Atwood C. P. — [Review] The Kitan Language and Script. By Daniel Kane. Handbuch Der Orientalistick. Leiden: Brill, 2009. xiv, 305 pp. $190.00 (cloth). // The Journal of Asian Studies, Volume 69, Number 1, February 2010. — [s. l.]: Cambridge University Press for the Association for Asian Studies, Inc., 2010. — pp.246—247. [ISSN: 0021-9118; Published for the Association for Asian Studies, Inc.]

The Kitan Language and Script. By DANIEL KANE. Handbuch Der Orientalistick. Leiden: Brill, 2009. xiv, 305 pp. $190.00 (cloth).
doi:10.1017/S0021911809992117

Ever since the publication of *Qidan xiaozi yanjiu* (Research on the Kitan Small Script) in 1985, the slow, steady decipherment of Kitan has been the most outstanding contribution of Chinese scholars (both Mongol and Han) to Altaic linguistics and philology. Led by Chinggeltei (Ch. Qingge'rtai) and Chen Naixiong at Inner Mongolia University, and by Liu Fengzhu and Yu Baolin at the Academy of Social Science in Beijing, the Kitan Small Script Research Group has slowly identified phonetic values and meanings for the symbols in one of the scripts found on Kitan inscriptions, called the "small script." These date from the Liao and Jin dynasties, with the earliest dating to 1055 and the latest to 1170. Some progress has also been made on identifying the meaning of the symbols in the other Kitan script, called the "large script," although phonetic values are still unclear.

In *The Kitan Language and Script*, Daniel Kane has written a thorough and accessible guide to what is reliably known of the Kitan script. Kane's study does not, however, cover every aspect of the Kitan language. As he notes, he does not deal with, except tangentially, the transcriptions of Kitan words into Chinese characters found in Chinese sources. As this includes much important vocabulary not yet identified in Kitan script materials, his study is not a complete description of what is known about the Kitan language, only of the language insofar as it is known from the script.

Kane begins with a clear introduction to the Kitan historical context, the history of research on the topic, the process and methodology of decipherment, and the conventions of transcription. Chapter 2 lists of all of the known Kitan small script characters and what is known of their sound (when used as phonograms) and meaning (when used as logographs). Chapter 3 gives an English–Kitan glossary. Chapter 4 gives all of the morphemes and other grammatical features known from the Kitan inscriptions. Chapter 5 offers a brief introduction and glossary of the Kitan large script. Chapter 6 gives three important texts with phonetic readings, notes on translation, and Chinese parallels. Chapter 7 analyzes the phonology of Liao Chinese insofar as it relates to the decipherment of the Kitan script.

The list-based organization, while probably the best possible one given the state of knowledge, has its drawbacks. Much important information appears outside its proper headword. For example, the English–Kitan glossary has *go.er* for "house, household" (entry 3.100, p. 102). But no mention is made in that entry that *go.er* is likely related to the *go.t* "family," which appears elsewhere under "good, goodness" (entry 3.086, p. 100) in an illustrative sentence. *Go.t* is also found in the notes to the transliterated texts (see p. 192 n.18, 206 n. 44), where Kane adds the important information that it is probably a plural form. An additional cognate found in the notes to these texts is *go.ci*, perhaps "houses, buildings" (p. 188 n. 9). In short, there is often much more data relevant to particular words than one finds set out explicitly in the entries in chapter 3.

Kane's approach is rigorously skeptical: skeptical about particular hypotheses advanced about the phonetic or semantic values of particular characters, skeptical that the Kitan language belongs to the Mongolic family, and skeptical of how much is really known of Kitan even now. At points this skepticism leaves, I believe, a false impression. Kitan is, from the data Kane presents, quite clearly of the Mongolic family, even though it just as clearly diverges sharply from the attested Mongolian of the thirteenth century on. Kane is right that other scholars have too mechanically attached Mongolian phonetic values to Kitan words, but the genetic relationship between the two seems undeniable. Kane often leaves unmentioned quite plausible connections with Mongolian. In the case of *goũer goũt*, for example, a link to Mongolian *ger*, "tent," "family," seems quite in order. Nor should the progress already made be underestimated. Enough is known of Kitan to be of considerable significance not just for linguistics, but also for historians. For example, the fact that the name Xiao, designating the Kitan Liao's imperial consort clan in Chinese sources, is not found in any Kitan text and appears to be an outsider's designation for what in Kitan was a number of separate clans (see p. 5) is a major datum for social history.

