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CCAS Statement of Purpose

Critical Asian Studies continues to be inspired by the statement of purpose formulated in 1969 by its parent organization, the Committee of Concerned Asian Scholars (CCAS). CCAS ceased to exist as an organization in 1979, but the BCAS board decided in 1993 that the CCAS Statement of Purpose should be published in our journal at least once a year.

We first came together in opposition to the brutal aggression of the United States in Vietnam and to the complicity or silence of our profession with regard to that policy. Those in the field of Asian studies bear responsibility for the consequences of their research and the political posture of their profession. We are concerned about the present unwillingness of specialists to speak out against the implications of an Asian policy committed to ensuring American domination of much of Asia. We reject the legitimacy of this aim, and attempt to change this policy. We recognize that the present structure of the profession has often perverted scholarship and alienated many people in the field.

The Committee of Concerned Asian Scholars seeks to develop a humane and knowledgeable understanding of Asian societies and their efforts to maintain cultural integrity and to confront such problems as poverty, oppression, and imperialism. We realize that to be students of other peoples, we must first understand our relations to them.

CCAS wishes to create alternatives to the prevailing trends in scholarship on Asia, which too often spring from a parochial cultural perspective and serve selfish interests and expansionism. Our organization is designed to function as a catalyst, a communications network for both Asian and Western scholars, a provider of central resources for local chapters, and a community for the development of anti-imperialist research.

Passed, 28–30 March 1969
Boston, Massachusetts
Political Metaphor in the Testimonial Prison Literature of Kanno Suga

Resistance Strategies of Indonesian Women Workers

The Kwangju Uprising and Poetry by Ko Chong-hui  Rural Women and the Family in an Era of Liberalization  Development and Rural Women in South Asia  Farmers, Women, and Economic Reform in China

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The Bulletin of Concerned Asian Scholars (ISSN 0007-4810) is a refereed quarterly journal that welcomes unsolicited essays, reviews, translations, interviews, photo essays, and letters about Asia and the Pacific, particularly those that challenge the accepted formulas for understanding the Asia and Pacific regions, the world, and ourselves.

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Contributors

Uradyne E. Bulag is a research fellow of Corpus Christi College, University of Cambridge, Cambridge, England.

Prasenjit Duara teaches history at the University of Chicago, Chicago, Illinois, USA. He is the author of Rescuing History from the Nation: Questions and Narratives of Modern China (1995).

John Fitzgerald teaches Chinese history and politics at La Trobe University in Melbourne, Australia.

Mies Grijns is a social anthropologist working on gender and development. She has a special interest in Indonesia, where she studied women in rural industries and plantations in West Java. Today she lives in Oman.

Masamichi Sebastian Inoue is a Ph.D. student in anthropology at Duke University, Durham, North Carolina, USA.

Govind Kelkar is an associate professor and director of Gender and Development Studies Center at the Asian Institute of Technology, Bangkok, Thailand. Her books include China after Mao: A Report on Socialist Development (1979) and Gender and Tribe: Women, Land and Forest in Jharkhand Region, India (1991).

Ann Lee teaches in the Asian Languages and Literature Department at the University of Washington in Seattle, Washington, USA.

John Lie is the head of the Department of Sociology at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, Illinois, USA. His publications include Blue Dreams: Korean Americans and the Los Angeles Riots (co-authored with Nancy Abelmann, 1995), and Han Unbound: Political Economy of South Korean Development (1997).

Gail Omvedt is a citizen of India with a permanent home in Kasegaon, Maharashtra, where she writes, teaches, and works with social movements, particularly among rural women. Her most recent books are Reinvining Revolution and Dalit Visions. She is professor of sociology at Pune University, Pune, India.

John Purves is a Ph.D. student in the Graduate School of International Development, Nagoya University, Japan.

Hélène Bowen Raddeker has been teaching premodern and modern Japanese history in Australian universities since 1990, and has recently taken up a position in the School of History at the University of New South Wales, Sydney, Australia. Her book on Kanno Suga and Kaneko Fumiko, two female "traitors" of prewar Japan, is entitled Treacherous Women of Imperial Japan: Patriarchal Factions, Patricidal Fantasies (forthcoming from Routledge).

Santi Rozario teaches in the Department of Sociology and Anthropology, University of Newcastle, NSW, Australia, and is the author of Purity and Communal Boundaries: Women and Social Change in a Bangladeshi Village (1992).

Mark Selden teaches sociology and history at Binghamton University, Binghamton, New York, USA.

Stephen R. Shalom teaches political science at William Paterson University in New Jersey; he is co-editor with Daniel B. Schirmer of The Philippines Reader (1987), and author of Imperial Alibi: Rationalizing U.S. Intervention after the Cold War (1993).

Ines Smyth has a Ph.D. in Social Anthropology. She has taught at the Institute of Social Studies (The Hague) and the Development Studies Institute of the London School of Economics. She is now a policy advisor for Oxfam UK and Ireland (Oxford, England). Her areas of interest include gender and development, reproductive rights, gender and institutions, and issues of social policy.

Alvin Y. So teaches sociology at the University of Hawaii, Honolulu, Hawaii, USA. He is the coauthor (with Stephen Chiu) of East Asia and the World Economy (1995).

Wang Yuxian is a research associate at the Gender and Development Studies Center of the Asian Institute of Technology, Bangkok, Thailand. She is completing her Ph.D. dissertation: "The Household Responsibility System and Women’s Position in Two Villages of Zhejiang Province, China." Her published papers include "Women and Land Rights in Cambodia" (co-authored), Economic and Political Weekly, 28 October 1995, and "Women’s Place in Family and Society: Social Transformation and Gender Relations in China," Asian Journal of Women’s Studies 2 (1996).

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"Death as Life":
Political Metaphor in the Testimonial Prison Literature of Kanno Suga

by Hélène Bowen Raddeker

Kanno Suga (1881-1911) achieved the dubious distinction of being the first female political prisoner in Japan's modern history to be executed. She was the one woman among twenty-four Meiji socialists to be sentenced to death early in 1911 for her involvement in a conspiracy to assassinate the emperor. Yet Kanno Suga is noteworthy for reasons other than for her role in the so-called Meiji High Treason Incident. As one of Japan's first feminists and also one of its first female journalists, she played an active role in various social movements in the Meiji era (1868-1912). Any one of these factors would qualify Kanno as a significant historical figure. Historians of Japan, however, have long tended either to ignore her or to focus their attention on her love life. Doubtless some have seen her as merely the "other half" of the "more important" anarchist theorist Kotoku Shusui, while others have apparently concluded that her romantic involvements are the most noteworthy features of her life. The fact that even works of women's history published in Japan seem preoccupied with Kanno Suga's romantic involvements suggests that it has not only been "within mainstream U.S. feminism [that] the good insistence that 'the personal is political' often transformed itself into something like 'only the personal is political'."

Of late, however, some scholars have found Kanno's political career to be of greater interest. This is with good reason, since her political critique of state and society has more to tell us about Meiji history than has hitherto been indicated. This is as much the case with her early as with her later writings, but those

1. Because some scholars refer to Kanno as "Kanno Suga" and others as "Sugako," I should explain in advance that her legal given name was "Suga," though she often used "Sugako" or other pen names when earlier she worked as a journalist.
2. The defendants were found guilty as charged for their intent, not for an actual attempt. Twelve of those sentenced to death on 18 January 1911 had their sentences reduced to life imprisonment a few days later. On the Meiji High Treason Incident, see John Crump, The Origins of Socialist Thought in Japan (London and Canberra: Croom Helm, 1983), and Shioj Shobei and Watanabe Junzo, eds., Hiroku Taigyaku Jiken (The High Treason Incident: Confidential documents), 2 vols. (Tokyo: Shunjusha, 1959); and on Kanno Suga, see Itoya Toshio, Kanno Suga: Heiminsha no Fujin Kakumeika Zo (Kanno Suga: Portrait of a woman revolutionary of the Commoners Society) (Tokyo: Iwanami Shinko, 1970).
3. Gayatri Chakarovorty Spivak, "In a Word: Interview" (with Ellen Rooney), in Outside in the Teaching Machine (New York and London: Routledge, 1993), p. 4. I would think that this focus on the personal-political has been a common tendency in metropolitan feminism elsewhere as well. In Japan, however, it has applied to many works on Kanno from the 1960s until recently: Setouchi Harumi, "Kanno Sugako: Koi to Kakumei ni Junjita Meiji no Onna (Bijoden daikyyura)" (Kanno Sugako: The woman who sacrificed herself for love and revolution [Biographies of beautiful women]), Chuo Koron 80, no. 9 (September 1965): 291-301; and Suzuki Yuko, ed., Shido no Kai e (Kai to kakkumei), 21, Josei—Hangyaku to Kakumei to Teiko to (Into the sea of ideas: Liberation and revolution. Vol. 21, Women: Rebellion, revolution, and resistance) (Tokyo: Shakai Hyoronsha, 1990), Part 3 on Kanno Suga and Kaneko Fumiko is entitled "Hangyaku to Ai to" (Treason and love), pp. 30-52.
she produced in prison in the last week of her life were written in such special circumstances that they warrant separate attention and a different sort of reading. Here, therefore, I shall concentrate my attention on her prison diary and letters, after first describing her involvement in the treason incident.

Most of the socialists sentenced in this treason case, either to "life" in prison or to death, had had no connection with the plan of Kanno and a handful of her friends to stage a rebellion that would include an imperial assassination. Tokyo police, prosecutors, and judges, however, took this opportunity to try to nip in the bud a small but vociferous socialist movement—particularly the section deemed the most threatening, the radical wing of anarchists associated with the infamous theorist of "direct action," Kotoku Shusui. In fact, Kanno was more the leader of these direct actionists than Kotoku. From January 1909 to May 1910 she had been involved in such a conspiracy with a few comrades, while Kotoku had shown some interest only in their preliminary discussions of a possible insurrection.

We cannot know whether anything would have come of the group's plans, nor can we even gauge conclusively the seriousness of their "intent," despite Kanno's protestations of serious intention during the preliminaries and trial. But what is quite clear from both trial documents and the prison writings of defendants is that in the highly repressive environment of the time some socialists had come to believe that desperate measures were justifiable. As to Kanno's own feelings of frustration and desperation, she was often tailed by police after the first of her three terms of imprisonment, suffering the sort of harassment that rendered it well-nigh impossible for socialists to find regular work or further their cause by peaceful means. She explained her decision to take desperate measures by reference to the arbitrary arrests and police brutality to which socialists were now subject. In part, this would-be "terrorist" was responding to state terror, so revenge was definitely a factor. The newly sacrosanct position

5. Both in this essay and more explicitly elsewhere, my work on Kanno Suga so far has been based on the premise that an intrinsic part of this political critique was her self-presentation and representation of her death, her life and her self: Hélène L. Bowen, "Victims as Victors, Death as Life: Representation and Empowerment in the Works of the Prewar Japanese Traitors, Kanno Suga and Kaneko Fumiko," (Ph.D. dissertation, History Department, La Trobe University, Melbourne, 1992—published as Hélène L. Bowen Raddedeer, Treacherous Women of Imperial Japan: Patriarchal Fictions, Patricidal Fantasies [London and New York: Routledge, 1997]).

6. Not all of those sentenced were anarchists. The supposed "ring-leader," Kotoku, was among those executed, apparently because he was responsible in the eyes of the authorities for having "introduced anarchocommunism into Japan." See Kanno Suga's Sixth Preliminary Court Interrogation (13 June 1910), in Kanno Sugako Zenshu, III (Complete Works of Kanno Sugako, III), ed. Shimizu Unosuke, 3 vols., (Tokyo: Koryuush, 1984), p. 248. Only records from the preliminaries of the Meiji high treason trial are extant.

7. See, for example, Kanno's preliminary interrogation records for 3 June 1910, in Shimizu, Zenshu, III, pp. 205-17. Kanno, Miyashita Daikichi, Niimura Tadao, Furukawa Rikisaku, and Uchiyama Gudo met a number of times to discuss a possible insurrection. They not only discussed the need for arms and explosives but began to lay in supplies and experiment with the manufacture of bombs. Uchiyama was the first to be arrested in May 1909 for an infringement of the explosives control laws. Then the arrest on 25 May 1910 of Miyashita, Furukawa, Niimura, and two others quickly led to mass arrests. Since Kanno was already in prison by the time of the first arrests, having begun on May 18 to serve an earlier sentence for a publication infringement, the small group of conspirators were therefore all incarcerated before an insurrection could be attempted. However, they had met the day before Kanno went into prison and vowed to carry out their plans on her release in the autumn.

8. Some like Kotoku might have had doubts about the efficacy of violent tactics, but he well understood the frustrations that had led others to want to stage their own "Paris Commune," even if, he insisted, no
of the Meiji emperor was another factor in the group’s desire not only to target him as “the sovereign of an oppressive system,” but also to prove that he could bleed like any other human being. However, there was one more probable reason for Kanno’s desire to act decisively even at the risk of her life: her poor health. Her consumptive condition meant that she probably did not have long to live. This must have contributed to her resolution to do something “meaningful” before she died, certainly it suggested that a mere indictment for lèse-majesté would not end her career of resistance. Indeed, she remained defiant throughout the trial and then broadcast her defiance in various texts written in the last week of her life.

Reading Kanno’s Late Prison Writings

In this essay, I shall look at this final stage of Kanno’s political career by considering how she expressed her resistance textually—at a time when her appointment with death had suddenly been brought forward. It is my contention that, if anything, this definite appointment with death strengthened her determination to resist. Interestingly, however, the style in which she expressed that determination was more “literary” than literal. Therefore, I will address the apparently paradoxical proposition that Kanno’s frequent recourse to metaphor in her late writings was more overtly “political” than, say, her explicit refutations of the views of her opponents with regards to the trial. To cite one significant example to be discussed below, her laying claim to revolutionary immortality through representing “death as life” was more systematically political because it was more closely connected with her critique of the entire socio-political system represented by those opponents. To put the point about her use of figurative language slightly differently, it was when her style was most literary that it was also most political or, to use her terminology: “revolutionary.” I believe that, more than anything else, it is this use of metaphor that reveals her last texts to be a literature of resistance.

Those familiar with Kanno’s diary or, more generally, her late writings might not find surprising the proposal that this was resistance literature—even if my discussion of how it was such is somewhat exceptional—but I will go further than this to categorize it as a special sub-type of this transnational genre.

Because I believe that Kanno’s late texts have much in common with others written by people in similar circumstances in other parts of the world, I shall end with some reflections upon transnational forms of resistance literature; in particular, the “testimonial narrative” seen by John Beverley as an alternative to traditional humanist “autobiography,” but treated by Caren Kaplan as one of its “out-law” forms. I should also note at this point that one of my reasons for situating these late texts of Kanno Suga’s within such a transnational genre is to show the limitations of a narrow focus upon cultural difference. The strong parallels between Kanno’s and other “testimonial” autobiography/resistance literature serve to remind us that cultural identity alone does not determine the speaking positions authors adopt, factors such as gender, class, ethnicity, doctrinal standpoint and/or the context of textual resistance (for example, prison) may be equally, or more, important.

