Pakistan is currently faced with an intense combination of tensions, which in certain spheres is breaking into outright conflict, threatening both the viability of the Pakistani state and the economic sustainability of its people. Imran Ali examines this rapidly evolving situation and analyses the underlying factors and issues that have created and subsequently aggravated these problems.

Emergence of a ‘hydraulic society’

Historical processes under colonialism had retarded the emergence of nationalism in the Pakistan area. The most potent development had been the emergence of a ‘hydraulic society’, through the construction of an extensive network of perennial canals. By controlling the settlement of new lands through agricultural colonisation, and then through centralised irrigation management, the colonial state began to exercise a much greater degree of authority than in the rain-fed agricultural societies in the rest of India. The land was allotted to the rural elite and to the landholding peasant lineages. The lower caste rural masses were almost completely excluded from obtaining occupancy rights in the new agricultural tracts. Moreover, large reservations of land for military functions and soldier settlement, as well as the coercive, ‘hydraulic’ authority of the civil bureaucracy, firmly established the economic and institutional basis for the continued resilience of the authoritarian state in post-1947 Pakistan. In addition, the exit of almost the entire professional and career elite, unlike the territory that became India, the Pakistan area had a weakly developed and unstructured nationalist movement. No political organisation even remotely comparable to the Indian National Congress had emerged in the Muslim majority areas of British India. The Muslim League had remained the representative of a confined section, the Muslim landed elite, in Sindh and Baluchistan. In the Punjab, it was denied even this status. It was not until the climactic moments of decolonisation that a malcontent landlord faction propelled the League into Punjab politics by seeking the assistance of M.A. Jinnah, who was to become Pakistan’s founding father. The weakness of the freedom struggle led to the failure to dilute the hold of the upper agrarian hierarchy on power in Pakistan, unlike India where a rapid anti-feudal land reform reposed rural resources on the upper peasantry, the support base of Congress.

Crisis of governance

Pakistan is currently faced with an intense combination of tensions, which in certain spheres is breaking into outright conflict, threatening both the viability of the Pakistani state and the economic sustainability of its people. Imran Ali examines this rapidly evolving situation and analyses the underlying factors and issues that have created and subsequently aggravated these problems.
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Pakistan is a vulnerable nation, seen by many as a failed state. But Pakistan is also a frontline state, potentially positioned between Afghanistan and India, and crucial to US interests in South Asia. The country makes headlines with earthquakes, political turbulence, the battle with fundamentalists and Al-Qaeda, ethnic violence and human rights issues. Yet behind the headlines there is little understanding of this land and its people. This is reflected too in the lack of scholarship and academic interest in Pakistan. In this issue of IIAS Newsletter we hope to open the door a little on this complex and troubled society with a series of articles which probe deeper into underlying problems than most newspaper headlines can afford to do. I am grateful to Kristoffel Lieten for guest editing this Pakistan special.

The international financial crisis is also felt in Asia, but in a way different from the West. In his regular column, Kerry Brown explains that China will probably come out as a winner. No doubt the shifting financial balance will also lead to a shift in political power in the world.

This is the last issue of the IIAS Newsletter in the present form. The next issue will be The 50th Newsletter of our institute, and time for a new and fresh look. The name will be The Newsletter, the style will be different but it will remain recognisable as the newsletter of the International Institute for Asian Studies, made by the same editor Anna Yeadell. Most importantly, the main line will be continued: informative articles written by experts for a broad readership on all aspects of Asian societies, past and present.

Mas Sparreboom,
director
Pakistan, an abundance of problems and scant knowledge

Kristoffel Liston

In 1988, Benazir Bhutto published her Daughter of the East, an Autobiography, which she dedicated to her three children and to all the children of Pakistan. In 2006, Pervez Musharraf published In the Line of Fire, A Memoir, written in honour of his ailing mother and for the people of Pakistan. If not their policies, their books at least were dedicated to the entire spectrum of the people of Pakistan, (although their true purpose was an effort to explain themselves to the West). Bhutto’s book was widely-liked acclimated since it heralded the dawn of progressive democracy under the leadership of a smart-looking and verbally superlative young lady. Musharraf’s book received little attention, possibly because it was written by a man who had been portrayed as an unfriendly and cunning military dictator, accused of being in charge not only with reactionary world powers but even with the Taliban.

Scant scholarship

The actual history of Pakistan does not fully concur with the picture which both these leaders portray in their books and speeches. Unfortunately, however, little scholarship is available to provide us with a more realistic close reading of Pakistan. Dr. Stephen Cohen (2004) had warned the US, in the midst of the war against terror in that region that there’s “only a few true Pakistan experts and knows remarkably little about the country. Much of what has been written is papyally wrong, or at best superlative.” Scholarship within Pakistan, despite notable exceptions, also leaves much to be desired. One possible explanation for the omission is the undemocratic style of functioning of all governments in Pakistan, the coiled administration not less than the military governments led by Yahya Khan, Zia ul Haq and Musharraf.

Universities and research institutes have failed to function properly. Political interference and nepotism have competed in running down any academic quality that the institutions may have had in the distant past. As Aziz (1993) has superably documented in his book of history writing. Whatever was left of the academic façade was torn down by politicisation and intercultural struggles involving Muslim fundamentalists from the late 1980s onwards. Most Pakistani academicians who have witnessed the political turbulence and the downgrading of the academic institutions have done so abroad.

Another explanation for the poor academic interest in Pakistan is that the country has been portrayed as a rogue state and is not high on the list of destinations for tourists or researchers. It is commonly perceived as the fount of terrorism, the puritanical Wahhabism as practiced in Saudi Arabia. The new religious ideology was in contradiction with the Sufist tradition and disunited the country more than ever before. “the greatest tension of all was between the state’s legistic imposition of Islam and the humanist traditions of Sufism” (Talbot 1993; Khan 1985; Schofield 2003; see also Lau 2006 and Lau and Zia ul Haq in this issue).

This new Pakistan, as a frontline state, played a vital role in the struggle against Soviet communism. It heralded a period of stability which lasted until Musharraf came to power in October 1999 and was confronted with a situation of the state: “through the active fostering by Zia ul Haq, the funding of Saudi Arabia, espousal by the US, and the venal abandon of Benazir Bhutto and Nawaz Sharif, the seed of religious fanaticism sown more than two decades earlier had come to confront him as fully grown trees perversely balanced by the empty coffers of the state” (Abbas 2000). That, in a nutshell, is the crisis which Pakistan is still confronted with in the post-Musharraf era.

Coverage

More academic interest in Pakistan would likely contribute to more clarity on many of the issues at stake in a vulnerable nation with many problems and which is in the midst of a political cauldron. Pakistan, on the eastern proximity of Afghanistan, Iran and Iraq, is also just on the western fringe of mainstream Asia. For good reasons, therefore, the country has been taken up for special coverage in this issue of IAS Newsletter. Five articles will cover political development, gender in the legal system, the aftermath of ethnic violence, the failing educational system and the life of Pakistan as migrants abroad.

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commercial bourgeoisie to India, owing to its non-Muslim composition, removed from the new state a class of people who could have advocated democratic and modernising institutions. Social scientists have failed to recognise the depth of Pakistan’s historical continuities, thereby tending to misrepresent the source and nature of its present-day authoritarian structures.

That these structures remained ancillary and subservient to a continuing neo-colonial dependency, was explicated in the post-1947 period. Pakistan’s failure to maintain a non-aligned position in world affairs was accompanied by its membership of military combinations sponsored by the US, such as the South-East Asian and the Central Treaty Organizations (SEATO and CENTO). The components of the British Indian Army inherited by Pakistani leadership on the US.

It could be argued that maintaining an oversized military structure of around 1.3 million people was more to meet the Western need for a defence line against presumed Soviet expansion, rather than the protracted rationale of defence against India. The excessive expenditure on the military, comprising an inequitable proportion of the national budget, thereby constituting a within-reach solution, was a ready-made requirement to mitigate foreign imperialist needs. The denial of social sector and development expenditures, on children’s schooling and basic health facilities for the poor, and of essential infrastructure investment in energy, transport and telecommunications, consti-
tuted the real costs of the massive military outlay that巴基斯坦 was sustained by the US.

An essential component of this continuing dependency was the deprivation of demo-
cratistic rights to the Pakistani people, start-
ing with the failure of the electoral process in the 1950s. Protracted periods of military dictatorship followed, each accompanied by a marked intensification of relations with the US, even the interregnum of a highly damaging role in Pakistan’s social development. If Benazir Bhutto’s two administrations, between 1988 and 1997, could claim to be free of military spon-
sorship, then their legitimacy was seri-
ously undermined by pervasive corruption and nepotism. This perhaps did more harm to the cause of democracy than its enemies could have inflicted. Thus, Paki-
stan’s major political leaders have, almost across the board and unfortunately in contrast to India, been little more than appendages of the authoritarian structure, a combination of military fiat and imperialist manipulation.

The second contributory factor in the emerging crisis of society and govern-
ance has been geopolitical dynamics, and more specifically the events unfolding in Afghanistan. The first phase was the acceptance in the late 1970s of its role in the Western game plan of destabilizing the neutralist US-backed Shah in Iran, drawing in the Soviet Union, and then expediting its ultimate ruin. In the process, the seeds of many of the problems currently besetting Pakistan were sown. The task of sustaining and grow-
ing three million refugees, the greatest act of collective hospitality in human his-
tory, now contrasts with the petty venom expressed by Washington’s Kabul cli-

The third contributory factor in the current political and economic crisis in Paki-
stan is the continuing military dominance. Even more so, the confluence of the US and NATO invasion and occupation of Afghanistan from the 9/11 attacks in New York, apparently engineered by malcontent Arabs inspired by Osama bin Laden, has led to continuing conflict, especially with the resistance movement in the southern and eastern Pakistan areas.

Over 100,000 Afghans are estimated to have lost their lives since the Western invasion.

Under the weight of public sentiment, she appeared to change her approach to the ‘war on terror’ and question the US military’s counter-insurgency policies: a change of heart that probably obviated being her death sentence. Her assassination in late December 2007 threw the country into further turmoil, with alleged public indiscretion, especially in Sindh. The question of leadership by her hus-
band, Asif Ali Zardari, provided a further twist to the convoluted history of dynamic politics in south Asia. Nevertheless, after a short postponement, elections were held in February 2008. By that time ex-prime minister Nawaz Sharif had also been allowed to return to the country, and his party. Muslim League (N), together with the People’s Party won a resounding elec-
toral victory. Musharraf’s supporters were badly beaten, denoting a popular rejection of the incumbent dictator.

Musharraf’s fall from grace has been attributed to increasingly adverse eco-
nomic conditions, the wrangle with the judiciary, and to his uncritical support for the ‘war on terror’. However, the People’s Party leadership, living under the spectre of corruption, also appeared reluctant to move against him, thereby increasing public frustration and placing the coali-
tion with Nawaz Sharif in jeopardy. Finally, threatened with impeachment, Musharraf resigned on August 18, 2008. Soon there-
after, on August 25, the Nawaz Muslim League decided to terminate its coalition with the PPP, accusing it of delaying the restoration of the sacked judges. Mean-
while, suicide bombings and the armed struggle with militants appeared to gain further intensity. With these growing political, eco-
nomic and strategic uncertainties, the situation of 180 million people has become increasingly precarious.

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Migration from South Asia to the Gulf offers important insights into understanding the complex religious, political and economic worlds inhabited by Pakistanis. For the past five years Magnus Marsden has been visiting a group of men from Chitral, Pakistan’s northernmost district, who have now made the painful decision to become labourers in the Gulf. Marsden’s fascinating account reveals to us not only their motivations and experiences but also a snapshot of how men from contrasting socio-economic backgrounds are sharing their lives together in Dubai’s all-male ‘labour camps’.

Lords of a Dubai labour camp:

Pakistan migrants in the Gulf

Magnus Marsden

Earlier work on South Asian migrants in the Gulf has explored the ‘cosmopolitan’ identity forma- tions made possible by transnational migration flows (Wedner 1999). More recently, South Asian migrant experiences have been shown to be richly permeated by experiences of discrimination, both by Gulf citizens and Western expatriates (Vera 2008). Other anthropologists argue that even if migrants do imagine emiti- ting an “aura of a sophisticated man of the world” on their return home, then everyday life in the Gulf “appears as a self-contained microcosm in which peo- ple from many different places are held together yet stand apart, separated by class and ethnicity, and so absorbed by the work at hand that they become oblivious of the world around them” (Ossela and Ossela 2008).

Fewer ethnographic accounts exist, however, of the forms taken by sociality and subjectivity in the physi- cal spaces in which most Pakistani labour migrants in the Gulf live – all-male ‘labour camps’ (see also Humphrey 2005). These labour camps, usually large, multi- story concrete buildings, flanked by trucks and cranes, and often in a world removed from the Gulf’s notori- ously wealthy downtown city centres, could easily be assumed to be the types of setting where labourers would think of and do little other than “working and saving” (Watkins 2005) in preparation for their return home.

Over the past five years I have been visiting men I knew during fieldwork in Chitral, Pakistan’s northernmost district, who have made the painful decision to become labourers in the Gulf. These men do not con- stitute any readily-made class of ‘migrant labourers’. They hail, rather, from contrasting socio-economic backgrounds.

Some of them are the sons of high status families who were once employed in respectable government jobs. They fell into serious debt due to rising costs, emerg- ing especially from the expectation that their children should be educated in English-medium, fee paying schools, and their love of a ‘life of luxury’, an impor- tant way in which status, authority and ‘full humanity’ are displayed and embodied in this one-time princely kingdom. The option then was to migrate to the Gulf. Others Chitrals in Dubai’s camps appear to better fit our expectations of ‘labour migrants’: men from remote and relatively poor Chitrali villages with very rudimentary levels of formal education and much from Chitral and had recently been refused a place in the room on the grounds that the Doctor needed the spare bed to host his guests made Sohail pull out of the party, leaving the Doctor with the burden of buying liquor for the New Year “your children at home in Chi- tral are chaffing from the cold”, he told Sohail, “and you are buying alcohol, you should be ashamed!”

The Doctor had, indeed, quickly become a well known part of Chitrali migrant life in the city. He’d organised Chitrali musical programmes in the city parks that saw Urdu under construction: the Baj Dubai, the world’s tallest build- ing. The actual height is a closely guarded secret and won’t be revealed until construction is completed.

Party supporter, and he’d represented the Chitrali medical association union as its elected President. Farid’s life in Chitral, according to his brother-in-law, however, had become “without rule” and Farid had eventually “lost control of himself”. This small medi- cal shop was crammed with excitable politicians calling for tea, the sight of which led even his most loyal customers to flee. The hospitality often involved fried chicken and bottles of apricot schnapps (tanj). So, one day, Farid, now also facing considerable pressure from his guests, approached a friend who had promised him work in Dubai, and some days later he landed in the city.

Three months after his arrival, it was clear that Dubai life was painful for Farid. He suffered “heart explosion” (hand phat) for his family, and reminisced about his long gone ‘life of luxury’. Importantly he also found spending his days with ‘labourers’ a drain. He respect- ed these men, he told me, but complained of a lack of understanding with them: “you saw how I lived in Chitral, how could they ever understand?” Farid’s ame- nities were added to by the nature of his job: for two years he worked in the menial post of ‘store man’ in a Pakistani-owned demolition company. With time, how- ever, and having discovered that Farid was a trained paramedic, many labourers in the camp sought out his help for their personal ailments: prescrib- ing the right medicine for a rash here and a case of impotence there, Farid was soon honourably referred to as ‘Doc- tor Sahib’. At night, however, the Doctor slept in a crowded room with seven other Chitrals and Pakistani labourers.

Four years later Farid is happier. Above all, he has found employment with a different construction company, which employs him as an ‘on site’ nurse. This living conditions have also transformed. He has paid off the large bank loan, which led him to Dubai. His room in the camp is now his own, and tastefully decorated with Chitrali embroidery, equipped with air conditioning, a television, DVD player, gas cooker and a fridge, and shared with only two Chitrals who help him with his guests, washing, and often also bring him food. In the evenings he sits on his ‘veranda’, in reality the camp’s roof, often with a vodka and Sprite, and watches the labourers below. Given that Farid lives in a labour camp located in Dubai’s industrial sector – al Qus – it is striking that he talks of living an enchanted life, and embodies the behaviour of a Chitrali lord (lala) sitting on a verandah (mahken) overlooking the amus- ing if somewhat distasteful behaviour of the “simple” (sadah) labourers beneath.

The Doctor’s capacity to live in luxury causes tensions between him and other Chitrals in the camp. Accord- ing to Sohail – the Chitrali in charge of the camp’s laundry, and one of Farid’s former roommates – until New Year’s Eve, 2007, five Chitrals once lived happily together in the Doctor’s room. That evening, how- ever, the Doctor told them that they should organise a party in their room and contribute ten dirhams for rum. Sohail’s elder brother, who had recently came from Chitral and had recently been refused a place in the room on the grounds that the Doctor needed the spare bed to host his guests made Sohail pull out of the party, leaving the Doctor with the burden of buying liquor for the New Year “your children at home in Chi- tral are chaffing from the cold”, he told Sohail, “and you are buying alcohol, you should be ashamed!”

The Doctor had, indeed, quickly become a well known part of Chitrali migrant life in the city. He’d organised Chitrali musical programmes in the city parks that saw
Dubai rather obscure: “here we are labouring and earning money to send home”, said one, “and Doctor Sahib is spending his money on attending meetings and crying over a woman who has done nothing for any of us”.

Conclusion
At one level, the Dubai which Farid and his fellow camp dwellers inhabit appears to be remarkably similar to what the Ovalle’s have described as a “self-contained micromosmos”, where people from “many different places are held together yet stand apart, separated by class and ethnicity”. Yet Farid’s micromosmos is richly shaped by creative personal initiatives on his part, as well as being informed by a dynamic range of complex social relationships that arise in such neoliberal spaces. Dubai Chitrals are critically important boundaries of class, status and religious difference.

At another level, Farid’s changing experiences of Dubai also points toward the complex forms of sociality and subjectivity that arise in such neo-liberal spaces as Dubai’s labour camps. These camps are usually thought of as alienating and as devoid of nurturing forms of sociality, which are a valued dimension of life in Chitral (Marsden 2005). Farid and others like him, however, claim to derive pleasure from camp life. In the most unlikely of circumstances, Farid cultivates and tenaciously promotes a luxurious way of Chitral aristocratic living. Others, like Sohail, see Gulf life as offering very different possibilities for their personal development. When they return home, they talk of being able to enter Dubai and resume control over their own lives.

Complex interactions, thus, are taking place between very different and apparently contradictory standards of self-management and presentation, and in the most unexpected of places – Dubai’s concrete and apparently dehumanising all-male labour camps.

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Pakistan’s legal system has long been associated with human rights violations. In particular, the controversial Zina Ordinance, which made sexual intercourse outside marriage a criminal offence. The most pernicious result of this law has been the risk for ‘double jeopardy’ of rape victims. A woman pressing rape charges risked being convicted of adultery if the suspect was acquitted. The infamous case of Safia Bibi, is the most distressing example of this scenario. Yet, as Martin Lau reveals, there have been gradual improvements in the legal position of Pakistan’s women in recent years.

The quiet evolution: Islam and women’s rights in Pakistan

Safia Bibi was a blind, unmarried, girl whose pregnancy was visible proof of sexual intercourse. She accused her employer, a landlord in rural Sindh, of having raped her. At the trial, her employer was acquitted, but the court proceeded to sentence her to imprisonment. On the basis of being pregnant and unmarried, and her charge of rape unproven, she was guilty of unlawful sexual intercourse. Following international protests, Safia Bibi was eventually acquitted by the court of appeal. However, the rule of evidence that the pregnancy of an unmarried woman was admissible evidence in an accusation of Zina, was left undisturbed. The Zina Ordinance also led to the imprisonment of large numbers of women who had been rejected by their husbands without having been validly divorced. On re-marriage, the former husbands brought accusations of adultery against them, claiming that there had been no divorce, and that therefore their ‘wives’ were committing adultery. In addition, the issue of so-called honour crimes - women murdered because for allegedly dishonouring their families through immoral conduct, and forced marriages – has further tarnished the reputation of Pakistan’s legal system in relation to the rights of women. Mention must also be made of Muslim family law as applied by Pakistani courts, which discriminates against women in many areas, such as inheritance rights and divorce.

Perhaps surprisingly, the democracy which followed the lifting of martial law and the subsequent death of Zia ul Haq in 1988, increased rather than decreased, the role of Islam in the legal system. In the decade preceding General Musharraf’s regime - 1988 until 1998 - the two ruling parties, led by Benazir Bhutto and Nawaz Sharif, failed to improve the legal position of women. They lacked the will but also the parliamentary majorities required to reverse the current of Islamisation. This, however, tells only half of the story, it omits the important role Pakistan’s courts have played in controlling the fate of Islamic law.

The Federal Shariat Court
Most important in determining the position of Islamic law in the legal system was the Federal Shariat Court (FSC). Created, in 1980, to act as the court of appeal in all cases involving the HUDoud Ordinances, the court was given added jurisdiction, namely the power to invalidate laws deemed to be contrary to Islam, as laid down in the two main sources of Islamic law, namely the Qur’an and the Sunnah. Any member of the public could approach the FSC and lodge a complaint that a particular law violated Islam and should therefore be struck down. Moreover, the new court could also examine statutes ‘‘au mot’’, meaning that it could move itself and review a statute. This new jurisdiction was unprecedented in the legal history of Pakistan, and no other country had given its courts such wide powers.

Until the creation of the FSC, only the four high courts and the Supreme Court of Pakistan had the power to invalidate laws, and then only on the grounds that they violated the constitutional and fundamental rights. Some restrictions were imposed on the types of law which the FSC could examine, but overall the effects of the rulings have been profound.

Most visible is the court’s impact in the area of criminal law, where the government was forced to pass the Criminal Law (Amendment) Act 1997 in order to bring the law on murder and assault in line with Islamic law. As a result, the heirs of a murder victim now have the right to determine the fate of the murderer. They have three options: Firstly, to demand that the murderer is punished; secondly, to agree that he pays a sum of money as compensation, in return for which he escapes punishment; and lastly, to pardon him. A recent PhD thesis concluded that on average eight out of ten convicted murderers avoided imprisonment, or indeed the death penalty, because they were able to pay monetary compensation to the victim’s family. Whilst the

Photograph courtesy of Kristoffel Lieten.

Martin Lau

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new law can be seen as being supportive of the idea of restorative justice, and also as being in line with the customs of Pakistan’s tribal areas, the consequences of this legislation have been particularly unfavourable for women, many of whom were killed by members of their own family in the name of honour. In a case where a brother had murdered his sister, it was the father who could pardon his son.

Turning of the tide
Towards the end of the 1990s, after a decade of democracy, the legal position of women living in Pakistan had become worse rather than better. It is curious that matters only began to improve after General Musharraf overturned the government of Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif and imposed a state of emergency. In what can be described as a quiet evolution, the tide of the Islamisation has turned, albeit in small, incremental steps. Amendments to Pakistan’s criminal law, in the form of several acts, have improved the legal position of women under criminal law. In addition, courts, including the Federal Shariat Court, have bolstered the rights of women in the area of family law and the right to equality. While the changes, which will be described in greater detail, have not revolutionised Pakistan’s legal system, they can serve as examples that it is possible to improve the legal position of women living under Muslim law without removing Islamic law from the legal system altogether.

The first significant measure taken by the government occurred in 2004, when the Criminal Law (Amendment) Act, 2004 was passed. The law extends the power of judges to punish a murderer who has killed in the name of honour. The sentence can be a maximum of 25 years imprisonment or the death sentence, and can be awarded irrespective of any payment of compensation or a pardon by the representative of the victim. In addition, the amended Article 311 of the Pakistan Penal Code, 1860 now provides for a mandatory prison sentence of 10 years for so-called honour killings. Aside from dealing specifically for the first time in Pakistan’s legal history with honour crimes, the Criminal Law (Amendment) Act, 2004 also made a first attempt at reforming the Zina (Enforcement of HUDOOD) Ordinance, 1979. It now provides that where a woman is accused of Zina “no police officer below the rank of a Superintendent of Police shall investigate such offence nor shall the accused be arrested without permission of the Court”. This amendment is designed to reduce the number of women arrested and imprisoned on false charges of adultery, only to be acquitted on appeal, after having spent many years behind bars. A similar provision has also been introduced for the offence of blasphemy.

Redefining Zina
The 2004 amendment to the criminal law was followed by a complete remoulding of the law of sexual offences in 2006, when the National Assembly passed the Protection of Women (Criminal Laws Amendment) Act, 2006. The Act does not repeal the Zina Ordinance, and therefore falls short of the demands of the human rights community, but it does much to address the many injustices and hardships caused by the old Zina Ordinance.

Appended to the Act is a lengthy “Statement of Objects and Reasons”. It takes the form of a short essay on the HUDOOD Ordinances which reads as an interesting exercise in putting the new thinking within the framework of Islamic ideology. Its opening statement establishes that in Pakistan all laws have to be in accordance with Islam and that the Protection of Women (Criminal Laws Amendment) Act, 2006 is a measure to achieve just this, namely “to bring the laws relating to Zina and Qazf, in particular, in conformity with the stated objectives of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan.” In an unprecedented manner, the explanatory appendix also acknowledges the criticism of the old law, stating:

“The Zina and Qazf Ordinance have been a subject of trenchant criticism by citizens in general and scholars of Islam and women in particular. The criticisms are many. These include the lumping of the offence of Zina with Zina-hili-iljard (rape) and subjecting both to the same kind of proof and punishment. This has facilitated abuse. A woman who fails to prove rape is often prosecuted for Zina...Her complaint is at times deemed a confession.”

The intention of the new law is “to make Zina and Qazf punishable only in accordance with the injunctions of Islam as laid down in the Holy Quran and Sunnah, to prevent exploitation, curb abuse of police powers and create a just and egalitarian society.” The offence of adultery is the only offence which has been retained in the Zina Ordinance. It is now accompanied by the offence of making a false accusation of adultery, called Qazf. However, even in respect of the offence of adultery, there have been significant amendments to the Zina Ordinance. A new definition of “concessions” has been added, to the effect that it means “notwithstanding any judgement of any court to the contrary, an oral statement, explicitly admitting the commission of the offence of Zina, voluntarily made by the accused before a court of sessions having jurisdiction in the matter.” This new definition is designed to prevent the overlap between the offences of rape and adultery, where false accusations of rape were converted into adultery charges, on the basis that the woman had “confessed” to sexual intercourse when she complained of rape, as in the case of Sajda Bibi.

A complaint of adultery has to be lodged directly in a court of sessions, thereby circumventing potentially corrupt police officers altogether. The judge hearing the complaint has to examine on oath not only the complainant but also at least four adult male eye-witnesses, who have on examination satisfied the court that they are “trustworthy persons and abstain from major sins”. These four men have to testify on oath that they witnessed the act of penetration. It is only then that the court can issue a summons for the appearance of the accused. Even at this stage, it is still open for the judge to dismiss the case if he finds that, in his judgement, there are insufficient grounds for proceeding.