Still, in a survey of this nature excessive skepticism is a far more tolerable vice than excessive credulity. Altaicists, Chinese linguists, students of Liao and Inner Asian history, and, of course, specialists on Kitan will all profit greatly from this lucid summary of the results of the last thirty years in Kitan decipherment. They will use the work all the more confidently knowing that only the most reliable results have been included and that further speculations have been left to them, the grateful readers.

CHRISTOPHER P. ATWOOD
Indiana University
catwood@indiana.edu

Buddhism between Tibet and China. Edited by MATTHEW T. KAPSTEIN. Boston: Wisdom Publications, 2009. xxi, 453 pp. $34.95 (paper).
doi:10.1017/S0021911809992129

In this outstanding collection of essays, eleven authors explore in fascinating detail the 1,300-year history of Sino-Tibetan relations and, in so doing, not only upend the conventional narrative about this encounter, but also provide a model for future research on the role that Buddhism played in shaping historical interactions across Eurasia. Indeed, on account of this larger theoretical concern and its important implications for our understanding of Asian history, let us hope that this volume receives the wide readership it so rightfully deserves.

Of course, in order to appreciate the broader applications of the scholarship presented in this work, it is important to begin by recognizing its specific value. And in this regard, none of the essays disappoints; each not only presents new

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VOLUME 69 · NUMBER 1 · FEBRUARY 2010

CONTENTS

Editorial Foreword and Forthcoming Articles 1

ARTICLES

Asia Beyond the Headlines

The Rise and Fall of Japan's Liberal Democratic Party 5
Ellis S. Krauss and Robert J. Pekkanen

Trends in Research

Borders, Diaspora and Regional Connections: Trends in Asian "Queer" Studies 17
Megan Sinnott

From Undemocratic to Democratic Civil Society: Japan's Volunteer Fire Departments 33
Mary Alice Haddad

Third Sister Liu and the Making of the Intellectual in Socialist China 57
Eddy U

Others No More: The Changing Representation of Non-Han Peoples in Chinese History Textbooks, 1951–2003 85
Nimrod Baranovitch

The Begims of the Mystic Feast: Turco-Mongol Tradition in the Mughal Harem 123
Lisa Balabanlilar

The Market Approach to the Rise of the Geluk School, 1419–1642 149

Rachel M. McCleary and Leonard W. J. van der Kuijp

"Rule by Man" and "Rule by Law" in Early Republican China: Contributions to a Theoretical Debate 181

Leigh K. Jenco

BOOK REVIEWS

ASIA: COMPARATIVE AND TRANSNATIONAL

Jayasuriya, *African Identity in Asia: Cultural Effects of Forced Migration* 205

John McLeod

CHINA

Bonds, *Beijing Opera Costumes: The Visual Communication of Character and Culture* 207

Andrea S. Goldman

Campany, *Making Transcendents. Ascetics and Social Memory in Early Medieval China* 209

Jan De Meyer

Davis and Chen, eds., *Cinema Taiwan: Politics, Popularity and State of the Arts* 240

Alexander C.Y. Huang

Ebrey, *Accumulating Culture: The Collections of Emperor Huizong* 210

Alfreda Murck

Gamsa, *The Chinese Translation of Russian Literature: Three Studies* 212

Zoya Stanchits

Greenhalgh, *Just One Child: Science and Policy in Deng's China* 214

Rachel Murphy

Guo, *State and Ethnicity in China's Southwest* 216

Erik Mueggler

Horesh, *Shanghai's Bund and Beyond: British Banks, Banknote Issuance, and Monetary Policy in China, 1842–1937* 218