First and foremost among Kanno’s late writings is her prison diary. Sentenced on 18 January 1911, she spent the last seven days of her life preparing for her death, partly by writing a diary to leave to comrades. More than once she voiced her expectation that anarchist/socialist comrades would read the diary when she was gone. To some of those comrades she also wrote letters. Both her diary and her letters reveal much about the nature of her resistance throughout her eight months’ imprisonment, but as I indicated above, it was when she was staring death in the face that her construction of herself as an agent, as the subject of her own destiny (rather than as the object of State power), had a particular clarity and consistency. Even a death by execution, she seemed to say, would be one she had freely


11. In a letter to Kotoku Shusui dated 16 May 1910, Kanno wrote, “I will go into prison] resolutely. I’d rather sleep in prison than here. It’d be better to die in prison than linger on and die here. That would have some meaning. Then there would be some consolation in death.” Shimizu, Zenshu, III, p. 162.

12. It is not so common today for scholars to posit, in liberal-humanist ideological style, a necessary separation between literature and politics. There is no doubt, however, that in literary analysis this sort of binary distinction long informed the view that the less overtly political a text is, the “[greater] a work of literature” it will be. In Japanese studies, works on prewar proletarian literature are a good case in point: Arima Tatsuo, The Failure of Freedom: A Portrait of Modern Japanese Intellectuals (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1969), chapter 8, “Proletarian Literature: The Tyranny of Politics,” pp. 173-214; Donald Keene, Dawn to the West: Japanese Literature of the Modern Era (New York: Henry Holt, 1984), pp. 594-628.

13. John Beverley, “The Margin at the Center: On Testimonio (Testimonial Narrative),” and Caren Kaplan, “Resisting Autobiography: Out-Law Genres and Transnational Feminist Subjects,” in De/Colonizing the Subject: The Politics of Gender in Women’s Autobiography, ed. Sidonie Smith and Julia Watson (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1992), pp. 91-114, 115-38. I see no need for extended comment on this definitional issue of what constitutes “autobiographical” forms; there are strong arguments to be made in support of both positions but, rather than trying to avoid the term altogether because of its association with Western liberal-humanism, I prefer to see definitions of autobiography extended to include “out-law”/“resistance” forms. Hence I will speak of Kanno’s prison writings as “testimonial literature/autobiography.”

14. I find unconvincing the argument that the “era of Nihonjinron” is the 1970s and 1980s, since I do not believe that this discourse on Japanese cultural identity/difference/uniqueness has shown any real signs of abating in recent years. Nor do I think that criticisms of it as a “disturbing resurgence of nativism” or nationalism necessarily hinge upon an assumption that there being “only one correct [Western] form of modernity.” See Ann Wasso, Modern Japanese Society, 1868-1994 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996), pp. 90, 103. Even in some of its more moderate forms recently in Japan, demands for Western recognition of cultural diversity all too often take the form of an inverted, still essentialized and hierarchized “difference” between cultures or nations. To cite but one example, it seems that while Japan was once represented as the only truly “socialist” society, now it is portrayed as being more purely “postmodernist” than anywhere else. This sort of nationalistic discourse is still “orientalist,” which is to say that it is still premised on the same binary logic of East-West difference that, arguably, has long disabled the recognition of shared transnational experiences of oppression and thus the potential for solidarity.

15. See, for example, Kanno’s letter to Yoshikawa Morikuni (21 January 1911), in Shimizu, Zenshu, III, p. 182.

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chosen. One of the poems she included in her prison diary suggests this emphasis on her free will:

Knowing it to lead
to a fathomless precipice, I
hurry along—
ever once glancing back
down the unswerving path. 16

One might note that the poem also “prefigures” the forthcoming consideration of the consistently metaphorical way in which she highlighted the revolutionary nature of her project.

Representing her coming death as her choice, not a destiny inflicted upon her, was but one way in which Kanno resisted. Her last prison writings between 18 and 24 January 191117 show that in various ways, both practical and symbolic, she was trying to bring a sense of completion to her life. Of course, on the one hand, she made the necessary arrangements for the disposal of her physical remains and for leaving her few possessions to friends;18 to them she also said her farewells, both in letters and in her diary. On the other hand, however, she assigned meaning to her life and death: to a life of struggle and sacrifice; to a death that was the “natural” and “predetermined” outcome of this life. Just as she reduced her life metonymically to struggle and sacrifice, representing this as the sum total of her life-experience, so too did she invest her death with a similar totalistic meaning. This she could only do with a hindsight directly derived from her immediate context, 19 a political context that ensured that the meaning or “center” around which she structured her life and death would be equally political.

This ascription of a particular, singular meaning to her life and death explains Kanno’s use of metaphor as political strategy in her diary and letters. Since the resistance she expressed in her writing was in direct response to her sentence of death and in direct antagonism to those who had condemned her, it represented an attempt to render this supreme weapon of the State less significant, both for herself and in the eyes of her readers—opponents and sympathizers alike. Hence, she extended the metaphor of life-as-sacrifice to death-for-a-cause (anarchism), thereby representing death simultaneously as destruction-construction, negation-affirmation, end-beginning. As we shall see, more than once in her last writings when she referred to her coming death, and to the deaths of the comrades who would be executed with her, her language suggested a metaphor, not of defeat but of regeneration in connection with “the Cause.” Kanno’s expression of the idea that death is life, that ends can bring new beginnings, was part of a broader political strategy to present the “victims” as victors.

I noted above that it is Kanno’s figurative language that reveals most clearly the systematically political nature of her project. This, in short, is how she expressed her enduring commitment to revolution and her belief in a future anarchist society. It is possible that, because of the likelihood of censorship, she was being obscure quite deliberately. Alternatively, perhaps the fact that she had been a journalist and had a great love of novels and poetry partly explains the florid language she often used in her diary and letters. But this floridity was not merely a stylistic adornment, just as her rhetoric may well have been meant to impress and persuade her audience, but not of her “literary talent.” What, then, was she trying to impress upon her readers? I would argue that her frequent reference to the following topological themes rendered her revolutionary intentions clear:

**Overcoming the bondage of a “slave mentality.”** She often referred to her own personal-political sincerity and truthfulness, which is to say that she laid claim to being in possession of the real truth, possession of it signifying that she was free.

**Navigating a course to a new world.** More than once she emphasized her preparedness for execution because she spoke for a worthy and just Cause. This Cause, moreover, would prevail because the linear development or “progress” it symbolized was inevitable.

**Sowing the seeds of new growth.** In a variety of ways she laid claim to a victory—that is, the victory of herself, her comrades and their Cause—in apparent defeat. There was also a cyclical motif in her writings indicating that in “death” there is life, in ends, beginnings.

Given that the “real truth” she referred to was, in the last analysis, anarchism, as was the Cause that would “live on,” it is
clear that Kanno’s last texts were intended as a defense of anarchism. It was anarchism, or, more precisely, anarcho-communism, that had really been on trial. That this defense was at least partly her intention is clear from even a cursory reading of the texts; a careful reading of them in more than literal terms, on the other hand, shows it to be more central to her narrative-political concerns.20

Overcoming “Slave Mentalities”

At many points in her diary Kanno asserts her sincerity, frankness, and truthfulness. In doing so she set up her truths, that is, her anarchist truths, against those of the State; she often counterposed the worthiness of her beliefs and the justness of her Cause to the worthlessness of the existing political system and the injustice of her accusers. She would, she said at the beginning of her prison diary, write it “very frankly” without “whitewashing” herself and without any “pretense”; for she had no desire to “deceive” herself, much less anyone else.21 Toward the end of her diary, which was meant to be a true record of her thoughts and feelings from the day she “received the death sentence until [she would] mount the scaffold,” she repeated that she would “reveal [her] true feelings” regardless of how “others measure[d] her worth”: “If I can end my life without deceiving myself,” she wrote, “I will be content.”22

Kanno equated her frankness and truthfulness with a freedom that was in direct contrast with her opponents’ lies, bad faith, and even “slavery” to the existing political system and hegemonic ideology.Appearances notwithstanding, her very incarceration reflected her freedom for it was the direct result of her free thinking. In the following passage the message is quite clear: her body might have been “in chains” but her spirit remained free.

Poor, pathetic judges! In order to maintain your standing, solely to safeguard your own positions [deleted by the author: knowing it to be unjust, knowing it to be outrageous], knowing [that inhuman decision] it to be unjust, knowing it to be outrageous, you must have been compelled to hand down that inhuman decision.

Poor, pathetic judges! Slaves of the government! More than being angered by you, I pity you. Here am I constrained by this window, yet I spread my wings in the world of thought; you appear to be shackled or restricted by no one, yet in truth you are pitiable human beings—pitiable [brutes] human beings who live your lives as humans but have no human worth. One may live a hundred years without freedom, in servitude, but what would such a life be worth? Poor, pathetic slaves! Poor pathetic judges!23

She claimed an ability to think independently and to be true to her ideals, which meant that she would remain free despite her physical bonds. Implicitly, her reference to the possibility of judges living long lives, unlike herself, suggested that she would be free even at the moment when she mounted the scaffold. Judges and their like, on the other hand, were in metaphorical chains so long as they continued to live a lie, or to live their lives in ideological slavery. All this has a bearing on the third theme identified above, “victory in defeat,” for Kanno’s construction of judges’ lives as a lie and thus a living death was in direct contrast with her laying claim to life in death. Despite appearances, her death by execution would both symbolize freedom and truth and revivify them through a regeneration of anarchism.

Much of the above suggests that for Kanno, being truly human, not being enslaved or even “brutish,” not only necessitated the exercise of free thinking or will, it also required the capacity or, rather, the freedom to feel. If here she was speaking as a woman, she did not make explicit an acceptance of the common essentialist equation of “femininity” with emotionalism as opposed to rationality, but rather referred to the natural “human” emotions of ordinary “people.” Specifically, apart from observing that, unlike herself, “Oriental heroes” were noteworthy for their suppression of their emotions, on another occasion she intimated that judges were not permitted to act upon their natural human feelings or even, perhaps, their natural love of others. Elsewhere she had referred to the apparent “heartlessness” of a particular prosecutor.24 Both in an earlier declaration and in her diary she wavered between first thinking Prosecutor Taketomi Wataru heartless and then believing him to be at least partly human after all. She did remain suspicious of him—for good reason, since Taketomi bragged later about how he had tricked Kanno into “talking” by his shows of benevolence—but perhaps she did not want to believe that even a prosecutor could be entirely evil, or truly a “class enemy.”25 On the other hand, it may be significant that she changed her mind about him after an ostensibly private, “off the record” conversation about her back­ground.26 She did suggest that the true Taketomi had been revealed at that point because only then did he cast off for a moment the official constraints on his freedom, allowing himself to feel as a human being.

We cannot lose sight of the fact that in her last writings Kanno spoke mainly as an anarchist, for anarchists, and also to them. The implicit message that she was sending to her comrades was that, notwithstanding prison bars and other political constraints on their ability to act, she/they were still in possession of the sort of freedom that mattered. Merely in continuing to give vent to their true/human feelings, to think critically and to be honest about their convictions, they were the subjects of their

20. I am well aware of and, in general, share the general skepticism in scholarly circles today regarding intentionality—the ability of scholars to get into the heads of their subjects or to be privy to their inner motives. As will be seen, however, John Beverley and other commentators on standpoint or testimonial literature (accounts of the world seen from the margins or the eyes of the “colonized”) have argued that one of its features is a relative transparency of intention in narrative-political strategies. This is not to say, however, that narrative intention is not in some ways inevitably undermined. Intended meaning is continually deferred in the act or process of writing.


22. Kanno, Diary (22 January 1911), in Zenshu, II, pp. 263-64.


24. Kanno had referred to this prosecutor’s heartlessness in an earlier statement to interrogators (Prison Declaration, no. 1 [2 June 1910], in Shimizu, Zenshu, III, pp. 195-96).

25. It is possible that Kanno’s reappraisal of Prosecutor Taketomi was derived from humanist-anarchist notions of an intrinsic goodness in people, or even from a Christian-influenced desire to love and forgive others. She had been baptized a Christian in 1903 and had been involved in Christian groups for some years, though she rejected Christianity for socialist materialism well before her arrest; her presentation of herself as a materialist is quite clear in her diary.

own destiny in a way that their political opponents—"slaves of the government"—could never be.

Often in her diary Kanno challenged the official view of the high treason case. She wanted to reveal the real truth of the affair: the court's judgment, for example, contained "unjust distortions" in that it implicated even innocent comrades in the conspiracy; some were to be "cast into the abyss of death" merely "because they were anarchists," despite the fact that they had not been involved in the plans for insurrection and imperial assassination. 26 The injustice of the trial came as no surprise to her—her past experience having led her to see the outcome as "par for the course." She then asked rhetorically: "Wasn't it precisely because of such unjust trials and tyrannical authority that we came to conspire in this sort of plot?" 27 It would be foolish indeed to expect an authority she did not recognize to want to spare her comrades, she added. Three days later she retorted that it would be "more appropriate to call the incident a conspiracy tailor-made by public prosecutors than an anarchist conspiracy." 28 Then, two days after that, while noting that she was thankful that the sentences of twelve comrades had been reduced to life imprisonment by imperial pardon, she also suggested cynically that the authorities had intended all along to commute their sentences. Should it be deemed "admirable" or "cunning," she asked, that they did this (for ideological purposes) in order to represent the emperor as "merciful and just" both to the Japanese people and to foreign countries. 29 Finally, Kanno implied that she would find other ways to broadcast the real truth of the high treason case when she registered her intention to send the full text of the court's judgment to comrades in America. 30 This she noted in the last entry in her diary on 24 January 1911, which unbeknownst to her was the day her eleven comrades were executed and the day before her own hanging.

The above examples indicate various things that were both interrelated and intrinsically connected with Kanno's defense of anarchism. She not only defended herself, countering existing or potential representations of her ideas, character, and life, but also contested the official version of the high treason case. Further, she questioned the truths of her opponents by criticizing the existing socio-political system. This she did on a number of levels. We saw above that she refused to recognize the authority of the State, but she rejected the authority of institutionalized religion as well. On one occasion she wrote of the prison chaplain that [H]e encouraged me to find solace in religion as well. I replied that I could hardly have more peace of mind than at present. [Deleted: For a true anarchist, it's a bit of a joke that an anarchist who categorically denies all power should suddenly in the face of death cling to one such power, the Amida Buddha, claiming he [a fellow anarchist] has found peace of mind. 31

Here we have another suggestion of a "slave mentality." Kanno insisted that, unlike this comrade who felt a need to cling to an external spiritual power, she was able to draw on an inner strength: "the preparedness and solace" that came from her faith in a true and just Cause. Elsewhere she equated religious ritual and belief with "superstition," stating that she was "not so superstitious as to believe that sutras could save souls"; she did not in fact believe that the soul survived. 32

In sum, in her capacity as anarchist spokesperson, Kanno found numerous ways to distance herself from convention in the realms of politics, spirituality, and so on. Furthermore, her very manner of self-expression as shown in her diary and letters was far from conventional. It was highly unusual for a woman then to lay claim to political subjectivity by speaking "from the margins" (even if now she did not speak primarily as a woman), consistently setting herself apart from the society of her day 33 —indeed, not merely apart from, but morally and politically above a socio-political system which, she argued, was founded on "slavery." The subject-position she claimed in her last writings was itself an indication of her resistance.