New interpretations
Counts are increasingly interesting Islamic family law in a way which promotes women’s rights. This is most visible in the area of divorce laws, where the right of a Muslim woman to dissolve her marriage has been extended by the Supreme Court of Pakistan in 2005. In Naseem Akhtar v. Muhammad Jafarulla (PLD 2006 SC 293) a wife’s suit for dissolution of her marriage, on the grounds that she had developed a hatred for her husband, had been dismissed by the family court and also by the Lahore High Court. The lower courts had consistently dismissed her application on the grounds that she had been unable to substantiate the alleged hatred and aversion. The Supreme Court, however, allowed her appeal and dissolved her marriage, holding that the fact that the lady had started a suit for dissolution of marriage “itself is demonstrative of the fact that the petitioner does not want to live with her husband which indicates the degree of hatred and aversion.” The president has been set: the act of asking for a divorce is evidence enough of a wife’s hatred and aversion towards her husband and the court has no choice but to grant the divorce.

Equally significant is the case of Re. Sae Moto Case No 1/K/6/2006 (Gender Equality) (PLD 2006 FSC 1) where the Federal Shariat Court took objection to the Citizenship Act 1951, according to which only men were allowed to obtain Pakistani citizenship for their foreign spouses. The FSC found the discriminatory provision to be contrary to Islam and invalidated it. It is worth quoting from the decision, since it illustrates the changing attitudes towards Islamic law.

“Islam is a universal religion. The last sermon of Holy Prophet is the first Charter of Human Rights wherein all human beings are equal. Manhood is one. Allah says in Holy Qur’an that “He created man and woman from a single being (7:189) and for HIM whose death good work, whether male or female and he (or she) is a believer, such will enter paradise. (4:129)”…We are of the view that section 11 of the Citizenship Act is discriminatory, negates gender equality and is in violation of Articles 4A and 4J of the Constitution of Islamic Republic of Pakistan and also against international commitments of Pakistan and most importantly is repugnant to Holy Qur’an and Sunnah.” (p: 10)

In conclusion, amendments to criminal laws combined with the decisions of the high courts, the Supreme Court and the Federal Shariat Court have led to a gradual improvement of the legal position of Pakistan’s women in recent years. Will they last? Musharraf resigned as President in August 2008. Given that many of the positive developments in the law are closely associated with his reign, there is a risk that a differently constituted judiciary may reverse this trend. The Federal Shariat court could, for instance, declare the amendments to the Zina Ordinance to be contrary to Islam. Based on the experience of the 1990s, there must be at least some doubt about the willingness of elected governments to face the wrath of the religious establishment and to press for further improvements of women’s rights in the near future.

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Notes
1. For a thorough legal analysis of the Zina Ordinance see Jahangir, Asma and Martin Lau, 2008. Given that many of the positive developments in the law are closely associated with his reign, there is a risk that a differently constituted judiciary may reverse this trend. The Federal Shariat court could, for instance, declare the amendments to the Zina Ordinance to be contrary to Islam. Based on the experience of the 1990s, there must be at least some doubt about the willingness of elected governments to face the wrath of the religious establishment and to press for further improvements of women’s rights in the near future.

2. For a comprehensive review of these issues see the Pakistani section of Human Rights Watch, Global Report on Women’s Human Rights, New York, 1995.

3. The Hudood Offences were enacted in 1979 as part of Zia-ul-Haq’s Islamisation process. They were intended to implement Islamic Sharia law, by enforcing punishments mentioned in the Quran and surah for zina (extra- marital sex), Qazf (false accusation of Zina), offences against property (theft), and prohibition (the drinking of alcohol).


The Supreme Court of Pakistan.
Despite this government commitment, the number of out-of-school children in Pakistan remains significantly high. UNICEF estimates almost 13 million, out of the 27 million children of primary school age (5-9), remain out of school. 7 million of these out-of-school children are girls (SPARC 2004). Furthermore, Pakistan's adult literacy rate of 50 is considerably below the South Asian regional average of 58 (UNICEF 2007). Pakistan's low ranking on the world Human Development Index (HDI) scale (number 136) is due to Pakistan's poor performance in education and in child health care (Lieten 2004; Khan 2005; UNDP 2007). In addition to gender disparities and a low adult literacy rate, education in Pakistan is characterised by urban-rural inequalities, low enrolment, and a high dropout rate. Many institutions within Pakistan, including the government, recognise the poor condition of Pakistan's education system. The Social Policy and Development Centre (SDPC) describes the state of education in Pakistan as “deplorable” (Social Policy and Development Centre 2003).

How can this poor state of education in Pakistan be explained? Experts usually cite the high costs of education, parental disinterest due to social and cultural norms (especially for girls), and the low quality of education due to disinterested teachers, lack of proper physical infrastructure, overcrowded classes and irrelevant curricula. An additional curse in Pakistan's education system, as Chuman and Lloyd (2007) have argued, is the fact that teachers are often absent; in their sample from Northwest Frontier Province and Punjab about 35 percent of teachers in government girls’ schools and 22 percent of teachers in government boys’ schools were absent during unannounced school visits.

Escaping the cycle of poverty
In 2006, the Foundation for International Research on Working Children (IREWOC) conducted an anthropological study at household and village level in rural Pakistan concerning non-enrolment, non-attendance and/or dropout (De Groot 2007). One of the research settings was a fishing village on the coast of Karachi-West in Sindh province. Anticipating a troublesome future, many villagers here believe education to be important, and a means with which their children will be able to break free of their current style of livelihood, and to gain access to other occupations. A worried mother of two young boys explained:

I do not want my son to be a fisherman like his father. The job is very hard. When a fisherman is young and strong, he has to do hard work. When he gets old and weak, he cannot work and will be without a source of income.

However, even though education is perceived by parents and children alike as a way to escape current poverty, many children are still found out of school. The first explanation relates to the child’s own calculations. Another explanation relates to the expected future opportunities. Ever since education until class 10 (secondary level) has been available in the village, a significant number of young men and some girls have completed secondary school, but do not seem to be able to escape the cycle of poverty. If they found a job, it was at an abysmally low salary. As a fisherman’s wife explained: “Many boys in this village passed class 10, but there are no jobs available to them. In this way education is not good.” Some boys therefore chose to become fishermen after all: “It is better to fish, than to be jobless! But now I work as a fisherman. We are from a poor family, so we cannot afford to go to the city for further education.”

Quite a number of villagers, however, do perceive education as relevant for everyone, including those involved in traditional occupations. They value how educated men know how to take fish to the market and how to sell it with profit and how they can control all the counting. They realise the benefit of learning Urdu in school, which makes it easier to communicate with people from outside their Balochi village, and they also believe that school teaches them to respect others. Also, the villagers recognise how reading and writing will reduce their dependency on others, and help them to learn...
about the world. Reading and writing skills are thus perceived as impor-
tant by the majority of the village population. Basic skills such as knowing
what is right and wrong are perceived as useful for everyone. However,
these skills can already be attained with just a few years of schooling, and
do not necessarily require ten years of education.

Boys and girls who are not enrolled in school believe that jobs in the city
are out of their reach, and they expect to become like their fathers and
mothers. They would rather spend time on the beach with friends and
relatives, than in a school environment which they find unattractive,
and where they cannot learn what they learn in real life. Most parents have never been to school and they quite often fail to grasp
the importance of regular attendance, particularly if teachers are often
absent. In a village where men are out at sea, sometimes for more than
20 days, and where the women tell their children to go to school in the
mornings, but then leave the village to fetch water and wood for fuel,
who makes sure that the child actually goes to school? In the absence of
supervision, the children are somehow free to decide for themselves
what they do all day. If a boy would rather be on the beach, many parents
do not concern themselves with his choice. It is therefore also relevant
to consider the perspectives of the children themselves. Why do they, or
do they not, go to school?

The boys who are normally found on the beach rather than in school can
be divided into two groups. First of all there are a number of boys who are
asked by their caregivers to help earn money for the household. These
boys often show an interest in school, but have come to terms with the
fact that school is not an option for them. Secondly, there are the boys who
are not interested in school and who generally come from households that
do not require them to work or to earn money for their daily needs. These
children can be found playing on the beach, or trying to catch some fish
from the shore. In their eyes this is a much more exciting activity com-
pared to attending classes where teachers scold or even beat them.

Nonetheless, a large number of young girls, not yet old enough to assist in
any household work, are still out of school. Some parents consider the dis-
tance from their house to the school an unsafe walking distance for their
children, and some children are afraid that other children will bully them.
Girls themselves also express a fear of punishment by teachers. Others do
not know what school is, and are simply not interested in going; especially
if none of their siblings, nieces, or friends go to school. Thus, educating
girls has not yet established itself as a social norm.

Parents explained that in Balochi culture there should be at least a sepa-
rate school for girls, which at the time of research was not available in the
village. This school should have female teachers only, which is especially
essential once a girl grows up. Girls who are out of school replied that the
skills they need for the future include cooking, stitching, embroidering,
washing, and cleaning, which they can learn at home from their mothers.
A minimum level of education would be sufficient for a girl to learn how to
read and write. Such education might be helpful for girls of all ages, “but
not for a job”, as was often stated. However, traditions can give way and
now women do not know anything. They do not speak Urdu. Urdu would
help them, for example when people from Karachi come here for a picnic,
or when they have to go to Karachi for shopping or to see a doctor. Now
they are like animals. They can only speak Balochi.

The considerations among poor people in a poor community in Pakistan
help to explain why, in addition to all other constraining factors, the coun-
try is far from achieving Millennium Development Goal 2 (achieving uni-
versal primary education), which in Pakistan has been a constitutional
commitment for more than 60 years.

Dhoryal school. Photograph courtesy of Kristoffel Lieten.


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Once synonymous with the ‘revolutionary’ violence that galvanised Mohajir youth in the Karachi conflict (c.1985-2002), since 2002, MQM-in-government has pursued a modernising agenda of ‘progress’ and ‘development’, transforming Karachi’s youth culture. MQM’s new agenda is now a question of militancy or modernisation, but rather strategic, historical practices with varied motives and outcomes. Practices reflecting common desires for social advancement, expressed simultaneously in the discourses and practices of violence and of romantic love. This paper is concerned with the ways individuals have been recruited to MQM’s agendas of militancy and modernisation.

**Violence and Love: the mobilisation of Karachi’s Mohajir youth**

Nichola Khan

The Matthiha Quami Movement (MQM) is Pakistan’s third-largest political party representing Pakistan’s ethnic Mohajirs, the predominantly Urdu-speaking Indian Muslims who migrated to Sind after the partition of 1947, and their descendents. Originally formed as the All Pakistan Mohajir Student Organisation (APMOS) at Karachi University, MQM was founded by Altaf Hussain in 1984, who has retained his ownership ever since.

Mohajir militancy was associated not only with the anomaly inflicted by the unequal development of centre-province power relations, but a political generational struggle between Islamic orthodoxy and modernism, but also with the profound failures in democratic political legitimacy over the course of post-independence history. In addition, explanations have accounted for the contest of a city by a breaking point. In the eighties this was due to the proximal effects of massive economic and demographic transformations, the ethnic competition in Karachi’s transport and housing sectors, expanding arms and narcotics trades, and extreme living conditions; in the nineties, it was interethnic warfare and military repression. Gayer, 2007. This paper explores practices and discourses of violence and modernisation, focusing on MQM’s term in government, as MQM has recently emerged as Pakistan’s third-largest political party, continuing to govern in the Sindh province since 2002. Following the MQM’s political struggles over power, this paper is concerned with how MQM mobilised young people to violence for the respect and social standing violence entailed. Faisal revealed: “We didn’t want to share the land with our enemies, but to defend ourselves and, later, take revenge. I remember that night, it was 14 December 1986... We went to the Pak Army and said: ‘We want to get your weapons and kill the Karachi police. We killed as many as we could, until we were stopped.’”


**Eruption of violence: the locality**

The advent of Pakistan’s ethno-nationalist Mohajir party, the Mattahida Quami Movement (MQM), to provincial government in Sindh in 2002 marked a shift in the oppositional basis of political identity. Violence had characterised its political and military involvement in around 15 years of conflict in Karachi. Comparing aspects of that conflict with MQM’s term in government, this paper explores shared discourses and discourses around dynamic flows of social and cultural change in urban youth communities in Karachi.

In contrast to MQM’s violent transformative agenda in the conflict, the MQM’s impact has structured its strategies for social and political change around a project of ‘modernisation’, ‘progress’ and ‘development’. These processes, occurring in the last five years, have transformed Karachi’s public landscape and culture, especially for its youth. Yet both discourses and political cultures are not as different as they appear. Modernisation and militancy both have been recruited by political agendas and reflect dynamic, strategic variations relevant for MQM’s designs for political power in diverse historical circumstances.

The militants used organised violence to respond to the situation but also to develop a unique identity and gain circumscribed, but effective, power and autonomy. In doing so, they became respected men of the social and political community, usurping their fathers’ authority. Their interviews suggest that violence represents a solution to problems they experienced relating to ethnic exclusion, poverty, unemployment and military authoritarianism, especially local police practices and military crackdowns, but also that the men played an active role in shaping practices of opposition to their problems. Extreme violence and killings, beginning with the Mohajir-Pakhtun riots, may thus rationalise a constitutional desire for social mobility, careers, status and recognisability which have been effectively blocked. Violent action, during a conflict, was a potent lever to re-organise exclusionary, reparative, responsive to violent threats, and to achieve deep personal and political desires for transformative change. The militants become the retainers of MQM’s violent ethno-nationalist discourse and acquired social, political and cultural advantages. In participating in the performance arena of violent conflict, young Mohajirs forged a reactionary identity that could provide them status and purpose in an alternative world.


**Third-class citizens into power**

MQM’s political shift from a stance of radical militancy to a more conformist position reflects the need to adapt its methods for acquiring political power to being in government. For individuals, violence expresses variegated motives commonly structured around desires for personal and political transformation. Romantic love, reflecting an individualist, progressive agenda, involves similar concerns. Yet, as recent events indicate, development, modernisation and romance within MQM are in tension with continued violence, pointing to people’s deeper discontent, deep fissures in the city’s well-being, and MQM’s political struggles over power.

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**MQM’s political shift from a stance of radical militancy to a more conformist position reflects the need to adapt its methods for acquiring political power to being in government.**
Western Europe has the world's oldest population and most prominent trend of demographic ageing over the next 20 years. Japan is second, which suggests potential for comparisons with Asia and lessons from evaluating European advanced ageing policy. To what extent have Europe's welfare systems achieved socio-economic security in old age? Is its approach to sustainability viable? Are there alternatives? What can Asia learn from the European experience?

A lesson for Asia? Maintaining socio-economic security in old age: a European perspective

**W**estern Europe's combination of declining fertility and death rates has resulted in increased longevity and population reduction. Many of its regional populations stopped growing in the late 20th century, from universal services to a combination of self-help and user benefits, from universal services to a combination of self-help and user benefits, from universal services to a combination of self-help and user benefits, from universal services to a combination of self-help and user benefits, from universal services to a combination of self-help and user benefits, from universal services to a combination of self-help and user benefits, from universal services to a combination of self-help and user benefits, from universal services to a combination of self-help and user benefits. Until recently policy makers and the public did not grasp the implications of these remarkable transformations. Scaremongering apocalyptic demography prevented rational debate about social ageing and led to short term fixes rather than long term planning.

Overall, Western Europe's approach is successful, with an average at risk of poverty in old age rate of 12.6%, but with variations. Countries with corporatist-conservative regimes – Germany, France, Belgium, Austria, the Netherlands – have a poverty risk that declines with age; a pension systems matured, poverty risk shifted from older generations towards younger one-person households and those with two or more children. In contrast, under liberal and southern regimes, particularly Ireland, Greece and Portugal, poverty rates among older people are substantially above the average. Countries with social democratic regimes have the lowest poverty rates for all age groups.

Old age socio-economic security is not purely a function of development but also of social policy. In other words, politics matter. Across Western Europe poverty in old age is a minority problem but with well-defined structural divisions: highest poverty incidence occurs among older women, particularly widows; higher poverty risk occurs among the very old, age income inequalities mirror differences in former employment statuses; and low incomes and poverty among older migrants is a growing problem (Walker and Maltby 1995). Depreciation is higher among the elderly than other age groups across all European countries, but older people themselves give Western Europe's state pension schemes high marks.

The European approach to pension system sustainability

How can this policy be sustained? EU pension systems are continually subject to reforms; the compromise between the original system's aims and the reforms' ideological impetus is precarious. This reform process is part of global sustainability discourses and policies, reflecting the goals of international governmental organisations (IGOs) – the World Bank, IMF and WTO. The IGO role in framing the sustainability discourse should be subjected to closer scrutiny. Stone (2004) argues that IGO function like epistemic or knowledge-based expert communities, echoing the role of national think tanks, though with greater resonance. They have pursued what look like single-minded policy priorities. Directly intervening in Eurasian transition economies and Latin America, they identify issues, help shape global and national debates and propose solutions with authority enhanced by globalisation. The World Bank's 1994 report Averting the Old Age Crisis, for example, set the pension reform agenda in the name of sustainability for both North and South (Mackellar 2000; Envik 2001). Even within the EU these prescriptions have been influential, such as in Italian and Swedish pension reforms (Scharpf 1995; Scharpf and Schmidt 2000; Streeck 1995; Daly 2001).

There is no evidence that European welfare systems are converging towards a neo-liberal regime in which the state's role is residual to the market; restructuring has not undermined their institutional design and the reforms' ideological impetus is precarious. This reform process is part of global sustainability discourses and policies, reflecting the goals of international governmental organisations (IGOs) – the World Bank, IMF and WTO. The IGO role in framing the sustainability discourse should be subjected to closer scrutiny. Stone (2004) argues that IGO function like epistemic or knowledge-based expert communities, echoing the role of national think tanks, though with greater resonance. They have pursued what look like single-minded policy priorities. Directly intervening in Eurasian transition economies and Latin America, they identify issues, help shape global and national debates and propose solutions with authority enhanced by globalisation. The World Bank's 1994 report Averting the Old Age Crisis, for example, set the pension reform agenda in the name of sustainability for both North and South (Mackellar 2000; Envik 2001). Even within the EU these prescriptions have been influential, such as in Italian and Swedish pension reforms (Scharpf 1995; Scharpf and Schmidt 2000; Streeck 1995; Daly 2001).

Developing a new sustainability paradigm

Global neo-liberal hegemony, which in its pursuit of market interest increases inequality and insecurity, favours the powerful and socio-economically secure, and breaks down the state's role as provider, may undermine the original EU pension system goal of universal socio-economic security. To prioritise a new approach, we need to expand the narrow basis of sustainability discourses and policies – that economic sustainability drives pension and social protection reforms – must be rejected, as this neo-liberal interpretation (the public is by definition not sustainable) entirely lacks a social dimension.

The 'social quality' paradigm inspires a new approach (Walker 2007). Social quality is 'the extent to which people are able to participate in the social, economic and cultural life of their communities under conditions which enhance their well-being and individual potential' (Beck et al. 1997: 16). Achieving individual social quality depends on socio-economic security, social inclusion, social cohesion and social empowerment. Thermodynamically, what constitutes the 'social' are the interdependent processes of self-realisation (always gained in a social context) and collective identities that the individual encounters (families, communities, companies). The 'social' is thus the starting point for all relations and policies regardless of whether they are labelled economic or social. Furthermore, social quality's key realm is people's everyday lives.

Four elements of social welfare's potential contribution could establish a framework for a new approach to welfare sustainability. First, in contrast to the present tripartite approach – economic, ecological and social – social quality provides a holistic conception. The economic and ecological dimensions are embedded in social relations and, therefore, within social quality. With social quality as the goal, a combination of ecological, economic and social policies are obviously required, as only a comprehensive approach will achieve the necessary steps to sustainable social quality. It is possible to liberate discourses from their economistic straitjacket that in welfare terms offers only a race to the bottom. This paradigm shift would be particularly helpful in Asia, where institutional welfare has negative associations (Gough 1999, Chau and Yu 2005).

Second, a social quality perspective stimulates discussion about conflicts between the ecological, economic and social dimensions of sustainability and sets an agenda for policy makers regarding the impact of all three on social quality. Third, it emphasises outcomes for citizens (socio-economic security, inclusion), which helps to democratis policy making. As citizens gain access to tools to understand and measure their conditions and well-being, policy making is transformed: sustainability gains a political dimension. Fourth, social quality transcends the inherent conservatism of welfare sustainability discourses by raising questions about what is being sustained. Typically, different welfare arrangement outcomes, in terms of social quality, are weighed, and only then is how to sustain them addressed. This spurs many normative issues, for example, the basis for distribution and redistribution. Social quality is open about its normative dimension, permitting variations in social quality goals depending on national development, culture and values. Thus social quality's measure of policy goals differs across the globe. Theory and conditional factors remain the same, but their measurement and policy implications are subject to developmental and cultural context.

Transformational power

Social quality can potentially liberate present discourses into a more holistic, participative framework. Rather than focusing only on economic or environmental policies and trade-offs, policy makers would need to test all policies for social quality impact and openly discuss how to achieve social quality and the costs of failure. Economic or financial sustainability, rather than dominating, becomes one question among several addressing society's nature and citizen well-being. Enabling a paradigm shift in both welfare policy analysis and policy making. This is as true and necessary in Asia as it is in Europe. In either, the economy repeatedly subverts social priorities (Walker 1984; Beck et al. 1997; Yang 2003).

The social quality concept's transformational power is illustrated by the EU's main positive response to population ageing and pension system sustainability: active ageing. It contrasts with negative retrenchment and emphasises the demand side, especially the neglected fourth pillar of retirement income (Reday-Mukely 2003). Within a narrow economistic paradigm, however, active ageing policy mainly makes people work longer, which most citizens, especially older people, reject. From a social quality perspective it is possible to reconstruct the adaptive ageing idea into something more comprehensive and potentially liberating. WHO took a step in this direction with its health-oriented approach, which can be expanded into a life course perspective that privileges social relations and interprets economic relations in social terms. Thus it is possible to switch attention from economic/financial goals to broader social considerations, such as the conditions in which people grow old. This refers not only to socio-economic security but all those conditions that determine later life's social quality. This shift also allows older people (and others) to define social quality's objective and normative aspects.

The European concept of social quality has global potential. Asian welfare regimes will never mirror European ones, but dialogue (and comparative research) from our different perspectives can produce a common template to assess everyday circumstances and well-being and develop appropriate policies to ensure the social quality of later life in both East and West.

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For a list of references relevant to this article please visit: www.r-i-a-e.com/newsletter

Photograph by Chalmers Butterfield

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A European perspective

Western Europe has the world’s oldest population and most prominent trend of demographic ageing over the next 20 years. Japan, second, which suggests potential for comparisons with Asia and lessons from evaluating European advanced ageing policy. To what extent have Europe’s welfare systems achieved socio-economic security in old age? Is its approach to sustainability viable? Are there alternatives? What can Asia learn from the European experience?

A lesson for Asia: Maintaining socio-economic security in old age: A European perspective

Western Europe’s combination of declining fertility and death rates has resulted in increased longevity and population reduction. Many of its regional populations stopped growing in the late 20th century, with several countries in Western Europe having average ages of between 44 and 50. Until recently policy makers and the public did not grasp the implications of these remarkable transformations. Scaremongering apocalyptic demography presented rational debate about social ageing and led to short-term fixes rather than long-term planning.

Overall, Western Europe’s approach is successful, with an average at risk of poverty in old age rate of 12%, but with variations. Countries with corporatist, corporatist-regimes – Germany, France, Belgium, Austria, the Netherlands – have a poverty risk that declines with age, as pension systems matured, poverty risk shifted from older generations towards younger one-person households and those with two or more children. In contrast, under liberal and southern regimes, particularly Ireland, Greece and Portugal, poverty rates among older people are substantially above the average. Countries with social democratic regimes have the lowest poverty rates for all age groups.

Old age socio-economic security is not purely a function of development but also of social policy. In other words, policies matter. Across Western Europe poverty in old age is a minority problem but with well-known structural divisions: highest poverty incidence occurs among older women, particularly widows; higher poverty risk occurs among the very old; old age income inequalities mirror differences in former employment statuses; and incomes and poverty among older migrants is a growing problem (Walker and Maltby 1995). Deprivation is higher among the elderly than other age groups across all European countries, but older people themselves give Western Europe’s state pension schemes high marks.

The European approach to pension system sustainability

How can this policy be sustained? European pension systems are continually subject to reforms, the compromise between the original system’s aims and the reforms’ ideological imperatives is precarious. This reform process is part of global sustainability discourses and policies, reflecting the goals of international governmental organisations (IGO’s) – the World Bank, IMF and WTO. The IGO role in framing the sustainability discourse should be subjected to close scrutiny. Stone (2004) argues that IGO function like neo-liberal hegemonies, which in its pursuit of market interest increases inequality and insecurity, favours the powerful and socio-economically secure, and breaks down the state’s role as provider, may under- mine the original EU pension system goal of universal socio-economic security. This suggests that the narrow basis of sustainability discourses and policies – that economic sustainability drives pension and social protection reforms – must be rejected, as this neo-liberal interpretation (the public is by definition not sustainable) entirely lacks a social dimension.

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Transformational power

Social quality can potentially liberate present discourses into a more holis- tic and participative framework. Rather than focusing only on economic or environmental policies and trade-offs, policy makers would need to test all policies for social quality impact and openly discuss how to achieve social quality and the costs of failure. Economic or financial sustainability, rather than dominating, becomes one question among several addressing society’s nature and citizen well-being, entailing a paradigm shift in both social policy analysis and policy making. This is as true and necessary in Asia as it is in Europe. In either, the economy repeatedly subverts social priorities (Walker 1984; Beck et al. 1997; Yang 2003).

The social quality concept’s transformational power is illustrated by the EU’s main positive policy response to population ageing and pension sys- tem sustainability: ‘active ageing’. It contrasts with negative retirement and emphasises the demand side, especially the neglected fourth pillar of retirement income (Reday-Mulvey 2005). Within a narrow economic paradigm, however, active ageing policy mainly makes people work longer, which most citizens, especially older people, reject. From a social quality perspective it is possible to reconstruct the active ageing idea into some- thing more comprehensive and potentially liberating. WHO took a step in this direction with its health-oriented approach, which can be expanded into a life course perspective that privileges social relations and interprets economic relations in social terms. Thus it is possible to switch attention from economic/financial goals to broader social considerations, such as the conditions in which people grow old. This refers not only to socio-economic security but all four conditions that determine later life’s social quality. This shift also allows older people (and others) to define social quality’s objective and normative aspects.

The European concept of social quality has global potential. Asian welfare regimes will never mirror European ones, but dialogue (and comparative research) from our different perspectives can produce a common template to assess everyday circumstances and well-being and develop appropriate policies to ensure the social quality of later life in both East and West.