Georgia A. Mickey

Huang, *Charisma and Compassion: Cheng Yen and the Tzu Chi Movement* 220

Charles B. Jones

Lee and Yang, eds., *Re-envisioning the Chinese Revolution: The Politics and Poetics of Collective Memory in Reform China* 222

Timothy Cheek

Leese, ed., *Brill's Encyclopedia of China (Handbook of Oriental Studies IV.20)* 224

Ned Davis

Makley, *The Violence of Liberation: Gender and Tibetan Buddhist Revival in Post-Mao China* 226

Isabelle Henrion-Dourcy

Mann, *The Talented Women of the Zhang Family* 228

Hu Ying

Mungello, *Drowning Girls in China: Female Infanticide since 1650* 230

Weijing Lu

de Pee, *The Writing of Weddings in Middle Period China: Text and Ritual Practice in the Eighth Through the Fourteenth Centuries* 232

Hugh R. Clark

Saich, *Providing Public Goods in Transitional China* 233

Dorothy Solinger

Smith, *Fathoming the Cosmos and Ordering the World: The Yijing (I-Ching, or Classic of Changes) and Its Evolution in China* 235

Bent Nielsen

Szonyi, *Cold War Island: Quemoy on the Front Line* 237

Steven Phillips

Taylor, *The Generalissimo: Chiang Kai-shek and the Struggle for Modern China* 239
R. Keith Schoppa

Yeh and Davis, *Taiwan Film Directors: A Treasure Island* 240
Alexander C.Y. Huang

INNER ASIA

Baumann, *Divine Knowledge: Buddhist Mathematics According to the Anonymous Manual of Mongolian Astrology and Divination* 244
Vesna A. Wallace

Kane, *The Kitan Language and Script* 246
Christopher P. Atwood

Kapstein, ed., *Buddhism Between Tibet and China* 247
Johan Elverskog

JAPAN

Adachi, ed., *Japanese Diasporas: Unsung Pasts, Conflicting Presents and Uncertain Futures*

Endoh, *Exporting Japan: Politics of Emigration to Latin America* 249
Jeffrey Lesser

Esselstrom, *Crossing Empire's Edge: Foreign Ministry Police and Japanese Expansionism in Northeast Asia* 251
Rustin B. Gates

Faison, *Managing Women: Disciplining Labor in Modern Japan* 253
Bill Mihalopoulos

Hahn, *Sensational Knowledge: Embodying Culture through Japanese Dance* 255
Reginald Jackson

Hara and Jukes, eds., *Northern Territories, Asia-Pacific Regional Conflicts and the Åland Experience: Untying the Kurillian Knot* 258
John J. Stephan

Kimura, *The Kurillian Knot: A History of Japanese-Russian Border Negotiations* 258
John J. Stephan

Kominz, ed., *Mishima on Stage:* The Black Lizard *and Other Plays* 260
Steven C. Ridgely

Mase-Hasegawa, *Christ in Japanese Culture: Theological Themes in Shūsaku Endō's Literary Works* 263
Kiri Paramore

Miyao, *Sessue Hayakawa: Silent Cinema and Transnational Stardom* 266
Sachiko Mizuno

Ooms, *Imperial Politics and Symbolics in Ancient Japan: The Tenmu Dynasty, 650–800* 268
Charles Holcombe

Partner, *The Mayor of Aihara: A Japanese Villager and His Community, 1865–1925* 269
Michael Lewis

Sato, trans., *Japanese Women Poets: An Anthology* 271
Lee Friederich

Siniawer, *Ruffians, Yakuza, Nationalists: The Violent Politics of Modern Japan, 1860–1960* 273
M. William Steele

Slaymaker, ed., *Yoko Tawada: Voices from Everywhere* 276
Robin L. Tierney

Zimmerman, *Out of the Alleyway: Nakagami Kenji and the Poetics of Outcaste Fiction* 278
Nina Cornyetz