Navigators to a New World

Both in her diary and in her letters Kanno often emphasized her preparedness and resolution, partly no doubt in order to set her friends’ minds at rest about how she was bearing up under the strain of facing execution. 34 She said that the "peace of mind" she found in her last days derived from embracing "in death a precious feeling of self-respect and wonderful solace in being a sacrifice for the Cause." It had nothing to do with religion. She did, however, draw a parallel between the sacrifice for the Cause of herself and her comrades and that of Jesus Christ, for "it was only after many sacrifices were made following the coming of

33. Ibid. (January 23), pp. 266-67. Here she sets up the truth of scientific (socialist) materialism in opposition to Buddhism. Moreover, her asking to be buried in the convict graveyard, not in the grounds of a temple, probably reflected her rejection of institutionalized religion and her identification with other recipients of State “justice.” She actually said that while she really wanted to be buried with her sister, whose grave was at a temple named Shoshunji, she did not like the priests there. And she even went so far as to say that, far from following the proprieties of funereal ritual, it would not matter to her if her ashes were “scattered to the wind or thrown into the river.”
34. Another early example of this was Kageyama-Fukuda Hideko, by the time a veteran of the earlier popular rights movement and an active socialist-feminist. In 1904 she had written an autobiography entitled Warawa no Hanshogai (My life so far), which was published in Nikkonjin no Jiden, Vol. 6 (Tokyo: Heibonsha, 1980). This is discussed in Vera Mackie, Creating Socialist Women in Japan: Gender, Labour and Activism, 1900-1937 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), chapter 1.
In her repeated use of metaphors of regeneration, revivification, rebirth, and “reincarnation,” what she was saying to her/their accusers was tantamount to a taunt that they had won only this round of the fight.

An example of this cycles of life/nature theme was one of the \textit{tanka} she included in her diary:

\begin{quote}
{\textbf{Do not search for a seed lost in a field—
pray wait for a day in spring with an east wind blowing.}}
\end{quote}

Almost certainly, the “seed” (or seeds) was an allegory for herself, for all those sentenced to death, or even for anarchism—which would put forth life again, “naturally,” under the right conditions. Elsewhere, after speaking of the contrast between those who were fearful of government persecution and those who did not abandon the struggle and therefore had to die, she added, “The tall tree falls only to put forth new shoots again.”

Kanno Suga was among the many authors of resistance literature in the modern world who, in representing a group opposed to hegemonic power structures and practices, practice a subversion that might be focused upon the nation-State, or even upon colonial or neo-colonial institutions, yet can also subvert, even if unintentionally, the very institution of literature. And this remark she followed with another, averring the coming (again?) of a “spring-time” in the “world of thought”: “Those like her “who willingly took on the role of pioneers had] no need to look back to past days of autumn and winter”; they must look ahead, “forge ahead, looking toward the bright future anticipated.” She appeared to be confusing two distinct views of time here, linear and cyclical, since one would think that “dark” days of autumn and winter would come again after the brightness of spring. But perhaps she merely meant to say that in any struggle there would be continual successes and reversals. In any case, here she spoke explicitly of the new life that would be generated from the government’s suppression of anarchism. In part this implied that she found consolation in an expectation of revolutionary immortality, while also using it as a weapon against the State. Thus the “victory in defeat” or “life in death” motif that runs throughout her diary.

\textbf{Kanno’s Prison Writings as Testimonial Autobiographical Literature}

Powering and defining centers, margins, boundaries, and grounds of action in the West, traditional “autobiography” has been implicated in a specific notion of “selfhood.” This Enlightenment “self,” ontologically identical to other “I’s,” sees its destiny in a teleological narrative enshrining the “individual” and “his” uniqueness.

Yet autobiographical practices can be productive...as the subject, articulating problems of identity and identification, struggles against coercive calls to a “universal humanity.” For the marginalized woman,

\begin{quote}
{\textit{The tall tree falls only to put forth new shoots again.} “Kanno}
\end{quote}

\begin{quote}
\begin{itemize}
\item The Seeds of New Growth
\item It didn’t seem to matter much to Kanno that she might mix her metaphors. She was unconcerned, apparently, about putting into implicit contradiction metaphors of linear progress and cyclical growth. The latter might imply that from an apparent “death” will come new life, but it also suggests ever-repeating cycles of decay and regeneration. But presumably, Kanno’s many allegorical references—to herself and possibly also to her co-defendants as “new shoots” or “seed/s” that would bring forth new life in the spring, to their having contributed to a “spring-time” in the “world of thought,” to their sacrifices “bearing fruit” in days to come—were simply designed to express the idea that the anarchist movement would survive, the Cause would live on.
\end{itemize}
\end{quote}

37. Ibid., p. 251.
38. Ibid. (January 20), p. 255.
autobiographical language may serve as a coinage that purchases entry into the social and discursive economy. Deploying autobiographical practices that go against the grain, she may constitute an "I" that becomes a place of creative and, by implication, political intervention.

Much of what Sidonie Smith and Julia Watson have to say about alternative (non-liberal-humanist) autobiographical practices in their *De/Colonizing the Subject: The Politics of Gender in Women's Autobiography*, is quite pertinent to Kanno’s prison diary. Other essays included in this same volume, which will be discussed further below, are even more to the point. It may well be possible to read Kanno’s diary and her last letters specifically in terms of gendered identities and authorial strategies, but I prefer to follow Kanno’s own lead. This is not to privilege any one form of political oppression or any one standpoint over another, but simply to emphasize that during her political career Kanno adopted multiple speaking positions. She had long been a vocal critic of women’s oppression, but at the end of her life she spoke first and foremost as an anarchist; now she spoke only occasionally as a woman or a “feminist.” In her diary Kanno actually seemed to want to distance herself from other women (at least at one point, when she intimated that her personal determination not to become a victim of patriarchy and capitalism had saved her from becoming a “prostitute or girl-spin­ner”)43. This does not necessarily indicate a lack of sympathy and solidarity with other women, however. Furthermore, even if she felt that to speak as a woman in such a situation would mean that she would not be taken as seriously, her prioritizing her anarchist voice was probably not meant to deny other political commitments, but rather to position herself by reference to the political standpoint she shared with her sentenced comrades. What that suggests, in turn, is that she also spoke directly to the immediate political context in which she wrote: prison, and a coming execution for a specific political crime associated by her accusers with “anarchism.”

As for Kanno’s nationality, more than once she spoke as an internationalist in her late writings but never once explicitly as a “Japanese.” Indeed, the new nation of Japan was one of her political targets; her one reference to a shared culture with “Japanese.” Indeed, the new nation of Japan was one of her political targets; her one reference to a shared culture with “internationalist” Osugi Sakae. See Byron K. Marshall, trans., *The Autobiography of Osugi Sakae* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1992). Kaneko Fumiko (1903-1926), was also partly self-defense, partly indictment of state and society, very personal, and at times quite emotional.45 In this and other ways Kaneko’s prison memoirs had more in common with Kanno’s last texts than with Kotoku’s.

Whether one considers strategic intention, political content, or form, however, the parallels between Kanno’s works of resistance literature and those of others do not stop at Japan’s national boundaries. As I have already noted, there are strong parallels between her late prison writings and the “testimonial” form of women’s resistance literature autobiographied by various authors in relation to literature in the neo-colonial “Third World.” Particularly thought-provoking is John Beverley’s discussion of defining characteristics of this postwar genre in its Latin American form, even if he does see it as largely resistance to neo-colonialism.46 Kanno did not speak primarily as a woman, as we have seen, and hers was not specifically an anti-colonial struggle; nevertheless, differences of time, culture, nation, or the specific State or other power confronted should not blind us to the similarities between texts produced by writers who are “colonized” by, and pit themselves against, social institutions of power. Moreover, Caren Kaplen states that the institutions subverted in such “out-law” genres of autobiography as “testimonial” may include the institution of literature itself. This subversion may only be implicit, as it was in Kanno’s case, but it is partly because of it that the works of such authors have been produced by “fellow” nationals, it would be with writings by prewar Japanese leftists—particularly those writings produced by men and women in prison and, even more particularly, with those produced by political detainees under sentence of death. Kotoku’s last work, his essay on violent revolution, was not unlike Kanno’s diary in being a defense of himself, of international anarchism, and of the ideas and actions of his Japanese comrades, as well as an indictment of his accusers. Stylistically, however, his was a treatise, not a diary written in a personal, “autobiographical” style;44 it did not engage with the emotions of the moment as directly as Kanno’s diary, though this did not make the diary any less revolutionary than the “political treatise.”

Another prison work, produced fifteen or so years later by another would-be regicide, the “nihilist” Kaneko Fumiko (1903-1926), was also partly self-defense, partly indictment of state and society, very personal, and at times quite emotional.45 In this and other ways Kaneko’s prison memoirs had more in common with Kanno’s last texts than with Kotoku’s.

43. Kanno wrote in her diary on January 23 that this personal victory was due to her “unwillingness to accept defeat.” A further example of her distancing herself from other women might have been an admission (attributed to her by a lawyer, Hiraide Shu) of a sense of shame at being a woman: “For me the only disappointing thing is that the [XX—two characters censored: ‘plan’ or ‘revolution?’] ended in complete [XX—‘failure!’]. It’s because I’m a woman—and women lack spirit—this is my shame.” Kanno had said earlier that she regretted that foolish mistakes had led to her arrest and thus to the failure of their plans. Nonetheless, the statement may not be entirely accurate because it is derived only from Hiraide’s report of what she said in the Supreme Court in his fictionalized account of the trial. I am not entirely convinced of their accuracy. Hiraide Shu, cited in Itoya, *Kanno Suga*, p. 197.
44. This difference is not surprising as Kotoku was known as a theorist while Kanno explicitly styled herself as an activist. However, it was common for socialist women to write autobiographical works in prison in prewar and wartime Japan. In fact, I cannot recall any prison writings by women that were not memoirs of some kind—though prison autobiographical works were not the particular preserve of women. An early example of one by a man that was personal in style was by well-known anarchist, Osugi Sakae. See Byron K. Marshall, trans., *The Autobiography of Osugi Sakae* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1992).
45. On Kaneko Fumiko’s autobiography, see Bowen Raddeker, “Prison-Life-Story of Kaneko Fumiko.” Kaneko, like Kanno, spoke at times as a woman, but she prioritized her “nihilist” voice because it was nihilism she was defending while in prison and on trial for high treason. Her preference in this regard was also due, in part, to the judges’ insistence on seeing her as an anarchist.
46. Beverley, “The Margin at the Center,” pp. 91-114. It should be noted that Beverley includes in this genre of testimonio—“whose unit of narration is usually a ‘life’ or a significant life experience”—both autobiographies or autobiographical novels and confessions, memoirs, and diaries.
47. Japanese sources have debated the “literary merits” of Kanno Suga’s writings (both her early journalistic works and her prison diary), at least
Literature

By the Margin of Literature


The “legal” connotation implicit in its convention implies a pledge of honesty on the part of the narrator that the listener/reader is bound to respect.

This is a “real” not a fictional narrator speaking the truth about a real (and shared) situation. The particular “truth-effect” of the form is intimately connected with its collective authorial voice, whereby the narrator speaks partly as representative for a group (socialists, for example, or women), for a class or community in opposition to hegemonic structures of power and dominant modes of representation. Finally, this particular form of resistance literature, according to Beverly, speaks to a perceived need for general social change in the readers’ world.

Kanno Suga not only spoke “from the margins” of society, both for herself and for a group but, as if facing a jury, she “testified” to the need for broad social change in her world. Firstly, she spoke from the margins for herself, for her comrades and, less often (only in these last writings), for women or others who suffered oppression in their struggle for a more just society. As if to a jury, she spoke the “real truth,” the truth of the high treason affair and of the real condition of Meiji society. She did so in a personal effort not to be silenced or defeated, as part of a collective struggle for social change that would be ongoing after her death. Besides her comrades, the intended audience of her diary also included political opponents such as judges. On occasion she addressed them directly. This “jury” before whom she defended and justified herself, therefore, comprised “impartial” participants in the trial, including her political opponents, and also sympathetic comrades and the defendants’ lawyers, although these lawyers were not necessarily sympathetic toward the “ringleader,” Kanno.

Kanno Suga’s diary was her adopting a speaking position that combined the voice of the individual author or subject with a collective voice in a “discourse of situation” or “politics of location.” Concerning the marginalized/‘colonized’ location/s from which such authors speak, Beverley also notes that, “testimonio-like texts have existed for a long time at the margin of literature, representing in particular those subjects—the child, the ‘native’, the woman, the insane, the criminal, the proletarian—excluded from authorized representation.”

Beverley also emphasizes the transparency of authorial intention: the term testimonio/testimony literally refers to “the act of testifying or bearing witness in a legal or religious sense.” Hence, testimonial narration has to involve an urgency to communicate, a problem of repression, poverty, subalternity, imprisonment, struggle for survival, implicated in the act of narration itself. The position of the reader of testimonio is akin to that of a jury member in a courtroom. Unlike the novel, testimonio promises by definition to be primarily concerned with sincerity rather than literariness.

Kanno’s sense of a national and international anarchist collective mission was clearer than that of the later anarchistic “nihilist,” Kaneko Fumiko, who ultimately found common cause only with a small group of Korean nihilists in Japan. Kaneko was nevertheless quite explicit in the preface to her prison autobiography about its not being written out of what Kaplan calls a desire for “a book of [her] own,” but rather for specific socio-political, pedagogic purposes. She said she spoke for children and the powerless lower classes. Elsewhere in the text she indicated that she spoke also for the colonized (e.g., Koreans) and for women.

An example of how Kanno saw the struggle as partly a personal achievement was mentioned above in another connection: how she attributed to her “unwillingness to accept defeat” the fact that she had not suffered the same fate as the many women forced to become prostitutes or “girl spinners.” Elsewhere, however, she also claimed that her personal victory was the direct result of a determination she shared with others.

On the sympathetic attitude toward Kotoko of one of the defendants’ lawyers, Hiraiide Shu, and his ambivalent, sometimes hostile attitude toward Kanno, see Jay Rubin, Injurious to Public Morals: Writers and the Meiji State (Seattle and London: University of Washington Press, 1984), pp. 162-66. It is clear in her diary and letters that Kanno felt constrained to justify herself even to her comrades because of her feelings of guilt over inadvertently involving the innocent some who had not been involved in the “conspiracy.” She also expressed herself
As to her speaking to a need for social change, we have seen how in her last “testimonios” Kanno often voiced her opposition to the prevailing socio-political system. This she did powerfully through her ascription of metaphors of bondage or slavery to her ostensibly free opponents—who spoke for a system she equated with stagnation or even regression. Connected to this “bearing witness” to the need for social change, moreover, is a further parallel between her “testimonios” and others, because for Beverley “bearing witness” is one indicator of how “transparent” testimonial literature is in authorial/political intention.

Kanno was quite transparent in her political intentions in this and other respects already noted, but a further suggestion of her transparency was her unconcern with what he calls “literariness,” for however “flowery” Kanno was in her expressive style, I very much doubt that she set out to leave behind her a great work of “literature.” Even the poetry in this “poetic diary,” however figurative, was often an expression of her revolutionary purpose.

