

In This Issue

In this issue, we emphasize research on insular Southeast Asia. After beginning with DANIEL DOEPPERS' study of one of Asia's great entrepôts during the 1930s, we present KENNETH GEORGE's research on a remote location in Indonesia. In our third contribution, ARAM YENGOYAN reviews the fascinating story of another highland forest people, the Tasaday, in the Philippines.

DANIEL F. DOEPPERS' topic is the Great Depression's impact on Manila. It might be expected, reasoning from the character of the world depression and the nature of Manila's entrepot economy, that the city's population would have experienced sharp economic losses and severe hardships in the 1930s. Instead, Doeppers' research led him to conclude that, in Manila, wealthy and middle-class Filipinos did not suffer greatly. Even the working class was partially protected because of a sugar boom and counter-cyclical construction employment. Most middle-class employees kept their jobs and were favored by falling food prices, so he concludes that, among middle-class Filipinos in Manila, the 1930s is remembered as a period of stability, while the World War II years are recalled as a period of great suffering. Doeppers' work suggests that the experience of a colonial entrepot during a depression may be distinct both from the situation in the metropolitan economy and from the experience of the entrepot's own rural hinterland.

KENNETH M. GEORGE discusses a headhunting ritual among upland people living in a small corner of Sulawesi in Indonesia. In the ritual, some inhabitants of the Pitu Ulunna Salu area conduct an annual mock headhunt as a chief event in marking their ancestral religious calendar. George found no evidence that their ritual ever involved a real headhunting expedition. Rather, his interpretation begins with an analysis of the pattern of highland-lowland differences and then places the headhunting ritual into the context of the prevailing patterns of interaction. George concludes the headhunting ritual reflects highlander attempts to interpret their relationship to the Mandar coastal lowlanders on terms favorable to themselves. The ritual also serves, he notes, to ratify the moral and religious legitimacy of the participants. This legitimacy is itself threatened, as most Pitu Ulunna Salu highlanders have abandoned older religious observances in favor of Muslim and Christian practices, which have become pervasive religious forms in present-day Indonesian society.

ARAM A. YENGOYAN reviews for us key elements in the tangled story of the Tasaday, a small community of forest-dwelling people in upland Mindanao who became an object of worldwide attention in the 1970s. The Tasaday remain a topic of great scholarly and popular fascination. He traces out the complex web of interests—journalistic, scientific, humanitarian, political, economic, and our own cultural attraction to the exotic—which have shaped the treatment of these people. Yengoyan suggests the Tasaday are best understood as a refugee group, but notes sadly that whatever the truth of that social science definition, the “discovery” of the Tasaday has unleashed more perplexing forces that have altered the Tasaday's way of life and clouded our understanding of them.

In our next article, DANIEL K. GARDNER shifts attention to China in the Sung period, where he examines a form of text employed by Neo-Confucianists beginning in the eleventh century A.D. Gardner skillfully employs both literary analysis and philosophical explication to demonstrate how the characteristics of this literary form, known as *yü-lu* or “recorded conversations,” can be related to Sung Neo-Confucian epistemology. He shows how this new literary form was connected with Neo-Confucian conceptions that every man has a mind that is capable of enlightened knowledge. Thus the colloquial style of these “recorded conversations” reflects the Sung Confucianists’ belief that basic principles can be grasped by ordinary people and must be presented in terms understandable to them.

Finally, RAMON H. MYERS and PHILIP C. C. HUANG exchange views about the direction of changes in modern Chinese economic history. Myers argues that recently published research convincingly demonstrates that after 1870 China experienced economic growth at modest, but measurable, rates as a consequence of the development of China’s market economy along modern lines in the coastal provinces. This conclusion challenges a consensus associated with the Michigan school—Albert Feuerwerker, Robert Dernberger, and Rhoads Murphey—who had concluded that, whatever occurred in the Chinese economy between 1870 and 1949, those changes were inconsequential. A third interpretation, here represented by Philip Huang, argues that an involutory economic decline took place in the period.

In response, Huang feels that Myers has misunderstood the significance of his conclusions about involution. Huang states he does not, as Myers suggests, see Chinese economic growth as impeded by imperfect functioning of markets. Rather, Huang believes that after 1870 increasing commercialization was occurring, but that it did not foster rural economic development. Thus, the Chinese case should cause us to question a common underlying assumption—shared by Myers and most other scholars—that links increasing commercialization and modern economic development.