

# AAMES Newsletter

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## *Letter from the Chair*

It has been an honor and a privilege for me to serve as Chair of AAMES for the 2011-12 term. As my term comes to an end, I'd like to take this opportunity to thank all the members for their interest in and/or service to the section. I'd particularly like to express my deepest thanks to the officers of AAMES. Their devotion of time, commitment, and dedicated service have helped sustain as well as move AAMES forward. I'd also like to thank Megan Griffin, Erin Shackelford, and Katie Coombes of the Office of ACRL for their assistance. Their knowledge of the association and professionalism have made my job a little easier.

Finally I would like to recognize the two following individuals for their service to AAMES. First, I would like to offer a special thank to Ms. Doris Seely of the University of Minnesota Libraries for her service to AAMES. For decades, Ms. Seely regularly attended and diligently took the minutes of many AAMES meetings. Second, I would like to offer a very special thanks to Dr. Ravi Sharma of Monmouth University Libraries for his leadership in guiding and advancing AAMES for the past three decades. Equally important, Dr. Sharma has also assisted many of us in becoming more involved in the profession's activities including international and scholarly activities.

Binh P. Le  
AAMES Chair, 2011-12

## Hidden Treasures: Charles L. Blockson Collection of African-American and the African Diaspora at Penn State University

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*Oh, East is East, and West is West, and never the twain shall meet...  
~from "The Ballad of East and West" by Rudyard Kipling (1889)*



The Charles L. Blockson Collection of African-American and the African Diaspora could not be physically further from the Eberly Family Special Collections Library at Penn State. Yet, the two are inseparable in their association. The Blockson Collection houses thousands of materials acquired from Mr. Charles Blockson, a 2007 Penn State Distinguished Alumnus, and it is almost filled to capacity.

The Blockson Collection came to Penn State during the fall of 2007. It incorporates more than 11,000 volumes related to African-American, African, Latin American, and Caribbean history and culture. The Collection is an eclectic assemblage of every topic imaginable: history, race, education, arts, biography, poetry, children's literature, relationships, cooking, and much more. The scope of the collection can be attributed to Mr. Blockson's

fourth-grade experience in which his teacher told him that African Americans did not have a history. He has been actively collecting ever since then.

The Blockson Collection at Penn State is made up of mostly books, but it also showcases a variety of material sources. The collection houses African American journals and magazines, as well as a number of photographs and Jim Crow-era postcards which are of great interest to undergraduates. In the Blockson Collection, a number of artifacts and works of art are displayed: sculpture depicting African and African American people (including a bronze head of Mr. Blockson himself), two pairs of slave shackles, and prints and posters. In the spring of 2011, the Blockson Collection provided the material for a Penn State Libraries exhibition on African American music. The exhibit included vinyl album jackets, sheet music and scores, and theatrical playbills.

The Blockson Collection is split into a main reading room and a vault in which many of its



### *Blockson Collection (continued from p. 2)*

most rare and valuable books and artifacts are kept. These precious materials include a first edition of Phyllis Wheatley's poems, a slave manumission document, and editions of books published from the 17th, 18th and 19th centuries. All of the books in the Blockson Collection are searchable through the University Libraries' online database. The non-print sources are being cataloged and will soon be searchable online.

Mr. Blockson remains an active part of the African American community. He entertains requests for speaking engagements and continues to donate materials to his collections at both Penn State and Temple. Currently, Penn State Public Broadcasting is working with Mr. Blockson, a former Penn State football player, on a documentary of his life and work.

The Blockson Collection is open to the public on Mondays, Tuesdays, and Fridays between 2pm and 4pm. Special visits are available upon request. If you would like more information about the Blockson Collection please contact the Special Collections Library, by phone at 814-865-7931 or by email at [UL-spcolref@lists.psu.edu](mailto:UL-spcolref@lists.psu.edu).

For additional information, see <http://www.libraries.psu.edu/psul/speccolls/rbm/blockson.html>.

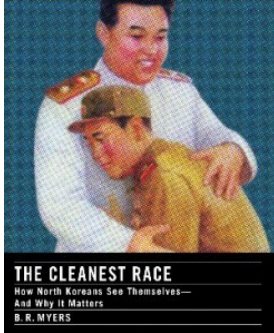


### *New to AAMES?*

Make sure that you're subscribed to the AAMES listserv. If you are not already subscribed, you can do so by sending SUBSCRIBE AAMES-L [your name] in a message to [sympa@ala.org](mailto:sympa@ala.org) (leave the subject line blank).