**Conclusion**

If Beverley is right to define testimonial literature by reference to its promise of sincerity rather than literariness, Kanno’s use of “death as life” (destruction-construction or “reincarnation”) metaphors of revolutionary change shows how explicitly political a sincerity this can be. In sum, therefore, I think we can see that for various reasons Kanno Suga’s late writings were a clear example of “testimonial resistance literature” or, alternatively, “testimonial out-law autobiography.” They constituted a literature of resistance not merely because through them she continued to resist, nor only because she resisted (in liberal-humanist style) by constructing herself as a free, independent subject. Although she did, in fact, do both, what is more to the point is that her object was not “a book of her own,” as Kaplan puts it, not a great work expressing individual uniqueness or genius or worth; rather it was one chapter in a “collective document” valorizing a collective mission. Thus, Kanno Suga was among the many authors of resistance literature in the modern world who, in representing a group opposed to hegemonic power structures and practices, practice a subversion that might be focused upon the nation-State, or even upon colonial or neo-colonial institutions, yet can also subvert, even if unintentionally, the very institution of literature. However attuned to the “crime” of anarchism and its defense, hers was a voice from a number of different yet interrelated “margins”—or “colonized” subject-positions.
Unjuk Rasa or Conscious Protest? 
Resistance Strategies of Indonesian Women Workers

This paper explores the ways in which Indonesian women workers actively devise strategies through which they can counteract the exploitative practices typical of their working environments and use their labor in ways that are more beneficial to them. These strategies—sometimes dismissed as “emotional displays” (unjuk rasa) rather than conscious protests—are examined in a manner that deemphasizes divisions between formal labor struggles and the alternatives that workers devise, since it is clear that women are involved in both. The authors stress that the awareness of the importance of women’s strategies should not obliterate the recognition of the personal and structural conditions that may limit and repress women’s participation in more collective, formal, and overt labor struggles in Indonesia. This paper makes use of Scott’s notion of “everyday forms of resistance,” pointing out that these forms differ from institutionalized struggles in that “everyday resistance is informal, often covert, and concerned largely with immediate de facto gains.” The paper advocates an actor-oriented approach that shows the agency of individuals and groups in shaping social change, as well as the force of the structural conditions that frame their lives and choices. The authors acknowledge that the scarcity of suitable empirical information makes it difficult to document this approach in detail.

by Ines Smyth and Mies Grijns

In this paper we explore the strategies devised by Indonesian women workers to counteract exploitation in their working environments and we examine the ways in which they use employment opportunities to their advantage. Our analysis downplays the division between formal and alternative kinds of labor struggles since women are involved in both. Awareness of the importance of alternative forms of resistance should not overshadow the personal and structural conditions that may limit the participation of women in more collective, formal, and overt labor struggles in Indonesia. More broadly, this paper focuses on women’s active participation in processes of economic and social change, challenging the prevalent image of women as docile workers.

We chose Indonesia, and in particular Java, as our case study for several reasons. For one thing, the notions of passivity and docility—in gender and in labor terms—are often applied to Asian women and to Muslim women especially. (The vast majority of Indonesia’s population is Muslim.) In addition, Indonesia is a country with a history of repressive labor relations and forceful suppression of formal modes of protest. For these reasons the role that Indonesian women play in labor activism is not often recognized.

Most studies of workers’ actions, including those that include women workers, focus on formal, organized forms of resistance. This paper studies alternative strategies as well, making use of J. C. Scott’s notion of “everyday forms of resistance.” In contrast to forms of resistance that are characteristic of institutionalized labor struggles, Scott states that “everyday resistance is informal, covert, and concerned largely with immediate, de facto gains.” Evidence gained from discussions in our circle of nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), as well as from our own research, underscores the importance of “everyday forms of resistance” in the case of Indonesian women workers. Yet very little has been written on this subject.

Our case studies in this paper are based, for the most part, on anecdotal evidence. We recognize the limits of this approach, but hope that our study stimulates a greater degree of concern in the academic community for the struggles of Indonesian women workers.

Docile Women or Militant Workers?

There are many noteworthy studies of women’s subordination worldwide, especially in the context of the processes of economic and social development. However, many questions remain unanswered and many assumptions have gone unchallenged. One issue that is receiving increased attention is the vague but persistent portrayal of women in countries of the South as docile and passive. Indeed, feminist scholarship in the West

1. Or “display of feelings.” This is the term commonly used to refer to recent strikes in Java. According to Razif the term indicates the apolitical nature of such forms of protest. See Razif, “The Working Class: Defeated by History, Mobilised by History,” in Indonesia’s Emerging Proletariat: Workers and Their Struggles, ed. D. Bouchier (Monash: Monash University, 1994), Annual Indonesia Lecture Series, no. 17.
2. This does not imply that the case of Indonesia can be used to generalize about other Asian, or other Muslim, countries.

Conditions of work in most industries are bad for both men and women. Research...shows that large firms, both domestic and foreign-owned, provide only basic physical amenities for their workers.

(Cartoon by Tom Meyer/The Chronicle [San Francisco]. Reprinted with permission.)

documented women's resistance struggles against political and economic processes such as structural adjustment and other "recovery" programs that threaten the material security of themselves and their families. 8

Productive work is one of the ways in which people shape the world around them. Women's access to employment and to earnings is fundamental to their ability to ensure personal survival and social recognition. This access, however, is continually being altered and renegotiated because of the ongoing transformation of the structures of production. In recent decades some of these transformations have been particularly dramatic, especially in the wake of the process of rapid industrialization that is under way in so many countries. 9

Women have always been involved in the manufacture of goods either for their own use or for gain, but the growth of industrialization in developing countries since the 1970s has given women new employment opportunities in the industrial sector. This is a complex phenomenon. The involvement of women in industrial production has proceeded at an uneven pace in recent decades and it has involved countries and regions very differently. Interpretations of the benefits that women derive from this increased participation in the industrial workforce differ as well.

These complexities aside, it cannot be denied that large numbers of women are now working in industry, either in modern, technically advanced branches and enterprises or, more frequently, in home-based industries or workshops of limited size and technical sophistication. 10

Many studies of women's work in the manufacturing sector agree that the involvement of female workers in trade unions and other labor-based organizations and activities is relatively low. Reasons given for this low level of participation include at least these five:

1. At the most general level, women's limited involvement in labor activities may be attributed to the restrictive laws and heavy-handed actions enforced by repressive governments such as Indonesia's.

2. Poor support and even hostility from male trade unionists prevent women from participating and reaching leadership positions in organized labor movements. 11


3. Trade unions assume that women are dependent on male breadwinners; this influences the labor-related demands they raise and the style of their labor actions, affecting, in turn, the relevance and accessibility of these actions to female workers.12 Similar problems have been noted in Western contexts as well.13

4. The characteristics of women workers themselves can work against their own best interests. Women who are young and inexperienced, or who, when older, have family responsibilities that make them reluctant to jeopardize their earnings, are hesitant to join in overt labor confrontations. These very characteristics, together with the fact that women are cheaper to employ, make them attractive as workers in the first place.14 Managers and employers in Indonesia freely admit that they prefer female workers because they see them as malleable, easy to control, and easy to intimidate.15

5. Employers' practices (in the selection of younger, inexperienced, migrant workers) combine with the dominance of certain cultural norms of patriarchal control outside the factories.16 C. Mather explores this complex reality in the case of Indonesia, observing that the behavior of female workers in the highly industrialized region of Tangerang in West Java is regulated through an alliance between local employers and Islamic leaders.17 In her study, Mather examines the use by local elites of new relations of production to reinterpret traditional patriarchal norms.

Each of the five explanations cited above points to specific historical circumstances that discourage women's participation in labor struggles. Taken as a body, they perpetuate the notion of female docility by representing women as victims of economic systems that make use of their labor in the most exploitative manner possible, or of cultural constructs that demand submission in the home and at work.

Studies show, however, that the situation in many Asian countries, as well as in other regions of the world, is even more complex.18 The growth in women's militancy has been particularly noticeable in the export-industries of South Korea, the Philippines, Thailand, Malaysia, and Sri Lanka.19 The nature and extent of women's participation and the levels of their leadership in the organized labor movement differ from country to country. Geographical and sectoral factors account for some of these differences. Additional factors include the maturity of particular industries and of the labor movement itself and the relations between and among workers, and between workers and employers, relations that shape the "dynamics of the workplace" in specific firms and sectors.20

The literature also shows that the nature of industrialization and expressed dissatisfaction with the organized labor movement—or with the repressive measures directed against labor organizing—have given rise to alternative forms of organization and protest.21 Nongovernmental organizations have played an important role in developing alternative forms of labor organizing. Though community-focused for the most part,22 some NGOs have shown an explicit concern for the welfare of female workers, especially in situations in which overt actions are restricted by a repressive political system.23 In the case of Indonesia, for example, the NGO Yasanti has successfully used a cooperative form of organization to build solidarity among female workers.24 Another NGO, Kalyanamitra, is engaged in lobbying, training, and support initiatives for and with women workers.

In several other Asian countries women workers associations are bridging the gap "between factory and community,"25 giving women the opportunity to deal with issues normally overlooked or downplayed by trade unions. These alternative forms of labor actions still involve collective and planned efforts to improve workers' pay, working conditions, and career prospects. But female workers in Asia are also developing spontaneous forms of resistance in pursuit of the same labor objectives.

In several countries, for example, there were reports of incidents of "mass hysteria" among young female workers throughout the 1970s and early 1980s. Reasons typically given for these incidents include a variety of social, medical, and psychological factors: lack of nearby family support, a distaste for menstruation among Muslims(!), the absence of hygienic facilities in the workplace, and the extreme monotony of the

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work. Scott, p. 345.

Our interpretation, however, is similar to that offered by R. Grossman, who perceives them to be acts of sabotage and protest called into play when more conventional forms of struggle are prohibited or extremely difficult. This analysis can be expanded and refined by recalling Scott’s notion of “everyday forms of resistance.” According to Scott, different forms of labor control give rise to distinctive forms of resistance. Furthermore, forms of resistance may not necessarily be directed at the source of exploitation and control, but might be used in a practical way, for the satisfaction of immediate needs. Characteristically, these forms of resistance are often individual in nature. The observations of Grossman and Scott will be used in our analyses of the actions undertaken by Indonesian female workers.

Our focus on women naturally entails a gender-aware analysis of labor-related issues. This kind of analysis leads us to expand on Grossman’s observation: women’s strategies as workers are a response not only to forms of labor control but also to gender-related domination. In other words, the types of resistance that women (and men) adopt must strike a balance between opposition to work-based forms of control and exploitation and conformity to accepted modes of gendered behavior. This balance does not correspond to what Scott calls “routine compliance,” or to the way in which the powerless wear a “protective disguise” in their exchanges with the powerful. Women’s resistance—of the type discussed here—is not directed against gender-related domination in the same way that poor peasants resist the rich and powerful. Rather, women’s resistance takes place against the diffuse background of socially defined gender roles and relations.

This perspective does not imply that these forms of resistance are innately “feminine,” as is suggested in some of the literature but rather that the forms are gendered. The influence that gender has on women’s strategies is understood in two ways: first, that gender norms define the social acceptability of particular forms of resistance, and second, that gender-based norms and practices, as well as authoritarian labor relations, dissuade women from participating in more overt and institutionalized labor activities.

**Industrialization and Women’s Employment in Indonesia**

Among Southeast Asian countries Indonesia is a relative newcomer to industrialization. Since the mid-1980s it has embarked on a strategy of export orientation, greatly expanding its manufacturing sector. It has to be remembered, however, that manufacturing absorbs only a small proportion of the labor force. The majority of Indonesian workers are employed in small-scale, rural enterprises, which are often subcontractors to larger firms. Furthermore, the industrialization process is proceeding with a high degree of spatial concentration. Most industries are located in Java, although some large plants processing primary resources are located in the Outer Islands.

The percentage of women in the labor force in Indonesia has been increasing steadily, from 32.7 percent in 1980 to 39.2 percent in 1990. The most noticeable increase—over 9 percent per year—is in urban areas. Agriculture, however, still attracts the largest percentage of women workers. In 1985, 64.7 percent of
of the female labor force worked in agriculture, 10.8 percent in industry, 16.7 percent in trade, and 7.0 percent in services.35

The majority of women in industrial occupations work in small-scale and cottage industries, as entrepreneurs, unpaid family labor, or wage workers. In larger enterprises, women are employed mainly as wage workers. They tend to be concentrated in labor-intensive, low-skilled, and poorly paid jobs.36

Among female wage workers a pattern is clear: older, married women work in the small-scale segment of industry, usually in rural areas; younger, unmarried women37 are more often found in the larger, urban-based manufacturing firms.38 In recent years, due to the expansion of export manufacturing, the number of large urban firms has risen considerably. The concentration of Indonesia's large industries in specific areas means that many of their workers, male and female, are necessarily migrants.

These characteristics of the female labor force help explain the low levels of labor militancy among women workers. Older women may have the personal confidence and experience necessary for labor activism, but these women work in industries in which the size of the enterprise and the social relations at the site favor paternalistic labor relations that discourage any form of organized labor activity.39 Workers employed in large, urban firms, on the other hand, are young and inexperienced migrants, already socialized into docility and as a consequence not inclined to join labor organizations. Signs are emerging, however, that this younger group is learning from the experiences of recent labor protests and simply from being in an increasingly industrial working-class environment.40

Wages of manufacturing workers in Indonesia are among the lowest in the world (between US$1.00 and US$3.00 per day).41 The wages of female workers tend to be even lower than those of men. One study shows that in urban manufacturing, 78 percent of women are concentrated in the four lowest income categories, compared to 28 percent of the men.42

Conditions of work in most industries are bad for both men and women. Research in West Java43 and in Jakarta44 shows that large firms, both domestic and foreign-owned, provide only basic physical amenities for their workers: poorly equipped toilet facilities, inadequate supplies of clean water, minimal medical services, cramped workplaces with little light and ventilation, no preventive measures against injuries or other health risks, and no protection or recourse against the physical abuse and sexual harassment directed against female workers. Working days of 10 to 15 hours are commonplace in large firms, overtime is often compulsory, and holidays are few and far between. Basic rights of female workers are also systematically ignored;45 for example, rights pertaining to menstruation and maternity leave, the right

37. It should be noted, however, that in large firms many workers are "married" whatever their real marital status. This is in order to avoid providing maternity leave and related benefits in the event of pregnancy. See V. Yusuf, Pembentukan Angkatan Kerja Industri Garmen Untuk Ekspor: Pengalaman dari Bandung, Jawa Barat (Bandung: West Java Rural Non-Farm Sector Research Project, 1991), Working Paper Series, no. B-13; and N. K. Hutagalung, M. Grijns, and B. White, "Women as Wage Workers," in Grijns et al., Different Women, Different Work.
39. This observation is based on our own impression of the situation, but it should be said that there is little information concerning labor relations and forms of resistance in small-scale industries. Our impression is confirmed by research on homeworkers, which clearly shows that kinship and familial-like relations weaken the position of homeworkers vis-a-vis their employers. See RDCMD-YTKI, Indonesian Women Workers in the Putting Out System (Jakarta: RDCMD-YTKI, in cooperation with Friedrich Ebert Stiftung, 1992).
to breast-feed, and rules governing night shifts (such as the provision of safe transportation). Child workers (between the ages of 10 and 14) have little or no protection. In urban areas child labor is increasing considerably, especially among girls.