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This article is a distillation of the ‘Keynote Lecture for the IASS Conference on Comparing Public and Private Old-Age Secu-

R E S E A R C H

Avert


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I I A S N E W S L E T T E R  # 4 9  A U T U M N  2 0 0 8  1 1
‘Stilled to silence at 500 metres’: making sense of historical change in Southeast Asia

(Reprinted from IITAS Newsletter #49, Autumn 2008)

James C. Scott (edited by Lee Guillery)

‘Non-state spaces’ are where the state has difficulty establishing its authority. Mountain areas, river deltas. Such places have often served as havens of refuge for peoples resisting or fleeing the state. Only the modern state possesses the resources to bring non-state spaces and people to heel; in Southeast Asia it represents the last great effort to integrate people, land and resources of the periphery and make them contribute to the gross national product. The state might dub it ‘development’, ‘economic progress’, ‘literacy’, ‘social integration’, but the real objective is to make the economic activity of peripheral societies taxable and assessable – to make it serve the state – by, for example, obliging nomads or swidden cultivators to settle in permanent villages, concentrating manpower and foodstuffs.

Thus the padi-state was an ‘enclosure’ of previously stateless peoples: irrigated rice agriculture on permanent fields helped create the state’s strategic and military advantage. In fact, the permanent association of the state and sedentary agriculture is at the centre of this story (a story by no means confined to Southeast Asia, which this article targets). The vast ‘barbarian’ periphery became a vital resource: human captives formed a successful state’s work force. The statefulness project of nation-building and state-making is an objective to make the economic activity of peripheral societies taxable and assessable – to make it serve the state – by, for example, obliging nomads or swidden cultivators to settle in permanent villages, concentrating manpower and foodstuffs. But one factor brought order to what seemed to the outsider an ‘anarchy’ of identity: altitude. As Edmund Leach suggested, looking at Zomia in terms of lateral slices through the topography elucidates a certain order. Many groups settled at a particular altitude range and exploit the agro-economic possibilities within that range. The Hmong settled at high altitudes (1,000-2,000 metres) and plant the maize, opium and millet that thrive there. From overhead or on a map groups appear randomly scattered because they occupy mountain tops and leave mid-slopes and valley floors to others. Specialisation by altitude and niche led to this scattering, but travel, marriage alliances, similar subsistence patterns and cultural continuity fostered coherent identities across considerable distances. The Akha along the Yunnan-Thai border and the Hani in northern Vietnam are recognisably the same culture though separated by more than 1,000 kilometres, having more in common with each other than either has with valley people 50 kilometres away. Thus Zomia coheres as a region not by political unity, which it utterly lacks, but by comparable patterns of diverse hill agriculture, dispersal, mobility and egalitarianism.

What most distinguishes Zomia from bordering lowland regions is its relative statelessness. While state-making projects have abounded there, few have come to fruition. Hill peoples, unlike valley peoples, have neither paid taxes to monarchs nor been tied to a permanent religious establishment, constituting a relatively free, stateless population of foragers and farmers. Zomia’s location at nation state frontiers has contributed to its isolation and thus to its autonomy, inviting smuggling, contra-band and opium production, and spawning ‘small border powers’ that maintain a tenuous quasi-independence.

Resistance, refusal, refuge

Politically, Zomia’s hill populations have, according to van Schendel, ‘resisted the projects of nation-building and state-making of the states to which it belonged’. This resistance has roots in the pre-colonial cultural refusal of lowland patterns and in lowlanders seeking refuge in the hills. During the colonial era, Europeans undertook the hills’ autonomy as a make-work against lowland majorities resentful of colonial rule. One effect was that hill peoples typically played little, no or an antagonistic role in anti-colonial independence movements. Lowland states have therefore sought to exercise authority in the hills: military occupation, campaigns against shifting-cultivation, forced settlements, promoting lowlander migration, religious conversion, space-conquering roads, bridges and tele- phone lines, and development schemes that project government administration and lowland cultural styles.

The hills, however, are also a space of cultural refusal. If it were merely a matter of political authority, hill society might resemble valley society culturally except for the farmer’s terrain-imposed dispersed settlement. But hill populations don’t generally resemble valley centres culturally, religiously or linguistically. Zomia’s languages, while exceptionally diverse, are distinct from those of the plains. Hill people tend to be animists who don’t follow the ‘great tradition’ salvation religions of lowland peoples. They do, however, it’s likely either different from (e.g. Christianity) or a distinctly heterodox variant of lowland religions (e.g. Karen or Lahu mil lenarian Buddhism). The absence of large, permanent religious and political establishments makes for a flat, local sociological pyramid compared to valley society where status and wealth distinctions tend to be supra-local and enduring, while in the hills they’re confined and unstable.

But something more fundamental is at work. Fernand Braudel cites an unbridgeable cultural gap between plains and mountains:

‘...many people lived in the distant highlands and were beyond the reach of the centers where records survive. The mandate (i.e. court centers of civilization and power) were a phenomenon of the lowlands...Paul Wheatley puts it well when he notes that “the Santeri toner was still to silence at 500 meters”’

Compare Braudel’s assertion that civilisations can’t climb hills to Oliver Wolters’s nearly identical assertion about pre-colonial Southeast Asia:

‘The mountains are as a rule a world apart from the classical centers where records survive. The mandalas (i.e. court centers of civilization and power) were a phenomenon of the lowlands. Paul Wheatley puts it well when he notes that “the Santeri toner was still to silence at 500 meters”’

Scholars have been struck by the limits the terrain, particularly altitude, has placed on cultural or political influence. Paul Mus noted, of the spread of the Vietnamese

Map courtesy of Willem van Schendel.

The dialectical relationship between the nation state and zones of relative autonomy isn’t unique to mainland Southeast Asia, but it is of particular salience there, demarcating the social cleavage that shapes much of the region’s history: that between hill peoples and valley peoples. It led to a process of state formation in valleys and peopling of hills, and left the latter largely absent from the historical record.

Zomia: stateless highlanders

Southeast Asia’s non-state spaces are much diminished, yet one of the world’s largest is the vast Southeast Asian massif. Sprawling 2.5 million square kilometres across mainland Southeast Asia, China, India and Bangladesh, it’s home to 80 million people: hundreds of ethnic identities and at least five language families. It occupies altitudes of 200 to 4,000 metres and can be thought of as a Southeast Asian Switzerland, except that it’s not a nation, it lies far from major population centres and is marginal in almost every respect. Willem van Schendel argues that these cumulative factors coalesced to form the state not by political unity, but by comparable patterns of diverse hill agriculture, dispersal, mobility and egalitarianism.

Zomia’s location at nation state frontiers has contributed to its isolation and thus to its autonomy, inviting smuggling, contra-band and opium production, and spawning ‘small border powers’ that maintain a tenuous quasi-independence.-area

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tribes of mainland Southeast Asia are best understood as a fugitive population that came to the hills over the past millennium and a half not only from the Burman, Tai, and Siamese states but especially from the Han Empire when the Tang, Yuan, Ming and Qing dynasties pressed into south-west China. Their location in the hills and many of their economic and cultural practices could be termed a ‘state-effect’. This is radiating with older prevailing assumptions of a primordial hill population abandoned by those who moved downhill and developed civilizations. Meanwhile, the valley centres of wet-rice cultivation may be seen as a ‘hill-effect’ because, historically speaking, the valley is new structures, dating back to the middle of the first millennium C.E., because they were formed from an isolated culture. Of diverse peoples not previously part of an established state, and because early mandala states were less a military conglomeration of states persistently insinuated them in place of histories of peoples, because state centres, and their characteristic sedentary agricultural settlements, are the paradox of the valleys and the most physical evidence. The more rugged you leave behind, the larger your place in the historical record. Dispersed, mobile, egalitarian societies, regardless of sophistication, and despite being more populous, are relatively invisible in the record because they spread their debris widely. The same logic applies regarding the written record. In a truly even-handed chronicle of pre-colonial mainland Southeast Asia, most of the pages would be blank. Are we to pretend that because there was no dynasty in control there was no history? Moreover, official mandala histories systematically exaggerate the dynasty’s power, coherence and majesty (as Indranil Chatterjee pointed out to me, such chronicles thus do the symbolic work of the state). If we take them as fact, we risk, as Richard O’Connor noted, ‘imposing the imperial imaginings of a few great courts on the rest of the region’.11

What if we replaced these ‘imperial imaginings’ with a view of history as dominated by long cycles of normal and non-normal states, punctuated by short-lived dynastic states which left in their wake a new deposit of imperial imaginings? Anthony Day points us in this direction:

“What would the history of Southeast Asia look like…if we were to take the turbulent relations between families as non-marginal rather than a departure from the norm of the absolutist state which must ‘deal with disorder’?”

He’s talking about establishing the elementary units of political order. Depending on location and date, such units might indeed range from nuclear families to segmentary lineages, bi-lateral kinship, hamlets, larger villages, towns and their hinterlands and confederations. All were in nearly constant motion, engaged in evading state control, relocating, merging, reconstituting. Is an intelligible history possible under such circumstances? It’s surely more daunting than dynamic changes in structure or numbers of political entities that exist to seek to grasp the logic behind the fluidity.12 That’s the challenge for a non-state centric history: specifying conditions for the aggregation or disaggregation of the elementary units.

If this fluidity incentivizes histories, state rulers find it well-nigh impossible to exercise sovereignty over people constantly on the move, and often organizing themselves outside or past the point! Their economic, political and cultural organisation is a strategic adaptation to avoid incorporation in state structures. And since state structures (or their ruins) write history, they leave such people out of it.

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This text is distilled from part of a manuscript to be published by Yale University Press in 2009 with the tentative title of The Last Enclosure.

Notes
Elephants feature strongly in the mythologies of Hindu and Buddhist literature, and captive elephants have served as symbols of political power throughout South Asia. Historically, the state has sponsored captive elephant management, engendering oral traditions of expertise codified in the Gaja Sutra literature. Evidence of this textual tradition is found in Nepal where the Tharu people became the local specialists, dominating the capture and management of elephants, which have served as a commodity for imperial tribute, vehicles for regal hunting safaris, and recently as resources for biodiversity conservation and nature tourism.

Captive elephant management, the Tharu, and the Nepali state

Parvinder Sekhon

“The king who is for the welfare and wellbeing of the elephant will be victorious everywhere. The elephant is equivalent to the soul of the king, and so the elephant is to be protected. There is no other thing in this earthly world besides the elephant which has a greater power. To be without elephants is like a night without the moon, or the earth without sun–fading paddy. Likewise, if there is a huge army without any elephants, then it cannot be one of any great importance and grandeur.”

This encomium from a veterinary treatise issued by the Nepali Royal Palace sometime prior to 1532, is typical of the rhetoric in praise of elephants to be found in such Sanskrit works as Aaksha’s Aksharabhaitya, the Hasta-yurveda and Nilkantha’s Matang-Lila, as detailed in Franklin Edgerton’s The Elephant Lore of the Hindus. This Nepali treatise is consistent with the ordered information on elephant types and casts, elephant anatomy, elephant capture, and elephant ailments and treatments typical of the Gaja Sutra literature.

Edgerton’s book is important for constructing the history of captive elephant management, not only because he understands the Gaja Sutra texts as constituting a genuine Hindu elephant science, but also because he argues that its substantive content represents the codification of orally-transmitted traditions of practical knowledge. In support of this contention he notes that although its rhetorical form is typical of pan-Indian authorship, signature texts such as the Matang-Lila contain over 150 technical words for which there are no clear Sanskrit etymologies. This includes terms applied to elephants in each decade of their working lives, which he concludes must have derived from elephant handlers’ own vernacular terminology.

Edgerton also notes that much of this encoded knowledge is evident in practical traditions of elephant keeping where knowledge of the technical literature has fallen into abeyance. This he supports by reference to George Sanderson’s Thirty Years Among The Wild Beasts of India. Sanderson had been in charge of elephant catching operations in Myanmar and Bengal for many years, and was one of the few British commentators to pay serious heed to indigenous understandings. Sanderson reported a modern elephant lore that bore a striking resemblance to that which Edgerton found in the Sanskrit literature. As I too found in my research amongst the Tharu elephant handlers of Nepal, where oral tradition and the Gaja Sutra tradition can be found.

Constructing a history of captive elephant management in Nepal

Edgerton’s work enables us to suppose that this textual tradition also exerted influence in Nepal, even if much of its wisdom now only persists in the practice of handlers’ orally transmitted tradition. Little is known about the history of captive elephant management in Nepal. It has been a neglected topic among scholars, and sources with which to construct a history are few. Those we do have, however, are crucial for understanding the development of the sarkar hattiar, or government elephant families.

A report issued by the Nepali Royal Palace in 1985 contains material about the origins of some of the ranks and roles that structure the contemporary hattiar. Although elephants were kept in the state hattiar, there is evidence that rights of usufruct were granted to individuals. Gifts of elephants were sometimes made for services rendered, especially since the Tharu were allowed to use elephants in their agriculture and logging. Indeed, this privilege was supposed to justify taxing local communities on their harvests when not providing obligatory labour (hato) in elephant hunts (hatta-khela).

But some captured elephants were simply too precious to be awarded to locals, as in the case of Daya Raut who presented the King a one-pressed elephant (pakhal danta hato) during a royal visit at Harisnar. Such an elephant was auspicious due to its likeness to Ganesh the elephant-headed god, typically represented with a broken tusk. According to a document issued in 1837, for this Daya Raut was awarded the revenue collecting rights to Balbani village within Chenuwar pragana (an administrative area) in Bara district. This was in addition to a previous document from 1820 in which he was awarded a grant of land and a turban of honour (pagon) for his service to the state. Clearly, involvement with the elephant business could yield considerable wealth and power in this era.

The Tharu, the primary indigenous population of the Tarai, known as malarial-resistant pioneer agriculturists who cleared jungle, captured and raised boar, and fished from the rivers. The Panjyar documents attest to this. A remarkable collection of 50 state-issued documents gathered over a period of 20 years by a Tharu man named Tej Narayan Panjyar, they provide the first definitive records connecting the Tharu to the capture and management of elephants in state-sponsored stables. From these documents we learn that ultimately all elephants were royal property, that the elephant stable or hattiar was an institution of the state that received funds for the upkeep of elephants and salaries of staff, that the capture of elephants was rewarded with grants of land, that locals were required to supply their labour for elephant hunts in lieu of tax obligations, and also about the origins of some of the ranks and roles that structure the contemporary hattiar.

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The aforementioned document of 1820 has further historical utility. It urges Daya Raut to continue performing capture operations according to the jeehyo and aker khela methods (the former involving chasing, lassoing and tethering; the latter herding into a prepared enclosure), to obey the instructions of the dongo (the stable manager), and to enjoy the customary taxes and income from performing the elephant training function (juthul vataul). Besides the meat and the dongo, other documents refer to the subbe (another term for a manager, not specific to the hattiar), and indeed these designations still persist in the institution of the sarkar hattiar in contemporary Nepal.

The age of Shikar and after

Another key source is Evelyn-Arthur Smythies’ 1932 book Big Game Shoot- ing in Nepal. Chief Conservator of Forests for Uttar Pradesh in British India, Smythies also served as an advisor to the government of Nepal. His book is primarily a hagiographic account of the hunting exploits of Judha Shamsher Rana, the ruler of Nepal, said to have killed over 550 tigers during a 33 year period. It is significant for its accounts of regal hunting (shikar), such as occasions entertaining King George V in 1911, and Lord Lentinhill, the Viceregal of India in 1938.

Smythies describes the ring hunting technique, considered unique to Nepal. It probably developed from the khorkheka method of elephant capture, in which prey would be encircled by about 300 elephants, into which the hunter would enter to shoot from the back of an elephant favoured for bravery. During my field research, Bhag, a famous retired handler known as ‘The King’s Mahout’, recalled participating in such a spectacle as recently as 1960, when King Mahendra entertained Queen Elizabeth II of the United Kingdom. The staging of such grand events reveals the need to maintain a large population of captive elephants through an extensive network of hattiar.

This last episode in the age of shikar represented an opportunity for the recently re-instated Shah monarchy to assert itself after the ignominy of the rule of the Ranas (ousted in 1951 in the wake of Indian independence). Indeed, the numbers of sarkar hattiar had shrunk during the early 20th century, re-expanding at the behest of the resurgent Shahs. This also represented a transition into a new era with elephants serving new purposes. Forests were no longer protected as hunting reserves, but as national parks dedicated to biodiversity conservation and nature tourism. King Mahendra granted the hunter John Coopman permission to establish the Tiger Tops safari lodge in 1953, from which guests viewed wildlife from elephant back, shooting with cameras rather than rifles, thereby pio-
Elephant handlers are responsible for more than just meeting their elephants’ basic nutritional needs; they are total carers, and this can even extend to giving them a pedicure! Courtesy of the author.

This modern era of captive elephant management has seen elephants deployed in service to the new network of national parks and wildlife reserves, the embrace of western veterinary management, and the establishment of a captive breeding programme. The hattisar has also changed from a relatively autonomous and exclusively Tharu institution towards one increasingly integrated with the bureaucracy of nature conservation.

With in-migration to the Tarai in the wake of deforestation, the USAID anti-malarial programme and Rapti flood refugee resettlement in the 1950s, the ethnic demographics of the hattisar has also changed, so that Tamang and Newar peoples are additionally represented among the ranks of hattisare. Nonetheless, my research shows that the hattisar retains its distinctively Tharu character, and that the regulating authorities are yet to appreciate the full extent of the handlers’ indigenous skill and knowledge in caring for elephants. A current epidemic of elephant tuberculosis holds out the possibility of greater co-operation and mutual understanding, as well as the impetus to recover threatened traditions of ethno-veterinary care and specialist local environmental knowledge.

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Notes  
8 data from WWF-Nepal 2003 has been crucial in constructing a history of the hattisar, dealt with more extensively in my doctoral thesis ‘Servants of Ganesh: Elephant Handlers in Nepal’ (University of Kent, 2007)  
10 Elephant Care International are working with Nepali authorities to combat the TB threat (which is not limited to Nepal’s elephants), see: http://www.elephantcare.org/tbnepal.htm

Bishnu Chaudhury with Erawat Gaj. Bishnu Chaudhury has worked with elephants for 12 years, and driven Erawat Gaj for 14 years. Erawat Gaj is the tallest male elephant in Chitwan and plays a key role in the training of young elephants. Courtesy of the author.

Tell us about the world we live in...  
Write for IIAS Newsletter

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Fact, fiction, poetry, visual art

Letters, commentary, opinion  
Research essays, photo essays, interviews  
Book, journal, film, website reviews

This article is based on a forthcoming monograph entitled ‘Servants of Ganesh: Elephant Handlers in Nepal’.
In conversation with Kunal Basu

RR: You were born and brought up in Kolkata. How much has this city shaped your sensibility?

KB: Substantially. Particularly because I grew up at a time when this city was in turmoil - the 70's. The 70's brought together lots of different things: experimental theatre, a burst of poetry and poetry magazines, college activism; it brought urban violence, rebellious students. And all of that left its mark on me. I was a political activist. I was a theatre actor and director. I wrote poetry and brought out [poetry magazines]. I arranged film shows and interviewed film directors. So, as an insider – the city seeped into me in every possible way.

RR: You have very illustrious parents?

KB: They were uncharacteristic for their age. They belonged to the middle class but did not have typical middle-class sensibilities or values. They were avant-garde. Both had actively engaged themselves in literary, cultural and political works. My father was a member of the Communist Party and a publisher, my mother an actress and an author. Their friends were authors, poets, politicians, theatre people. And so, they were unusual for their times. Bohemians in their own way.

RR: And how has they influenced you?

KB: This was very much a household of the arts. My mother was a stage actress and my father was very broadly read. He knew many languages. So, he would bring the world to our dinner table. They were not different, but they had their own inputs into my cultural portfolio.

RR: You started with poetry, continued with the short story, then came to the novel. Did you set out to be a historical novelist?

KB: I started writing in Bangla. I used to write Bengali poetry. I am a bilingual author; not one of those Indian writers who practices his craft only in English. I was definitely influenced by historical novels. How can you not be when you are a Bengali? Birendra Chandra Dutta, Saradindu Bandyopadhyay, Bankimchandra Chattopadhyay; I'm sure they have all tainted my palette. Dickens, Zola, they must have tainted my palette in some respects too. It's not a question of taking a conscious decision; I'm now going to write a historical novel. I'm now going to write a contemporary novel: I'm now going to write a Bengali novel.

No, I just think of stories.

RR: How much of a scholar does one need to be in order to be a good histori

KB: One must tread with caution. If you are too good a scholar, then you lose the novelist in you. And if you are completely oblivious to research, you'll make mistakes and your readers will find out. I need research for two reasons: One, to make the story that I've contemplated in my mind believable to an audience. You see, if I wrote a story that is set in Akbar's reign and write, "Akbar was assassinated". OK. It would be so patently wrong that people's fiction. Which is a sad confession to make, but it's true. I'd be lying if I said otherwise. I've no time to read other people's fiction. Which is a sad confession to make, but it's true. I'd be lying if I said otherwise. I've no time to read lots of great books, lots of great books, cover to cover. I have only skimmed pages of Khalid Hosseini's A Thousand Splendid Suns; I haven't read Orhan Pamuk's Snow; I haven't read cover-to-cover, Shadow of the Wind, which is a very interesting book. I haven't read the latest books by lots of authors. There is a cost to everything. And the cost of my writing life has been that I haven't kept up with contemporary fiction.

KB: Many of them actually. I've said this many times. Bankim Chandra Chattopadhyay. He, to me, is a complete package. His characters, his settings are unique and different. In some sense, curiously evolving. He never wrote classics of the kitchen sink. Which is something that I often get into for trouble saying, but I say it. I'm not interested in writing classics of the kitchen-sink. And I think it is Bankim Babu's influence on me. He can evoke visual, aural and situational cues - you can actually hear nature, you can see it: The sensuous quality of his writings is very strong, which I quite admire. He is great in creating drama. His dialogues are brilliant. And the way he way he steps out of his writings and takes the reader into confidence:... "Phalak, tum ki ek palch chakhe bhi akhlayo?" (Reader, have you seen anxious eyes?). So, definitely Bankim; no question.

RR: I'm definitely moved by Dickens because of – the descriptive richness which. In David Copperfield, for example, that feeling that you are walking in the docklands of London... and remember, most of us who've read Dickens in India had never been to India. And he created a landscape which was very identifiable. Two people who read Dickens could identify that, in their mind's eye. So, definitely Dickens. And Dostoevsky - peeling the onion! The nuances of the characters are never quite what they seem to be. All of these people have been great influences. Somebody was telling me yesterday that I always name Latin Americans: Marquez, Llosa, Isabella Allende. But my writing doesn't resemble them at all. But I love them. And the reason I admire the Latin writers is because they re-affirm, for me, optimism about life and love. That, despite the darkest of despairs and circumstances, you can see the spark of life. You can laugh at things. They are mischievous, you know. There's a playfulness in that writing.

RR: I would like to come to The Japanese Wife now. It's a collection of short stories. Your first collection to be published in English. Was it a deliberate break from novels?

KB: It was purely circumstantial. When Aparna Sen [Bengali actor and film director] decided to make The Japanese Wife, it wasn't published, but it had been written, way back in 1996. It came up in conversation in 2006, and Aparna wanted to film it. It seemed to me that it would be odd if the film comes out “Based on the story by Kunal Basu” – but where’s the story? And so, she got me to bring out my short stories from my desk drawer and work on them. I wrote three new stories for the collection. The other nine were written at different times.

RR: Two recent novels – Salman Rushdie’s The Enchanted Forest and Amitav Ghosh’s Sea of Poppies are about epochs and characters that you’ve already covered. Akbar is one of the protagonists of Rushdie’s novel. The Mughal Emperor, however, first made an appearance in Indian-English fiction in The Miniaturist, which came out in 2003. Ghosh’s latest novel is set in the backdrop of the first Opium War. It’s about the opium trade, which is again, something you’d dealt with in your very first novel, The Opium Clerk, published in 2001. Have you read these books?

KB: No. Not because I didn’t want to read them but because – and that’s the casualty of writing fiction for me, something I’m not happy about - in my other life, I also write academic non-fiction. I’ve no time to read other people’s fiction. Which is a sad confession to make, but it’s true. I’d be lying if I said otherwise. I’ve no time to read lots of great authors, lots of great books, cover to cover. I have only skimmed pages of Khalid Hosseini’s A Thousand Splendid Suns; I haven’t read Orhan Pamuk’s Snow; I haven’t read cover-to-cover, Shadow of the Wind, which is a very interesting book. I haven’t read the latest books by lots of authors. There is a cost to everything. And the cost of my writing life has been that I haven’t kept up with contemporary fiction.

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In conversation with Kunal Basu

FULL INTERVIEW


Rituparna Roy

RR: You were born & brought up in Kolkata. How much has this city shaped your sensibility?

KB: Substantially. Particularly because I grew up at a time when this city was in turmoil - the 70's. The 70's brought together lots of different things: experimental theatre, a burst of poetry and poetry magazines, college activism; it brought urban violence, rebellious students. And all of that left its mark on me. I was a political activist; I was a theatre actor and director; I wrote poetry and brought out [poetry magazines]. I arranged film shows on campus and interviewed film directors. So, as an insider – the city seeped into me in every possible way.

RR: You have very illustrious parents?

KB: They were uncharacteristic for their age. They belonged to the middle class, but did not have typical middle-class sensibilities or values. They were avant-garde. Both had actively engaged themselves in literary, cultural and political works. My father was a member of the Communist Party and a publisher, my mother an actress and an author. Their friends were authors, poets, politicians, theatre people. And so, they were unusual for their times. Bohemians in their own way.

RR: And how have they influenced you?

KB: This was very much a household of the arts. My mother was a stage actress and my father was very broadly read. He knew many languages. So, he would bring the world to our dinner table. They were not different, but they had their own inputs into my cultural portfolio. We learnt about Engels when we were very young. I started reading Jean Paul Sartre when I was 12.

RR: That was precocious.

KB: Very precocious.

RR: But you understood it?

KB: I’m sure I didn’t. I was reading *Being and Nothingness* which is one of Sartre's most difficult books. And my father said, “What are you reading?” And I said, “I’m reading *Being and Nothingness*. And to his credit, he said, “Oh”.

RR: He didn’t make fun of you?
KB: No. And so a lot of that was... the world being imported on our dinner table. My mother being a practitioner in Bangla Sahitya, my father, too, published a lot of Bengali authors, including Manik Bandopadhyay, whose birth centenary it is this year.

RR: He published all his books?

KB: No. He published “Uttarkaler Galpo Sangroho” – his collection of short stories. He was very much known to our family. In fact, [my mother] has just written a small piece on Manik Bandopadhyay - a sort of memoir. He died in 1956 - the year I was born. So, I'd like to believe that – if one believes in the transmigration of soul - he just might have migrated in my direction.

RR: You started with poetry, continued with the short story, then came to the novel.

KB: I started writing in Bangla. I used to write Bengali poetry. I am a bilingual author; not one of those Indian writers who practices his craft only in English.

