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## Cross-Currents: East Asian History and Culture Review

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Note to Readers

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# CROSS-CURRENTS



## EAST ASIAN HISTORY AND CULTURE REVIEW

### Note to Readers

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Dear *Cross-Currents* readers,

We are pleased to present you with the thirtieth quarterly issue of the open-access e-journal *Cross-Currents: East Asian History and Culture Review*.

In this special issue on "Air-Water-Land-Human: Interdisciplinary Approaches to Health and Environment in East Asia," guest editor and editorial board member **Ruth Rogaski** (Vanderbilt University) has brought together five research articles that present new directions for thinking through connections between health, well-being, and environment in East Asia. The articles by **William Johnston** (Wesleyan University), **Mary Augusta Brazelton** (University of Cambridge), **Janelle Lamoreaux** (University of Arizona), **Bo Wang** (University of Lausanne), and Rogaski herself highlight, among other themes: (1) the importance of attention to material/nonhuman actors, (2) comparative and transnational framing, (3) tensions and choices between individual/body-based solutions to health issues and social/environmental interventions, and (4) the complexities involved in the idea of finding solutions to environmental crises within Asian traditions. In her introduction, Rogaski notes that this special issue demonstrates how questions of health and environment "open up interdisciplinary inquiry perhaps better than any other field in Asian studies."

This issue also includes four review essays covering nine new and recent publications. The first essay, by **David R. Ambaras** (North Carolina State University), discusses *Give and Take: Poverty and the Status Order in Early Modern Japan* by **Maren A. Ehlers** and *Down and Out in Late Meiji Japan* by **James L. Huffman**, books that address chronologically adjacent yet substantially different moments in the history of poverty in Japan. Ambaras writes that, taken together, the two works "show the evolution of a set of social relations that underpinned the Tokugawa order and a dramatically increased

concentration of urban poor people left largely to fend for themselves in the midst of the social, economic, and political upheavals of the late-Meiji years.”

In another review essay, **Kwangmin Kim** (University of Colorado, Boulder) discusses **Nianshen Song’s** *Making Borders in East Asia: Tumen River Demarcation, 1881–1919* and **Judd C. Kinzley’s** *Natural Resources and the New Frontier: Constructing Modern China’s Borderlands*. Kim writes that these books “unexpectedly reveal the neglected story of the transnational politics in the expansion of global capitalism deep in the resource-rich and labor-scarce Inner Asian borderlands.”

**Nadia Y. Kim** (Loyola Marymount University) reviews two books—**Jaeun Kim’s** *Contested Embrace: Transborder Membership Politics in Twentieth-Century Korea* and **Minjeong Kim’s** *Elusive Belonging: Marriage Immigrants and “Multiculturalism” in Rural South Korea*—that deal with how states and everyday actors negotiate with one another to determine political belonging and citizenship. The reviewer concludes that these works “do an excellent job demonstrating that issues of emotive identity and belonging are never extricated from the state, that even the most excluded have agency and therefore transform the countries in which they live, and that cultural and cognitive (and emotional) processes are just as important as those of policy and capital.”

In the fourth review essay, **Anne Walthall** (University of California, Irvine) puts three historical studies of Japanese women from the ruling class or wealthy commoner families in conversation with one another: **Rebecca Corbett’s** *Cultivating Femininity: Women and Tea Culture in Edo and Meiji Japan*, **Yuki Terazawa’s** *Knowledge, Power, and Women’s Reproductive Health in Japan, 1690–1945*, and **Shiba Keiko’s** *Literary Creations on the Road: Women’s Travel Diaries in Early Modern Japan*. Walthall uses this discussion to consider more broadly the sources and methods available to, and chosen by, these three authors and points out the different challenges faced by scholars seeking to understand the life experiences of illiterate women who constitute the vast majority of the female population in early modern Japan.

Finally, this issue features a photo essay, “Life with Tetrapods: The Nature of Concrete in Okinawa,” curated by **Gerald Figal** (Vanderbilt University). Figal’s images and accompanying essay offer insights into how tetrapods (cement wave-dissipating blocks) have proliferated along Okinawa’s shoreline, and how, perhaps surprisingly, they have been “accommodated and exploited by life around them”: the lives of tourists, engineers, fishermen, crustaceans, cats, environmental activists, and retailers have all become entwined with, and influenced by, these massive structures.

Wen-hsin Yeh and Hyongchan Kim

We hope you enjoy reading this issue. As always, we look forward to receiving your feedback. Be sure to register here on our website in order to leave comments for our contributors and join the conversation.

Wen-hsin Yeh and Hyongchan Kim  
Co-editors