Diverse Strategies

Even in the face of significant and numerous obstacles, industrial unrest in Indonesia is growing and women workers are increasingly becoming involved in labor actions. Women are joining in collective and planned actions and in direct confrontations, but our studies indicate that women are also participating in mass spontaneous protests and engaging in individual acts of resistance and indirect confrontations.

Although the right to strike is rarely respected by the Indonesian authorities, the 1990s witnessed a huge upsurge in the number of labor disputes and strikes. The International Labour Organisation (ILO) recorded 110 strikes in Indonesia in 1991, the majority of them taking place in the manufacturing sector. The Labor Union of Indonesia (SPSI) reported a record 1,130 strikes in 1994, compared with 312 in the previous year—an increase of about 350 percent and ten times higher than the number of strikes in 1991. Most of the labor actions took place in the “Jabotabek area,” which includes Jakarta and the districts of Bogor, Tangerang, and Bekasi. The Bandung and Medan areas were also important sites of labor unrest.

The number of workers involved in strikes is an indication of the widespread discontent and desperation of Indonesian workers. Estimates range from 1,000 to 20,000 laborers, with actions sometimes involving several businesses at the same time.

Increased international attention to the plight of Indonesian workers has been both an effect of the renewed labor unrest and a stimulus to its continuation. The unrest in 1994 was kindled in part by the complaint lodged with the ILO by the International Confederation of Free Trade Unions (ICFTU) and by the threat from the U.S. government to remove Indonesia from the Generalized System of Preferences unless it observed internationally recognized workers’ rights. (GSP trade benefits cover about 14 percent of Indonesian exports.)

Although the Indonesian media report extensively on developments on the labor front, the participation of women workers in strikes is seldom explicitly mentioned. Newspaper reports pay more attention to the educational level and place of origin of the workers than to their gender. That women are active can be deduced from the fact that labor activism has been strongest in the industries in which female workers are in the majority: textiles, garments, and footwear. An overview of all labor actions and strikes in Jakarta and West Java reported in the press in January 1994 shows that large numbers of women took part in at least thirty-seven of the sixty-seven cases.

Although participation of women in labor unrest is rarely acknowledged, there is one notable exception: the case of Marsinah, a young woman murdered in May 1993 in East Java. The media coverage of this case, which “galvanized the movement for labor rights as no other incident has in memory,” was extensive and is ongoing. Marsinah was posthumously named a “workers’ heroine” and she has become a symbol of the struggle for labor rights in Indonesia. From what can be gathered from the contradictory evidence, Marsinah was murdered after visiting the district military command to protest the dismissal of fellow workers at the Catur Putra Surya watch factory in Porong, Sidoarjo. (Earlier Marsinah had been part of a delegation of workers that had helped settle a two-day strike at the same factory.) Her body was found three days after her visit to the factory. Continued on p. 20
Labor Relations in Indonesia

One of the reasons why labor relations in Indonesia remain extremely oppressive is the absence of strong autonomous trade unions. In Indonesia only one labor organization is permitted: the SPSI (Serikat Pekerja Seluruh Indonesia or All-Indonesia Workers Union). This stricture violates the freedom of workers to organize under the provisions of the ILO's Convention no. 98, a convention ratified by the Indonesian government. SPSI was established in 1963 under the name FBSI (Federasi Buruh Seluruh Indonesia or All-Indonesia Workers Federation), replacing a number of smaller, more or less independent labor unions. These smaller unions were those that remained after the banning of the communist SOBSI (Sentral Organisas Buruh Seluruh Indonesia or All-Indonesia Labour Union Federation) and other labor groups that had been active in the 1950s and early 1960s. FBSI became the sole, state-sanctioned workers' organization. In 1985 it was transformed into the more centralized and hierarchical SPSI, virtually eliminating any role for sector-based unions. SPSI follows the code of the "Pancasila Industrial Relations" (Hubungan Industrial Pancasila [HIP]), which considers conventional trade union approaches as alien to Indonesian cultural values, favoring instead principles of partnership and harmony between workers and management, and the prevention of conflict.

Although their right to be involved in labor disputes was revoked by law in 1994, Indonesia's armed forces still play a critical role in labor disputes. According to the HIP code, all labor disputes are handled by employers, SPSI, and the government. In practice this means that the Department of Manpower, police, and local government officials are involved—along with territorial military commands. It is estimated that the enlistment of security forces adds around 30 percent to the cost of production!

SPSI is controlled by the government at all levels and its leadership is dominated by the ruling party, GOLKAR. Union branches at the factory level can only be established with the knowledge of the employer and they often include the participation of management's representatives. Strikes and lockouts are usually forbidden. Since 1993 a new regulation places strict limits on the length of time workers may be away from work during a labor dispute. Workers regard the factory-level SPSI units as being either powerless or as working against their interests and have called for their elimination. Finally, it is worthy of note that SPSI has failed to gain international recognition as a legitimate trade union. Recently SPSI has been confronted by competitors, especially the SBSI (Serikat Buruh Sejahter Indonesia or Prosperous Workers Union of Indonesia). Formed in 1992, this fledgling independent trade union concentrates on educating workers on their rights. SBSI has never sought official recognition, but this lack of legitimate status has been used by the government as an excuse for prosecuting SBSI leadership. Examples of government actions against SBSI are numerous. In February 1994, SBSI leaders were arrested after a meeting that was attended by some 90,000 workers. In April of the same year, the military blamed SBSI for fomenting widespread labor unrest in Medan and arrested several of its officials, among whom was at least one woman. In August 1994 SBSI's secretary-general, Dr. Muchtar Pakpahan, was arrested and condemned to four years in jail. According to Human Rights Watch/Asia the charges against Pakpahan were "a pretext for cracking down on the independent labor movement and [an effort to] deflect attention from the grievances of the workers."

Detailed information on the participation of women in the new labor organizations is impossible to find, although women workers seem to be active in the strikes and protest meetings organized by these labor groups. At least one of the national leaders of SBSI, who often acts as spokesperson, is a woman. There is a little more information available on the participation of women in SPSI, the official union. SPSI has a special office for women and child workers, but even this effort effectively reaches only a minority of women workers.

In 1992 the Indonesian government claimed that SPSI had a total membership of just over one million workers, representing less than 6 percent of the workforce. An estimated 40 percent of the total membership are women, but even one percent of SPSI's leaders are women.

Notes

9. Hadzi, "Workers and Working Class Politics in the 1990s."
10. Others are the SBM Setiaawan (Serikat Buruh Merdeka Setiaawan—Solidarity Independent Labour Union), which started in 1990 but has since closed, and two local unions that emerged in 1994: the Serikat Buruh Sejahtera Bogor (Bogor Genuine Labour Union) and the Serikat Buruh Tangerang (Tangerang Labour Union).
13. The verdict was later revised and Pakpahan was released after having spent six months in jail. See NRC Handelsblad, 7 November 1994; Indonesie Feiten en Meningen 17 (7 November 1994); Indonesie Feiten en Meningen 18, no. 6 (October 1995). After the riots around the PDI (Democratic Party Indonesia) headquarters in Jakarta in July 1996, however, he was detained again. See Indonesie Feiten en Meningen 19, no. 5 (December 1996).
17. Human Rights Watch/Asia, The Limits of Openness, p. 43.
military command in a hamlet 200 kilometers away. She had been tortured, raped, and murdered (probably by strangling).

Despite demonstrations and extensive publicity about the case in both the Indonesian and the international press, the investigation of Marsinah’s murder has been marred by delays and irregularities. The use of torture and other violations of the rights of workers have helped to strengthen the popular perception of a massive cover-up of the role of the military in Marsinah’s murder and in the broader suppression of labor unrest in Indonesia.

Sadly Marsinah is not the only Indonesian worker who has been murdered. In early 1994 a male factory worker named Rusli was killed after leading a strike in North Sumatra. Rusli’s murder contributed to the mass demonstrations that took place in Medan in April 1994.54 In May 1994 another young worker, Titi Sugianti, was found dead on the premises of the Bandung textile factory where she was employed. The authorities suggested a love affair as the cause (as they had done in the case of Marsinah), but the Indonesian press linked her death to a strike that was being planned for April. Titi Sugianti is being called “the second Marsinah.”55

The Marsinah and Sugianti cases show—in extremis—that women have played an active part in labor protests in Indonesia and have been at the receiving end of brutal repression. That Marsinah was not just killed, but also raped and tortured, shows that gender does play a role in the control of labor protests.

The vast majority of the demands made by Indonesian workers involve wages. Of particular concern is the variety of interpretations of Indonesia’s legal minimum wage law by employers.56 In 1993 the minimum wage was set at Rp 3,800 per day (less than US$2.00 per day) for Jakarta and a part of West Java (i.e., the Jabotabek area).57 Workers complained that they were being paid less than the minimum wage, that it was not clear which categories of workers were covered by the minimum wage law, and that the minimum wage did not even cover their minimum subsistence requirements (estimated to be at least Rp 7,000 per day). The wage situation of Indonesian workers is deplorable: actual wages decreased by about 1.9 percent per year from 1986 until 1993, while productivity increased during the same period. In 1992 the minimum wage covered only 63 percent of the minimum subsistence requirements (estimated to be at least Rp 7,000 per day). The wage situation of Indonesian workers is deplorable:

Another workers’ complaints concern the lack of transport (especially at night), the withholding of bonuses for the national Eid celebration (often the equivalent of a month’s pay), no or too little paid-annual-leave, no paid menstruation or maternity leave, an unreasonably long working day, no allowance for food, compulsory and unexpected overtime, problems of contract labor versus permanent employment, and the right to have trade union representatives who are at least elected by the workers themselves.

**Forms of Protest and Tactics of Resistance**

Particular forms of labor control give rise to distinctive forms of resistance. The size of an enterprise, for instance, influences the type of labor relations and thus the forms of protest. It is virtually impossible to go on strike or to undertake direct confrontations in a small family-run enterprise in which paternalistic labor relations exist. In recent years a variety of means have been developed to voice discontent at larger worksites. These include marches on offices of the Department of Manpower, the local police, and the House of Representatives; the display of posters; singing and dancing; banging on doors or equipment; mass walks down the main streets; going home and refusing to work; and sit-downs or sleep-ins at the offices of the local Department of Manpower.58 These open and confrontational actions have only been used by workers employed in large firms in an urban context.

The organization of labor also shapes forms of resistance. Workers who are paid piece wages—as many women are—are not inclined to engage in slow-down actions because this would result in a drop in their income. Production lines used in combination with target outputs per worker build up a lot of stress for women workers and undermine attempts to unite them. Conditions such as these lead to indirect forms of unjuk rasa, as in the cases mentioned by Mather,59 in which workers “air their grievances” through mass hysteria actions such as weeping and spreading rumors that their factory is haunted. At PT HM Sampoerna in Surabaya, for example, women workers rolled on the floor as if struck by epilepsy, voicing their complaints in various foreign languages.60

Recruitment practices discourage labor unrest as well. Often employees are encouraged to invite friends and relatives from their home village to come and work with them. Newcomers feel that they are under an obligation to the individuals who found them jobs, so they keep quiet at work, lest they cause trouble for their friends. These migrants tend to live together and form associations based on their place of origin. It follows, then, that their first loyalty is to their fellow villagers, not to their workplace colleagues.61

“Everyday forms of resistance” are developed by women workers to avoid the dangers of open protests and also to achieve immediate, personal gains. These forms of resistance are often coping strategies rather than direct challenges to the forces of

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56. For an extensive discussion of wage violations, see J. Themrin, “Development Policy” and Abdullah and Ety, “‘Would Be’ and ‘Make Believe’ in Crisis” and the “Preface” in Harris, *Prisoners of Progress*.
57. There are different (lower) minimum wages for other regions and for specific sectors of the labor market.
exploitation and control. Although workers may feel that they “cheat the system,” R. Saptari points out that their actions may in fact result in workers collaborating in the continuation of the system of exploitation. 63

One of the ways in which women workers resist unfavorable working conditions is by moving to a new workplace. Turnover in large- and medium-scale industries of many branches of manufacturing tends to be high among women workers. 64 In industries in the Majalaya area, where much of the country’s textile production is concentrated, factories have a turnover rate that runs as high as 50 percent. 65 Since it is difficult for women to gain seniority and thus higher-paying jobs, there is no incentive for them to stay long in the same workplace, women workers are constantly on the move seeking better pay or better working conditions.

Stealing materials and goods from factories is another common expression of resistance. This underlines Scott’s point that resistance is often very practical, for the satisfaction of immediate needs. According to one report on shoe factories, theft was both widespread and systematic, involving many workers and even supervisors. 66 In the course of our research we found numerous examples of stealing in a shoe factory and on tea and coconut plantations. 67 Supervisors were often accomplices.

In the kretek cigarette industry, women try to use only the upper layers of the mixture of tobacco and cloves to roll cigarettes. Since cloves are heavier than tobacco, they tend to sink to the bottom layers. Rolling cigarettes without cloves in the mixture is faster, and thus results in higher production and higher piece-rate earnings. 68 Similarly women workers on a tea plantation purposely wet the tea leaves they pick in order to offset the deductions they know are going to be made to allow for humidity.

This practice of women workers is an example of resistance in the sense that it serves a practical purpose for the satisfaction of immediate needs. In another factory women workers used abusive language in reply to scoldings by managers and they sent anonymous letters to their superiors threatening them with bodily harm. 69

Protests and complaints about wages or working conditions hardly ever reach management. Workers have to channel their requests through supervisors, who are either uncaring because they are well rewarded by the existing system or too scared to advertise them for fear of reprisals by their employers. 70

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We stated earlier that women act within the given constellation of gender roles and relations, rather than protesting against them. For example, the majority of demands made by protesting workers concern low wages. But never in any of these wage demands is it noted that women’s wages are lower than men’s, or that women workers are treated as singles with no family responsibilities. Likewise, women do not challenge the workplace hierarchy that reserves the top jobs for men and seldom allows women to supervise men.

High labor turnover is a gendered “weapon” of resistance. Women do elect to switch jobs on some occasions, but turnover is also a function of the short working life of women in export-oriented manufacturing. Married women and mothers do not last long in these industries because they have difficulty combining factory work with household chores and child care responsibilities.

A special problem for women workers is sexual harassment, ranging from defamatory gossip to physical violence. These are some of the examples found in published materials: women employees have been forced to strip to prove that they
are eligible for menstruation leave, one woman was made to stand several hours in the burning sun because she had applied for menstruation leave; another woman, in an advanced stage of pregnancy, was ordered to go about by squatting and standing as a punishment for being late for work; as part of a health check-up for new applicants, women have been required to undress completely and to pass a virginity test to demonstrate that they were unmarried.

Women workers do not engage in direct physical confrontations with their supervisors. We observed that tea-plantation workers, for instance, would protest against sexual harassment by a foreman, not by confronting him directly, but by moving to other sections of the plantation or by asking their husbands to threaten the man. Sexual harassment as such is seldom raised as an issue in workers’ protests, which again points to the gendered context of resistance.