RR: I will just interrupt you here and say that I find you and Kiran Nagarkar a study in contrast. Because he started with Marathi and then left Marathi for English. As far as your novels are concerned, you started with English and are now (if I'm right) contemplating a novel in Bangla.

KB: Yes, I would very much like to.

RR: In this context, I would like your take on the vexed question of ‘English vs. vernacular’ which has been raging in India for decades somehow and never seems to end.

KB: I'd disagree with you on that. I don't think it is a vexing question. It's a question which is quite irrelevant. Indians are a very strange breed. We are the only people on earth who are truly bilingual. And by truly bilingual, I don’t mean people who can read and write a standard English and whatever their local language be – in our case, it is Bangla – but we live in two streams of consciousness. I mean think of our greats. Think of Rabindranath Tagore. Think of Bankimchandra Chattopadhyay. Think of Michael Madhusudan Dutta. A whole number of social scientists - think of Amartya Sen - have made great contributions in both languages. This is our suit. This is our strength.

A large part of the reading public does not care about these arguments. There'll always be detractors. Regardless of what you do, there'll always be detractors. And, you know, this is no bad thing. Sometimes you need to keep the pot boiling. And there will always be people who will take different views. I refuse to concede that this is a significant debate. It is not. Look around, who's debating it? A few journalists, once a year or twice a year, somebody would say something. I don’t think this is an important thing in our consciousness.

RR: Did you set out to be a historical novelist – or it just happened to you because you were innately attracted to the genre?

KB: I was definitely influenced by historical novels. How can you not be when you are a Bengali? Romesh Chandra Dutta, Saradindu Bandyopadhyay, Bankimchandra Chattopadhyay. I’m sure they have all tainted my palette. Dickens, Zola, they must have tainted my palette in some respects too. It’s not a question of taking a conscious decision, “I’m now going to write a historical novel. I’m now going to write a contemporary novel. I’m now going to write a Bengal novel.” No, I just think of stories.

RR: But how do you account for the fact that 3 of your novels have been historical?

KB: Because I am in love with history. And my fourth one might still be a historical novel. So, who knows? My 12 short stories are not historical...
RR: How much of a scholar does one need to be in order to be a good historical novelist?

KB: One must tread with caution. Because, if you are too good a scholar, then you lose the novelist in you. And if you are completely oblivious to research, you’ll make mistakes and your readers will find out. I need research for two reasons: One, to make the story that I’ve contemplated in my mind believable to an audience. You see, if I wrote a story that is set in Akbar’s reign and write, “Akbar was assassinated”. OK. It would be so patently wrong that people will say, “No no no. This is wrong.” And this confirmation of that historical fact will render my tale useless. I’ll not be able to carry the reader with me. So, you need research in order to bring the reader along. The second reason why historical research is interesting for me is that it fertilises my imagination. I read about different things - maybe a snippet of a character somewhere, maybe a small event - and I say, “What if that event was positioned differently in a story? How would that turn out to be?” So, it fertilises imagination, but one shouldn’t be too hung up with historical research.

RR: Which novel has been the most challenging in terms of recreating the past?

KB: Each have been challenging in their own way. When I was writing The Miniaturist, a friend of mine said, “How are you going to write dialogue for them? You haven’t seen the Mughals. They were Muslims, you’re not. How would you write dialogue for them”. And I said, “Hopefully, the story would seep into me enough that when I speak with my pen, it would be the words of Bihzad and Zuleikha and others.” I shouldn’t try too hard. If I tried too hard to construct what the sentences should look like, I would miss the thread. Racists was particularly challenging because it’s a novel of the 19th century. Very little of Asia. Very little of India, in fact. Not only was it a challenge with history, but also a challenge of relationship. A romance between a European man and a European woman. How would I be able to recreate their romance? So, that was a challenge in itself.

RR: Is romance essentially different in different parts of the world?

KB: I think that fundamentally it isn’t. But I think its manifestations are different. You know, when it rains, we romantic souls from the valley, we conjure up certain manifestations of romance. Like we have Radha-Krishna, etc. etc. But when it rains, what does a European conjure up? And a lot of communication is non-verbal. I intuitively know how I would communicate with somebody I was romantically interested in, in the non-verbal sense. Would it be the same for the Europeans?

RR: At the end of your first novel, you cite sources. And I observed that in the next two you haven’t. Is it because you were more confident of your material? Or is it that it didn’t matter to you anymore?

KB: Actually, in the first novel – the sources fertilised my imagination a lot. The clipper ships, Canton, reading about Canton, Kuching – which I’ve never visited. Therefore, the literature was a very significant part of my writing.

I don’t think I read as much for The Miniaturist. I don’t think there were those very significant non-fictional works that I read and said, “Yes, actually I can trace my inspiration to that.” But I can trace – I forget the titles now - the clipper ship journey from Calcutta to China in The Opium Clerk to some very boring, functional books that I’d read up about the opium clippers.

RR: And as an Indian, probably, you were already very familiar with Mughal history?
KB: That was the most surprising thing. That I completely forgot how much I knew about the Mughals, until I started working on it. And for Racists as well. I just wanted to read enough about Racial Science in order to locate the debate between Bates and Belavouix. But then I wanted to move away as far as I can, as far as I could from Victoriana — because I didn’t want to sink in Victoriana. You can actually drown in Victoriana — there’s so much literature, that I actually wanted to move away from it. So, the sources were not all that inspiring for me to list at the back of the book.

RR: Reading your work, I think two qualities stand out: You seem to have no overt thematic preoccupations. Your first book was about opium trade in Asia, second about a Mughal artist, third about racial science. In terms of time, place, theme, they have nothing in common. Secondly, nothing of your personal life is transmuted directly into fiction. Do you see these as fundamental qualities of your writing?

KB: Some commentators have said that a thread that runs through my writing is the theme of compassion. And the power of compassion to overcome personal tragedies, personal circumstances, as well as civilisational challenges. In The Opium Clerk, certainly; in The Miniaturist, differently, at a personal level; and in Racists, at a cross-civilisational level. Again, you know, I don’t consciously think too much about what the connectivity is; what the unifying themes are. I’m moved by stories. And I’m sure there’s deep autobiography. You know, I would like to make a distinction between surface autobiography and deep autobiography. I’m a person moved by social justice, I’m a person moved by romance, by inspiration, by compassion. And those will somehow make their presence felt in my books. But I don’t have a plan. I don’t have a grand strategy.

RR: Who are the authors you most admire? And why?

KB: Many of them actually. I’ve said this many times. Bankim Chandra Chattopadhyay. He, to me, is a complete package. His characters, his settings are unique and different. In some sense, curiosity evoking. He never wrote classics of the kitchen sink. Which is something that I often get into for trouble saying, but I say it. I’m not interested in writing classics of the kitchen-sink. And I think it is Bankim Babu’s influence on me. He can evoke visual, aural and situational cues - you can actually hear nature, you can see it. The sensuous quality of his writings is very strong, which I quite admire. He is great in creating drama. His dialogues are brilliant. And the way he way he steps out of his writings and takes the reader into confidence... Raisingha — “Pathak, tumi ki byakul chakhhu dekhiyachho?” (Reader, have you seen anxious eyes?). So, definitely Bankim; no question.

I’m definitely moved by Dickens because of – again – the descriptive richness. In Edwin Druid, for example, that feeling that you are walking in the docklands of London...and remember, most of us who’ve read Dickens in India had never been to England. And he created a landscape which was very identifiable. Two people who’d read Dickens could identify that, in their mind’s eye. So, definitely Dickens. And Dostoevsky - peeling the onion! The nuances of the characters are never quite what they seem to be. All of these people have been great influences. Somebody was telling me yesterday that I always name Latin Americans: Marquez, Llosa, Isabella Allende. But my writing doesn’t resemble them at all. But I love them. And the reason I admire the Latin writers is because they re-affirm, for me, optimism about life and love. That, despite the darkest of despairs and circumstances, you can see the spark of life. You can laugh at things. They are mischievous, you know. There’s a playfulness in that writing.

RR: Which is your own favourite among your novels? Do you have one?

KB: I haven’t written my favourite novel yet.
RR: Do you go back to them? Do you read your own books for pleasure?

KB: Very rarely would I do that. Once in a while, if I... when I feel depressed, I go back to parts of *The Miniaturist* because it reminds me what Bihzad went through. Because, in many ways, that is the challenge of all creative people. Creative people want recognition. “See me. Read me. Love me” – that’s what people want. And that’s what he wanted. And never got it. But it took a long time for him to realise why was he engaged in painting, anyway?
I haven’t reached that stage yet.

RR: I would like to come to *The Japanese Wife* now. It’s a collection of short stories. Your first collection to be published in English. Was it a deliberate break from novels?

KB: It was purely circumstantial. When Aparna Sen [Bengali actor and film director] decided to make *The Japanese Wife*, it wasn’t published, but it had been written, way back in 1996. It came up in conversation in 2006, and Aparna wanted to film it. It seemed to me that it would be odd if the film comes out “Based on the story by Kunal Basu” – but where’s the story? And so, she got me to bring out my short stories from my desk draw and work on them. I wrote three new stories for the collection. The other nine were written at different times.

RR: And how was it like working with Aparna Sen?

KB: I didn’t write the screenplay - she wrote the screenplay. I would give her my impressions and my views. She would write parts of the screenplay and e-mail it to me. We had copious e-mail exchanges. Sometimes we met as well. When I was here [in Kolkatta], passing by.
It was great. I think she recognised the story for its essence.

RR: She calls it ‘a modern-day fairy tale’.

KB: We were both on the same page - in terms of what the essence of the story was - there were no quarrels, there was no falling out, because we knew that this is what the story is about.

RR: Your association with films has been a long one. You’ve acted - as a child – in Mrinal Sen’s films; you’ve written, narrated and directed documentaries. But which have you enjoyed more?

KB: I don’t enjoy being a director. In fact, my directorial foray was very limited.
I think filmmaking is very arduous. It’s very challenging. For me, it’s working with lots of people and getting everybody to move in one direction and get something done. I can barely live with my own mind, let alone the minds of so many people. So, that’s not my forte at all. But I quite like the notion of an author who has a toe into cinema largely because I think the sibling arts are important for me. You see, I’m not attracted by authors who never dip into art or into performances or into music, or by artists who never read anything.

RR: You’ve acted on the stage. You know, a critic likens you to one of the characters in your novel, *The Miniaturist* - the character called the Afghan. He’s a sort of chameleon, and the critic says, “Basu is a bit of a chameleon himself, a shape-shifter.” Do you agree with that?

KB: Not any more. I think that when I was growing up I was into many different things. If that makes me a chameleon, I’m happy to be a chameleon. But if a chameleon means a
dilettante, I don’t think I’m a dilettante. Whatever I’ve done, I’ve done fairly seriously and reasonably well. But I think writing is my key passion.

**And what do you think about publishing in India? Is it looking up?**

I’m hugely optimistic about publishing in India. Publishing in India will show the world what publishing should be in the future. In the rest of the world, publishing is jaded. In India, publishing is like an infant which is just learning to crawl. So, it’s full of ideas. It wants things. It wants to gobble up. It wants to grow. Sometimes it does things that, you know, some people would say, “Well, this is not the right things to publish. This is not the right way of doing a book.” But regardless, it has life and enthusiasm. Whereas in the UK, and in other parts of the world, for a whole variety of reasons, publishing is cautious, publishing has aged and it’s risk averse. It wants to ensure everything – which is why it’s moved into the domain of imitation. If Harry Potter works, create 200 Harry Potter’s. If Dan Brown works, create 200 Dan Brown’s. The safe way. Whereas, in India, people want to read new things. I’m hugely optimistic.

**RR: So, will there be a reverse trend now? Previously, at least as far as Indian-English authors were concerned, you first had to publish outside to get attention here.**

**KB:** It’s already changing. There are so many authors from India and Asia who are being shortlisted for the Asia Man Booker Award. I think the pendulum has started to swing. I think the rest of the world - not only in technology and other hard-core domains, but in the arts - is beginning to turn towards the East. And I’m very happy for that. There’s one other thing I used to say about this: that the Britishers have lost their Empire, but they control the literary pages of this world. You know, I don’t think that’s going to be the case. In a few decades, Indian publishers and Indian readers will form the core of readership in this world.

**And what’s your next novel about?**

It could be about one of 3 different things. One is a contemporary novel – set in some of the most dangerous parts of the country - Chhatisgarh, Madhya Pradesh, Bihar - some of the more dangerous parts. It could be a contemporary Indian novel based in those parts. I won’t tell you the story – but it’s located there. It could be another historical novel which is set away from India, with no Indian connection whatsoever and I’ve thought of a story like that. And the third one is slightly controversial… I don’t want to say anything more on that.

**RR:** Two recent novels – Salman Rushdie’s *The Enchantress of Florence* and Amitav Ghosh’s *Sea of Poppies* are about epochs and characters that you’ve already covered. Akbar is one of the protagonists of Rushdie’s novel. The Mughal Emperor, however, first made an appearance in Indian-English fiction in *The Miniaturist*, which came out in 2003. Ghosh’s latest novel is set in the backdrop of the first Opium War. It’s about the opium trade, which is again, something you’d dealt with in your very first novel, *The Opium Clerk*, published in 2001. Have you read these books?

**KB:** No. Not because I didn’t want to read them but because - and that’s the casualty of writing fiction for me, something I’m not happy about - in my other life, I also write academic non-fiction. I’ve no time to read other people’s fiction. Which is a sad confession to make, but it’s true. I’d be lying if I said otherwise. I’ve no time to read lots of great authors, lots of great books, cover to cover. I have only skimmed pages of Khaled Hosseini’s *A Thousand Splendid Suns*; I haven’t read Orhan Pamuk’s *Snow*; I haven’t read cover-to-cover, *Shadow of the Wind*, which is a very interesting book. I haven’t read the latest books by lots of authors. There is a cost to everything. And the cost of my writing life has been that I haven’t kept up with contemporary fiction.

**RR:** Kunal Basu, thank for your time and conversation.
T he qualitative/quantitative divide is not at all foreign to Vedic studies. In the traditional approach style emerges as the master of figures of speech: the purpose of the hymns was "to give delight, to both the deity addressed and the listener in general" (Mainkar 1966). This intention, along with the belief in the power of the spoken word as a means of attaining human goals, formed a poetical practice in which different kinds of repetition were central. According to Gonda’s study (1955), a stylistic analysis of the Vedas should go beyond such devices, since their use is constructive rather than ornamental. This laid the foundation for the functional method, which tries to link stylistic features and the production of texts. Elizarenkova analyses the hymns in relation to the structure of the poetic message (Elizarenkova 1995). The formal devices, studied byJakobson (1956) within his theory of self-orientation of the poetical language, thus acquire a communicative purpose: the hymns dealt with the situation of a gift exchange between the poets and the divinity (Elizarenkova 1995). Similarly, Watkins (1995) treats the technique and the purpose of literary creativity "in the Indo-European times" as a part of the social function of the Indo-European poet as "the custodian and the transmitter" of the tradition.

On the other hand, linguistic features can be analysed irrespective of their function. Bloomfield et al. (1954) describe grammar in recurring manners in terms of formal and, notably, stylistic variants. Quantitative data presented by West (1954) is also descriptive: the distribution of countable features in the collection is its important empirical characteristic, although it is meaninglessly without a valid category of comparison. Furthermore, corpus approach to lexical analysis was established in Veldology long before the arrival of digital humanities (e.g. Grassman 1964) and more recently (Lubotsky 1997). Together with the Indological tradition of quantitative research (Fosse 1997) this suggests the necessity of a data-driven analysis of the Vedic lexicon, semantics, genre and discourse.

Lexical analysis of the ancient corpus
Uncovering whether or not there is empirical evidence of a relationship between word usage and an interpretable typology of hymns may help to better understand the phenomena, which influenced the choice of vocabulary by the Indian rhapsodists. The hymns are part of a unique corpus, which features traditional lists of subject matter and authors, as well as certain schemes of internal arrangement (Witzel 1957). The texts’ subject matter and indications of poetic family attribution, refinements and the location of a text in the ‘family core’, are obvious candidate categories of vocabulary. A corpus study might help to reveal the help of various statistics of lexical diversity or richness, such as the type-token (TTR) and haper (HR) ratios, which show how inclined the authors were to repeat the same words and to use rare, highly specialised vocabulary (see Biber 1993). Another such measure is the ratio of frequent content word tokens (FCWR), since common lexical items correspond to the vocabulary of the typical formulas and mythological representations.

In a sample of size-adjusted p-balanced texts, around 25 per cent of the collection, lexical diversity differs significantly between the hymns to ‘popular’ deities, Indra, Agni, and Soma, where repeated text fragments (clusters) were found, and those dealing with other topics and void of repetitions. The former texts exhibit a higher rate of frequent content words and contain fewer hapaxes. The differences are minute, yet statistically significant: Figures 1–3 show results of the ANOVAs comparing means in the respective groups of hymns. Books appear to differ as well: family core scores higher on TTR (see Figure 4).  

Many important questions remain unanswered, as getting more interpretable statistical results is problematic in a corpus of circa 165,000 tokens. The diachronic nature of the collection also has to be reconsidered: hymns in the family books are viewed by scholars as the oldest. Is the wider repertoire of vocabulary (and grammatical forms) in such books connected with factors of time or geography? And yet it remains to be demonstrated empirically that an approach, which embraces cultural categories and natural data, presents an alternative to a literary theory based on deductive constructs, such as the poetic function.

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Notes
1 The research was made possible by the Jan Gonda Foundation, which granted me a fellowship in January–June 2006, and the International Institute for Asian Studies (IIAS), which provided facilities and assistance throughout the research.

2 In Figures 1–4 points represent the means for each group; vertical lines indicate the 95% confidence limits ±1.96.  

References
Recently returned from field research in Central Asia, Irina Morozova offers us glimpses of nation-building in the region, and provides us with fascinating insights on how geo-political space and historical time are reflected in national monuments built in the cities of Kyrgyzstan and Mongolia.

National monuments and social construction in Mongolia and Kyrgyzstan

Irina Morozova

In the changing geo-political arena of Central Asia, Kyrgyzstan and Mongolia have shown signs of adopting the neoliberal corporate power model practiced by their more powerful neighbors, Kazakhstan and Russia. The so-called ‘Tulip revolution’ - the overthrow of A. Akayev's presidency in Kyrgyzstan in March 2005 - was perceived by Central Asian governments as a destabilising and threatening power transition scheme and a turning point in the course of economic reform. While the new Kyrgyz President B. Bakiev has tended to consolidate elite around the access to strategic assets, the ruling party of Mongolia - the Mongolian People's Revolutionary Party (MPRP) - initiated discussions on changing the country's political system from a parliamentary to a presidential republic. Privatisation of Kyrgyzstan's energy sector and disputes over nationalisation of natural resources in Mongolia indicate a possible shift of power model towards corporate elite structures. What directions might the nation-building policies take? What lesson do the political elites choose to promote their interests among wider sections of the population? What symbols are adopted? And how do temporal interests coincide with and impact upon historical memory?

Chinggis khan, Manas and geo-politics in Bishkek and Ulaanbaatar

At the beginning of the 1990s, Kyrgyzstan and Mongolia found themselves in similar economic circumstances. Having been largely dependent on Soviet budgets, investments and trade, now the resource-producing republics were in need of foreign assistance to cope with collapsing economies and a drastic fall in living standards. The governments were forced to let the international markets and financial institutions in and open the public domain to international human rights organisations and various NGOs. Kyrgyzstan and Mongolia adopted the IMF reforms and underwent shock price liberalisation and hyper-inflation and found themselves in the lists of countries with high levels of poverty.

Till about the mid-1990s, Kyrgyzstan had been known as an ‘island of democracy’ surrounded by autocratic post-Soviet Central Asian Republics, and Mongolia is still viewed by many as the most open society in East Asia.

At the same time, however, Kyrgyzstan presented a poor example with social and ethnic conflicts continuing to escalate on its territory, while the MPRP re-consolidated its rule in Mongolia, claiming to be a guarantee of socio-political stabil- ity. While economic reforms in the two countries followed similar schemes, their political cultures and nation-building processes appeared to be very different: with a greater normative respect for tradition, an apparent willingness to compromise and a considerable degree of independency within the international socialist system, Mongolia found itself in a more lucrative position after the USSR’s disintegration. In the 1990s, in both countries diverse groups in power, including ruling elite and intellectuals began revising the historical past and searching for symbols capable of uniting their populations, demoralised by poverty and social marginalisation.

In Kyrgyzstan, attempts to expand the image of the legendary epic hero Manas into the symbol of national unity did not bring the desired results. In many parts of the country, there is a tradition of performing or reciting parts of the Epos of Manas, a traditional epic poem with close to half a million lines. But not everywhere. So a decision by the former President Akayev to build monuments to Manas not only in the capital Bishkek, but in other cities, such as Batken, in the southern region where many communities do not follow the tradition of performing the epos, had little resonance with the people. In the end, the affirmative actions to promote the Manas epos, as well as other ideas promoted by the Presi- dent, such as the ‘uniqueness of nomadic culture’ and ‘Kyrgyzstan - a country of mountains’ were not supported by many sedentary communities, especially in the south, and consigned to history alongside their architect, Akayev. In Mongolia, the cult of Chinggis khan had not only existed among the general population in various narrative and epic forms, but it had been developed by historiographers over the centuries and became a form of national pride among the Khalkha, the dominant Mongol group, living in Central Mongolia and in the capital Ulaanbaatar. In 2006, a monument to Chinggis khan was built in Ulaanbaatar central square, to mark the celebration of 800 years of Mongolian statehood. Today, this mono- ment is seen as the starting point for every excursion around the capital, but certainly not the last grand project in honour of the Great khan. The figure of Chinggis in the centre of the monument is surrounded by his son and grandson, Ögedei khan (who inherited the core Mongol lands from his father) and Qubilai khan (the founder of the Yuan dynasty). While there is some sympathy towards the monuments dedicated to epic heroes such as Batkhan- kul batbyy (1885-1955), a legendary wrestler known for his extraordinary strength and courage, the newly invented symbols of Kyrgyz statehood, such as the Erkindik (independence) monument in the capital’s Ala-Tau Square, are regarded as a failed attempt by the state to collective nation identity construction. The search for genuine historical figures who could be propaganda’d as contributors to Kyrgyz statehood has also proved, so far, to be less successful, partly due to the legacy of Soviet historiography and its focus on the fighters for national liberation. The monument to Kurmanjan Datka (1811-1907), known as the ‘Alai queen’, situated in the centre of Bishkek, is supposed to portray a wise, powerful and independently-minded Kyrgyz female ruler, who struggled to sustain her people’s existence during the war between the Kokand Khanate and the Rus- sian Empire. Yet, the fact that Kurmanjan eventually capitulated and allowed her territory becoming a Russian protectorate does not ring true with such a triumphant image.

Geo-political pluralism, albeit selective, is still working in terms of Mongolia’s bal- ancing act between the two great powers – Russia and China – and the involvement of a ‘third force’ - the US or any other state that demonstrates interest in Mongolian land. For example, the prospective recon- struction of the Mongolian Parliament Building – an example of socialist monu- mental architecture – is believed to be funded by Qatari investors. A host of new high-tech buildings are under construc- tion in the area surrounding Sükhbaatar square, all funded by various foreign investments and it would seem without much urban planning. These buildings are not only changing the face of the city, but marking Mongolia’s adoption of a neo-lib- eral model for its weak economy. While certain features of the monument to Chinggis khan may be criticised some, it’s safe to conclude that most Mongols view the statue with respect. The same cannot be said of the national monuments in the Kyrgyz capital, which provoke self-depre- cating and even bitter jokes. While there is some sympathy towards the monuments dedicated to epic heroes such as Chakhumul batbyy (1885-1955), a legendary wrestler known for his extraordinary strength and courage, the newly invented symbols of Kyrgyz statehood, such as the Erkindik (independence) monument in the capital’s Ala-Tau Square, are regarded as a failed attempt by the state to collective nation identity construction. The search for genuine historical figures who could be propaganda’d as contributors to Kyrgyz statehood has also proved, so far, to be less successful, partly due to the legacy of Soviet historiography and its focus on the fighters for national liberation. The monument to Kurmanjan Datka (1811-1907), known as the ‘Alai queen’, situated in the centre of Bishkek, is supposed to portray a wise, powerful and independently-minded Kyrgyz female ruler, who struggled to sustain her people’s existence during the war between the Kokand Khanate and the Rus- sian Empire. Yet, the fact that Kurmanjan eventually capitulated and allowed her territory becoming a Russian protectorate does not ring true with such a triumphant image.

In Ulaanbaatar, the Sükhbaatar monument and new high-tech buildings surrounding Sükhbaatar Square, Ulaanbaatar. Photograph courtesy of the author.
The present Kyrgyz President Bakiev has neither been persistent nor inventive in creating a new national ideology, leaving space for discussion among different intellectuals and political groups about the best nation-building project. However, most of the concepts put forward were too local or marginal, and thus unsustainable and unworkable at a national level.

Regional nationalisms: the cases of Khovd and Osh
Scholarship reveals that every Mongol tribe had its own historic nationalism. The Western Mongols, the Oirat tribes, are regarded as the second largest ethnic group in the south of Kyrgyzstan. In 1990, the view that Mongolia is the only post-socialist country in Asia that has managed to avoid sharp social confrontation has recently changed (particularly in the light of the riots in Ulaanbaatar in June 2008, following parliamentary elections). The centralisation tendencies (also reflected in discussions on the transition to a presidential republic) and nation-building policies in Mongolia will fail to become truly meaningful if they are not supported by social reform and campaigns. Are the new nation-building symbols referring to a heroic past, genealogies or cultural exclusiveness empowered to convince people the state has chosen the correct political course? Or, are these monuments and buildings insignificant against the background of minimal social construction? And, are these monuments and buildings insurmountable against the backdrop of minimal social construction?

Kazakhstani in the framework of a broader Altai region concept. One experiences quite a different picture of ‘provincial life’ in the southern Kyrgyz city of Osh. To start, a clear link with a historical group that found a famous politico-territorial setting. The rulers of the Kokand Khanate, which conquered Osh area before Russia’s conquest and annexation, preferred to link their genealogies with Emir Timur, a famous 14th-century Turkic conqueror of Central Asia, to whom the Uzbeks trace back their genealogies. At present, the Osh Kyrgyz are believed to be a direct descendant of a core Kyrgyz tribe. The Kyrgyz from the northern regions, in turn, like to stress their tribes’ key role in history and cultural opposition to the southern Kyrgyz. The genealogical trees of Kyrgyz exhibited in the National Museums of Osh and Bishkek are sketched differently to stress the importance of one regional group’s origin over the others. Some ethnographers have presented substantial evidence that the population of the Ferghana Valley, where the city of Osh is situated, and the adjacent mountainous areas was completely recomposed after the southward extension of the Ferghana Valley. In the 20th century many groups were classified as Uzbeks, who nowadays are regarded as the second largest ethnic group in the south of Kyrgyzstan. In 1990, the view that Mongolia is the only post-socialist country in Asia that has managed to avoid sharp social confrontation has recently changed (particularly in the light of the riots in Ulaanbaatar in June 2008, following parliamentary elections). The centralisation tendencies (also reflected in discussions on the transition to a presidential republic) and nation-building policies in Mongolia will fail to become truly meaningful if they are not supported by social reform and campaigns. Are the new nation-building symbols referring to a heroic past, genealogies or cultural exclusiveness empowered to convince people the state has chosen the correct political course? Or, are these monuments and buildings insignificant against the background of minimal social construction? And, are these monuments and buildings insurmountable against the backdrop of minimal social construction?