KOREA

Cho, *Haunting the Korean Diaspora: Shame, Secrecy, and the Forgotten War* 280
Katharine H.S. Moon

Chong, *Deliverance and Submission: Evangelical Women and the Negotiation of Patriarchy in South Korea* 282
Seungsook Moon

Chung, *Between Ally and Partner: Korea-China Relations and the United States* 284

J.J. Suh

Haggard and Noland, *Famine in North Korea: Markets, Aid, and Reform* 286

Suzy Kim

Finch, *Min Yŏnghwan: The Selected Writings of a Late Chosŏn Diplomat* 288

Vipan Chandra

Ikenberry and Moon, eds., *The United States and Northeast Asia: Debates, Issues, and New Order* 291

David C. Kang

Kawashima, *The Proletarian Gamble: Korean Workers in Interwar Japan* 292

Jinhee Lee

Oppenheim, *Kyŏngju Things: Assembling Place* 294

Albert L. Park

SOUTH ASIA

van Beek and Pirie, eds., *Modern Ladakh: Anthropological Perspectives on Continuity and Change* 296

Andrea Marion Pinkney

Benei, *Schooling Passions: Nation, History, and Language in Contemporary Western India* 298

Nita Kumar

Copeman, *Veins of Devotion: Blood Donation and Religious Experience in North India* 300

Herman Tull

Ernst and Pati, eds., *India's Princely States: People, Princes and Colonialism* 302

Nawaraj Chaulagain

Gangadharan, *The Malabar Rebellion* 303

George Pati

van der Geer, *Animals in Stone: Indian Mammals Sculptured through Time* 305
Lance E. Nelson

Grant, *Buddhism and Ethnic Conflict in Sri Lanka* 307
Bradley S. Clough

Hogan, *Understanding Indian Movies: Culture, Cognition, and Cinematic Imagination* 308
Rebecca J. Manring

Lawrence, *The Teachings of the Odd-Eyed One: A Study and Translation of the Virūpākṣapañcāśikhā with the Commentary of Vidyākakravartin* 310
Sucharita Adluri

Malik, *Islam in South Asia: A Short History* 312
Afsar Mohammad

Saran, *Yoga, Bhoga and Ardhanariswara: Individuality, Wellbeing and Gender in Tantra* 314
Ellen Goldberg

Sartori, *Bengal in Global Concept History: Culturalism in the Age of Capital* 315
Tithi Bhattacharya

Spink, *Ajanta: History and Development: Painting, Sculpture, Architecture—Year by Year* 317
Lisa N. Owen

Sreenivas, *Wives, Widows, Concubines: The Conjugal Family Ideal in Colonial India* 319
Smith Tewari Jassal

Upadhya, *The Raj Lives: India in Nepal* 321
Michael Baltutis

SOUTHEAST ASIA

Fischer, *Proper Islamic Consumption: Shopping among the Malays in Modern Malaysia* 323
Nancy J. Smith-Hefner

Liow, *Piety and Politics: Islamism in Contemporary Malaysia* 325
Elizabeth Fuller Collins

Lindquist, *The Anxieties of Mobility: Migration and Tourism in the Indonesian Borderland* 327
Andrew Causey

Waterson, ed., *Southeast Asian Lives: Personal Narratives and Historical Experiences* 329
Hue-Tam Ho Tai

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Editorial Foreword 69.1 (February 2010)

Our Cover

Firefighters marching in traditional garb in the 1985 Atsuta Shrine Festival parade in Nagoya, Japan. Photograph by Jonathan Dresner http://www.flickr.com/photos/jondresner/. Used with permission.

