivation where farmers first cut and burn forest or bush and then plant crops that will soon yield a harvest. After a few years the land is left fallow to allow the soil nutrients to replenish, and then the cycle can be repeated. In the paper, Ellen examines the scholarship of swidden agriculture in Southeast Asia, dating back to pioneering work in the 1950s and 1960s which established the initial framework for study. He looks at many aspects of swidden agriculture, including the role it plays within local cultures, its economic advantages, its ecological sustainability, and how it is influenced by the political climate. Ellen's central aim is to identify why swidden agriculture—viewed by various



government agencies over many years as an irrational, unscientific, and anachronistic form of farming—persists to this day, when it has long been expected to disappear in the face of agricultural development.

The General Articles

Our first general paper in this issue examines a recent trend within China of identifying and defining ethnic subcultures among the Han Chinese ethnic majority. Hironao Kawai notes that most previous cultural studies in China have been focused on the situation of minority groups in the multicultural country that is China today, and little has been written on multiculturalism among the majority: the Han Chinese. However, because the Han culture itself has a vast diversity, scholars—and politicians as well—have recently started to focus on the Han sub-ethnic cultures, viewing them within a framework of multiculturalism. And the way these cultures become “defined” impacts how the government and the business community redevelop the landscape going forward. Kawai takes a detailed look at the “manufacturing” of Cantonese culture (one of the identified Han sub-ethnic cultures) in Guangdong Province, China, and how it affected the design and construction of a theme park in urban Guangzhou, built in an effort to promote tourism in the region.

In the second paper, Rie Kido Askew explores the fiction of Japanese author Dazai Osamu, analyzing his concept of morality and how it impacts his writing. In particular, she focuses on Dazai’s short story “Run, Melos!” (written in 1940). On the surface, it appears to be simply a retelling of earlier versions of the story, originating as a Greek legend. However, Askew discovers that what at first seem like trivial differences with the earlier versions actually reveal a lot about Dazai’s conception of morality, most notably that morality is something that cannot come simply from one’s instincts about being good, but must be developed through experience and self-examination. In earlier versions of the story, the integrity of the hero (Melos) is never in question, but Dazai causes him to question whether it is worth sustaining his integrity in the face of adversity, and even has him at one point deciding to give up and take the easy way out of his troubles. Dazai also treats the “villain” of the story with more sympathy than do earlier authors. In her analysis, Askew also ties in the concept of “literacy” (in this case, not learning how to write, but developing a metaphysical mindset) and shows how Dazai’s Melos achieves this literacy over the course of the story.

At this point we change our tack. The remaining three papers deal with aspects of the operation of the business sector in the Asia Pacific, although—as you will see in the article by Fukutani—cultural values do also determine how the new brand of workers are produced, valued and incorporated within the business sector in the region. The first paper in this section deals with a study of factors affecting investment in the Sri Lankan banking system. Manjula Kumara Wanniarachchige and Yasushi Suzuki explain that there is a large unmet demand for corporate credit in developing countries, in part due

to underdeveloped financial markets in those countries. In such countries, the banking systems act as the key provider of finance for firms. An expansion of credit, then, can improve the economic activity of those countries. In their paper, Wanniarachchige and Suzuki study the Sri Lankan banking system over two decades, analyzing what factors affect the amounts of deposits and available credit extended to the private sector. They find that the expansion of bank branch networks significantly contributes to a higher level of bank deposits. Interestingly, they also find that the interest rates on deposits have only a minor effect on the amounts of deposits.

Due to the rapid economic growth in the Asia Pacific, the region's employment structure is, expectedly, undergoing change. In a timely contribution to the understanding of this change, Masanobu Fukutani explains that in countries and other areas of the Asia Pacific which have already achieved a certain level of industrialization, such as South Korea, Taiwan, Singapore, and Hong Kong, as well as in numerous other countries in the region wanting to follow in their footsteps, demand is rapidly growing for "knowledge workers": workers whose knowledge, abilities and training serve as a foundation for intellectual work, and who have both information processing abilities and leadership abilities. Among other places, these workers are needed in science and technical fields. But such workers, of course, need training, and these nations have been facing numerous challenges in providing the necessary level of training. In his paper, Fukutani reports the results of a survey he conducted of companies from nine countries in the region to determine the state of trends in the employment and training of knowledge workers, as well as the qualifications and abilities that are expected of these workers. Fukutani shares his conclusions of what must be done going forward to enable these countries to meet the rising demand for knowledge workers.

Our last paper in this edition is a contribution on the socio-economic impacts of remittances sent home by a country's nationals working abroad. While this is not a new phenomenon for the Asia Pacific Region, newly opened economies are experiencing a boost from this source. Munim Kumar Barai discusses the socio-economic impact of remittances, looking specifically at Bangladesh and Vietnam. The paper shows that remittance inflows have been growing rapidly in both of these countries over the last decade, and that ensuing economic and social impacts are being felt. In Bangladesh, the aggregate amount of remittances now exceeds FDI and ODA combined. There, remittances have helped to improve socioeconomic indicators like nutrition, education, healthcare, and social security. Positive effects are also found on poverty reduction, GDP, and the country's BOP (balance of payments). In Vietnam, remittances have helped increase household income and national output, but are also seen to have added to inequality and inflation. Barai finds that both countries have been able to avoid appreciation of the real exchange rate of their currencies as an effect of remittance inflows.