Conclusions

In recent years there has been a resurgence of labor struggles and protest in Indonesia. The examples contained in this paper show that women workers have played an active part in these struggles. They have also devised alternative forms of resistance. We have shown that forms of protest and resistance vary according to the different types of labor controls imposed and that they are usually not directed at the source of control, although they can satisfy certain material needs. Furthermore, we have demonstrated that women develop resistance strategies within the context of dominant gender norms.

Women’s participation in labor struggles in Indonesia is increasing in numbers and in visibility. One source maintains that “women workers are the most progressive sector of Indonesian women today, as they are more easily united.” Though outside the scope of this paper, it is possible to speculate on the factors that may encourage further developments along these lines. With the passing of time industries mature and so do their workers. Even some government and SPSI officials have commented in public about how workers are gaining a better knowledge of their rights and are feeling more self-confident. Other factors include the rise in the level of women’s education and their growing mobility. These factors—combined with the considerable spread of mass communication media in the country—empower women workers by giving them greater access to information. Yet another factor could be recent increases in youth protest in general and the active involvement of students in particular. Finally, the expansion in the number and in the activities of NGOs, including those working with women, is also relevant. These factors provide women with better knowledge of work situations in Indonesia and abroad. This information enlarges their understanding of their rights as workers and of the benefits they can derive from work, enhances their personal assertiveness, and clarifies their expectations.

Much more information and analysis are needed to understand the connections between these factors and the forms of resistance that women adopt at work. Researching this paper has demonstrated the paucity of written material on women’s participation in overt and informal labor struggles in Indonesia. Activists and others involved in these struggles have extensive knowledge of the situation, and the national press has covered recent events and debates. But this knowledge is not readily accessible outside the country, nor has it been the subject of much academic reflection. Research and information-sharing are clearly needed to better understand women’s struggles as workers. Furthermore, a coherent actor-oriented approach, which we would have favored, demands a type of knowledge not available to us in the course of our research, namely, descriptions and interpretations by the actors themselves about the circumstances of their lives and work. Knowledge of this type is important in its own right and also for the possibility it creates of supporting Indonesian women’s fight against all forms of discrimination and exploitation.

In the introduction to his book, Weapons of the Weak, J. C. Scott states that looking into certain forms of political activity is the first step to acknowledging that the peasantry is not a “political nullity unless organized and led by outsiders.” We believe that it is important to take a similar step in relation to women workers, and especially the women in developing countries, whose image of passivity is still being propagated and whose real “ujuk rasa” or resistance has not yet been acknowledged.

70. Republika, 10 December 1993.
75. Scott, Weapons of the Weak.
76. inDEMO, The Other Portrait of Indonesia, p. 370.
81. S. M. P. Tjondronegoro suggests that for the Indonesian social sciences the government’s stress on national security and stability in political and military terms has prevented analyses of problems of conflict and power struggles: “Only in the 1990s, when a trend towards more openness in society appeared, did problems of social change through processes of competition and also conflict... become more digestible.” The Indonesian Social Science Agenda: A Personal View (Amsterdam: CASA, 24-26 November 1993), p. 36, Seminar on Social Science in Indonesia: Action and Reflection in ASEAN Perspective.
83. Scott, Weapons of the Weak, p. xv.

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The Kwangju Uprising and Poetry by Ko Chong-hui, a Writer of South Cholla

In this essay, the author translates and interprets the poetry of Ko Chong-hui, examining especially her treatment of gender, anti-colonial struggles, class, and the democracy movement in Korea. Ko Chong-hui wrote in a style that combined shamanistic narrative, the language of liberation theology, and feminism. She wrote about gender, nation, and class, destabilizing the totalizing effects of these narratives with depictions of individual women and the intersections of these women's lives with the Kwangju uprising of 1980. In her writing, we hear a voice in the process of articulation. Sometimes this voice falls into cliched rhetoric, but her writing also yields passages of vivid imagery, incisive social criticism, and deep insight.

by Ann Lee*

May 1980. My college classmates and I were preparing for graduation and worrying about work, relationships, and graduate school. I was going to do a summer internship before going to graduate school in the fall. I had no idea that students of my age and ethnicity were dying that month in the South Cholla province of Korea in the struggle that came to be known as the Kwangju uprising of 1980. This study is my belated attempt to understand one writer's narratives of that struggle.

I was first introduced to the poetry of Ko Chong-hui (1948-1991) when one of my students at the University of California, Berkeley, brought a poem by Ko to my class in Korean poetry. The poem was entitled "Paem kwa yoja" (The snake and the woman).1 When I first read it, I wondered whether the student had brought the poem, not because he really liked it, but because it was the kind of feminist rhetoric that he thought a female educator would approve of. The poem with its didactic tone seemed almost a parody of feminism.

I became reacquainted with Ko's writing years later as I began to research Korean women's poetry. I found that Ko was among the few Korean poets whose works could be clearly identified as feminist. This time, in contrast to my earlier reading of her poetry, I tried to read Ko's writing in terms of my own questions. I was particularly interested in Ko's many narratives about the Kwangju uprising.

In this essay, I translate and interpret the poetry of Ko Chong-hui, examining her treatment of gender, anti-colonial struggles, class, and the democracy movement in Korea (particularly the 1980 uprising in the city of Kwangju).

Feminism and Ko Chong-hui's Poetry

Western liberalism has identified the male with reason and intellect and has devalued emotion and materiality, which are considered to be female.2 Postmodern feminism has questioned the legacy of the Enlightenment dualisms of reason and emotion, mind and body, male and female, and has sought to demonstrate how concepts of rationality are based on the "exclusion and repression of the bodily realm and all that which, by analogy, it is held to represent—desire, materiality, emotion, need....." Feminism has called for an examination of how ideology affects our attitudes toward gender and literary critics have placed a new emphasis on the body in writing.4

Third-world women, however, have criticized Western feminism for using the rhetoric of a Western "salvage operation" in promising "global sisterhood." Feminism risks resembling imperialism in its strategies.4 Recognizing a need to discuss women's

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issues within particular cultural contexts, discourse about gender and different cultures has tried to articulate specific experience. My aim in presenting translations of some of Ko Chong-hui’s poetry in this article is to introduce her writings into inter-cultural feminist discourse.

Ko traced the origins of economics to the body, delineating the “equation of blood and economics.”

Those imposing buildings are blood
an equation of blood and economics
The basic element that constitutes economics is tears
the womb of tears is sweat
the placenta of sweat is life
the address of life is a brandname
the name of the brandname is a flower
Look at that flower that blossoms from a vending machine
that flower carved on the magnificent column
It is the tattoo of modern slaves
a confused marker
no sign more moving
What a strange world
the Babel tower
of a temple keeper
Seoul wakes from a nightmare
oppressed by the goblin of rules
Night descends and seats itself
like a thieving cat
Brilliant lamps the color of blood are lit
on every dark, medieval column of stone
Tens of thousands of moths gather in screeching hordes
and melt into drops of oil
beneath the flaming signal light.

This poem likens corporate buildings to the tower of Babel: corporate buildings are edifices of transnational capital, which imposes cultural uniformity. Economics consists of tears of sweat born of human labor. Life resides at the address of a product brand name; the corporate logos mark company property. Laborers are likened to “modern slaves.” The “confused marker” identifies the bearer like the sign on Cain’s forehead after he had slain Abel. The sign implicates the Korean people, enslaved by economic development, in the deaths of their brothers and sisters at Kwangju.

8. Kim Mi-hyun discusses Korean feminist literature and the body in Han’guk yosong sosol kwa p’eminjum (Korean feminist fiction and feminism) (Seoul: Sin’gu munhwasa, 1996).
The city sleeps, burdened by the rules of military dictatorship. Moths gather in screeching hordes, only to be destroyed by light. The moths are like the goblin of rules—demonic. Light destroys the “goblin of rules” or the legal apparatus of dictatorship; light represents the democracy movement. The narrative mentions the viscera of the body: “lamps were lit in our livers, gall bladders and lungs.” These organs are portrayed as locations of emotion. The narrative brings the body and the emotions into the discourse of politics. Light illuminates the internal organs of the body like lamps lit within the edifice of hegemony, revealing the workings of blood and economics. The image of the placenta, moreover, alludes to the role of childbirth in economics. The womb “situates the woman as an agent in any theory of production.”

In the poem “Cho mudom wi e p’urun chandi” (Green grass on the grave), the voice of a shaman recognizes the spirits of women from different times in history.

Who is this soul?
A mother of Koryo
sent as tribute to another land
ten thousand li away
Bound to a horse
hands tied, tears of blood
in the blue waters
of the Ch’ongch’on River
Taken to a land of strange mountains and streams
the land of the Mongols
Contribute to the nations of Yuan, Sui, Wu

An independence fighter who severed your finger
to write in blood
Traveled by night with a bomb hidden at your breast
Gave your ring to the movement to repay the national debt

Struggled for Korean independence
and women’s independence
Mourned when you received notice
of the death of your son and husband
Died in prison in a foreign land
and grew into waving leaves of eulalia grass

“Comfort woman” under Japanese imperialism
You gave birth to me, a daughter
Never returned to your homeland
with your head held high
Swallowed your tongue in death
Sex slave for the Japanese army

Here Ko uses the image of a woman nationalist during the Japanese colonial period concealing a bomb at her breast. One cannot help wondering how Ko Chong-hui felt about contemporary terrorism. Ko helped found the Korean feminist group Tto hana ui munhwa (Alternative Culture), which advocates a culture of non-violence. Did Ko not see a contradiction between terrorism and non-violence? She does not address this question.

Ko’s allusions to women’s participation in anti-colonial struggles require some explanation. The “movement to repay the national debt” took place from February 1907 to late 1908. Citizens formed organizations to raise funds to repay Korea’s national debt to Japan and thereby restore national sovereignty. It was believed that Korea had become a protectorate of Japan because of Korea’s 13 million won debt to Japan. In January 1907, So Sangdon and Kim Kwangje of Taegu started a Society to Abstain from Smoking to Help Repay the National Debt. Taehan maeil sinbo (Korea Daily News) published a statement on 21 February 1907 that urged citizens to abstain from smoking for three months and to donate the funds saved to help repay the national debt. Women in Taegu organized to collect donations of women’s jewelry, while other women’s organizations called upon women to save a portion of uncooked rice from each meal as a donation or to economize on side dishes or fees paid to water-bearers and donate the money saved. At least twenty-nine women’s organizations participated in the movement to repay the national debt.17 Ko Chong-hui mentions one such organization—T’alhwanhoe (Association to Donate Rings to Repay the National Debt)—that organized women to achieve gender equality, as well as national sovereignty. The following passage from the Taehanhoe’s Han’guk yonsonga (A history of Korean women) provides background for the reference in Ko’s poem.

14. Ko Chong-hui was associated with the feminist organization Tto hana ui munhwa (Alternative Culture), which sought “an analysis of patriarchy and the search for solutions to problems related to patriarchy just as has been done with regard to the form of production known as capitalism. Cho Ok-ra, in Yi Mi-kyong et al., “Pyonhwa hanun segye wa yosong haebang ui myomi” (A changing world: The concept of women’s liberation), Ch’angjak kwa pip’yongsa (Creation and Criticism) 19, no. 4 (fall 1991): 13. Tto Hana ui munhwa professes the goal of creating an “alternative culture” of non-violence and equality. Kim Yong-hye, “Han’guk yosong haebang munhak ui yon’gu e taehan pip’anjok koch’al” (A critical study of the current state of research on Korean feminist literature), Munhak chongsin (Literary Spirit) (September 1991): 57.
15. Han’guk yosong yon’guhoe (Association for Korean Women’s Studies), Han’guk yonsonga (A history of Korean women) (Seoul: P’ulpit, 1992), p. 32.
17. Ibid., p. 60.
18. Han’guk yosong yon’guhoe, Han’guk yonsonga, p. 33.
cubines, and women of merchant families. The movement was

The Kwangju Uprising

Ko Chong-hui brought gender into poetic narratives about many periods of Korean history. Her writings about women in the 1980 uprising in Kwangju (see pp. 27-28) placed her in the company of other Korean poets who used their writing to overcome the oppression of state censorship and tell the story of Kwangju’s democratic movement.

In mid-October in the year of the uprising, the government under Chon Tu-hwan ordered the consolidation of some media agencies and the closing of others; hundreds of journalists lost their jobs. Under conditions of severe state censorship of the press, poetry provided a means of communication “at a time when no one could talk about Kwangju.”

The first poem about the Kwangju uprising was an anonymous poem entitled “Minju ui nara” (Nation of democracy), which was transmitted orally. Kim Ch’um-t’a’e’s “Aa Kwangju-yo, uri nara ui sipchagayoo” (Ah Kwangju, crucifix of our nation), published in 1980 in Chonnam maeil simman (Chonnam Daily News), was the first poem attributable to a known author. Censors eliminated 156 lines of Kim Ch’un-t’a’e’s 230-line poem. Nevertheless, the original text of the poem was circulated and recited widely. Poetry about the Kwangju uprising was published in Owol si (Poetry of May [18]) and Si wa kyonngi (Poetry and economics) in 1981. These volumes were published as a non-periodic series of anthologies, since the regime would not have allowed registration of such periodicals.

The Korean government’s attempts to smother talk about the uprising and its aftermath were particularly upsetting to Ko. She refused to allow the state to cover up the deaths that resulted from the violent military suppression of the democratic uprising in 1980.

“The coverup of the Kwangju struggle,” Ko wrote, “was the cruelest political conspiracy in the history of the constitutional government in Korea. The coverup continued with the collapse of the opposition majority in the National Assembly (yadae yoso). The treachery and collapse of the opposition became evident in the farcical coupling known as the ‘Conservative Alliance’ (posu taeyonhap).”

I felt an anger about historical truth, an anger that was difficult to restrain, and I had doubts about the things I had felt hopeful about, my beliefs, my objectives. The image of the ‘90s stood there, growing absurd, turning traitor, stepping towards the abyss of catastrophe.

