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Qinghai Earthquake Readings

April 14, 2010 in [Uncategorized](#) by [The China Beat](#) | [1 comment](#)

Quite a bit is being written today about Wednesday's earthquake in Qinghai, and we expect many more stories in the coming days. Here, a survey of what we've found online so far:

1. *The Guardian* has put together [an interactive map](#) of the quake region, as well as a powerful [photo series](#).

2. Danwei has translated [a commentary by Wang Jian of China National Radio](#), which focuses on the difficulties of relief and rescue efforts:

At this time, we do not have enough tents to shield the victims from the cold, and we do not have enough blankets to warm them. This is a critical part of the relief effort. Just now I saw that the Ministry of Civil Affairs has sent 5,000 tents, and the Civil Affairs Department of the Qinghai government has sent another 5,000. There are also 50,000 cotton overcoats and 50,000 cotton blankets on the way. But this is far from enough, and the rescue agencies must work even faster. . . .

Additionally, we are also worried about the injured. One characteristic of the Yushu earthquake is that it took place in a region where most of the houses are structures of earth and wood, whose earthquake resistance is relatively poor. Once an earthquake strikes, they are liable to collapse. But the death toll is usually less than when cement buildings collapse; the number of injured will be larger. So at present, the disaster region must arrange for hospitals and emergency rescue units to rescue the injured and work to treat them.

3. In this ["Letter from China"](#) at the *New Yorker*, Evan Osnos outlines some of the early reports about the earthquake and its coverage in the press.

4. Spanish-speakers, see ["Terremoto en Qinghai"](#) at ZaiChina for updates about the earthquake (a serviceable English translation can also be obtained by using the Google Translate button on the webpage).

5. The *Wall Street Journal* ["China Real Time Report" blog](#) reports that earlier today Baidu was blocking search queries that included the word "Qinghai," though it now appears that searches are producing results without a problem. As Loretta Chao and Josh Chin note, however, it shouldn't be assumed that the blocked results were related to an attempt to curtail earthquake-related discussions:

. . . it's unclear how long Qinghai discussions on Baidu Post Bar have been limited. But filtering discussion on a sensitive region like Qinghai, which is located close to the Tibet Autonomous Region and is home to many ethnic Tibetans, would fall within the realm of what Chinese Web sites are sometimes required to do by the government. It's possible the block wasn't as widely noticed before because Qinghai was an infrequent topic of discussion.

6. For Twitter updates and news stories, see NPR correspondent [Louisa Lim's feed](#). Lim also reported on the story for Wednesday's *Morning Edition* show.

7. Amy Wilentz, a UC Irvine faculty member and author of *The Rainy Season: Haiti—Then and Now*, published an op-ed at the *New York Daily News* earlier this week titled ["Renew Haiti from the Ground Up."](#) Wilentz's piece examines the complexities of reconstruction in the wake of an earthquake, a challenge that will be faced in Qinghai as well:

The real question for Haitians and others who love Haiti goes beyond issues of appropriation and pie-dividing and asks, instead, whether what was special and unimaginable about Port-au-Prince and the country as a whole can be retained while building something new in its place. While donors talk about "building back better," old Haiti hands and skeptics secretly chortle at the phrase. There can be no thought, for example, of building Port-au-Prince back, better or worse. What is gone, a heart-tugging city of surprising beauty and terrible, ruthless privation, cannot and should not be reinvented. Only sentimental foreigners and perhaps its elderly residents can long mourn the city's demise.

8. After the 2008 earthquake in Sichuan, Caroline Reeves wrote a two-part post for *China Beat* about the history of the Chinese Red Cross (Part 1 [here](#); Part 2 [here](#)). Kathryn Edgerton-Tarpley also placed the Sichuan earthquake in historical perspective in her essay, "[Chinese Responses to Disaster: A View from the Qing.](#)" Finally, read Steve Smith's piece on "[Rumor and the Sichuan Earthquake](#)" for a look at how omens have functioned in Chinese culture throughout the centuries.