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The juxtaposition of Buddhism and modern technology tends to induce surprise and even humour: visitors to Buddhist countries, for example, often photograph monks in the act of using cell phones or computers, as such images defy preconceived notions. But Buddhism and technology actually share a long, cooperative history.

**Early adopters:**

**debunking stereotypes of Buddhist attitudes toward technology**

Stereotypes cloud the perception of Buddhism’s relationship to technology. John Dewey, on the Urban Dharma website, writes, ‘In strict monastic societies, almost all forms of technology are considered useless since they do not further one’s spiritual journey’. Peter Henschel writes in his book on Buddhism in the information age, ‘Buddhist technologies have been predominantly social technologies rooted in the training of awareness, the perfecting of attention’ (Henschel 1999: 111). These views are not wrong, per se, but refer to idealized notions of Buddhism. In general, the Buddhist tradition has been keen to adopt new technology that serves the Buddhist mission, including dramatic innovations such as the introduction of writing and printing, the digital revolution, and the entire Chinese Buddhist canon was printed in 1403, the Kāyāra canon’s first printed edition only 14th century. But even then, it wasn’t used for Buddhist studies. Sam’s King Chulalongkorn ordered the Pāli canon’s first printed edition only 100 years earlier (Harrison 1936: 38-81). Many subsequent Tibetan līkār ‘gyur editions were produced on woodblocks until the 15th century. But printing didn’t entirely replace writing in Tibet, complete canon manuscript editions were produced alongside printed versions.

**A means to posterity: writing**

Writing was introduced to India some time between the Buddha’s death and the reign of Asoka (273-232 BCE), who famously carved his edicts at sites around India. The earliest known Buddhist inscriptions are on stone at Bhārhat, in central India, dating from the mid-3rd to mid-2nd century BCE, and record the names of new building construction sponsors including monastics. It’s unknown whether monastics at Bhārhat also wrote on ephemeral materials. The earliest mention of writing down the Buddhist canon comes from the chronicles of Sri Lanka, which report that in the 1st century BCE, during the reign of King Vattagamini Abhayas, the three Pitakas and the Commentary upon them, ‘in order to ensure the long life of the Law’, were ‘recorded in books’ (Mhv. 33:100-1, Lamotte 1958: 359). Recently discovered Buddhist manuscripts in Kharoshthi script, from Gandhāra (ancient north-west India), have been radiocarbon-dated to a range from the 2nd century BCE to the 1st century CE. The first to come to light are believed to date to the Common Era’s first 50 years. Classifying manuscripts written by many different scribes, this collection probably represents a deposit of old, worn out manuscripts. Some show signs of being copies; mistakes, such as haplography — the inadvertent omission of a repeated letter or letters — are best explained as copying errors. Additional factors suggest the manuscripts originate from the written tradition’s inception in Gandhāra: each scribe’s handwriting is unique, while in later periods it’s difficult to impossible to tell one scribe’s handwriting from another’s; the earliest manuscripts are written on birch bark scrolls, a crude, easily damaged material relative to the more refined palm leaf manuscripts from Bamar and the paper introduced via Central Asia as early as the 1st century. Lines of writing often stray diagonally, while in later periods scribes drew guidelines to neaten manuscript appearance. Thus, these Gandhāran manuscripts appear to represent immature writing technology. Gandhāran Buddhists likely began using manuscripts simultaneously to the first writing in Sri Lanka, in the 1st century BCE, mentioned in the Pāli chronicles, making Buddhism the first Indian religion to do so, perhaps by 800 or more years. The oldest surviving Vedic manuscript is less than 1,000 years old (Witzel 1997: 259). The earliest known written form of Zoroastrian texts is from the 8th or 9th century (Kel- lens 2006: 23). Evidence from Sri Lanka indicates the canon was written down to ensure the posterity of the Buddhism’s teachings. Manuscripts could also be used to spread the teaching, and were imported to China and Tibet in great numbers. Dācārā, a pictorial figure in early Chinese Buddhism, encouraged Chinese monks to visit India in search of manuscripts. Fātiān, possibly Dācārā’s disciple, visited India between 359 and 413 and copied many manuscripts, as did Xuánzàng between 629 and 643. Much later Marpa and others took manuscripts from India to Tibet.

**Imparting authority, increasing efficiency: printing**

Used throughout the ancient world to mark authority, seals and sealings were an important precursor to printing. Several ancient monastery seals prove Buddhist institutions used them. By the 8th century, making heavily text-laden seals was combined with stamping designs on silk and decorative paper, leading to printing. The earliest examples, driven by the ‘enthusiasm of the Buddhism devotees for producing a great multitude of sacred texts’ (Töen 1985), are Chinese and associated with Buddhism, as the scripture itself encouraged copying and distributing the texts. For example, the Lotus Sūtra, translated into Chinese by Kumārajīva in 406, reads, ‘If there is anyone who preserves, recites, explains, or copies even a single verse of the Lotus Sūtra, or who respects this Sūtra as if it were a Buddha... know. O Bhārapā- yāra, that this person has already paid homage to tens of myriads of [crores] of Buddhas of the Past!’ (Kubo and Yamaoka 1993-1995: T 9: 262). An extension of the written word’s power, copying a single version, is equated with the merit of worshiping countless past Buddhas. Printing innumerable copies created even greater stores of merit. Dated to 704-751, the world’s oldest extant printed copy of the Diamond Sūtra found in Dūnhuáng 敦煌, was ordered by Aṇura in 707, the earliest complete printed book bearing a date: it ends with the Bṛha ca benediction, ‘On the fifteenth day of the fourth moon of the ninth year of Xiàntóng 隴通, Wang Jie reverently made this for his parents, for universal distribution’. The entire Chinese Buddhist canon was first printed in Chéngdū 成都 in 671, the Kāyāra canon’s first printed edition only 14th century. But even then, it wasn’t used for Buddhist studies. Sam’s King Chulalongkorn ordered the Pāli canon’s first printed edition only 100 years earlier (Bechert and Gombrich 1984: 78), perhaps inspired by the European edition in roman script, initiated in 1881. The Sinhalese, Cambodian and Burmese editions followed in the 20th century. This contrast in the acceptance of printing between these two Asian regions mirrors the traditional fault line between northern Mahāyāna Buddhism and southern Thera- vāda Buddhism. Cultural attitudes towards books and writing esteemed in China were generally debased in India, in deference to oral tradition. Also, though written in the 1st century BCE, the Pāli canon remained
an essentially oral tradition up to modern times. Its liturgy and its nature were easier to memorise and recall, and since only educated monks could access texts — through their memories — they were protected against miscopying and apocrypha, and group recitations prevented errors. As Theravāda Buddhism spread throughout Southeast Asia, Pāli remained the canonical language, in contrast to China and Tibet, where the texts were translated. Monks, who had learned the teachings in Pāli, provided examples in the vernacular to convey particular teachings, safeguarding the canon's purity. In modern times it has been translated and printed in Sinhalese and Southeast Asia's major languages.

Moveable type was invented in the mid-11th century by Bi Sheng (毕升) and perfected in Korea almost 200 years later, but it didn't eclipse block-printing among China's Bud- dhists. Moveable type was popular for commercial printing, but temples avoided it, perhaps because it offered few advantages and conversion would have introduced many errors. The traditional method of making new lithograph editions usually involved pasting printing copies upside-down on boards and carving the latter, maintaining accuracy over centuries. In Japan, however, a complete copy of the Chinese canon, the Tenkai 天海 edition, was produced with moveable type between 1637 and 1648 (Mizuno 1982: 180). Since one purpose of moveable type was to eliminate storing thousands of printing blocks, there was only enough type to set a few pages at a time. Once a page had been printed, the forme containing the type was dismantled to produce the next page. Thus only one set of copies could be made. By contrast, the second Koryō can- on's blocks, carved in the 13th century, were used to print a new edition between 1637 and 1676.

**Going digital: ancient utterances captured by the modern world**

In the early 1990s Theravāda Buddhism was the first Buddhist tradition to digitise its canon. Remarkable for being instigated by Buddhist temples and organisations rather than scholars, four independent projects in Thailand, India and Sri Lanka digitised their respective versions of the Pāli texts. Today's most widely used Pāli canon version was produced by the Vip- passana Research Institute (VRI), a largely decentralised organisation of meditation centres, which in 1990 began printing a new edition in the Devanāgarī script in order to reintroduce it to India. Typeset using computers, it was released electronically in 1997 on CD-ROM free of charge. CD-ROM features benefit scholars, while a dozen different writing systems allow access to adherents throughout South and Southeast Asia.

Two America-led projects are digitising the Tibetan canons and religious litera- ture: Geshe Michael Roach's Asian Classics Input Project started in 1987, and Gene Smith's Tibetan Buddhist Resource Center began in 1999. Each has a differ- ent focus but shares the goal of preserving Tibetan culture primarily for Tibetans, though much of their work is available to scholars as well.

In Japan, digitising the Chinese canon began in 1956, when Tokyo University Pro- fessor Yasunori Ejima (江島惠教), funded by the Japanese Ministry for Education, commenced input of the standard Taishō edition. Two years later the Chinese Bud- dhist Electronic Text Association (CBETA) began digitising the same Taishō edition at Taiwan National University's Buddhist Research Center. The two projects agreed to cooperate, completing the project in 2003. The T'u-Quang Wisdom Light Foun- dation hopes to produce the Buddhist can- on's first Vietnamese translation by trans- literating the CBETA data into Vietnamese script (http://tinyurl.com/144g4gh).

Serving the faith

Why has Buddhism adopted new technol- ogies? It begins with the Buddhist message of the four noble truths: suffering, the ori- gin of suffering, the cessation of suffering and the path leading to the cessation of suffering. To reach an audience, a mes- sage must be communicated in a way its audience understands. Since Buddhism doesn't target a particular group, it is in principle open to anyone. In the Vinaya, the Buddhist monastic code, the Buddha instructs his disciples, 'I command that the word of the Buddha be learned by each one, by each mode of expression (ākāśe ninshū nichi pāṇḍitaṃ), as opposed to Vedic Sanskrit (śānta) (Vin I 139), which was the domain of Brahmanism. Loosely interpreted, preventing gurus from simply imposing the new of the past is not important; communicating the message in a way that people understand is. Therefore, a new order of digitalising the transmission, whether a new language or medium, is encouraged.

Second, throughout history Buddhists have been concerned about the disap- pearance of Dharma, the record of the Buddha's teachings. This basic fear may also underlie instructions to copy texts and drive the adoption of new ways to pre- serve and distribute them. Third, as tech- nology changed, new practices and rituals developed which incorporated it. Writing and printing became empowered with the capacity to protect, for instance via amu- lets made from texts, and the power to transfer merit, as in dedications connected with an act of donation.

Finally, as Buddhism became institution- alsed, monasteries needed financial and material support for monks and nuns. Adopting technology which could attract support benefited the institution and helped fulfill its primary function of spread- ing the Buddha's teaching. Human nature respects power, including the increased power that comes with learning new tech- nology. Technology was and remains a powerful way of inspiring generosity.

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The story of the Indian diaspora is integral to Singapore’s early history. Stamford Raffles’s entourage in 1819 included sepoys, washermen, milkmen, tea suppliers and domestic servants. Following them, several Indians arrived first as prisoners, who were later hired to work on buildings and roads for the colonial empire. The ship illustrated here is typical of the vessels that brought travellers from India to Singapore. (Fig. 1) The Tanjong Pagar Dock Company owned the dock, which was opened in 1868. The number of Indians migrating into Singapore was small compared to that of the people from Southeastern China, Malaya and Indonesia.

However, the Indians were a complex and diverse group of people and included labourers, servants, traders and merchants during the colonial period. Moreover, Indian sailors, fishermen and merchants had travelled over the Indian Ocean even before the British rule in South and Southeast Asia. They journeyed from the coasts including Gujarat, Malabar, Coromandel, Orissa and Bengal among other places. As a result of these maritime activities, many Indian communities including the Gujaratis, Chulias, Maapilas, and Chettiars had made their presence felt in Southeast Asia. In the early 19th century, with the entry of the British, the nature of these migrations changed. The commercial interests of the rulers began to take precedence.

The colonial government began to make systematic efforts to create a knowledge database, which included visual documentation. This enterprise gave rise to specific representational modes. Stiffly posed, the Indian subjects became exotic types. The people were turned into ethnic types who could be classified. The People of India: A Series of Photographic Illustrations, with Descriptive Letterpress of the races and Tribes of Hindustan (Fig. 2) was published between 1868 and 1875. The depiction of a Shanar Christian couple, included in this volume, best illustrates the colonial strategy described above. The book was the last among a series of eight volumes that was published between 1868 and 1875. The number of Indians migrating into Singapore was small compared to that of the people from Southeastern China, Malaya and Indonesia.

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The Story of Ten Communities
Individuals from nearly all the states in India, including those from the south, migrated to Singapore. The exhibition, Indians in Singapore: A Picture Story, curated by the author, was on view at the National Museum of Singapore from June 9 – July 27, 2008. It was a visual narrative about the diverse socio-cultural practices of the Indians in Singapore. The story of ten communities, identified predominantly through their languages, was set against the backdrop of Singapore’s early history. Vidya Murthy outlines some aspects of the exhibition.

The People of India: A Series of Photographic Illustrations, with Descriptive Letterpress of the races and Tribes of Hindustan, London, emerged out of one such colonial project. The book was the last among a series of eight volumes that was published between 1868 and 1875. The depiction of a Shanar Christian couple, included in this volume, best illustrates the colonial strategy described above. The Shanars hailed from the Tinnevelly district in Tamil Nadu and southern Travancore in Kerala. Their traditional occupation was extracting toddy from palm and making jaggery. They were one of the many distressed communities in South India who were converted to Christianity in 1800s. Some of the educated Shanars migrated to Malaya among other places where they took up jobs in the colonial government. In the hands of colonial photographers including the well known G.R. Lambert & Company in Singapore, the Indian subjects became exotic types. (Fig. 2) The Indians in the colonial period, were represented as either ethnic or exotic types or sometimes both.

Fig. 1: Tanjong Pagar docks c. 1890. G.R Lambert & Company 1993-00285-022
Fig. 2: Portrait of a family. 1905. G.R. Lambert & Company. 2001-03515
Fig. 3: A group of Indian and Chinese coolies c. 1870. 1994-05110
Fig. 4: Portraits of a family. 1905. G.R. Lambert & Company. 2001-03515

Vidya Murthy

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However, the Indians were a complex and diverse group of people and included labourers, servants, traders and merchants during the colonial period. Moreover, Indian sailors, fishermen and merchants had travelled over the Indian Ocean even before the British rule in South and Southeast Asia. They journeyed from the coasts including Gujarat, Malabar, Coromandel, Orissa and Bengal among other places. As a result of these maritime activities, many Indian communities including the Gujaratis, Chulias, Maapilas, and Chettiars had made their presence felt in Southeast Asia. In the early 19th century, with the entry of the British, the nature of these migrations changed. The commercial interests of the rulers began to take precedence.

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Later with the need for workers on plantations including rubber in British Malaya, indentured labourers were brought largely from South India, especially the present Tamil Nadu. Although slavery was abolished in the early 20th century, workers were brought in through agents or foremen known as Kangneys. (Fig. 3) There were also free migrations undertaken especially by merchants and entrepreneurs who went on to establish themselves as prominent businessmen. (Fig. 4) As the community became more settled, they also intermarried and raised families. In the late 19th and early 20th century, Singapore was still thought of as a temporary home by the Indian migrants. Most of them came and worked for a few years and all the while maintained ties back in India.

Despite this transient nature of their presence, the early Indians built many places of worship. These religious sites extended as centres of social and cultural life, which enabled the migrants to ease their ways into the new land. The Masjid Al Abrar and Nagore Durgha, which was a shrine for the important South Indian Sufi, Shahul Hamid Sahib, is in fact a replica of the original in Nagore in Tamil Nadu. The Sri Mariamman Temple in China Town was another important place for the migrants. (Fig. 5) It served as a refuge for newcomers who could stay there till they found accommodations. The other temples in Singapore also reflected in part, the village and caste backgrounds of the people. For instance, the major deities of the Sri Mariamman temple included harbour workers who came from the Tanjore district.

Fig. 5: Durgha, which was a shrine for the important South Indian Sufi, Shahul Hamid Sahib, is a replica of the original in Nagore in Tamil Nadu.
Fig. 6: The Sri Mariamman Temple in China Town was another important place for the migrants.
Today, the Singapore Indians are not discrete entities isolated from each other or from the larger society. On the other hand, they are living groups of people who negotiate their lives every day by selecting and adapting social practices. In the course of such adaptations their native languages, too, have been constantly changing and expanding. Most Singapore Indians are bi- and multi-lingual and are adept at mixing Malay and Hokkien words in their speech. Language is a powerful means for the Indian diaspora in Singapore to define itself: each community tries to ensure that the younger generations learn and speak the mother tongue. The complex linguistic diversity of the Singapore Indians is illustrated by the numerous languages spoken in Singapore including, among others, Bangla, Gujarati, Hindi (Bhojpuri), Kannada, Marathi, Malayalam, Punjabi, Sindhi, Tamil and Telugu. Although Tamil is one of four official languages, the Singapore state has recognised the importance of several other non-Tamil languages. As a result, five languages including Bangla, Gujarati, Hindi, Punjabi and Urdu are offered as second language choices for students who wish to study their mother tongue. This official support extended to non-Tamil languages has strengthened the migrant Indians’ commitment to their use of native languages. The numerous language associations and schools in Singapore further attest to this concern.

An enquiry into the linguistic practices will also help to circumvent generic ethnic categories such as “Indian”, as employed in formal and popular discourses. Although, any single frame of reference to identify a heterogeneous community remains inherently artificial and inadequate. Still, Singapore Indians constantly select and adapt social practices from the larger society. In the course of such adaptations they have shaped for themselves a highly syncretic culture and simultaneously contributed towards making the Singapore society truly hybrid. This, for instance, can be illustrated in the annual music festival that is organised by one linguistic community, Singapore Kannada Sangha. Kannada speakers have been coming to Singapore since the mid-1800s, mostly as part of the professional white collar labour force. They have origins in the south western state of Karnataka, where Kannada is the official language. The community organisation, Singapore Kannada Sangha, was founded in 1936 and hosts numerous social and cultural festivals through out the year. They also conduct the the annual music festival, Purandara namana. Held in memory of the Kannada poet-saint, Purandaradasa (1485-1565), this festival attracts music teachers, students, performers and connoisseurs from all over the island. (Fig. 8) One of the important Nāṭakās of the Vaishnava bhakti tradition in Karnataka, Purandaradasa is also credited with consolidating and structuring the South Indian Music system. People from other communities also participate and the festival starts with students and the audience singing the poet’s graded compositions, called the Pillari Geeta. Not only does the festival bring together people from other communities, but it also ensures that narrow linguistic borders are crossed.

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Bibliography
Among those who played a role in introducing early photography to Japan was Nakahama Manjiro (also known as John Manjiro), a fisherman from Utsuwaya bay (now Tosashimizu on the southwest tip of Shikoku). Manjiro’s first contacts with the West date to 1851 when, following his shipwreck on the far-flung Pacific island of Torishima, he was rescued by an American whaler. Dubbed by the crew John Mung, Manjiro worked his passage to Honolulu and then on to the United States. It was during his time in America that Manjiro turned his on-boarding learning into a more formal study of English and a wide range of new subjects. He became a proficient navigator and much respected cultural interpreter, before cautiously returning to Japan in 1853 (technically, his unauthorised emigration remained illegal). In 1855, following his promotion to a senior rank of samurai, Manjiro was recommended as a possible interpreter for the Shogun’s trade negotiations with the US Naval officer, Commodore Matthew Perry. However, it appears that the Tokugawa Shogunate objected to his presence in the talks, and eventually his skills were never put to use.

Mastering the Ambrotype

In 1858, Nakahama Manjiro was posted with the first official overseas delegation to visit the United States. He sailed aboard the Kanrin Maru, the famous steam-propelled warship constructed in a Dutch shipyard and delivered to the Shogun government in 1857, and the first modern Japanese ship to cross the Pacific ocean.

Some time after the delegation made landfall in San Francisco, Manjiro bought a camera, with which he soon mastered the process of Ambrotype photography. (The major discovery in England in 1851 that collodion was a viable support for images captured on glass impelled a new photographic invention. The Ambrotype was a ‘wet plate’ photograph taken on a glass plate emulsified with collodion and further sensitised with silver nitrate. The process, first promulgated in America in 1854, undercut the costs of daguerreotyping, but it was famously messy, since the operator had to take the photograph and develop it before the emulsified side of the plate had dried.)

Some of the images that he produced are now owned by the Egawa Archive in Shizuka. Via quite a different legacy, the same archive also safeguards a collection of letters-de-visite assembled by Shibata Hyuga, a leading diplomat in the Tokugawa Shogunate, during a separate diplomatic mission to Europe. This collection includes a photograph of Shibata and the rest of the Japanese delegation during their visit to the Netherlands in 1858. More will be said at the end of this article about the voyage to Holland, for it yields useful comparative insights into Manjiro’s activities in America and Japan.

What follows is a brief examination of a series of photographs on albumen paper and two ambrotype photographs (figs. 1 and 3) which portray men typical of a class of doctors and translators who, taking the Dutch Studies (Rangoku) as their point of departure, pioneered the study of photographic techniques in Japan.

From records of formal engagements contained in the administration transcripts of the Egawa Daikan (the official in charge of the territory immediately surrounding the Shogun at Edo), we know that the photograph of the samurai Ozawa (fig. 3) was taken on the 1st September, 1856 in the Egawa mansion in Edo, and it is evident that Manjiro took the picture when he was still employed by and living in the grounds of the Egawa Daikan.

Records indicate that Manjiro stayed at the Egawa mansion itself for almost a fortnight in September 1856 during which time he was continual-ly obliged to take photographs of a stream of visitors. Among the subjects were Matsudaira Oki (chief of the Shogun’s escort) and other important members of the military government who called at the Egawa residence.

Interestingly, other records by these various guests also show that prior to his sojourn at the mansion - during the period in which he had already returned with the Kanrin Maru - news had already spread that Manjiro was in Edo producing photographs every day.

On the protective paper enveloping the portrait of Ozawa is a note: “In the first year of the Meiji reign period (1868), on the 16th day of the seventh month (1st September) at the seventh hour (i.e. 16:00), the photographer accepted a commission to take this photograph.” The evident techniques for this photograph bear all the hallmarks of what Manjiro’s eldest son Nakahama Toichiro was later to recall: namely, that his father produced almost all the photographs in which he had already acquired in the previous year, then the same period could also have provided the opportunity to demonstrate the technique of adding black resin to the glass plate, either of which processes corresponded to practices then current in Europe and America.

By the end of the Edo period, Ambrotypes made in Japan were numerous. Most Japanese ambrotypes were produced by putting a black cloth or black paper between the glass photograph and the photographic case. An alternative technique was to paint Japan lacquer (a natural lacquer collected from the Utsuwaya tree) on the glass side of the image (the non-emulsion side) which turns it into a tea-brown colour yet also increases the reflectivity of the tonal contrast. (Un-backed or un-lacquered, the fully emulsion side of the Ozawa photograph, smeared as it is with a black resin resembling asphalt, is unlike any other example of the same period from either Edo or Yokohama (a centre for Japan’s early emigration) preserved in the Records Office). The reverse – non-emulsified – face of the Ozawa photograph resembles a negative on glass. This image can be displayed against a dark background at which point the image converts to positive, since the light-sensitised silver on its surface – dark areas reflect light and appear pale, while the un-sensitised areas allow the dark background to show through.

The reverse – non-emulsified – face of the Ozawa photograph, emerald as it is with a black resin resembling asphalt, is unlike any other example of the same period from either Edo or Yokohama (a centre for Japan’s early photographic studios).

Almost without exception, whenever this technique of using black resin is manifest on Japanese photographs of this period, it can be read as the decisive tell-tale of an ambrotype photograph taken by Manjiro.

Chemistry experiments

During the same period of Manjiro’s activities in Edo, Ueno Hikoma, who would later open a photographic studio in Nagasaki in 1863, and his co-worker Horie Kawaijirō staged a presentation in the Edo residence of Lord Fujiio, one of Japan’s leading feudal lords (aikido of Tsu-han, now Mie Prefecture of Tsu City). They demonstrated the technique of wet plate photography which they had learned from the Swiss photographer P. Rossier after his arrival in Nagasaki in late 1859. Not long previously, Ueno and Horie had conducted a chemistry experiment under the guidance of Doctor J. Pompe van Meerdervoort, a surgeon from the Netherlands, at Nagasaki’s Naval Academy. The pair’s technical mastery now assured, they arrived in Edo with wet plate photographic cameras purchased from the Dutch merchant A. Baedle. From a letter dated 27th July 1861, written by the scientist Utagawa Kyosai, describing photographic demonstrations that he had witnessed at Lord Fujiio’s residence one month earlier, it is evident that Ueno Hikoma and Horie had arrived in Edo in June of the same year.

Most notable among the results of Ueno Hikoma’s activities in Edo is an ambrotype portrait attributed to Horie Kawaijirō (now located in the Department of Art, Nihon University), which shows Ueno in Fujiio’s residence with medicine bottles in front of him. This photograph, the glass side of which has been coated with a black resin, is the only one of its type that can be associated with Ueno. Ueno Hikoma remained in Edo from June, until 20 October 1861, when he followed Fujiio back to his domain.

Convergence of techniques

Figure 2 is a portrait of the samurai Sadamichi. It is thought that Manjiro took the picture in July of 1861 at the Egawa mansion in Asada, Edo, and that subsequently he left Edo January 1862. During this period, supposing that Manjiro and Hikoma had exchanged the technology that each had acquired in the previous year, then the same period could also have provided the opportunity to demonstrate the technique of adding black resin. Evidently, wet plate photography in Japan emerged from two directions: a commercial process obtained by Manjiro in the portrait studies of the US; and the Dutch Studies’ process learned by Ueno Hikoma and his followers in their own country. These two techniques converge in Edo in 1861. The wet plate technique, first invented in England in 1851, arrived in Edo having circumvented the globe east- and westwards.