19. Yi Hye-chae, Han’guk ui yosong undong, p. 60.
20. “Sin kunsu chikp’won ilchi” (Timeline of the new military’s seizure of power), Han kyore simmun (One People Newspaper), 24 January 1996, p. 4.
21. Han Man-su, “Kinyom si wa hangjaeng si” (Commemorative poetry and oppositional poetry), Munhak chongsin (Literary Spirit), May 1991, p. 42.
22. Ibid.
23. Ibid.
24. Paik Nak-chung, personal communication with author.
25. The Conservative Alliance refers to the collaboration between moderate opposition politicians and military forces during the course of Korea’s transition to democracy. Moderate opposition politicians have sought to gain power by staying within the system. When the struggle for direct presidential elections became a mass movement in 1986, moderate opposition politicians sought to control popular oppositional struggle. (See Ko Song-kuk, “1980 nyondae ui chongch’isa” [Political history of the 1980s], in Han gyasa [History of Korea], ed. Kang Man’gii, et al., Vol. 19 [Seoul: Han’gilsa, 1994], p. 154.) Moderate opposition politicians considered the labor movement to be damaging to their social and economic position; they stood by passively as the government suppressed the intense labor struggles of July, August, and September 1987 (ibid., pp. 163-64). When opposition politicians gained a majority of seats in the National Assembly in the April 1988 general elections, military forces responded by merging the ruling military party, the Minjongdang (Democratic Justice Party) with the opposition Minjungdang (Renunification Democratic Party) headed by Kim Yong-sam and the Konghwasang (Democratic Republican Party) headed by Kim Jong-pil, into one new ruling party, the Minjungdang (Democratic Liberal Party). (See Cho Hae-youn, “Transition to Democracy and Social Movements in Korea,” paper delivered at a workshop entitled “Transition to Democracy in Comparative Perspective: Theoretical, Empirical and Methodological Issues,” 17-18 February 1995, Bunche Hall, UCLA, p. 9.) This merger brought together a coalition of military forces and moderate opposition parties, and enabled the military dictatorship to retain state power through constitutional means (ibid., p. 8).
27. Transubstantiation: the miraculous change by which according to Roman Catholic and Eastern Orthodox beliefs the eucharistic elements at their consecration become the body and blood of Christ while keeping only the appearances of bread and wine. Webster’s Ninth New Collegiate Dictionary (1985, s.v. “transubstantiation”).

continued on p. 29
The Kwangju Uprising

In this section I provide background on the events of spring 1980 in the city of Kwangju in South Cholla province, situating the uprising both historically and as it has been analyzed by the various sides in the demonstrations.

Historical Background

On 16 May 1961, a military junta that included Park Chung Hee declared Emergency Martial Law throughout South Korea, forced the resignation of the existing Chung Myon administration, and seized legislative, judicial, and executive powers. The military regime prohibited gatherings and demonstrations, dissolved the National Assembly and regional assemblies, banned all social and political organizations not sponsored by the military regime, restricted political activities by established politicians, and ordered government censorship of journalists, publishers, and broadcasters. After Park Chung Hee was elected president in 1963 (under a highly centralized system), he revised the Korean Constitution to allow himself to run for a third term in 1971 and then, in 1972, he revised the constitution again to hold presidential elections in a special assembly that he controlled. Park sidestepped the legislative process and ruled through "Emergency Measures" that made everyone subject to arbitrary arrest, torture, and imprisonment on suspicion of subversive activity.

In 1974, Park banned a student organization called the National League for Democratic Youth and Students (Chon'guk minju ch' ongyon haksaeng ch' ongyonmaeng or Minch' ong hangnyon for short), declaring that any group or person that aided or abetted the NLDYS, or criticized the decree itself, could be punished with five years to life in prison, or even the death penalty.

Members of the People's Revolutionary Party (Inmin hyong-myongdang) and other groups in Korea and Japan were accused of controlling the NLDYS in an effort to overthrow the government. People's Revolutionary Party members were arrested, tortured, and executed.

In October 1979, the Yusin regime responded to democratic uprisings by students and citizens in Pusan and Masan by declaring martial law in the Pusan region and utilizing violent force. The uprisings expanded to include laborers. On 26 October 1979, President Park Chung Hee was assassinated by the head of the Korean Central Intelligence Agency, Kim Chae-gyu.

After Park's death, there were widespread demands for revision of the constitution and direct presidential elections instead of elections by the Yusin agency, the National Conference for Unification (T'ongil chuch' e' kungmin hoeui). Prime Minister Ch'oe Kyuh-ha ignored these demands, however, and was elected president by the Yusin agency, promising to pursue constitutional reform later. Major General Chon Tu-hwan, head of the Army Security Command (Kukkun poan saruyong kwan) and KCIA, seized de facto power in the Yusin agency, promising to pursue constitutional reform later. In October 1979, the Yusin regime responded to democratic uprisings by students and citizens in Pusan and Masan by declaring martial law in the Pusan region and utilizing violent force. The uprisings expanded to include laborers. On 26 October 1979, President Park Chung Hee was assassinated by the head of the Korean Central Intelligence Agency, Kim Chae-gyu.

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In the early part of 1980 (March through May), the campus democracy movement became a popular political movement and demonstrations were held throughout South Korea calling for the resignation of Chon and Prime Minister Sin Hyon-hwak for obstructing constitutional revision. Protestors called for a more rapid transition to democracy, an end to martial law, and freedom of speech.

On the evening of 17 May 1980, armed forces from the Army Capital Garrison (Sugyongsa) and military police (Sugyongsa honhyongan) were stationed outside and inside the Central Government Headquarters building (Chungangch' ong) where an extraordinary Cabinet meeting was in session to approve a decision by Chon Tu-hwan and commanders of the army, navy, and air forces to extend martial law nationwide. At 1:45 A.M. on May 18, soldiers from Regiment 101 of the 33rd Corps of the Capital Army Corps (Sudo kunsa yeha 33 sadan 101 yondae) advanced on the National Assembly building with armored tanks. Forty-five minutes later, Army Headquarters dispatched 25,000 martial law troops to the National Assembly and onto college campuses throughout the nation.

Chon Tu-hwan assumed overall command of martial law troops and mobilized national military forces, under the leadership of the Army Security Command (Poansa), on the pretext of a need for "national defense." In Kwangju, the 33rd battalion of the Seventh Air Transport Brigade arrested forty-three Chosun University students. About 200 students demonstrated at the gates of Chonnam University demanding the rescinding of martial law and of the order to close campuses. The 63rd battalion of the Eleventh Brigade of the Korean Special Forces opened fire near Kwangju High School on May 19, injuring a high school student. Trained to fight behind the lines in combat against North Korea, the Special Forces had a history of brutality dating back to their participation in the war in Vietnam. Recently declassified cables indicate that U.S. intelligence was aware of the impending deployment of Korean Special Forces against students in Kwangju at least by May 8.

Kwangju citizens joined the student demonstrators after they witnessed the barbarous acts of riot police and Special Forces troops. On May 20, the Third Brigade of the Korean Special Forces opened fire on vehicles carrying demonstrators in Kwangju. On the following day, the Eleventh Brigade of the Special Forces launched a massive attack in front of the provincial administration building. On May 22, two regiments of Special Forces troops from the Twentieth Division were deployed in Kwangju, but they were driven from the city the same day by demonstrators who had taken up arms. A citizens' committee for strategic action (T'iban susup taech'aek wiwonhoe) was organized to demand a formal apology from the government and an end to martial law and military dictatorship. The government ignored citizens' demands, and on May 27, the Third, Seventh, and Eleventh Brigades of the Special Forces retook the city by force.

More than 2,000 civilians may have been killed in the Kwangju struggle in May 1980. The Korean government acknowledges only 190 deaths, but Kwangju city death statistics totaled 2,600 deaths for May 1980, 2,300 deaths more than the monthly average for the city.

Airborne troops inflicted brutal violence on women, raping, beating, shooting, and stabbing them with fixed bayonets. Kwangju feminist historians claim there were more women victims of violence than men. Although few women were part of the male-dominated leadership of the May 1980 struggle, women participated in other ways. Women college students participated in the May 18 demonstration in front of the gates of Chonnam University. The next day, the struggle expanded to include women of various classes. Female high school students participated in demonstrations, called for blood donations to help the wounded, and distributed food to demonstrators. Women workers helped clean the streets during the short-lived liberation of Kwangju from the military dictatorship, did administrative work such as processing papers for searches for missing persons, distributed permits for entry to the provincial administration hall where the leadership was based (until the return of riot police on May 25), assisted in organizing assemblies, supervised the collection of arms in efforts towards disarmament, oversaw funeral preparations, supervised the transport of wounded, provided meals for demonstrators, and were among those who donated blood to the wounded. Cho A-ram, president of the YWCA, and Yi Ae-sun, execu-
tive director of the YWCA, were members of the Ilban susup teach'aek wiwonhoe (Citizens’ Committee for Strategic Action). Members of the Songbakeu hoe (Songbakeu Association) were central participants in the Kwangju struggle, together with the youth and labor movements. Other organizations with female membership that participated in the Kwangju struggle were Tulpul yahak (Light in the Field Evening School), the cultural organization Kwangdae (kwangdae: a singer of Korean pansori, or oral narrative); 37 and the Hyondae munhwa yon’guso (Korean Culture Research Center). 4

Interpretations

State-sponsored historical accounts published by the army have portrayed the 1980 Kwangju uprising as caused by “regional sentiments,” “behind-the-scenes manipulation by Kim Dae-jung and his supporters, who were taking advantage of the demonstrations,” “organized behind-the-scenes manipulation by disruptive, communist sympathizers,” “incitement by extremist ‘problem’ sympathizers, incitement by extremist problem students from the capital who went to Kwangju after universities were closed, and malicious groundless rumors.”83 The state has attempted to rewrite the history of Kwangju in order to improve the image of the military. 16

Leftist analyses of the 1980s have interpreted the Kwangju uprising of 1980 as the confrontation between popular forces, on the one hand, and, monopolistic capital and military dictatorship, on the other. The struggle was thought to be one in a series of national movements for democratization that had been taking place since the Yusin regime in the early 1970s. Political structures established after the May 16 military coup d’état in 1961 were considered to be neo-colonial military dictatorships that used cold war ideology to solidify their power, and the division of Korea was said to be a product of the hegemonic confrontation of the United States and the Soviet Union. 17 On the economic front, the 1960s and 1970s were periods of rapid dependent capital accumulation in Korea. 38 The process of rapid industrialization, based on long hours and low wages, led to an expansion of the labor class, the impoverishment of the non-monopolistic bourgeoisie. 39 According to this analysis, the labor class emerged as a subjective force of reform in the process of rapid industrialization, based on long hours and low wages. As a result, labor disputes grew in scale and intensified. Middle class social movements also became active around the time of the 1971 elections.

On the basis of these economic, political, and social realities, analysts on the left argue that the Kwangju uprising was a class confrontation between foreign powers, allied with monopolistic capitalism, and popular forces, who had been excluded from the industrialization process. 18 Thus, while people of the lower classes were in the front ranks of the struggle, they were under the hegemony of the non-monopolistic bourgeoisie. 31 According to this analysis, the labor class emerged as a subjective force of reform in the Kwangju struggle, which was only beginning to show characteristics of structured collective struggle.

U.S. Policy

U.S. policy in Korea was based on the logic of cold war confrontation, as is evident in the U.S. government’s response to the Kwangju demonstrations. In a cable sent to the U.S. State Department on May 7, the U.S. ambassador to the Republic of Korea, William Gleysteen, described the U.S. posture vis-à-vis the South Korean government’s response to the demonstrations: “In none of our discussions will we in any way suggest that the USG [U.S. government] opposes ROKG [Republic of Korea government] contingency plans to maintain law and order, if absolutely necessary, by reinforcing the police with the army.”42 On May 22, during the Kwangju uprising, Ambassador Gleysteen told the Korean foreign minister that the U.S. military was willing to help facilitate Korean “army efforts to restore order in Kwangju and deter trouble elsewhere.”43 General Wickham, commander of U.S.-South Korean Combined Forces, acceded to a Korean request for release of Korean troops under his operational command for the purpose of suppressing civilian demonstrations. 44 With Wickham’s permission, two regiments of Korean Special Forces troops from the Twentieth Division engaged in the retaking of Kwangju on May 27. 23

Notes

1. South Cholla, where the city of Kwangju is located, was the site of peasant uprisings that were part of the September-December 1946 uprisings that took place in many regions of South Korea. These uprisings expressed peasant grievances over land conditions and relations, grain collection policies, and local collusion involving landlord, government officials, and the police. (See Bruce Cumings, The Origins of the Korean War, Vol. 1 [Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1981], p. 367.) Postwar peasant rebellions mobilized a peasant consciousness that had been developed through participation in tenancy disputes during the Japanese colonial occupation. (See Shin Gi-wook, “The Historical Making of Collective Action: The Korean Peasant Uprisings of 1946,” American Journal of Sociology 99, no. 6 [May 1994]: 1618. Shin analyzes participation in colonial period tenancy disputes as a resource for postwar resistance, particularly when mobilized by a protest organization.)

South Cholla was also the site of the Tonghak peasant uprisings and “righteous army” resistance to Japanese colonial rule in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. (See Sin Yong-ha, Tonghak kwa Kabo nongmin chonjaeng yon’gu [Eastern learning and the 1894 peasant war] [Seoul: Ichodogak, 1993]; Hong Sun-kwon, Han­mal Honam chiyok ubyong undongsya yon’gu [A study in righteous army movements in Cholla province in the late Choson dynasty] [Seoul: Soul t'aehakkyo ch'ulp'anbu, 1994].)

A student uprising took place in Kwangju in 1929, sparked by the use of insulting language by three Japanese male students who were waiting for a train. (See Lee Ki-baik, A New History of Korea, trans. Edward W. Wagner, with Edward J. Shultz [Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1984], p. 364.) Korean and Japanese students clashed. The subsequent arrest of some Korean students who had been involved in the fighting led to demonstrations throughout Kwangju and, eventually, throughout the nation.


4. Ibid., p. 20.

5. Ibid., p. 31.


7. Asia Watch Committee, Human Rights in Korea, p. 34.

8. “Sin kunu chipkwon ichi” (Timeline of the new military’s seizure of power), Han kyore sinmun (One People Newspaper), 24 January 1996, p. 4.

9. In Pom, “Chon ssi chon’gyo suryonggwon kyoche’ chisi. Chong Ho-yongse t’onghae So Chun-yol ssi t’onghae ch’imp’il memo, Poansa chawikwon paltong chudo” (Chon Tu-hwan ordered the replacement of the Commander of Combat Education, sent a handwritten memo to So Chun-yol through Chong Ho-yong, and led the mobilization of military force by the Army Security Command, on the pretext of “national defense”), in Han kyore sinmun (One People Newspaper), 24 January 1996.

continued on p.32
The wind grew fierce
and beat mercilessly upon the wisteria vines
April when the apricot blossoms tremble
A bird that flew through our troubled bodies
and between the branches of the bright elm
folded its wings and fell
Free me, I shake with fear
Libera me domine
Libera me domine
The darkness of the middle ages descended
and stretched out beneath a sky of revelation
We recited the Lord's Prayer over and over again
led by a silence stronger than fasting
from the valley that faced towards
the hour of three o'clock

Kyrie, Kyrie, Kyrie
May Thy compassion be upon this land
May Thy freedom be upon this land
May Thy liberation be upon this land
May Thy forgiveness be upon this land
(Lord, it is not so)
May Thy punishment be upon this land
May Thy judgment be upon this land
May Thy anger be upon this land
May Thy curses be upon this land
(But Lord, what shall we do)
Give Thy peace to this land
Give Thy pity to this land
Give Thy pronunciation to this land
(Thy will be done) 28

This poem is set on the campus of a theological school, and seems to be autobiographical. Ko graduated from Han'guk sin-hak taehak (Korea Theological Seminary) in 1979. The voice in this poem tries to comprehend the tragedy of Kwangju in religious terms. The narrator prays by turns for forgiveness, liberation, and judgment.