In keeping with the longstanding JAS tradition of disciplinary eclecticism, the essays in this issue showcase the work of scholars trained in an unusually wide range of fields. The list of contributors is made up of four political scientists (Ellis S. Krauss, Robert J. Pekkanen, Mary Alice Haddad, and Leigh K. Jenco), one historian (Lisa Balabanlilar), a sociologist (Eddy U), an anthropologist (Megan Sinnot), a philosopher (Rachel M. McCleary), and the holder of a doctorate in Sinology, Indology, and Tibetology (Leonard W.J. van der Kuijp), as well as a scholar whose PhD is in musicology (Nimrod Baranovitch), though he is focusing, in this case, on literary rather than musical texts. The current locations of the contributors (Baronovitch teaches in Israel, Jenco in Singapore, for example) and the periods discussed (from the era of the Mughal Empire to 2009) and places mentioned (from Japan to Jakarta, Tokyo to Turkic parts of Central Asia) are also a study in diversity.

This issue begins with a commentary by political scientists Krauss and Pekkanen that explores the implications of last year's Japanese elections. Called "The Rise and Fall of Japan's Liberal Democratic Party," it is a contribution to the "Asia Beyond the Headlines" series, and it appears exactly one year after Duncan McCargo's "Thai Politics as Reality T.V." inaugurated this genre. Whereas McCargo explored a very public upheaval on the streets, Krauss and Pekkanen remind us that what happens in the privacy of the voting booth can also lead to dramatic shifts, such as, in this case, the fall from power of an organization that had an extraordinarily long string of electoral victories.

The main question addressed in the essay is a straightforward present-minded one: What will Japanese politics be like, now that the amazing streak of Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) wins has been broken? To answer this query, though, according to Pekkanen and Krauss, we need to bring the past and the future as well as the present into the picture. We cannot make sense of why and how the LDP lost the 2009 election without having an appreciation for why and how they won so many before that. And, they suggest, the greatest shift in Japanese electoral politics may lay ahead, when it starts seeming a normal rather than headline-grabbing event when the party in power is voted out and a new group takes control.

Following this commentary comes a book-based think piece on "Borders, Diaspora and Regional Connections: Trends in Asian 'Queer' Studies" by anthropologist Megan Sinnott. This discussion of recent developments in work on homosexuality in Southeast Asian studies in particular and Asian studies more generally is the first contribution under my editorship to a feature called "Trends in Research" launched by my predecessor Kenneth M. George.

The "Trends in Research" essays carry forward a longstanding tradition at the Journal, namely, extended analyses of disciplinary and interdisciplinary treatments of a common theme or subject. In the past, the Journal has often run these as "state of the field essays" (typically provided comprehensive surveys of debates on very broad issues) and much shorter "review essays" (that have analyzed a pair of books or a set of several books that look at a given topic in a more tightly focused book-by-book manner). I hope that we can continue to publish works in both of these genres, but the "Trends in Research" feature, as the previous Editor first imagined it and I am now extending it, has the potential to open up another set of possibilities.

In length, these essays will typically be somewhat shorter than standard research articles and fall between the shorter review essays and extended state of the field essays run in the past. In terms of topics, some will focus in on subject that has recently attracted a great deal of interest among scholars working on one Asian country. This was the case, for example, with Tobie Meyer-Fong's "The Printed World: Books, Publishing Culture, and Society in Late Imperial China," which appeared in 66.3 (August 2007) and was the first "Trends in Research" piece to run in the Journal. Others, however, will eschew national borders and look at how a subject has been treated in works on different Asian countries, as is the case with Sinnott's contribution to this issue.

The remainder of this issue's works follow a more standard article format, beginning with political scientist Haddad's "From Undemocratic to Democratic Civil Society: Japan's Volunteer Fire Departments." This article provides a nuanced assessment of a protean civic organization, which began its existence as a militarized instrument of an authoritarian regime and, after a slow process of transformation, ended up a local community safety organization within a full-fledged democracy.

This is followed by sociologist U's "*Third Sister Liu* and the Making of the Intellectual in Socialist China," a study of a popular musical of the early 1960s. The goal of this essay is both to present a case study of political mobilization via a work of art, and even more so to provide a fresh perspective on how, through this play and other related activities, the Chinese state constructed a particular vision of the intellectual as a political subject.