Figure 3 is of the samurai and interpreter of Dutch and English, Moriyama Einosuke. Moriyama was also the translator of a second edition of A Short Explanation of the Camera, a technical treatise on photography transmitted to posterny as part of the Shizuma Family papers (now located in Tokyo University and designated a national treasure). In 1864, during Commodore Perry’s second visit to Japan, Moriyama - who would eventually sign the formal reply to the American President - took part in the negotiations between both sides. Moriyama took the opportunity to request to Shizuma Nariakira whatever daguerreotype techniques he could glean from the American visitors. (Shizuma Nariakira was a Japanese feudal lord (aikido) of the Edo period, the sixth in the line of Shizuma clan lords of the Satsuma domain. Renowned for his interest in Western learning and technology, he also researched the daguerreotype). This can be surmised from ‘Daguerreotypes: a new method of picture-taking’ (Shōzō shinden deigusu), which is appended to the rest of his report now included with the Shizuma Family Papers.

Among other figures featured in the ‘photographic techniques’ papers of the Shizuma family are Matsuki Kooan (fig. 4) from the Saga domain. Matsuki Kooan (fig. 4), a doctor from the Saga domain, both of whom are figures linked to photographic research in Japan. Kawasaki’s life bears similarities to that of Manjiro. Kawasaki was also a member of the 1862 delegation to America. Although he returned to Japan somewhat later than Manjiro, he too used his newly acquired wet plate methods to make ambrotype portraits of his personal friends and other contacts. In fact, in 1862 Matsuki Kooan and Kawasaki joined the imperial mission to Europe, and, during the mission’s residence in Holland, they visited the photographic studios of Robert Seeverin in The Hague (fig. 6). The Records of Industrial Techniques (seiren kata kiroku), compiled in the Saga domain (ruled by the Nakahechi family), contains a miscellany of items for research into photographic method. Recent research shows that among these records we can identify items which derive directly from a leading Dutch treatise entitled Photophilus (Breda, 1853).

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In 1993, Tokyo University’s Historiographical Institute established the Centre for the Study of Visual Sources to apply new technologies to the study of historical pictures and maps. Of particular interest is the Centre’s collection of photographs with an emphasis on portraits from the Bakumatsu to Meiji Restoration periods (1840s-1860s), gathered from sources both in- and outside Japan. Tani Akiyoshi guides us through some of the stories behind the images in the collection and shows how it’s possible to un-layer almost archaeologically successive stages of development and practice in Japan’s history of photography.
I I A S  N E W S L E T T E R  # 4 9  A U T U M N  2 0 0 8

Figure 2: Photograph on albumen paper of the samurai Sadamichi. Taken by Manjiro in July of 1861

Figure 3: Ambrotype portrait of the samurai and interpreter Moriyama Einosuke.

Figure 4: Photograph on albumen paper of Matsuki Kooan from the Satsuma domain. Kooan was a member of the 1862 imperial mission to Europe.

Figure 5: Photograph on albumen paper of Kawasaki Dōmin, a doctor from the Saga domain and member of the 1862 imperial mission to Europe.

Figure 6: During the 1862 imperial mission to Europe, Kawasaki and Kooan visited the photographic studios of Robert Severin in The Hague.
Chinese Poetry in Times of Mind, Mayhem and Money
By Mgheshel van Crevel
Brill. 2008. Sinica Institution series, 86
ISBN 90 04 15828 9

Chinese Poetry in Times of Mind, Mayhem and Money is a groundbreaking contribution to scholarship, well-suited to classroom use in that it combines rigorous analysis with a lively style. Covering the period from the 1850s to the present, it is organised around the notions of text, context and metatext, meaning poetry, its socio-political and cultural surroundings, and critical discourse in the broadest sense. Authors and issues studied include Han Dong, Hai Wu, Xi Chuan, Yu Jian, Sun Wenbo, Yang Lian, Wang Jianxin, Bei Dao, Yin Lichuan, Shen Haobo and Yan Jun, and everything from the subcultures of poetic rhythm to exile-bashing in domestic media. This book has room for all that poetry is: cultural heritage, symbolic capital, intellectual endeavour, social commentary, emotional expression, music and the materiality of language – art, in a word.

By Catherine Russell
ISBN 978 0 8223 4312 7

One of the most prolific and respected directors of Japanese cinema, Naruse Mikio (1905-67) made 83 films between 1930 and 1967. Little, however, has been written about Naruse in English, and much of the writing about him in Japanese has not been translated into English. With The Cinema of Naruse Mikio, Catherine Russell brings deserved critical attention to this under-appreciated director.

Many of Naruse’s movies were “women’s films”. They have female protagonists; depicted women’s passions, disappointments, routines, and living conditions; and emphasized the rigid gender norms of Japanese society. By assessing the critical reception of Naruse in Japan and drawing on the cultural theories of Harry Harootunian, Miriam Hansen, and Walter Benjamin, Russell shows that Naruse’s portrayals of the changing roles of Japanese women in the public sphere and his depictions of an urban, industrialised, mass-media saturated society make his films key tests of Japanese modernity.

Riven by Lust
By Jonathan Silk
University of Hawai‘i Press. 2008.
ISBN 978 808 24319 0 8

Riven by Lust explores the tale of a man accused of causing the fundamental schism in early Indian Buddhism, but not before he has sex with his mother and kills his father. In tracing this Indian Buddhist Oedipal tale, Jonathan Silk follows it through tests in all of the major cano
drical dimensions, probing the place of the Oedipal in Indian culture, Buddhist and non-Buddhist, and simultaneously framing the Indian Oedipal within broader human concerns, thereby con
tributing to the study of the history of Buddhism, the transmission of narratives in the ancient world, and the fundamental nature of one aspect of human sexuality.

Starting from a brief reference in a polemical treatise, Riven by Lust demonstrates that its authors borrowed and intentionally adapted a preexisting story of an Oedipal antihero. This recasting allowed them to calum
niate their opponents in the strongest possible terms through the rhetoric of murder and incest. Silk draws on a wide variety of sources to demonstrate the range of thinking about incest in Indian Buddhist culture, thereby uncovering the strategies and working methods of the ancient polemacists. He argues that Indian Buddhists and Hin
dus, while occupying the same world for the most part, thought differently about fundamental issues such as incest, and hints at the consequent necessity of a reappraisal of our notions of the shape of the ancient cultural sphere they shared. Provocative and innovative, Riven by Lust is a paradigmatic analysis of a major theme of world mythology and a signal contribution to the study of the history of incest and compara
tive sexualities. It will attract readers interested in Buddhism, Indian studies, Asian studies, comparative culture, mythology, psychology, and the history of sexuality.
Undermined by these legitimacy deficits and political miscalculations the ‘illegal’ (non-UN sanctioned) war in Iraq has demolished the international prosecution. The selective exhortation of democracy and human rights, rightly discerning that this would expose American military personnel to control the primary instruments of world order such as the IMF and World Bank, should they be guided by their material interests and cling on to power, or the question: ‘The rise of Asia creates a real dilemma for Western states: Mahbubani identifies the tension between what he calls the ‘philosophical challenges but argues that the West must have the courage (and good grace) to actively export democracy at the barrel of a gun, as in Iraq and Afghanistan, have not met with success. Indeed, these Western concepts can be downright harmful to the supposed beneficiary (or ‘target’) societies.

Having set the context for debate in Western terms, the author examines more closely ‘Why Asia is rising now’ (Chapter 2). He recognises seven mutually reinforcing ‘pillars’ of Western wisdom behind the miraculous economic gains possible through openness and cooperation with Asia. This, Mahbubani argues, is already underway to some extent in the US and EU. The third scenario - ‘the triumph of the West’ - entails a reassertion of the hubris exemplified in Francis Fukuyama’s The End of History (1992) where Westerners believe the only acceptable model for development is replicating the social and cultural model. A key flaw in this triumphalist thesis is that it does not work. Even in Europe the cherished notion that democracies prevent war was disproved in the Balkan conflicts. Attempts to actively export democracy at the barrel of a gun, as in Iraq and Afghanistan, have not met with success. Indeed, these Western concepts can be downright harmful to the supposed beneficiary (or ‘target’) societies.

Having set the context for debate in Western terms, the author examines more closely ‘Why Asia is rising now’ (Chapter 2). He recognises seven mutually reinforcing ‘pillars’ of Western wisdom behind the miraculous development of Asia: ‘free market economics,’ ‘science and technology,’ ‘insecurity,’ ‘globalisation’ or ‘a culture of peace,’ ‘rule of law’ and ‘education.’ Adherence to these seven pillars allows Asia to reproduce the success experienced by Western states in their own ascent to power. Mahbubani considers this a cause for pride and celebration on the part of the West.

The loss of Western credibility

Chapters 3-5 return to the challenges faced by Western powers in adapting to this power shift. ‘Why is the West not celebrating’ (Chapter 3)? Mahbubani identifies the tension between what he calls the ‘philosophical West’ (or Western values) and the ‘material West’ (interests). He poses the question: ‘The rise of Asia creates a real dilemma for Western states: should they be guided by their material interests and cling on to power, or should they be guided by their values and begin to code and share power?’ (p. 103). He observes that the 12% of the population that live in the West control the primary instruments of world order such as the IMF and World Bank, and the UN Permanent Security Council (UNSC), underwriting this control with overwhelming military force. Here the author also lays bare the hypocrisy and abuse of power by the US, in particular. Washington espoused participation in the International Criminal Court (ICC) rightly discerning that this would expose American military personnel to prosecution. The selective exhortation of democracy and human rights, coupled with the commission of human rights violations and torture in an ‘illegal’ (non-UN sanctioned) war in Iraq has demolished the international credibility of the US and the West as a force for good to the world leadership. Undermined by these legitimacy deficits and political miscalculations the claim to world leadership by the West is becoming unsustainable. In Chapter 4: ‘De-Westernization and the return of history’ the author buttresses his case for the relinquishment of the instruments of world order by the West. In some aspects this is an elaboration of the philosophical stance developed in his work Can Asians Think? Understanding the Divide between East and West (2008) Once, Asians may have believed in the innate superiority of Western civilisation. Now ‘The rest of the world has raised its voice’ (p. 239). Furthermore, Asian personnel should become candidates for the IMF and World Bank, positions that have invariably been occupied by Americans and Europeans, respectively. Mahbubani recognises the difficulties but argues that the West must have the courage (and good grace) to make such concessions.

The New Asian Hemisphere makes some powerful and provocative arguments and is one of several recent books - Fareed Zakaria’s The Post-American World (2008) - being a close complement - that captures the ‘Asia rising’ Zeitgeist. There are some evident weaknesses in the overall thesis however: Mahbubani largely avoids confronting the diversity and discordant progress of Asia’ in this book. The accomplishments of China and India (unseen in themselves) are showcased to underline the strengths of Asia, while the deplorable conditions and prospects of Burma, Pakistan and Bangladesh, for example, are skimmed over. Furthermore, ‘Asia’ as conceived by Mahbubani seems to incorporate what most observers would separately distinguish as the ‘Middle East’. This serves to undermine Mahbubani’s case against the West since the most egregious examples of hubris and iniquity are drawn from US misbehaviour in this region, not Asia’ proper. To exclude Middle Eastern countries from ‘Asia’ would have deprived the author of some of his anti-Western ammunition.

Second, this reader was dismayed that the author fails to highlight the growing fissure in the West itself between the US and EU. It is Washington, not Brussels (harmful protectionists practices notwithstanding) to which the majority of the most ignoble foreign policy adventures may be ascribed. Yes, in some respects the EU and the US collaborate against joint dangers, but it is obvious to any European that they and Americans do not think alike and are implicitly opposed on many issues, especially human rights and international law. Europe and the US should not be conflated: we are not ‘All Americans Now.’

The rise of Asia will bring about an equally significant transformation (p. 1)

The rise of Asia will bring about an equally significant transformation. ‘Today, the 5.6 billion people who live outside the Western universe will no longer accept decisions made on their behalf in Western capitals.’ (p. 5)

Achieving a just and workable world order

Finally, Chapter 6 concludes with a roadmap of potential solutions to many of the impasses identified in the previous chapters. Mahbubani argues that the time to reconstruct the world order has come. A just and workable world order can only be achieved if the West shares some of the instruments of world governance with the great powers of Asia. In return the Asian newcomers can shoulder some of the heavy burdens that sustain world order entails. Reform of the UNSC is critical. He states: ‘The UNSC should preferably reflect the great powers of 2045, not of 1945’ (p. 249). Furthermore, Asian personnel should become candidates for the IMF and World Bank, positions that have invariably been occupied by Americans and Europeans, respectively. Mahbubani recognises the difficulties but argues that the West must have the courage (and good grace) to make such concessions.

The New Asian Hemisphere makes some powerful and provocative arguments and is one of several recent books - Fareed Zakaria’s The Post-American World (2008) - being a close complement - that captures the ‘Asia rising’ Zeitgeist. There are some evident weaknesses in the overall thesis however: Mahbubani largely avoids confronting the diversity and discordant progress of Asia’ in this book. The accomplishments of China and India.
Two journeys to the centre of the colonial project

Joost Cote

The two volumes under consideration here take the moral problem- atic of the link between technology and development within a colo-
nial setting as their starting point - a theme which they have approached their task. Ravensteijn and Kop establish their parameters in terms of ‘profit and prosperity’; Suzanne Moon contra-
tests ‘technology and ethical idealism’. Both signal in their introduction their intention to engage positively with the question of colonial modernity although their conclusions are significantly different. Immediately evident are the different historiographical traditions which these volumes represent. The voluminous multi-authored tome edited but Ravensteijn and Kop and the detailed and often disciplinary biographies of the colonial archive, for which contemporary Dutch colonial historiography is noted. Moon’s slim, single-handed argument is reflective of the anglo- phone, more specifically the Cornell, school of scholarship, and is shaped by contemporary postcolonial discourse almost completely absent from the former.

Aid for the Anglophone historian?

Wim Ravensteijn and Jan Kop provide the anglophone historian with an extensive and much needed overview of the history of technological inno-
vation introduced by Dutch colonial engineers in the Dutch East Indies colony. Both internationally recognised scholars well established in their fields, they have gathered a team of historians specialising in various fields of history of technology. The volume includes essays on the main elements of public works - road, rail, bridge and harbour construction and aspects of water reticulation, including irrigation works, drinking water and sanitation; and also five essays broadly dealing with the legacy of colonial technology for the post-colonial state, including one Indonesian scholar not included in notes on authors and editors. Suzanne Moon’s volume, on the other hand, focuses on a single aspect of what is generally perceived as a marginal, but the argues, crucial, aspect of technological intervention: small-scale agricultural development projects. Apart from their cover, which distinguishes these publications is the significantly different stance that each takes in dealing with the colonial archive - if not the colonial project, which raises broadly questions about the writing of (Dutch) colonial history in general.

The Ravensteijn and Kop volume, a weighty, suitably illustrated, 550-page hard back, is a translation of a previously published Dutch language vol-
ume entitled Bouwen in de archipel: burgerlijke openbare werken in Neder-
lnds-Indië en Indonesië, 1800 – 2000 that appeared in 2004. It is as much a celebration of the legacy of colonial Indian Public Works Department as of the Delft University of Technology which produced most of its lead-
ing engineers. As it moves across to an international readership however this characteristic feature takes on a new meaning. The transition of the title from what originally translated as ‘Building in the archipelago: civil public works in the Netherlands Indies and Indonesia’ into the English challenge (or ignore) established contemporary postcolonial perspec-
tives. Any reader of Rudolf Mäkere’s Engineers of Happy Land (2002) - of which the ‘global reader’ will be immediately reminded - will be struck by the self-congratulatory tone of this summary of Dutch colonial achieve-
ment, this ‘lasting testimony to the work done in this field in Indonesia’ (p. 43). This is despite Ravensteijn’s concern to distance his volume from a relativistic colonial classic, Dzer wal tew grottew vermacht (literally: Some-
thing grand was created over there) also discussed by Frans Huiskens in an epilogue that sits rather self-righteously at the end of that volume. That achievement is summarised in Ravensteijn’s introduction and more con-
veniently restated in a later essay.

Dutch East Indies state formation took place between 1800 and 1950 and civil engineering works were dominant in the technology involved. Dutch engineers in public service constructed 63,000 kilometres of roads, 7,000 kilo-
metros of railways, many large bridges, modern irrigation systems cov-
ering 5,4 million hectares of rice fields, several international harbours and 100 public drinking water systems in the archipelago.

Indonesians, not Dutch engineers, were of course the ones who did the constructing, but that aside, herenin essentially lies a well-argued argument about the physical foundations of the post-colonial Indonesian state rele-
vant - according to the title - until 2000. This may be argued and Huiskens, who provides the volume’s Afterword, appears to dispute this. The crucial

issue, though, hinges on one’s views about the role of historiography. For Ravensteijn doing historiography is ‘placing oneself in the position of Indonesian as it was in the time of the Dutch East Indies … and by assessing and sens-
ing the developments of that time in their true historical perspective’ (p. 93). Mäkere claims to do the same but comes to a significantly different sense of that colonial past.

‘Pernickety’ intervention results in small-scale change

Suzanne Moon also attempts to ‘understand history as it was’. Her slim

volume also excavates the Dutch colonial (and Indonesian) archive and Moon comes to this writing with the support of an appropriate range of technologist institutions. Her examination is motivated, as she makes clear in the introduction, not by a concern to document the work of the colonial engineers per se, but by a concern to understand the colonial or-
ings of Indonesian and to a certain extent, international developmentalist thinking. Like Ravensteijn and Kop, Moon finds literal, not simply ana-
logical, connections between colonial and Indonesian (and even interna-
tional) approaches to ‘developmentalism’ although discussion of this in detail necessarily leads beyond the scope of both books.

Moon’s focus is very specific: she concentrates on those technologies that were designed to make ‘small scale change’ rather than on the ‘roads and

bridges’ technology one usually associates with technologies, or indeed progress’. In this, perhaps unintentionally, she identifies the truer charac-
ter of Dutch colonialism. Moon suggests it was the small scale technology 'what might be characterised as the ‘pernickety-ness’ of Dutch interven-
tion - rather than the more robust ‘transformative projects’ that provides the key to understanding the impact of Dutch colonialism and its legacy.

Central to Moon’s argument is an identification of what we all know as the ‘ethical policy’, that much debated, rhetorical, practical and legisla-
tive cocktail that lies at the heart of late Dutch colonial practice. Drawing heavily on the writing of the pre-war English historian, JF Furnivall, who in turn was largely informed by the Dutch colonial ‘revisiosists’ of his day, Moon draws attention to its long gestation in religious, philanthropic and humanitar-
ian thought - rather than its short term political, pragmatic and self-interest birth - and against this ‘policy’ - actually a discursive - meas-
ures 20th century colonial policy. Like Ravensteijn, Moon finds support here in the influential writing of the Dutch scholar, JAA van Doorn, who, it may be noted, found the anglophone historians ‘sometimes revealed themselves insufficiently conscious of the problematical aspects of an Indonesian perspective’.2

Characteristic of Moon’s approach to the history of colonial technologies is a concern to examine contemporary debates about their use. Her empiri-
cal focus here is the aims and practice of the colonial Department of Agricultural Science and its ‘discontests’ - specifically the opposition from the colonial sugar lobby but also from within its own ranks. This obviously gives the lie to a view of history that suggests a uniform or predetermined interpretation. Given its nature, the activities of this colonial department and its field officers had the potential to have a far greater impact on more javanese lives than any other of the colonial technological innovations. It was also a technology with which, as Moon points out, javanese farmers were specifically involved and of whose agency therefore, colonial directors and field specialists had to take cognizance.

In the final two chapters, following standard historical periodisation

Moon examines the legacy of the ethical ideal in the ‘postethical’ period. Recognising this break in the on-going, changing, and always equirious colonial ‘native policy’ leads her into a useful discussion of the much discussed JH Booke thesis. Under the influence of the economic depression and the growing conservatism of pre-war Europe, the rad-
icalisation of the Indonesian Independence movement, and growing dis-
illusion with the hubs of the ‘idealists’, a belief in a bi-polar colon-

ial order gained dominance. This maintained the inevitability of a dual economy and society - which in one version was expressed as a respect for tradition, and in the other, as the impossibility of assimilation.

Focusing on its human impact provides Moon with a way to reconsider, in the origins of Indonesian and to a certain extent, international developmentalist thinking. Like Ravensteijn and Kop, Moon finds literal, not simply ana-
logical, connections between colonial and Indonesian (and even interna-
tional) approaches to ‘developmentalism’ although discussion of this in detail necessarily leads beyond the scope of both books.

Questions of orientation aside, the Ravensteijn and Kop volume provides the anglophone reader - and not the interested Indonesian reader for whom the Dutch colonial archive remains closed - an important addition to our knowledge of Dutch colonial technologies. Encasing the colonial archive as these various expert authors have done requires both the linguistic skills to travel the vast files of the colonial bureaucracies, and specialist knowledge. Before ‘interpretation’ it could be argued, we need the facts. Quite correctly Ravensteijn suggests one needs to thoroughly understand the work and intentions of these engineers before access-
ning their legacy. All too often the postcolonial historian is criticised for ignoring the facts - not least by historians who, in this case, may find in Ravensteijn and Kop a welcome antithesis to Mrázek’s ‘Happyland’. Except of course that ‘the facts’ themselves often more than no ideolo-
getic constructs.

Notes

2. Ibid, p. 52: abstract. The detail is substantially repeated on the opening page of the present volume.


11AS NEWSLETTER #49 AUTUMN 2008 29
Audible lessons in self

Constatine Sandis

In this new, clearly-written, book (on some counts his 71st) Noble Peace prize winner Tenzin Gyatso - known to millions as His Holiness the Dalai Lama - sets out to explain the Buddhist doctrine of Pratistha Samyagda (translated here as ‘Dependent-Arising’) and what it entails regarding the nature of the self, the world and our place within it. In so doing this pacifist ‘simple Bud- dhist monk’ - who has his own website (http://www.dalailama.com/) and travels with bodyguards - aims to help the reader overcome a self-deception that he believes is the fundamental source of a variety of ‘dysfunctional emotions that lead to actions’ contaminated by misperception’ (p.46). The origins and nature of the false conceptions thought to give rise to such afflictive emotions is best understood within the context of the Buddhist philosophical tradition from which Gyatso’s thought has emerged: Buddhist philosophy traditionally divides into five interrelated writing genres: Pra- jñāpāramitā Sutras (scriptures dealing with the perfection of wisdom), Madhyamaka Sutras (scriptures advocating a middle way between nihilism and eternalism as a method for approaching Prajñā pāramitā.), Vinaya Sutras (advocating the Theravada code of strict rules for monas- tic discipline known as the Patimokkha), Abhidharmaka Sutras (metaphysical script- ures that attempt to construct a systematic description of all phenomena e.g. the final book of the Tripitaka canon of the Theravada school of Buddhism), and Pāma- na Sutras (scriptures dealing with the sources of knowledge).

The ‘middle way’ While it engages with themes from all five genres, How to See Yourself was inspired by the Madhyamaka ‘middle way’ tradi- tion of denying that the nature or essence of any phenomenon is independent of that of any other. This outlook was most famously expressed by the hugely influen- tial Indian Buddhist philosopher Nagar- rajula (c. 150-250 CE) and his later follower Chandrakirti (c. 600-650 CE), who through his commentaries on Nagarrjuna’s work developed the Prasangika (‘logical con- sequence’) approach. This approach involved establishing ultimate truth by first eliminating all views with absurd or con- tradictory logical consequences. This con- trasts with the Sautrakīna approach, which begins with positive assertions about that nature of phenomena (e.g. that they may possess inherent existence without pos- sessing absolute existence). This method reaches conclusions by eliminating alter- native views through the use of Reductio ad Absurdum arguments viz. arguments that aim to accommodate the absurd con- sequences of following views and argu- ments to their logical extremes. There are parallels here with the reason employed by Sherlock Holmes in Arthur Conan Doyle’s novel The Sign Of Four (1890): “When you have eliminated the impossible, that which remains, however improbable, must be the truth.” Gyatso’s application of the ‘logical conse- quence’ heuristic leads him to claim that which ‘imperceptible/impersonatable distinct existence’ in that “they do not exist in their own right” (p.8). Hence the afore- mentioned notion of Dependent-Arising: phenomena do not exist independently of the causes and conditions from which they arise. What is less clear is whether, on this view, it is all phenomena that arise depend- ently or merely those that tend to capture our attention. While Gyatso asserts that “all phenomena arise dependently” (p.49 my italics) referring to external conditions as well as to “the fact that all phenomena – impermanent and permanent – exist in dependence upon their own parts” (p. 55), he often makes more qualified claims such as that “all ‘impermanent phenomena’ are not self-existent, they do not exist in and of themselves” (p.46).

Radical though this thesis may be, it should not be confused with the anti-realist view that they are illusions (i.e. that they do not exist at all, but only appear to do so): “[Although persons and things are empty of existing the way they appear to be established in their own right, they are not utterly nonexistent; they can act and can be experienced. Therefore being like an illusion is not the same as appearing to exist but actually not existing, like the horns of a rabbit, which do not exist at all.” (p. 175ff.)

Indeed Gyatso uses Praśānta to point out that if phenomena are empty of existence because they arise dependently on various (real) causes and conditions then they themselves must be real enough (p51).

So why should we think of all phenom- ena as dependent-arising? One obvious answer, which finds its modern Western expression in the chaos theory notion of ‘sensitive dependence on initial condi- tions’ – popularly known as the Butterfly Effect (the term originates from Ray Brad- bury’s short story ‘Sound of Thunder’ in which the killing of a pre-historic butterfly alters human history) - is that everything in the universe is casually interlinked in a way that makes it impossible to suppose that any one part of it could have been dif- ferent without this having a deep impact on the whole.

illusionary phenomena Whatever its precise scope, Gyatso’s claim that ‘all phenomena owe their existence to certain causes (in the sense that they would not have come into exist- ence without them)’ but the consider- ably more radical thesis that phenomena are illusory (or ‘like illusions’) to use the translator’s phrase because, contrary to realist view that they are illusions (i.e. that they do not exist at all, but only appear to do so): “[Although persons and things are empty of existing the way they appear to be established in their own right, they are not utterly nonexistent; they can act and can be experienced. Therefore being like an illusion is not the same as appearing to exist but actually not existing, like the horns of a rabbit, which do not exist at all.” (p. 175ff.)

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For a rather simplistic illustration of the dependence in question, being identical to the author of this review is dependent on numerous phenomena including not only an incredibly long (if not infinite) string of events without which I would never have been born, brought up, taught English, trained in philosophy etc., but also the entire prehistory that brought about the existence of the 14th Dalai Lama and all the further events (and the people they involved, each with their own strings of prehistory and personal his- tory) that collectively made it possible for him to write this book and when he did, the life and work of his translator Jeffrey Hopkins, the word-processing technology given such interdependence, to wish for any aspect of the past to be otherwise is to desire a self-negation that only tragedy could call for. Other thinkers influenced by related Buddhist insights include Aeschylus, Sophocles, Euripides, Aristotle, Chry- sippus, Virgil, Kant, Schopenhauer, Freud, Jung, Heidegger, and (more recently) Galen Strawson.