Visit AAMES online at: <http://aamesacr1.wordpress.com>

## World Beat



*Blake Robinson recently received his MSLIS from Florida State University and works in the Circulation department at the University of Central Florida. He holds a master of arts in Arabic and Islamic Studies from the University of Sydney, Australia, where he completed his thesis on the historiography*

Welcome to the spring 2012 edition of World Beat! This time around, I will review *The Cleanest Race: How North Koreans See Themselves – And Why It Matters* by B.R. Myers, who teaches at Dongseo University in South Korea. I chose to review this book because of the recent death of Kim Jong Il and the ascension of Kim Jong Un as leader of North Korea, a very noteworthy topic in a nation which has only had three leaders since independence from colonialism. Moreover, the perennial instability caused by the regime's actions make it a topic of continuing interest to students and researchers of political science, Asian studies, and related disciplines.

While the author covers a great deal of ground in his analysis of North Korean history and propaganda, three key points recur. First, the country's domestic and foreign policy are not informed in any significant respect by Marxism-Leninism (or its peninsular variant, *juche*) but rather by a variety of ultra-paranoid nationalism carried over from Japanese rule. Second, the regime inculcates loyalty in its citizenry by infantilizing them rather than extolling Marxist-Leninist virtues (in contrast with Soviet propaganda). Finally, he argues that outside observers constantly misinterpret the country's for one reason or another, and particularly by "the projection of Western or South Korean values and common sense onto the North Koreans" (14) which in turn that clouds our analysis of the "hermit kingdom."

Myers divides his work into two distinct sections. The first examines the country's history as told through its official propaganda. By contrast, the second section is nonlinear in nature and is thematic rather than chronological in approach; it mines North Korean propaganda for recurring themes and motifs while grouping propaganda according to its subject. Chapters are devoted to the notion of "Mother Korea," Kim Il Sung (the "Parent Leader"), Kim Jong Il (the "Dear Leader"), perceptions of foreigners, and finally, South Korea (the "Yankee Colony"). In addition, to help reinforce the author's arguments, there are black-and-white examples of propaganda sprinkled throughout the main text as well as sixteen separate pages of color illustrations. These pictures really help the book come alive for the reader and, in my opinion, lend immediacy to what might otherwise be a very abstract analysis. Certainly, it is far more difficult to discuss propaganda if the reader is not able to see it.

Myers's arguments are quite forceful and strident, and if I were writing a research paper I would want to read sources by those "academics, think-tank analysts, and other Pyongyang watchers" (12) that he so sharply criticizes for the sake of balance. In my opinion, the author does not adequately describe why his analysis differs so radically from that of other researchers, only that it does; his arguments that most researchers a) do not know enough Koran and b) care only to study political and economic issues are unconvincing. Nonetheless, the book is a good choice for upper-division undergraduates or graduate students doing more involved research on the Korean Peninsula, although it is certainly accessible to the educated general reader (indeed, my review copy is from the local public library). While I do not see it as essential enough a work for smaller libraries to own, I believe it well suited for larger research libraries as well as colleges and universities with strong Asian studies, communications, and political science programs.

Myers, B.R. *The Cleanest Race: How North Koreans See Themselves – And Why It Matters*. Brooklyn: Melville House, 2010. ISBN: 9781933633916. \$25.95.

### *Future Forward Near Fukushima Dai-Chi*

In true "jiéyīng jiā yóu" (hang in there) spirit, in the month of Yayoi (new life), a mere three days after having resolutely withstood Friday 11 March 2011's procession of incredulously calamitous events, the Tōhoku University re-opened the first floor of its Medical Library on the following Monday, 14 March.

Providing information and respite for student volunteers of the HARU Reconstruction Team, medical staff, and faculty members involved in early-stage disaster relief {along with electricity, gas, and water supply }, the first floor Learning Commons of the 3-storey quake-resistant building had undergone anti-seismic re-inforcement work beginning in 2008. As intermediary station for the University Hospital triage efforts, the Medical Library was centrally crucial in service to the survivor population; collection, preservation; and digitization of earth-quake related records; and disaster database development.

Being subject to extreme seismicity of the Sanriku coast (a less-publicised 7.3 offing quake occurred in the region on the Wednesday preceding that Friday's 9.0  $M_w$  earth-axis-shifting, tsunamic-energy releasing temblor, followed by another 7.4 on Thursday, 7<sup>th</sup> April), the Tōhoku University Library system undertook ambitious anticipatory disaster planning commencing in 2008.

Situated as it is near the Sanri-ku coastline, the historic region is regularly subject to seismic amplification of seawater waves. Tōhoku encompasses the three prefectures of Iwate, Miyagi, and Fukushima. Temblor-triggered waves did not reach the campuses but radiation monitoring stations were installed.