Another look at the Chinese state of the post-1949 period comes after this, Baranovitch's "Others No More: The Changing Representation of Non-Han Peoples in Chinese History Textbooks, 1951-2003." This essay, which is based on close readings of materials used in high school classrooms, argues convincingly that a significant shift in the portrayal of non-Han peoples took place over time in the PRC, as they went from being represented as "foreigners" to being treated as integral contributors to "Chinese" history.

Moving both time and location, this issue continues with Balabanlilar's "The Begims of the Mystic Feast: Turco-Mongol Tradition in the Mughal Harem," which offers a multidimensional view of symbols of cultural prowess and legitimacy. Topics addressed include shifting understandings of the rights and roles of elite women and changing practices at South Asian royal courts.

We continue with another piece focusing on the distant past, McCleary and van der Kuijp's "The Market Approach to the Rise of the Geluk School, 1419–1642." This article traces the early development of some aspects of Tibetan religion, such as the central role of the Dalai Lama, that are now so taken for granted by non-specialists that they are sometimes imagined to have always been basic features of life in Tibet. The authors also look carefully at the ways that actions by different neighboring rulers affected dynamics within Tibet half-a-millennium or so ago.

The issue concludes with an essay that takes us back toward the present, Jenco's "'Rule by Man' and 'Rule by Law' in Early Republican China: Contributions to a Theoretical Debate," which picks up some of the issues raised in the forum on Chinese and Indian legal history that appeared in these pages one year ago and takes them in an exciting new direction. The author is particularly concerned with how Liang Qichao and other major Chinese intellectuals writing about a century ago dealt with the question of whether, in order for a state to be well run, the crucial ingredient was the right set of laws or the right sort of virtuous political leaders.

—JNW

Forthcoming Articles in *JAS* 69:2 (May 2010)

Asia Beyond the Headlines

Asia's Declining Death Penalty
DAVID T. JOHNSON

Refugees and the Environment in Wartime China: Huanglongshan, Shaanxi
MICAH MUSCOLINO

The interplay between the State, the Market, and Culture in shaping Civil Society: a Case Study of the PSPD in Post-Military Rule Korea
SEUNGSOOK MOON

Explaining Divergent Responses to the North Korean Abductions Issue in Japan and South Korea: Political Maneuverings for Nationalist Ends
BRAD WILLIAMS AND ERIK MOBRAND

Global Environmental Encounters in Southwest China: Fleeting Intersections and 'Transnational Work'
MICHAEL HATHAWAY

The Political Poetic of the Sena Court
JESSE R. KNUTSON

From Power to Value: Ranked Titles in an Egalitarian Society, Laos
GUIDO SPRENGER

Remembering Asian Anticolonialism, Again
ROSALIND C. MORRIS

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IN THIS ISSUE

Editorial Foreword and Forthcoming Articles

Asia Beyond the Headlines

ELLIS S. KRAUSS AND ROBERT J. PEKKANEN
The Rise and Fall of Japan's Liberal Democratic Party

Trends in Research

MEGAN SINNOTT
Borders, Diaspora and Regional Connections:
Trends in Asian "Queer" Studies

MARY ALICE HADDAD
From Undemocratic to Democratic Civil Society:
Japan's Volunteer Fire Departments

EDDY U
Third Sister Liu and the Making of the Intellectual in
Socialist China

NIMROD BARANOVITCH
Others No More: The Changing Representation
of Non-Han Peoples in Chinese History Textbooks, 1951–2003

LISA BALABANLILAR
The Begims of the Mystic Feast: Turco-Mongol Tradition
in the Mughal Harem

RACHEL M. MCCLEARY AND
LEONARD W. J. VAN DER KUIJP
The Market Approach to the Rise of the
Geluk School, 1419–1642

LEIGH K. JENCO
'Rule by Man' and 'Rule by Law' in Early Republican
China: Contributions to a Theoretical Debate

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