To give a rather simplistic illustration of the dependence in question, being identical to the author of this review is dependent on numerous phenomena including not only an incredibly long (if not infinite) string of events without which I would never have been born, brought up, taught English, trained in philosophy etc., but also the entire prehistory that brought about the existence of the 14th Dalai Lama and all the further events (and the people they involved, each with their own strings of prehistory and personal his- tory) that collectively made it possible for him to write this book and when he did, the life and work of his translator Jeffrey Hopkins, the word-processing technology thereby...
Obstacles to enlightenment?

For the religious practitioner, the central problem is how to overcome the hindrances to the achievement of enlightenment. The religious tradition provides a range of responses to this problem, ranging from the purely theoretical to the purely practical.

The first article, “Central Asia: West and East” by Sir John Boardman, begins with a discussion of the historical and cultural background to the region, and introduces the main themes of the conference. It is clear from the outset that the Central Asian region is a complex and diverse area, with a rich history and a unique culture.

The second article, “Perspectives on the origins of Buddhism in Central Asia” by Vesta Sarkhosh Curtis, looks at the early history of Buddhism in the region. It explores the different schools of thought that emerged in Central Asia, and how they were influenced by other religious traditions.

The third article, “The Use of Buddhist Art in Central Asia” by Boris Marshak and Boris Stavisky, examines the role of Buddhist art in the development of the region. It shows how Buddhist art was used to convey religious messages, and how it was incorporated into the local culture.

The fourth article, “Buddhist Art and Society in Central Asia” by Yevgeny Sanogo, considers the relationship between art and society in the region. It examines the ways in which Buddhist art was used to reinforce social and political structures.

The fifth article, “The Influence of Buddhist Art on the Visual Arts of Central Asia” by Hans Delettrez, looks at the impact of Buddhist art on the visual arts of the region. It explores the ways in which Buddhist art influenced the development of local artistic traditions.

The sixth article, “The Role of Central Asia in the Development of Buddhist Art” by Pieter ter Keurs, considers the role of Central Asia in the development of Buddhist art. It examines the ways in which Central Asian art influenced the development of Buddhist art in other parts of the region.

The seventh article, “The Role of Buddhist Art in the Development of Central Asian Societies” by R. Bedaux, J. Polet, and A. Schmidt, considers the role of Buddhist art in the development of Central Asian societies. It explores the ways in which Buddhist art influenced the development of local political and social structures.

The eighth and final article, “The Influence of Buddhist Art on the Development of Central Asian Civilizations” by Laura van Broekhoven, looks at the ways in which Buddhist art influenced the development of Central Asian civilizations. It examines the ways in which Buddhist art influenced the development of local political and social structures.

Overall, the conference was a success, and the papers presented provided a valuable contribution to the understanding of the role of Buddhism in Central Asia.

Further Reading

One of the musicians interviewed by Mari Yoshihara was the Japanese American conductor Kent Nagano.

The question of ‘identity’ had no doubt in the minds of many respondents. ‘Identity’ was an initial focus of the interviews. Questions of ‘identity’ are indeed fashionable in academia as in government, and like other fashions themselves pass without much question. What does the word ‘identity’ mean? The recent census in the country in which I live was keen to find out with which ‘ethnic group’ respondents ‘identified’. I wrote that I could not answer. I was not sure which group I ‘identified’ with, or indeed if I ‘identified’ with any. And I was not at all sure that governments should be encouraged to divide their citizens in that way or to imply that we found our ‘identity’ in that way. Identity is, if I understand it, a complex rather than a simple matter. Probably, given the chance, I would put ‘historian’ first among several constituents.

The majority of Yoshihara’s respondents seemed to feel something similar. They thought of themselves above all as musicians. ‘[T]his musical identity is a more salient factor than socially defined categories such as race or identity’. Other aspects of Asians’ identity were ‘highly fluid’. (p. 227) Yoshihara seems to share the rather widespread attitude less so.

Aspirations and application

The globalisation of Western music is indeed an excellent topic, open to research historical and sociological as well as musicological. Its extension does not derive solely from its potent aesthetic appeal, but also from political, economic and social changes in the imperial and post-imperial worlds, as a result of which it was spread from the European to the non-European world and made welcome there. Many people of Asian origin now pursue the art form abroad as well as at home, as a visit to a Western conservatory or attendance at an orchestral concert in the West will readily confirm. Their aspirations, as Yoshihara argues, are shaped by structural factors – such as the opportunity to be ‘modern’ in their own society, their need to find a place in a different society – as well as by the presence of personal talent and the capacity for unmitting application.

Much of her book depends on interviews carried out with ‘Asian American’ musicians working in the New York area. Yoshihara at first thought her analysis of their ‘investment’ in classical music would rely on familiar academic concepts and categories, such as class, race, gender, imperialism, hegemony. Though these clearly continued to affect her work, she happily realised that they were not sufficient: “the profound and real connections that music – and musicians – create among people of different parts of the world seemed irreducible to categories like race, nation and imperialism” (p. ix). The vocabulary she was using was both too big and too small to encompass the musicians’ relationship with music. Happily, too, her own return to piano-playing led Yoshihara both to reflect on her own questions – “in all honesty, where and how I grew up felt rather ‘racist’, that implied. The argument was never, however, convincing, smack too much of sour grapes. Different training, the traditions of different conservatories and of different orchestras, different schools of instrumental playing, were at issue, not race or ethnic identity: you did not have to be English to play Elgar. He had, after all, been pioneered by Germans and admired in Germany. Possibly, too, a different approach revealed an additional aspect of the ‘racism’ that implied. Our contemporary globalisation may lead to diversity not to uniformity.

Questions of identity

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Forthright responses

Some of the most prominent Asian musicians that Yoshihara contacted declined to be interviewed, she tells us. It seemed that they thought she was “trying to make an argument for the racially and culturally based nature of music-making, a view with which they did not wish to be associated”. (p. 199) Those that did respond came out well in this book, thanks to their own forthrightness and the author’s honesty. “I found that most classical musicians’ everyday lives and work do not revolve around their Asian identities or the politics of East-West relations … what occupies them the most is the painstaking work of becoming better musicians”. (p. 235)

The book is almost entirely concerned with musicians from East Asia, though a few others appear. There is plenty of scope for further work that would provide a comparative context. How do Asian musicians fare in Europe or in Latin America? And is the story an ‘Asian’ one or an ‘East Asian’ one? In Southeast Asia, for example, the Malaysian Philharmonic vies with the Singapore Symphony, and Bangkok Opera is working its way through a Ring cycle. Yoshihara seems to share the rather widespread gloom about the future of classical music, talking of ageing audiences and difficult funding. But in some ways the prospects are exciting.

Nicholas Tarling
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Mari Yoshihara, Associate Professor of American Studies at the University of Hawai`i at Manoa, tells us that, like many middle-class girls in the Japan of the 1960s and 1970s, she learned the piano: her ‘musical sensibility’ was ‘Western’, her ‘identity’ the piano (p. xii). She did not, however, go to conservatory. The kind of femininity associated with so doing had no appeal. That, her growing political awareness, and, as she amusingly admits, her “utter frustration” with a Liszt Paganini concerto led her to enrol at the University of Tokyo and major in American Studies. Subsequently she wrote her book Embracing the East: White Women and American Orientalism (2002). Then she decided to return to music and also to write a book on Asians and classical music. What she had so far done in her life turned out to be good preparation for that task, and she has written a good book, without too many jargonistic cadenzones and only a few rather jarring notes from a not very apposite Pierre Bourdieu.

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You don’t have to be English to play Elgar: The globalisation of Western music

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Win-win for China?

Kerry Brown

What will the credit crunch and financial crisis in Europe and North America mean in Asia, and in particular in China? That must have been one of the questions posed in the meetings held in Beijing over the last month by China’s leaders. As well as assessing how the Olympics went, they will almost certainly have been thinking about the 30 years of reform since December 1978 when China started its economic liberalisations. As 2008 comes to a close, there will be more public events ‘celebrat- ing’ this turning point in China, Asia, and, as it turns out, the world’s development. But external events, more than usual, will have taken their attention.

China could either be in a win-win, or lose-lose position. As things stand at the moment, its economy is still growing by 5%, 1% drop on the earlier part of the year, but still way and far ahead of the developed world, where there is likely to be zero or negative growth this year. Its banks, insulated by the non-convertibility of the Chinese Yuan, and already cleaned up after nearly imploding during the Asian financial crisis almost a decade ago, are in decent shape – or more decent than their Western counterparts, many of whom have shares in them. China has 2 trillion in foreign reserves, a massive war chest against any economic downturn. And its propor- tion of public debt to GDP, in comparison to Japan, the UK, or the US, tiny. There will be some cheap assets going in the next few months, which Chinese may well be poised to take either a minority, or a major- ity share in. Suddenly, China the saver, the hoarder of massive bank deposits, looks like a champion of prudent fiscal policy and stability. Its investments might even be seen as one of the few areas where the world’s economy can be kick started in the months and years ahead.

But there is a downside to China for all of this. Shrinking overseas markets for Chi- na’s manufactured goods in the US and EU is a bad thing. Already factories are closing in the Pearl River Delta. Manufac- turers, put off by inflation and rising trans- port and labour costs, and complaining about the restrictions placed upon them by the Labour Law passed in January this year, are starting to look to places like Viet- nam, Laos, and Cambodia. Chinese peo- ple, while their consumer spending is up a healthy 20% on last year, are still not quite able to supply domestically the sort of mar- ket China had found abroad for its goods. And the ongoing overseas investment policy has been marked, since the big losses last year from stakes in the US fund Blackstone and Barclays, by caution. The ‘netizens’ of China at least have been vociferous in their criticism of a government that seems only to be able to lose money when it operates abroad. For a few moments in Sept- ember, during the worst of the crisis, it looked like China might even buy a large stake in Morgan Stanley (it already owns 5%). But the moment came and went. China feared, no doubt, both the risk of losing yet more money in the short term, and the possibility of major political back- lash in the US. The time is still not right.

A stable, benign international environment was what Deng Xiaoping, in the 1980s, said was most necessary to allow China to continue to develop its own internal capac- ity, and sort out its own formidable con- tradictions. Seeing the economies of the major powers in the rest of the world take a dive is not, most policy makers agree, in China’s interests. The last thing it wants to see is major unemployment, lay offs, and investment dry up. Its strategy has been to move towards the higher end of manufac- turing, creating something approaching a knowledge economy, promoting Chinese brands in the global market place. But these remain projects which will reach their fruition a decade or more in the future. At the moment, the Chinese economy is a work in progress. What is happening out- side China in the global financial markets is a very unwelcome interruption.

The other major issue discussed in Octo- ber which relates to China’s own internal development is agricultural land reform. Every inch of land in the People’s Repub- lic of China currently belongs to the state, though in the last 30 years there have been increasingly long periods of lease available. In 1978, when the reform started, more than 85% of China still lived in the countryside, working on the land. Very ironically, because of mass campa- gns to send young people out of the cit- ies, the late period of Maoism witnessed a process of de-urbanisation. In 2007, official figures show that something like 55% of Chinese, at least according to their registered place of abode, live in the rural districts. When the ‘floating population’ of up to 200 million is taken into account though, it is probably true to say that now more Chinese live in urban areas than in the countryside.

In October, China’s leaders proposed leg- islation that would allow farmers to use their land and the leases on it as security for loans. This is a major step away from state control of a fundamental part of the economy. And it reflects how the reforms really took off three decades ago, with the large-scale agricultural co-operatives at the heart of the ‘Southern Tour’ in 1992, Deng was to admit that this was a wholly unplanned part of the liberalisation pro- cess, and it’s most successful. Such an outcome, he went on to say, showed the flexibility of socialism, with Chinese charac- teristics.

Whether the current reforms will have such a dramatic effect won’t be known for several years. Land figures large in Chi- nese history. Mao Zedong and his fellow Communists in the late 1940s and 1950s were to make land reform a key compo- nent of their new liberation. Peasants were then saddled with massive rents. As a consequence of consolidation of his- tory, landlords who owned larger tracts of land appeared. This process continued after the revolution in 1949. By 1959 Chi- na’s land was nationalised. But its use, and legal treatment, remains a bedrock cause of unrest. More and more rural land is being put over to industrial or building use. The way some of it has been appropri- ated by village and town officials and busi- ness people has caused major discontent. Of the thousands of protests each year, a good proportion arise from land disputes. Here the Chinese are not so different to people in other countries, many of whom feel so passionately about their land rights they will pursue cases for only a few inches of land they believe belong to their borders through the courts for years, at risk of maxi- mum expense.

Will we see Chinese laden with large mort- gages and debts the way so many in devel- oped countries are? It seems unlikely. As the government is cautious in its approach to investment abroad, so Chinese middle class seem conservative and cautious in their decisions about their own financial affairs. Even so, it is likely in the years ahead that, just as China was reflecting on the meaning of its recent 30 years of history, ironically a considerable portion of global economic power was suddenly to shift towards it, and also other Asian pow- ers. In the months and years ahead, there will be fewer self-righteous lectures from economists and commentators in the West about the doomed Chinese system, in view of what has happened recently. And for that reason, win-win or lose-lose, China still comes out a winner of the events of the last few months.

Kerry Brown

IIAS NEWS

IIAS NEWSLETTER #49 AUTUMN 2008

IIAS NEWS

NWO – Humanities Internationalisation grant: History of Science in Asia

IIAS and the Nederlands Organisatie voor Wetenschappelijk Onderzoek (NWO) at the University of Amsterdam have awarded a Mobility Grant (Scientific Programme Netherlands-Norway, SPIN) to IAS and Prof. Leontine Visser. From October 2008 to October 2009, Norwegian post- doc researchers will visit IAS and Wageningen for additional training in social science methods related to and research on maritime protected area management in Eastern Asia. In addition, a workshop and training for the post-doc researchers and their university students will be held in Denpasar, Bali.

IIAS welcomes new Board members and new Academic Committee members

As of 1 January 2009, Prof. Barend Ter Haar (Leiden University) and Dr Marcel van der Linden (ISIM Amsterdam) will leave the IAS board after two consecutive periods of 4 years.

IIAS is pleased to welcome (Leiden University) and Prof. Thomas Blom Hansen (University of Amsterdam) as new members of the board.

Collaboration Wageningen University: Marine protected areas in Eastern Indonesia

The Royal Netherlands Academy of Arts and Sciences (KNAW) has awarded a Mobility Grant (Scientific Programme Netherlands-Norway, SPIN) to IAS and Prof. Leontine Visser. From October 2008 to October 2009, Indonesian post- doc researchers will visit IAS and Wageningen for additional training in social science methods related to and research on marine protected area management in Eastern Asia. In addition, a workshop and training for the post-doc researchers and their university students will be held in Denpasar, Bali.

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Alexander von Humboldt Foundation extends funding for IAS fellow

IAS fellow Dr Irina Morozova received a 9 month extension from the Alexander von Humboldt Foundation for her research on The Transformation of Political Elites in Kyrgyzstan and Mongolia, 1924-2006. A Comparative Historical Analysis. The research is carried out under the auspices of GIGA Deutsches Orient-Institut in Hamburg.

IIAS will host AKE conference in 2009

The Association for Korean Studies in Europe has approached IAS to host the 24th Biennial Conference of the Association for Korean Studies in Europe from 17-21 June, 2009, in Leiden, the Netherlands. The conference covers the sub- ject areas pre-modern history, modern history, modern Korean society, religions and philosophy, linguistics, anthropology and folklore, literature, and arts and archaeology.

Grant from Korea Foundation

Dr Melody Lu received a grant from the Korea Foundation to carry out a research on ‘Technologies of governmentality and migration policies in South Korea and Taiwan’. This research is scheduled for the period 1 September 2009 - 30 June 2010.

New Memorandum of Understanding

In collaboration with IIAS alliumus Dr Alex McKay, IIAS signed a Memorandum of Understanding with the Namgyal Institute of Tibetology in Gangtok, Sikkim, India. The agreement provides facilities for the exchange of researchers, the organisation of joint seminars, as well as the publication of joint research results.

For more IIAS news and information www.iias.nl
Asian Laureates announced

Since 1997 the Prince Claus Fund Awards are presented annually to artists, thinkers and cultural organisations in Africa, Asia, Latin America and the Caribbean.

The focus of the 2008 awards is culture and the human body. With this theme the Prince Claus Fund for Culture and Development celebrates ingenuity in forms of expression that touch on the human body, particularly by individuals, groups and organisations that are positively engaged with their surroundings and society.

2008 Principal Prince Claus Award to Indian writer, Indira Goswami

Indian writer Indira Goswami (1942, Guwahati, Assam) will be presented with this year’s Principal Prince Claus Award of €100,000.

Goswami, in the judgement of the Prince Claus Award jury, is an outstanding writer who reveals the lived experience of ordinary people. Through powerful graphic descriptions and haunting images she shows how central the body is in human affairs, how political, religious and cultural systems are codified through the body; and how life process, gender, age, poverty and conflict are defined physically.

Indira Goswami is a scholar of Assamese and Ramayana literature, a former professor and Head of Modern Indian Languages and Literature at Delhi University. She works together with others to translate her works into English, to make English literature available in Assamese and vice versa.

She is a courageous public intellectual, speaking in defence of disadvantageous groups. Through her mediation of recent peace talks in Assam, she has worked hard in trying to help resolve a conflict that has caused 10,000 deaths. A woman of remarkable insight and conviction, Indira Goswami is an opportunity to showcase the wide-ranging research carried out by our fellows in the field of Asian Studies.

The awards ceremony will take place on the 3rd of December in Amsterdam.

3rd IIAS Fellow Symposium

The third IIAS Fellow Symposium will take place on 25 February 2009 in Amsterdam. This unique event is an opportunity to showcase the wide-ranging research carried out by our fellows in the field of Asian Studies. The IIAS Fellow Symposium is designed to give academics, and all those interested in ‘all things Asia’ the chance to get to know our researchers and join in lively discussions about diverse subjects.

Lectures planned for the day include Dr Mehdi Amineh talking about Energy Programme Asia, the IIAS Research programme established in 2007 to address the domestic and geopolitical aspects of energy security for China and the European Union; Dr Dipika Mukherjee on the Surinamese-Indian Community Research programme established in 2007 to address the domestic and geopolitical aspects of energy security for China and the European Union; Dr Yen Fen Tseng on migration in and out of Taiwan.

The day will also host two book launches. For further information www.iias.nl or email s.jans@iias.nl

IIAS welcomes Ian Buruma

November sees Dutch/British journalist, author and political commentator Ian Buruma on Dutch soil again. Buruma, who writes regularly for The New York Review of Books, The New Yorker, The New York Times, Corriere della Sera, The Financial Times, and The Guardian is in Holland to receive the prestigious Erasmus prize. This distinction is awarded annually by the Praemium Erasmianum Foundation to a person who has made an especially important contribution to culture, society or social science in Europe. Previous laureates include Henry Moore (1968), Claude Levi-Strauss (1975) and Václav Havel (1986). The award ceremony takes place on 7 November. Ian Buruma is a author of a number of books including Inventing Japan: 1853-1964 (2003); Occidentalism: The West in the Eyes of Its Enemies (2004) and the novel The China Lover (2008). He studied Chinese at Leiden University and returns to his alma mater on 26 November to give the 2009 Cleveringa lecture. IIAS welcomes Ian Buruma as IIAS fellow for the month of November.
Programmes

Science and History in Asia

The complex links between science and history in Asian civilisations can be studied on at least two levels. First, one can focus on the ways in which the actors have perceived these links; how, on the one hand, they have used disciplines that now emerge as sciences, such as astronomy, for a better understanding of their own past; and, on the other hand, how they have constructed the historicity of these disciplines, giving them cultural legitimacy. Secondly, one can reflect on historiographical issues related to these processes and how they can be incorporated into historical narratives of Asian civilisations? This question is crucial, given the dominant 19th and 20th century view that science is an European invention, and that it has somehow failed to develop endogenously in Asia, where “traditional science” is usually taken as opposed to “Western” or “modern science”. This project will address various approaches to the issue by organising five international workshops in Cambridge, Leiden and Paris.

Sponsored by: NWO Humanities, Needham Research Institute, Recherches Épistémologiques et Historiques sur les Sciences Exactes et les Institutions Scientifiques (REHSEIS), and IIAS

Coordinators: Christopher Cullen (Needham Research Institute) and Harm Beukers (Scaliger Institute, Leiden University

Asia Design

This programme consists of a number of individual projects related to graphic design - from classical graphics in art and communication to the rapidly emerging fields of cyberculture (New Media, videogames, etc.) and animation (anime and manga) in East Asia - and architectural design in Asian megacities. The projects address both the physical and social aspects of design.

Institutes involved: IIAS, Modern East Asia Research Centre (MEARC), Delft School of Design (DSSD)

Sponsored by: IIAS and AsiaScape

Coordinators: Chris Goto-Jones and Manon Osseweijer c.goto-jones@hum.leidenuniv.nl m.osseweijer@iias.nl

Catalogue of Sanskrit manuscripts

In 1929, two crates of 17th and 18th century Sanskrit manuscripts arrived at the Kern Institute, University of Leiden. This Gonda/IIAS project is preparing a scientific catalogue of the roughly 500 South Indian Sanskrit manuscripts written on palm leaves in ancient Indian scripts such as Grantha, Telugu, Malayalam, Nageri and Nandinagari.

Coordinator: Saraju Rath s.rath@iias.nl

Energy Programme Asia - EPA

Established in September 2007, this programme addresses the domestic and geopolitical aspects of energy security for China and the European Union. The geopolitical aspects involve analysing the effects of competition for access to oil and gas resources and the security of energy supply among the main global consumer countries of the EU and China. The domestic aspects involve analysing domestic energy demand and supply, energy efficiency policies, and the deployment of renewable energy resources. Within this programme scholars from the Netherlands and China will visit each other’s institutes and will jointly publish their research outcomes.

Institutes involved: Institute of West Asian and African Studies (IWASS) of the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences (CASS)

Sponsored by: KNWV China Exchange Programme and IIAS

Coordinator: Mehdi Parvizi Amineh m.parvizi@iias.nl

Gender, migration and family in East and Southeast Asia

Developed from an earlier research project on “Cross-border Marriages”, this project is a comparative study on intra-regional flows of migration in East and Southeast Asia with a focus on gender and family. It aims at studying the linkage between immigration regimes, transnational families and migrants’ experiences. The first component of the project looks at the development of the immig ration regimes of the newly industrialised countries in East and Southeast Asia. The second component looks at the experiences of female migrants in the context of the first component. To investigate these issues, this project will bring together scholars who have already been working on related topics. A three-year research project is developed with an empirical focus on Taiwan and South Korea as the receiving countries, and Vietnam and the PRC as the sending countries.

Coordinators: Melody LU (IIAS) m.lu@iias.nl WANG Hongchun (Graduate School of Sociology, National Sun Yat-Sen University, Kaohsiung, Taiwan)

Illegal but licit: transnational flows and permissive politics in Asia - IBL

This research programme analyses forms of globalisation-from-below, transnational practices considered acceptable (licit) by participants but which are often illegal in a formal sense. It explores limitations of “see ing like a state”, and instead privileges the perspectives of participants in these illegal but licit transnational flows.

Sponsored by: NWO and Asia

Coordinator: Willem van Schendel h.w.vanschendel@uu.nl

Socio-genetic marginalization in Asia - SMAP

The development and application of new biomedical and genetic technologies have important socio-political implications. This NOW/ASSR/IIAS research programme aims to gain insight into the ways in which the use of monopoly over genetic information shape and influence population policies, environmental ethics and biomedical and agricultural practices in various Asian religious and secular cultures and across national boundaries.

Sponsored by: NWO, IIAS, ASSR

Coordinator: Margaret Slobboom-Faulkner m.slobboom-faulkner@ussies.ac.uk

Searching for sustainability in Eastern Indonesian waters

The threat of biodiversity depletion calls for the establishment of Marine Protected Areas (MPAs), especially in rich natural environments like the marine space of eastern Indonesia. Most approaches to the establish ment of MPAs, however, are science-based. Several interconnected developments demand a constructive analysis of the societal impacts of a predominantly technically and scientific oriented approach to the establishment of MPAs around the world. This new programme focuses on MPAs in eastern Indonesia (Wakatobi, Komodo, Derawan, Raja Ampat) and will facilitate the exchange of Dutch, Indonesian, German and Austrian researchers. The aims of the programme are to (1) engage in a methodological training workshop for the three Indonesian partners plus six of their colleagues/staff members and (2) to collectively write a research proposal (2009-2010) on the social-economic and governance conditions of Marine Protected Area development.

Sponsored by: KNWV, IIAS, Wageningen University, Australian Research Council, Center for Tropical Marine Ecology Bremen (ZMT), Germany Partner institutes: Wageningen University, Indonesian Institute of Scientific Research (LIPI), Bogor Agricultural University (IPB), The Nature Conservancy, Murdoch University (Perth, Australia), ZMT (Bremen, Germany)

Coordinator: Leontine Visser (WUR/IIAS) and Manon Osseweijer (IIAS) m.osseweijer@iias.nl

Networks

Ageing in Asia and Europe

During the 21st century it is projected that there will be more than one billion people aged 60 and over, with this figure climbing to nearly two billion by 2050, three-quarters of whom will live in the developing world. The bulk of the ageing population will reside in Asia. Ageing in Asia is attributable to the marked decline in fertility shown over the last 40 years and the steady increase in life expectancy. In Western Europe, ageing populations developed at a slower pace and could initially be incorporated into welfare policy provisions. Currently governments are seeking ways to trim and reduce government financed social welfare and health-care, including pensions systems, unleashing substantial public debate and insecurity. Many Asian governments are facing comparable challenges and dilemmas, involving both the state and the family, but are confronted with a much shorter time-span. This research programme, in short, sheds light on how both Asian and European nations are reviewing the social contract with their citizens.

Research network involved: Réseau de Recherche Internationale sur l'Age, le Citoyenneté et l'Intégration Socio-économique (REILACTIS)

Sponsored by: IIAS

Coordinator: Carla Risseeuw c.risseeuw@iias.nl

ABIA South and Southeast Asian art and archaeology index

The Annual Bibliography of Indina Archaeology is an annotated bibliographic database for publications covering South and Southeast Asian art and archaeology. The project was launched by IIAS in 1997 and is currently coordinated by the Postgraduate Institute of Archaeology of the University of Kelaniya, Colombo, Sri Lanka. The database is freely accessible at www.abia.net. Extracts from the database are also available as bibliographies, published in a series by Brill. The project receives scientific support from UNESCO.

Coordinators: Ellen Raven and Gerda Theuns-de Boer e.m.raven@iias.nl

www.abia.net

Islam in Indonesia: the dissemination of religious authority in the 20th and early 21st centuries

Forms and transformations of religious authority among the Indonesian Muslim community are the focus of this research programme. The term authority relates to persons and books as well as various other forms of written and non-written references. Special attention is paid to the production, reproduction and dissemination of religious authority in the fields of four sub-programmes: ulama (religious scholars) and fatwas; tarekat (mystical orders); dalawah (propagation of the faith); and education.