Quake-proofing reconstruction work and annual emergency library drill plans ensured the functioning of this East Asian institution whose *originating medical school* {*Meirin-yōkendō*} foundations were first laid in 1736, thereafter being re-organized as *Sendai igaku senmon gakkō* {Sendai Medical College}, forerunner of the present day medical department. Its Medical Library was established in 1915.

Located in the Aoba-ku ward of the coastal city of Sendai in the Miyagi Prefecture, 12 kilometers from the coastline in the northeastern region of the island of Honshu, Tōhoku University faces the Pacific Ocean on the east with mountains to its west in the scenic *City of Trees*. The edifice of the university proper {東北帝國大學} was initially set up in 1907 by the Greater Japanese Empire as the third of nine imperial universities

Of its five principal campuses (Amamiya, Aobayama, Katahira, Kawauchi, and Seiryō), the undersea megathrust earthquake afflicted the most extensive damage upon the Aobayama campus – the home of globally-esteemed graduate schools of engineering, environmental studies, and biomedical engineering and wherein the world-class institution also housed its Main Library, Medical Library, Kita-Aobayama Library, Engineering Library, Agricultural Library, Tohoku University Museum, Tohoku University Archives, Research Institute of Electrical Communication Library, and treasured works. Among these works are the Kano Collection, Wasan

*LaVerne Poussaint is CKO of Plutonic Research & Knowledge Teams International [PRAKTI] and Director of its DeepMed Library.*



*Future Forward Near Fukushima Dai-Chi (continued from page 5)*

Collection, Soseki Collection, Akita Archive, Valuable & Rare Books Exhibition Room, Digital Marx/Engels Collection, and the Kaitai Shinsho (Tafel Anatomia) Medical Library Collection.

These international exchange departments, investigators, and cross-disciplinary science scholars suffered severe destruction to their facilities {chemical fires decimated the Faculty of Science's chemistry department, for instance} and labs equipment in addition to massive loss of intellectual property assets - the comprehensive scope, range, and consequence of which have already been apprehended by the research world.

In spite of the Tōhoku-Oki earthquake which moved the whole of Honshu 2.4 m eastward and which set off a chain of devastation throughout the ports and prefectures of Iwate, Miyagi, Fukushima, Akita, Ibaraki, Chiba and the Wakabayashi-ku Ward {an ineffable experience recalled in the Japanese collective memory as Tohoku Dai-ShinSai (東北大震災) }; in spite of the undulating tsunami and subsequent Fukushima Dai-ichi nuclear disaster, Tōhoku University Library celebrated its 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary on 14 June 2011.

Maintaining that momentum, the world-class institution commenced last July its "Powerful Positive Recovery Campaign" which ends this May. Results of Tōhoku University Hospital's first post-quake clinical trials are now recorded in the March 2012 issue of the *Keio Journal of Medicine*. A full year after being dispatched to Haiti in that massive humanitarian operation, the same Japanese Self-Defense Forces were joined by United States military in "Operation Tomodachi" (friendship) and the HARU student volunteer corps seeking out corpses which weren't swept out to the overpowering seas.

Sources:

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## *News and Notes*

A \$25,000 gift to the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill Library will establish an endowment for the acquisition of Persian language and culture materials. The gift comes from Dr. Ali Jarrahi of Winston-Salem, N.C. The Jarrahi Family Library Fund for Persian Studies will provide support for one of the most rapidly growing programs at the University.

Jarrahi is an Iranian-born psychiatrist who completed his training at UNC in 1967 and earned a master of public health degree from the University in 1969. Two of his three daughters are also UNC graduates. Jarrahi and his family are long-time supporters of the University.

Press release: <http://www.lib.unc.edu/blogs/news/index.php/2012/02/persian-endowment-jarrahi-family-fund/>

For additional information about this endowment, please contact:

Emily Silverman, Associate Director of Library Development:  
[essilver@email.unc.edu](mailto:essilver@email.unc.edu), (919) 962-3437

OR

Mohamed Abou El Seoud, Middle East and African Studies Librarian:  
[mseoud@email.unc.edu](mailto:mseoud@email.unc.edu), (919) 843-3859

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Congratulations to AAMES member Raymond Pun on his 2012 Library Journal Mover and Shaker award!

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The AAMES meeting at ALA Annual will be on Saturday, June 23, 2012, from 8:00 - 10:00 AM in the Disneyland Hotel, Frontier Board Room. The 9-10 hour will be taken up by the AAMES Research Forum. If you would like to present your research at the forum, send an abstract by May 31st to Binh Le ([bp11@psu.edu](mailto:bp11@psu.edu)).

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