The Book Reviews

We have seven book reviews this month, thanks to our readers and reviewers. In the first of them, Alexander F. Day (Wayne State University) looks at *Drink Water, but Remember the Source: Moral Discourse in a Chinese Village* (Ellen Oxfeld, 2010), and concludes that this book makes a significant contribution to our understanding of rural China—and moral discourse in general. Constructed from close analysis of village-level stories and intimate discussions with villagers, Oxfeld's study of moral discourse combats the widely-held belief that morality in rural China has disintegrated. Even though there is contentious debate and there are divergent moral views within the Hakka village that she studies, moral discourse is still essential to the way villagers understand themselves and others. Thus, she argues that the rural morality she investigates goes beyond issues of social status or political leverage, and she rightly focuses on daily life interactions to tease out the importance of moral discourse to villagers.

Next, Chris Ryan (University of Waikato) assesses the book by Tim Oakes and Don Sutton (eds., 2010), *Faiths on Display: Religion, Tourism, and the Chinese State*. Ryan's view is that this collection will, for the scholar already familiar with the issues being described, have value by providing more data, and for those not familiar with the issues the chapters are well ensconced in observation and the wider literature and thus will provide an excellent introduction to the subject matter discussed. There is no better accolade but that of Ryan, an expert in the field, when he says that he will repeatedly refer to this book in his own future writing on these topics.

Next, Gary McDonogh (Bryn Mawr College) looks at *Fake Stuff: China and the Rise of Counterfeit Goods* (Yi-Chieh Jessica Lin, 2011). McDonogh notes that, in this short book, Lin provides an engaging classroom introduction, including solid questions for discussion and further work as well as a wide but not necessarily comprehensive bibliography. In his view, *Fake Stuff* highlights the need to talk about this area that has so much impact on understanding China and its economic methods today, yet by covering so much so quickly, the text entails real constraints for educators who might see this as a new generation of flexible course materials. At the same time, this discussion raises questions of how anthropologists might best contribute to this wider contemporary debate, in the classroom and outside of it.

Stuart Gilmour (University of Tokyo) continues our look at material being published on China in his review of *Passage to Manhood: Youth Migration, Heroin, and AIDS in Southwest China* (Shao-hua Liu, 2010). Gilmour notes that this book is a very valuable contribution to our understanding of the effects of modernization and globalization on vulnerable communities (albeit reduced in effectiveness by its concentration on just one ethnic group), and gives some useful insights into the particular cultural challenges that can undermine even the most well-meaning and well-planned public health development work. He finds that it is a well-written, clear and useful addition to our understanding of substance abuse in minority communities, and a welcome addition to the literature.

We have another major handbook of research to assess in the next review by Roy Starrs (University of Otago): the *Routledge Handbook of Japanese Culture and Society* (eds. Bestor and Bestor, with Yamagata, 2011). The book is an important contribution to the understanding of this complex society. Starrs notes that if this book may be said to have an overall theme or argument despite its twenty-two authors, it is that Japanese culture and society, while always more diverse than many past accounts claimed, are becoming even more so today: that is, contemporary Japan is better construed as multiethnic, multicultural, multilingual, religiously pluralistic, socially and economically multi-layered, and as a site of social and cultural contestation. But the Japanese political establishment still largely subscribes to the opposite view: for instance, former Japanese Prime Minister Asō boasted in 2005 that Japan was the world's only country with “one nation, one civilization, one language, one culture, and one race.” It is precisely this oft-vaunted homogeneity that many of the authors here would say is contradicted by the realities of present-day Japan. Starrs says that it is good to have such a uniformly excellent collection of short essays that reflect, by and large, today's mainstream scholarly opinion on a wide range of social and cultural issues—and, by doing so, also challenges the often simplistic and stereotypical model of a monolithic “Japan, Inc.” that was popular just a few decades ago.

Our next review looks at *Sacred Natural Sites: Conserving Nature and Culture*, by Verschuuren, Wild, McNeely, & Oviedo (eds., 2010). Jinyang Deng (West Virginia University) notes that there are places that have been protected by religions and faith communities long before the existence of the protected areas officially established by governments. These places, along with other protected areas, not only play an essential role in maintaining the tangible ecological integrity, but also function as sacred sites for intangible spiritual and cultural purposes. The tangible and intangible values of the sacred sites have long been recognized, however, less examined, particularly in the field of tourism studies. The book provides the reader with useful information on issues and prospects related to sacred areas in the world.

The final book review is that by Robert Seward (Meiji Gakuin University), who comments on *South Pacific Islands Communication: Regional Perspectives, Local Issues* (eds. Papoutsaki and Sundar Harris, 2008). In this review Seward suggests that, despite the thought that it might not be easy to obtain a copy, all-in-all, *South Pacific Islands Communication* provides a timely and sharp-focused perspective on the media and communication issues. The volume does so in the context of development in the small-island states of the Pacific. It is thanks to Evangelia Papoutsaki who organized many of the talks at the annual meetings of the Asian Media Information and Communication Centre (AMIC), and that were turned into papers, that we have this valuable resource.

Once again APW has demonstrated the extraordinary diversity of research on the Asia Pacific Region and the importance of understanding the policy and governance issues facing it. As we have noted in previous issues, there is an overwhelming need to recognize and deal with such issues, but this is what will create a sustainable future for this region and the world.