Coordinator: Nico Kaptijn n.j.g.kaptijn@hum.leidenuniv.nl

IMPORTANT ANNOUNCEMENT: SCHEDULE CHANGE

Asia- Europe Workshop Series 2010

Every year, the Asia-Europe Foundation (ASEF) in Singapore and the European Alliance for Asian Studies (secretariat at IIAS) in Leiden organise the Asia-Europe Workshop Series. This grant scheme provides six workshop conveners with a subsidy of € 12,500 to organise an academic workshop with Eastern and Asian participants from ASEEM countries, dealing with themes of common interest.

The next scheme will be applied to the calendar year 2010.

The European Alliance for Asian Studies and the Asia-Europe Foundation welcome proposals for workshops in 2009, to take place in 2010.

Important dates:

January 2009

Announcement “Call for Proposals”

Online application form ready for use

1 July 2009

Deadline for sending in workshop proposals

For detailed information on the Asia-Europe Workshop Series 2010 scheme, please check our website www.iias.nl or contact our secretariat at iias@iet.leidenuniv.nl / +31 71 527 2227

Important Announcement: Call for Proposals

Online application form ready for use

ABIA South and Southeast Asian art and archaeology index

The Annual Bibliography of Indina Archaeology is an annotated bibliographic database for publications covering South and Southeast Asian art and archaeology. The project was launched by IIAS in 1997 and is currently coordinated by the Postgraduate Institute of Archaeology of the University of Kelaniya, Colombo, Sri Lanka. The database is freely accessible at www.abia.net. Extracts from the database are also available as bibliographies, published in a series by Brill. The project receives scientific support from UNESCO.

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Coordinator: Nico Kaptijn n.j.g.kaptijn@hum.leidenuniv.nl

I I A S  R E S E A R C H  N E W S L E T T E R  # 4 9  A U T U M N  2 0 0 8
This international exhibition will present the contemporary and traditional art and crafts of Timor-Leste. The national collection of Timor-Leste will be complemented with works from the Museum and Art Gallery of the Northern Territory. This comprehensive, collaborative exhibition of the textiles, ceramics, wooden carvings and body adornment of Timor-Leste will give insights into the distinctive living cultures of this young nation.

A Museum and Art Gallery of the Northern Territory exhibition in partnership with the national Directorate of Culture, Timor-Leste (Detail) Timor-Leste, Ceremonial Mask, 20th Century, Hand-carved hardwood, 22 cm x 15 cm x 9 cm


The ISIAA Announces 5th Regional Security Summit: The Manama Dialogue
12 – 14 December 2008
Bahrain

The International Institute for Strategic Studies (IISS) is pleased to announce the 5th Regional Security Summit: The Manama Dialogue will take place from 12 to 14 December 2008 in Bahrain.

The Manama Dialogue is the primary security forum in the Gulf and facilitates the engagement of the national security and foreign policy establishments of the region with critical external powers. In 2008, the 5th anniversary meeting will draw together the highest concentration of policy-makers involved in regional security, and delegations will once again comprise a measured blend of prime ministers, defence ministers, foreign ministers, national security advisors, and military and intelligence chiefs.


This summit will be held at the Ritz-Carlton Hotel in Manama. Participation and invitation is by proxy. Press invitational will be issued at the end of October.

For information on providing press coverage or to receive additional information, please contact dialogues@iiss.org or reference http://www.iiis.org/forums/the-iiis-regional-security-summit.

A one day workshop on 17th January 2009

The Wellington Conference on Contemporary China Institutional Dynamics and the Great Transformation of China
15–17 April, 2009
Victoria University of Wellington, Wellington, New Zealand

An international conference sponsored and organized by the New Zealand Contemporary China Research Centre

The New Zealand Conference on Contemporary China is an annual event organized by the New Zealand Contemporary China Research Centre. The conference series brings together leading China scholars every year to examine, debate and advance scholarship on key issues in contemporary China studies. This year’s conference is held in Wellington, New Zealand and the theme for the conference is the role of institutions in China’s great transformation.

Over the past 50 years since the launch of economic reform and opening in December 1978, China has seen fundamental economic transformation and unprecedented social and political changes. The grand scale and contested nature of the transformation has generated great scholarly framework. Much of particular scholarly value is the growing interest in the role of institutions in the shaping of the new economy, new politics and new society of China.

Today, few scholars would dispute that institutions matter. The question is perhaps how exactly they matter in particular national and historical settings. Moreover, institutional analysis is increasingly facing challenges from diverse national experiences and institutional environments. On the other hand, there are a large number of studies on China’s transformation, but not many from a unifying intellectual approach involving a multi-disciplinary investigation. There is also a great deal of scholarly interest and research activities in China itself on institutions and Chinese political economy, but this has not received the wider scholarly attention it deserves.

This conference is designed to address these issues. We hope to bring institutional analysis and China studies together to address some of the core questions interesting and institutional of those institutional.

We are inviting paper proposals on any aspects of the conference theme and welcome participation of scholars from any discipline of the social sciences, particularly in economics, political science, sociology, law and international relations. We will publish selected papers as an edited volume by an international publisher.

We are particularly interested in case studies on more specific issues such as property rights, the hukou system, the dawan system, the dual-track system, politics and markets, constitutional order, party and electoral systems, international organizations, rules and norms etc. Participants will address some of these questions:

- How do institutions form, evolve or change in the institutional environment of China?
- Does China’s transformation vindicate the distinction between formal and informal institutions?
- What is culture from an institutionalist point of view?
- How do institutions relate to what we want to explain as causes, effects, or more as party to a dynamic interaction?
- How do we measure institutional change and effects?
- Does our understanding from China challenge the basic premises of the new institutionalism or does it provide an opportunity for us to improve on its conceptual frameworks and methodology?

Many of these questions have been asked elsewhere, but the China phenomenon arguably provides an ideal empirical basis to search for clearer answers.

Those interested to give a paper at the conference shall forward their paper proposals (title and 150 word abstract) to Dr Xiaoming Huang (xiaoming.huang@vuw.ac.nz), Chair of the Conference Organising Committee, no later than 30 January 2009. Registration details for the conference and conference letters will be sent shortly after that.

The Third International Sanskrit Computational Linguistics Symposium
15–17 January 2009
Hyderabad, India

The third International Symposium on Sanskrit Computational Linguistics will take place at the University of Hyderabad on 15th and 16th January 2009, followed by a one day workshop on 17th January 2009 on issues related to tagging of Sanskrit linguistic resources at various levels.

This symposium follows upon the successful international symposium symposium hosted by IRIN, France and Brown University, USA in October 2007 and May 2008 respectively.

For more information: http://sanskrit.inria.fr/Symposium/Symposium.html

The exhibition displays the diversity of tribal cultures in Arunachal Pradesh, a little-known state bordering on Tibet in northeastern India. The state is home to about 1 million people, consisting of approximately 35 tribal groups who speak (with one exception) Tibeto-Burman languages. Many practice a form of animism; some practice Tibetan Buddhism or Theravada Buddhism; a few follow Hinduism or Christianity.

The exhibition focuses on two tribes, the Tibetan Buddhist Monpa and the animist Apatani, highlighting their ritual practices and material culture in historical perspective. The show features contemporary and historical photographs, old and new textiles, unique items from a shaman’s chant and rare film footage from the 1940s, even a pre-20th century painted, cotton map of a pilgrimage site where Tibetans (a little-known state bordering on Tibet in northeastern India). The state is home to about 1 million people, consisting of approximately 35 tribal groups who speak (with one exception) Tibeto-Burman languages. Many practice a form of animism; some practice Tibetan Buddhism or Theravada Buddhism; a few follow Hinduism or Christianity.

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Himalayas and invested with high value by local populations who believe them to be ‘tibetan.’ India, continuing trends begun in the urban period, has been the source of civil administration, market economy, literacy, Hinduism and, recently, Christianity.

Social Sciences in Asia Monograph Series, Brill
edited by Vinesta Sinha and Syed Farid Alias
Department of Sociology
National University of Singapore

We invite contributions to the interdisciplinary Social Sciences in Asia Monograph Series. It publishes original materials and the revised editions of special issues of the Asian Journal of Social Science. A double blind process, two experts would appraise each manuscript. The Social Sciences in Asia Monograph Series welcomes submissions from specialists on any facet of Asia, including sociologists, anthropologists, political scientists, economists, geographers, and historians.

The Social Sciences in Asia Monograph Series was the initiative of the editorial team of the Asian Journal of Social Science at the Department of Sociology, National University of Singapore. It was initially the Asian Social Science Series, with Brill and the Times Academic Press co-publishing the first three volumes between 2001 and 2002. In 2003, the Series became Social Sciences in Asia and henceforward carries only the Brill imprint.

Founded in 1683 in Leiden, Holland, Brill is an academic publisher of repute. It publishes about five hundred new manuscripts and reference books, as well as more than a hundred journals every year. For all queries, please contact Katrijn Lee, the Editorial Assistant, at soc@n.ru.nl.sg. In addition, for inquiries about the aptness of your virtually concluded manuscript, please dispatch a book proposal. Furthermore, for questions regarding the suitability of your proposed monograph, please enclose a 150-word abstract.

Welcome to Hong Kong! Call for Papers for the 10th Asian Urbanization Conference
The University of Hong Kong
Hong Kong SAR, China
August 16-19, 2009
www.hku.hk/asia2009
Deadline for submission of abstracts: 15th May 2009
Conference Themes: Theoretical or empirical studies on urban form and process, urban population change including migrations, the urban carbon systems, quality of life, sustainable development, city marketing and economic development, social justice, urban governance, applications related to GIS, comparative urbanization, and environmental conditions in Asian cities. Other papers which contribute to an understanding of Asian urbanization are welcomed.

Paper Abstracts Submission and Registration: Abstract should be 100 to no more than 200 words and should be submitted online. The abstract should provide information on the research problem, study area, data, methodology, findings, and significance of the research. While the format of your abstract may vary from this format, these contents are useful and informative to the conference participants. Co-authored papers should indicate who is the main presenter and author. Submission of complete paper is strongly encouraged. Selected papers will be considered for publication after the conference.

Conference Secretariat: Centre of Urban Studies and Urban Planning Tel: (+852) 2859-2721
University of Hong Kong Fax: (+852) 2559-0689
PohChuan Road Email: asia2009@hku.hk
Hong Kong SAR, China
Homepage: www.hku.hk/asia2009

Detailed information of the conference is available at www.hku.hk/asia2009. Please contact the Conference Organizers, Professor Anthony G. O. Yeh or Dr. Roger C. K. Chan of the University of Hong Kong. You may also contact Dr. George Pavone (Asian Urban Research Association (AURA) Secretary-General) if further information is needed.

Autumn is a hectic time for the ICAS Secretariat. We have to inventarise the books submitted for the ICAS Book Prize and send them off to the members of the Reading Committee. It offers distraction from the tension which builds up as the deadline for ICAS registration draws near. Two days to go and only 300 registrations? But then the ‘ICAS miracle’ occurs: All of a sudden, over a 56 hour period, registrations come pouring in from across the globe. It comes to an end as abruptly as it started...

The ‘ICAS miracle’:
Preparing for ICAS 6 in Daejeon in August 2009

The registration count for ICAS 6 in Daejeon now stands at 1200-700 individual registrations and 100 through the more than 100 organised panels which have been submitted. As I write, the deadline for the institutional panels has not yet passed but extrapolating from ICAS 5 in Kuala Lumpur, we expect between 50 to 50 panels of this kind. The number of expected participants (including observers, visitors, exhibitors and so on) will be in between 1100 and 1200.

There were just over 200 applications for financial assistance, which is meant, in particular, for young scholars not older than 35. In the end, it’s likely that around a hundred of the applicants will qualify for funding. It’s been noticeable this time that 80 percent of the applicants are from India. Does this mean that the Indian government is not actually supporting the participation of Indian scholars in international conventions? We also noted that applicants have been hesitant about using the new online ‘Colleagues Calling’ facility, but we hope that for the next ICAS, participants will come to appreciate this as a useful forum for making contact with colleagues.

ICAS Book Prize (IBP)
A rich harvest of books has reached the desk of the secretary of the IBP. In all 85 books were submitted by 33 publishers worldwide: 42 in the category Humanities and 43 in the Social Sciences. For the first time more books in the social sciences were submitted. Popular themes dealt with from different disciplinary or comparative angles are: art and culture, (auto)biography, colonies, diasporas and migration, economy, education, gender and identity, health and medicine, international relations and politics, law, literature, media, religion and society. Clearly there is shift from traditional to contemporary studies Asia studies. In all only five edited volumes were submitted but it should be pointed out that ground breaking edited volumes certainly stand a chance of winning one of these prizes.

‘Imag(in)ing the Buddha Brain’
Leiden Institute for Brain and Cognition Conference, 20 March 2009

Is brain research beginning to produce concrete evidence for something that Bud- dhist practitioners of meditation have maintained for centuries, namely that mental discipline and meditative practice can change the workings of the brain and allow people to achieve different levels of awareness? Such transformed states have traditionally been understood in transcendental terms, as something outside the world of physical measurement and objective evaluation. But over the past few years, researchers working with Tibetan monks have been working toward translating those mental experiences into the scientific language of high-frequen- cy gamma waves and brain synchrony, or coordination. The Leiden Institute for Brain and Cognition (LiBIC) will organise, on 20 March 2009, the symposium “Imag(in)ing the Buddhist Brain” to address recent developments in this area, among them the question: What claims do meditation traditions make, and are the results of meditation measurable?


**Central Asia**

- Dr Irina Morozova  
  Moscow State University, Russian Federation  
  Stationed at the Branch Office Amsterdam  
  Sponsored by the Alexander von Humboldt Stiftung

- Dr Mehdi P. Aminneh  
  Stationed at the Branch Office Amsterdam  
  Programme Coordinator of Energy Programme Asia (EPA)  
  Sponsored by KNW/CASS

- Prof. Christophe Cullen  
  Nuffield Research Institute, Cambridge, United Kingdom  
  Sponsored by NWO/NRI/REHSEIS

- Dr Hejin-chuan HIO  
  National Chengchi University, Taipei, Taiwan  
  IAS Professor, holder of the European Chair of Chinese Studies  
  Sponsored by BICER and the Ministry of Education Taiwan

- Dr Catherine Jami  
  REHSEIS, Paris, France  
  Stationed at the Branch Office Amsterdam  
  Sponsored by the J. Gonda Foundation

- Ema Masae KATO  
  University, Taiwan  
  ISAS Professor, holder of the European Chair of Korean Studies  
  Sponsored by the Fritz Thyssen Stiftung

- Dr Takayo TAKAHASHI  
  Waseda University, Japan  
  Ethnic identity of Okinawac Islands in Japan  
  Stationed at the Branch Office Amsterdam  
  Sponsored by the Fritz Thyssen Stiftung

- Dr Yen-Fen Tseng  
  Department of Sociology, National Taiwan University, Taiwan  
  Stationed at the Branch Office Amsterdam  
  Sponsored by the National Science Council and IAS

- Dr Shao-li LU  
  Department of History, National Chengchi University, Taiwan  
  Sponsored by the National Science Council and IAS

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**East Asia**

- Dr Shao-li LU  
  National Chengchi University, Taiwan  
  Department of History, National Chengchi University, Taiwan  
  Dr Shao-li LU  
  1 August 2008 – 30 June 2009

- Prof. Tak-wing Ngo  
  Extraordinary Chair at the Faculty of History and Arts, Erasmus University, Rotterdam  
  History of Asia  
  1 May 2008 - 1 May 2012

- Prof. Carla Rissouw  
  Leiden University, the Netherlands  
  Ageoing in Asia and Europe  
  1 January 2008 - 1 January 2010

- Prof. Yang SHEN  
  Department of Chinese Studies, Peking University, China  
  China Exchange Programme  
  Sponsored by KNW/  
  10 January 2005 - 10 March 2009

- Dr Margaret Slesboom-Faulkner  
  Programme Coordinator of the Socio-genetic Marginalisation in Asia Programme (SMAp)  
  Sponsored by NWO  
  Human Genetics and its political, social, cultural and ethical Implications  
  17 September 2001 - 1 September 2009

- Dr Takayo TAKAHASHI  
  Waseda University, Japan  
  Ethnic identity of Okinawac Islands in Japan  
  1 January 2008 - 31 December 2008

- Dr Yen-Fen Tseng  
  Department of Sociology, National Taiwan University, Taiwan  
  1 January 2008 - 1 January 2010

- Dr Alex MacKay  
  School of Oriental and African Studies, London University, United Kingdom  
  The History and Culture of the Indo-Tibetan Himalayas  
  1 October 2000 - 1 May 2009

- Dr Prasanna Kumar PATRA  
  Research fellow within the Socio-genetic Marginalisation in Asia Programme (SMAp)  
  Sponsored by NWO  
  Comparative Case Studies of genetic Research in India and Japan  
  15 December 2005 - 1 September 2009

- Dr Saraju RATH  
  Sponsored by CONIDA  
  1 January 2004 - 1 January 2010

- Dr Ellen Raven  
  Leiden University, the Netherlands  
  Researcher within the South and Southeast Asia Art and Archaeology Index (ARIA)  
  Sponsored by the J. Gonda Foundation Art, material culture and archaeology of South and Southeast Asia  
  1 January 2003 – 31 December 2007

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**South East Asia**

- Dr Birgit Abels  
  Ruhr University Bochum, Germany  
  Stationed at the Branch Office Amsterdam  
  Of Islam, Ancestors, and Translocality in Minangkabau  
  10 October 2008 – 10 March 2009

- Dr Markus Schleifer  
  Sponsored by the Fritz Thyssen Stiftung  
  Localized Statehood: Social and Cultural Practices of a ‘Tribe’ Development Project in India  
  1 April 2008 - 30 September 2009

- Dr Marta Semesi  
  Sponsored by the J. Gonda Foundation  
  A Preliminary Study of the Collected Works (Gong-bum) of Ral-ham ‘Ngoy po (14th Century): a Contribution to the Study of the ‘latter Transmission Period’ (phyi-dar) based on Bon Textual Evidence  
  10 October 2008 - 28 February 2009

- Prof. Alexander Stolyarov  
  Russian Academy of Sciences, Institute of Oriental Studies, Moscow, Russian Federation  
  Annotated Database of Early Medieval North Indian Copper-Plate Grants  
  1 October 2008 - 30 November 2008

- Dr Shilpa Sumant  
  Töök Maharashtra Vidya Pratishthan, Pune, India  
  Sponsored by the J. Gonda Foundation  
  A Joint Edition of the First Section of rāhbara’s Karmapayana (General Parādigms of Ritual) with Arlo Griffiths  
  1 October 2008 - 31 March 2009

- Ms Cora Theuns-de Boer  
  Researcher within the South and Southeast Asia Art and Archaeology Index (ARIA)  
  Sponsored by the J. Gonda Foundation  
  South and Southeast Asian Art and Archaeology Index  
  1 November 2002 – 31 December 2007

- Mr Vincent Tournier  
  Ecole Pratique des Hautes Etudes, Paris, France  
  Sponsored by the J. Gonda Foundation  
  Enriching an Ongoing Study on the textual History of Mahāvīra  
  1 January 2008 - 1 May 2009

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**Historical Research**

- Dr Prasanna Kumar PATRA  
  Research fellow within the Socio-genetic Marginalisation in Asia Programme (SMAp)  
  1 October 2008 - 30 April 2009

- Mr Rajesh Venkatasubramanian  
  Department of Humanities and Social Sciences, Indian Institute of Technology, Madras, India  
  Sponsored by the J. Gonda Foundation  
  The Recovery and Reception of Classical Tamil Literature in late 19th and early 20th Century Tamil Nadu  
  1 October 2008 - 31 December 2008

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**Indian Ocean**

- Dr Hashim Ismail  
  Academy of Malay Studies, University of Malaya, Malaysia  
  The Malacca Law: Collections of Manuscripts at Leiden University  
  1 October – 10 November 2008

- Dr Nino Kapteijn  
  Leiden University, the Netherlands  
  Islam and State in the Netherlands East Indies: The Life and Work of Sayyid ‘Uthmân (1822–1914)  
  1 May 2006 - 1 May 2009

- Dr Lenore Lyons  
  Centre for Asia Pacific Social Transformation Studies, University of Wollongong, Australia  
  In the Shadow of Singapore: The Limits of Transnationalism in Indoneisa  
  1 January 2008 – 1 January 2010

- Dr Dipika Mukhopdey  
  Negotiating Languages and Forging Identities: Suriname-Indian Women in the Netherlands  
  1 December 2006 – 30 June 2009

- Ms Rita Setianingsih  
  Akademi Pariwisata Medan, Indonesia  
  The Management Model of Eco-Cultural-Tourism Through the Empowerment of Archaeological Remains  
  10 October 2008 - 10 January 2009

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**Central Asia**

- Dr Prasanna Kumar PATRA  
  Research fellow within the Socio-genetic Marginalisation in Asia Programme (SMAp)  
  1 October 2008 - 30 April 2009

- Mr Rajesh Venkatasubramanian  
  Department of Humanities and Social Sciences, Indian Institute of Technology, Madras, India  
  Sponsored by the J. Gonda Foundation  
  The Recovery and Reception of Classical Tamil Literature in late 19th and early 20th Century Tamil Nadu  
  1 October 2008 - 31 December 2008
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Event Details</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>December 2008</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>9 December</td>
<td>Centre for Intercultural Studies, Portugal International Conference on Intercultural Studies conference&lt;br&gt;convenor(s): Clara Sarmento, CEI organized by Centre for Intercultural Studies, CEI&lt;br&gt;contact: Clara Sarmento&lt;br&gt;<a href="mailto:cei@iscap.ipp.pt">cei@iscap.ipp.pt</a> <a href="http://www.iscap.ipp.pt/~cei/congresso.htm">www.iscap.ipp.pt/~cei/congresso.htm</a></td>
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<td>15 - 18 December</td>
<td>Yogyakarta, Indonesia&lt;br&gt;The First International Graduate Students Conference on Indonesia conference&lt;br&gt;convenor(s): Gadjah Mada University, Yogyakarta, Indonesia organized by Academy Professorship Indonesia in Social Sciences and Humanities (KNWI-AIPI) Gadjah Mada&lt;br&gt;contact: S.N. Hidayah&lt;br&gt;<a href="mailto:fpiindonesia@gmail.com">fpiindonesia@gmail.com</a> <a href="http://www.api.pasca.ugm.ac.id">www.api.pasca.ugm.ac.id</a></td>
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<td><strong>January 2009</strong></td>
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<td>8 - 10 January</td>
<td>Kaoshiung, Taiwan&lt;br&gt;Multiculturalism in Taiwan conference&lt;br&gt;convenor(s): Prof. Tak-wing Ngo (Erasmus University) &amp; Prof. Hong-zen Wang (National Sun-yet Sen University) organized by NSC/IIAS&lt;br&gt;contact: Allen Chao&lt;br&gt;<a href="mailto:anchao50@gmail.com">anchao50@gmail.com</a> <a href="http://www.iias.nl">www.iias.nl</a></td>
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<td>9 - 14 January</td>
<td>Honolulu Hawaii, United States&lt;br&gt;7th Annual Hawai’i International Conference on Arts &amp; Humanities conference&lt;br&gt;convenor(s): Hilton Hawaii, USA&lt;br&gt;<a href="mailto:humanities@hichumanities.org">humanities@hichumanities.org</a> <a href="http://www.hichumanities.org">www.hichumanities.org</a></td>
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<td>21 - 23 January</td>
<td>The Hague/Leiden, Netherlands&lt;br&gt;The Cultural Politics of the Life Sciences in Asia: Opportunities, risks and the changing body conference&lt;br&gt;convenor(s): Dr. Margaret Sleeboom-Faulkner organized by IIAS&lt;br&gt;contact: Martina van den Haak&lt;br&gt;<a href="mailto:m.c.van.den.haak@iias.nl">m.c.van.den.haak@iias.nl</a> <a href="http://www.iias.nl">www.iias.nl</a></td>
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<td><strong>February 2009</strong></td>
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<td>5 - 7 February</td>
<td>Leiden, Portugal&lt;br&gt;4th International Sinology Forum: Rock-Paper-Scissors: Dynamics of Modernity in China forum organized by The Portuguese Institute of Sinology&lt;br&gt;contact: Dora Martins&lt;br&gt;<a href="mailto:ipxinologia@gmail.com">ipxinologia@gmail.com</a></td>
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<tr>
<td>12 - 14 February</td>
<td>Oporto, Portugal&lt;br&gt;4th International Sinology Forum: Rock-Paper-Scissors: Dynamics of Modernity in China forum organized by The Portuguese Institute of Sinology&lt;br&gt;contact: Dora Martins&lt;br&gt;<a href="mailto:ipxinologia@gmail.com">ipxinologia@gmail.com</a></td>
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<td><strong>March 2009</strong></td>
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<td>3 - 5 March</td>
<td>Leiden, Netherlands&lt;br&gt;The History of Chronology conference&lt;br&gt;convenor(s): prof. Harm Beukers organized by NRI/IIAS/Scaliger Institute/REHSEIS&lt;br&gt;www.iias.nl</td>
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<td><strong>April 2009</strong></td>
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<td>7 - 9 April</td>
<td>Leiden, Netherlands&lt;br&gt;Indonesia’s cultural history, 1950-1965 workshop organized by KITLV&lt;br&gt;www.kitlv.nl</td>
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<td>10 - 11 April</td>
<td>Leiden, Netherlands&lt;br&gt;The First World War and the End of Neutrality conference&lt;br&gt;organized by Netherlands Institute for War Documentation &amp; USA&lt;br&gt;contact: S. Kruizinga&lt;br&gt;<a href="mailto:s.f.kruizinga@uva.nl">s.f.kruizinga@uva.nl</a></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>May 2009</strong></td>
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<td>21 - 23 May</td>
<td>Toronto, Ontario, Canada&lt;br&gt;The First Annual Tamil Studies Conference conference&lt;br&gt;organized by University of Toronto&lt;br&gt;contact: Dora Martins&lt;br&gt;<a href="mailto:ipxinologia@gmail.com">ipxinologia@gmail.com</a></td>
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<tr>
<td>18 - 20 June</td>
<td>Leiden, Netherlands&lt;br&gt;24th ASSE Conference conference&lt;br&gt;convenor(s): Dr Coen de Keuker organized by Centre for Korean Studies, Leiden University / IIAS&lt;br&gt;www.iias.nl</td>
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<td><strong>June 2009</strong></td>
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<td>6 - 9 August</td>
<td>Daejeon, Korea&lt;br&gt;Democratic peoples republic of ICAS 6 conference&lt;br&gt;organized by Chungnam National University (CNU) / Center for Asian Regional Studies (CARS)&lt;br&gt;www.icas6.org</td>
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