Ko also wrote in the language of shamanistic ritual. Her poem “Cho mudom wi e p’urun chandi” (Green grass on the grave), written in 1989, is an epic-length shamanistic narrative for the spirits of people who died in the Kwangju struggle. The shaman’s voice also identifies the spirits of women throughout Korean history. The poem prays for the spirits’ journey to the worlds of equality, liberation, and reunification, but the spirits are unable to depart because of other spirits who stand in their way. The shaman recognizes the obstructing spirits as those of military dictatorship, dependent monopolistic capital, ruling politicians who serve these powers, and women who are complicit with patriarchy and other forms of oppression. 29

<List recitation>
The path to democracy is blocked today
by norms of female obedience, submissiveness, and servility
women who use fate as an excuse to prostitute themselves
women who use their husband’s status in order to speculate for profit
women who use tradition as an excuse to demean themselves
women who use their academic background as an excuse to be idle and do nothing but eat
women who use their lineage as an excuse to be idle and do nothing but eat
women who use their husband’s status in order to speculate for profit
women who use their own status as an excuse to be idle and do nothing but eat
women who use their family’s status as an excuse to be idle and do nothing but eat
women who use their self-esteem on their husband’s success

In terms of structure, it seems to continue along the lines of “Hwan-inje” [Ritual for returning a spirit to the other world] and “Saram toraonan nanjang’am” [A tumultuous return], 34 and, according to the poet herself, was planned as a script for actual performance in shamanistic ritual. Thus the entire poem...has been composed in a format appropriate to the structure of shamanistic ritual, written with the basic rhythm of spoken narrative and suitable for oral recitation... “Green grass on the grave” bears the characteristics of a ssitkim kut, which calls forth the spirits of those who died in unjust circumstances, washes away their pain or resentment and bitterness, and placates their souls. The spirits it summons are not only those

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29. Novelist Choi Yun has also criticized a “victims’ mentality” in Korean attitudes, and has written about how the individual can be implicated in mass violence. Choi Yun, “History, Social Taboo and Fiction,” talk delivered to the Southern California Korean and Korean American Studies Group, 2 January 1996.
34. These were earlier works written by Ko Chong-hui.
of people throughout history who died as innocent victims of unjust and violent oppression, but also the wounded souls of people who live unjustly oppressed by authoritarian systems.\(^{33}\)

Ko tells the story of the Kwangju uprising from the perspective of the citizens of Kwangju.

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Kwangju ui nunmulbi
(Prayer for rebirth in the Pure Land) of the Three Kingdoms period (57 B.C.-A.D. 668), attributed to the wife of Chon Ch'ul-lye.\(^{33}\)
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The narrative voice prays for the rebirth of the spirits of Kwangju in the Pure Land of Amitabha, an allusion to the "Hyangga wonwangsaengga" (Prayer for rebirth in the pure land) of the Three Kingdoms period (57 B.C.-A.D. 668), attributed to the wife of Kwangdok.

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Ko Ch'ul-lye's friend Ko Yong-cha (22), who worked at the same factory and lived in the same dormitory, died with her in the same vehicle. Ko Yong-cha's mother died four years later of stress resulting from the shock of her daughter's death.\(^{40}\)
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Ko Yong-cha was an adopted child who had grown up in an orphanage. She was shot and killed at the age of 15 when she went with some of her neighbors to watch the demonstrations. Witnesses reported that the shooting was not accidental; soldiers reportedly took precise aim at her heart. Yi Song-cha's father was hospitalized when he learned of her death.\(^{40}\)
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Hospitals were filled with people, who had been wounded by government soldiers, and citizens were called upon to help by donating blood. Pak Kum-hui was shot by troops after donating blood at Kidokkyo pyongwon (Christian Hospital).\(^{44}\) She was the eldest of eight children.
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What was the significance of the deaths of these young women? Ko selected the stories of women who had died in the uprising and yet were not necessarily active agents in the uprising: an orphan who went to watch, a laborer and her friend who were on their way to a chesa. There is tragedy and absurdity in the deaths of these women.
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The narrative voice prays for the rebirth of the spirits of Kwangju in the Pure Land of Amitabha, an allusion to the "Hyangga wonwangsaengga" (Prayer for rebirth in the pure land) of the Three Kingdoms period (57 B.C.-A.D. 668), attributed to the wife of Kwangdok.
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35. Pak Hye-gyong, in Ko, Cho mudom wi e, pp. 147-54.
37. Owol yosong yon'guhoe, Kwangju minjung hangjaeng, p. 238.
38. Ibid., p. 92.
39. Ko, Cho mudom wi e, pp. 66-68. I was unable to find historical source material about Pak Hyon-suk such as I have provided for the other women written about in Ko's poem.
40. Ibid., pp. 238-39.
41. Ibid., p. 240.
42. Ibid., pp. 240-41.
43. Ibid., p. 236.
44. Ibid., pp. 176-82; 236-37.
Kim Sung-hui's preoccupation with death is a poetic record of the many deaths of life and, like Isis, death. Moreover, Kim sees an overwhelming presence of the moon in her work: the "Konghuin" and three poems among fourteen Silla hyangga, the "Toch'onsu Kwanumga" (Prayer to the thousand-armed Guan-yin on behalf of the dead) (author: Huimyong, the Silla period), and "Won wangsaengga" (Prayer for rebirth in the Pure Land) (author: the wife of Kwangdok, the Silla period), among fourteen Silla hyangga that have been transmitted in the Samguk yusa; and "Chongupsa," a poem by a woman of Paekche, preserved in the Akbak kwebom.

The first poem is a song of prayer in which worship of Guan-yin is evident, as is the love of a mother fervently praying before the Bodhisattva Guan-yin with hands pressed together. The third poem expresses the love in the heart of a Paekche woman who awaits the return of her husband Kwangdok in the Pure Land of the Three Pure Landideal. The latter is an indirect prayer that personifies the intermediary entity of the moon as someone who guides the speaker to the Pure Land of the West. "Chongupsa" may also be interpreted as a prayer poem. According to Yi Pyong-ki and Paek Ch'ol, the moon signifies the gods of the universe; the song defies the moon, and prays fervently about the joys and sorrows of life in the visible world. "Like other Silla hyangga, these poems can be interpreted as reflecting the thought that dominated the period, that is, Buddhist faith and the spirit of Buddhism. These three poems are also similar in that the person praying in each poem is a woman, and her prayer is about a man."

Notes

*Written by Ko Chong-hui. Translated by Ann Lee.


2. Ko died when she slipped in a stream on Chiri mountain while hiking with a friend. She seems to have predicted her death in citing the "Toksinsa" (The unmarried one), in which she described death as "drops of rain falling on a river." (Paik Nak-chung, personal communication.) An anonymous reader for the Bulletin of Concerned Asian Scholars also noted the way in which Ko foresaw her own death. See also Kim Unsil, "Ko Chong-hui sonsaengnim chuqotgwa?" (Ko Chong-hui has died?) in Cho mud, p. 65.

3. Ko Chong-hui, "Han'guk yosong munhak ui hurum" (My parched lips upon your silence) (Seoul: Tto hana ui munhwa, 1993), pp. 211-27.

Ko Chong-hui wrote in a style that combined shamanistic narrative, the language of liberation theology, and feminism. She wrote about gender, but this was not the sole focus of her writings. She also wrote about nation and class, destabilizing the totalizing effects of these narratives with depictions of individual women and the intersections of these women's lives with the struggles at Kwangju. In her writing, we hear a voice in the process of articulation. Sometimes this voice falls into clichéd rhetoric, but her writing also yields passages of vivid imagery, incisive social criticism, and deep insight.

45. Ko, Cho mudom wi e, p. 65.
47. Tejumola Olaniyan discusses "articulation" as a means of thinking about difference between practices of African or Black drama and theater; "articulation" is a model of identity as a process that includes interaction between various levels of subordination, and the exercise of power between and among cultures and cultural forms. Tejumola Olaniyan, Sears of Conquest/Masks of Resistance (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995), pp. 4-5.


15. Kim Song-kol, "12.12 5.18 kun yoksa tasi ssunun paegyong" (The background of the Department of Defense's decision to rewrite the military history of December 12 and May 18), in *Han kore ssimun* (One People Newspaper), 30 December 1995, p. 5.

16. Ibid., p. 5.

17. Paik Nak-chung discusses the division system in *Pundan ch'eye pyonbyok ui kongbutkil* (A path of study for transformation of the division system) (Seoul: Ch'angjik kwa pip'yong, 1994), pp. 13-48. Paik asserts that the division system—unlike a short-term partition or a division enforced wholly from without—may also foster two varieties of nationalism within the contending quasi-nation-states, and the various combinations of each variety with pan-national sentiment may have widely differing effects on the structure of the division system. Already one may observe signs of Korean nationalism being mobilized to sustain and strengthen either of the divided states, as well as of both South Korean and North Korean nationalisms taking on (each in its different fashion) ominous resemblances to the notorious Japanese nationalism of the past. Paik Nak-chung, "National and Transnational Claims on Civil Society: A South Korean Contribution," Conference on Consolidating Freedom: The Role of Civil Society, San Jose, Costa Rica, February 1995, pp. 3-4. Cited with the author's permission. See also Paik's articles in *New Left Review*, nos. 197 (January/February 1993) and 219 (September/October 1996). Note: Korean historians see parallels in North and South Korean cold war ideology and the use of these ideologies to protect existing class interests. Korea's decisions to participate in the Vietnam War and to normalize relations with Japan, for instance, were thought to be part of a regional cold war defense structure engineered by the United States to form a barrier against the Soviet Union.


19. Ibid., p. 113.


22. When he sent this cable on May 7 Ambassador Gleysteen was preparing for a meeting two days later with Chon Tu-hwan and a top aide to Choe Kyu-ha. See Shorrock, "Ex-Leaders Go on Trial in Seoul."

23. Ibid.


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Rural Women and the Family in an Era of Liberalization: India in Comparative Asian Perspective

This essay looks at some aspects of the effects of liberalization on rural women and the family in Asian societies, with a particular focus on India. The author maintains that the “era of liberalization” has neither fulfilled the extravagant promises of liberalizers nor has it been as much of a burden for women as opponents of structural adjustment programs have argued. The author’s perspective is that to move ahead from the stagnated development seen especially in South Asian societies, we need to transcend the sterile and politically deadend debates that brand either the state or the market as the enemy and engage, instead, in a clearheaded and value-oriented examination of how and in whose interest to use the market, and what the state should be doing. The author concludes that efforts to change the family in India as elsewhere should move in the direction of democratization. The question is not one of rejecting wider kinship networks and the “extended-family aid” that often comes with them, but of ensuring human rights to all family members, so that the cooperation and solidarity shown in family activities becomes a voluntary one, not one enforced by the sheer lack of alternatives (as is the case for so many women).

by Gail Omvedt

Introduction

The official “Year of the Family” (IFY) in 1994 was not marked by any major conference such as the women’s conferences held in Cairo, Beijing, and Copenhagen, in spite of the fact that the “family values” issue is, if anything, more politically potent than the topical themes of the earlier conferences, namely, population, women, and equality. Perhaps it was more difficult to find a progressive consensus around this topic. As one feminist noted:

The IFY jingles about building the smallest unit of democracy at the heart of society...struck discord in the hearts of those for whom marriage is no more than slavery, as slavery is defined in modern dictionaries. The privacy maintained around family life allows the perpetuation of a whole range of violent acts against women, from stripping them of an identity to brutal physical abuse.¹

In India as in other Asian countries (and in the industrialized North, as well) the family is one of the most controversial social institutions today. Conservatives in India talk of “our sacred culture” being endangered by the spread of Western decadence (meaning divorce, open sexuality, and gay rights) through the onslaught of commercialism and the imperialist media, while feminists speak with some trepidation about the rights of single women. In the United States and Europe, conservatives who fear that “family values” are in danger from the onslaught of feminism, increased divorce rates, cultural depravity, and the like, are likely to face strident rejections of the family by feminists. In both cases, however, there is no doubt that fundamental changes are taking place in family forms and that these are intensifying in the “era of liberalization.”

These changes are having an especially drastic impact on rural women of the South. The rural areas of developing countries have been a bastion of traditional family structures, but even their relative isolation from global processes seems to be over. Now villages everywhere are caught up in and affected by processes of global change: commercialization, export-oriented development, new agricultural and fishing technologies, deforestation and displacement, and price increases. Whether in terms of “food security,” the feminization of poverty,” or the rising environmental crisis, the impact of worldwide economic and political changes falls most heavily on women, especially rural women.

This impact, however, should not be seen simply in terms of increasing burdens, for these worldwide changes also offer possibilities for moving forward from often stultifying tradition coupled with earlier forms of global integration, earlier types of capitalist or semi-capitalist production. The “era of liberaliza-
In a period in which economies and states themselves are rapidly changing, the "future of the family" is very much an open question—in the North and in the South. The need—and the struggles—for democratization and change apply as much to the industrial-model "nuclear family" as to the extended (and frequently more patriarchal) families that are thought to be typical of agricultural societies. (UN/DPJ photograph)

function" is also one of increasing democratization; it presents opportunities as well as dangers. This essay looks at some aspects of the effects of liberalization on rural women and the family in Asian societies, with a particular focus on India. I maintain that the "era of liberalization" has neither fulfilled the extravagant promises of the liberalizers nor has it been as much of a burden for women as opponents of structural adjustment programs (SAPs) have argued. My perspective is that to move ahead from the stagnated development seen especially in South Asian societies, we need to transcend the sterile and politically deadend debates that brand either the state or the market as the enemy and engage, instead, in a clearheaded and value-oriented examination of how and in whose interest to use the market, and what the state should be doing.

This perspective draws upon various editions of the Human Development Report, The State of World Rural Poverty (published by IFAD, the International Fund for Agricultural Development), documents produced by the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC), as well as the work of economists such as Amartya Sen and Jean Dreze. These materials provide alternatives not only to "neoliberal" approaches, but also to the fruitless and backward-looking judgments made about the market economy by many Marxists and environmentalists today.

From this perspective, liberalization provides support for—rather than hinders—an overall growth in human welfare. But it does not do so automatically. In fact immense new challenges lie before societies such as India's. They face the task not of abolishing their states but of remodeling them, beginning with economic liberalization and, in the words of Dreze and Sen, moving "well beyond liberalization." One important aspect of this is social spending: the basically government-provided programs of health, education, and welfare (including social security, drought relief, and employment programs). This issue has been much discussed in the literature, but since it is so crucial to rural women (where the effort is usually not so much in maintaining social programs as in establishing them to begin with) it is worth reviewing.

Somewhat more unusually, I also argue that along with concerns about social services, what rural women need most of all is something that lies at the very heart of liberalism itself: property rights. Taking up the issue of property rights for rural women requires a strategy for change that makes use of what is actually a fruitful contradiction in liberal ideology. At another level, land rights for women is an extension of a long-held progressive demand: ideas of "land reform" must be extended within the family itself, to include the landless women of "landed" families. This issue is particularly important for the more patrilineal societies such as India and China, where women have traditionally been deprived of property rights, but it applies also to more egalitarian societies where patriarchal colonial and post-independence state policies have eroded the traditional claims of women.

What Is Happening to "The Family"?

"The country that is more developed industrially only shows to the less developed the image of its own future." This famous statement by Karl Marx (in his preface to Capital) sums up modernization theory's approach to the family as to other social institutions. The model is simple: as societies move from agricultural to industrial economies, family sizes shrink while family forms change from "extended families" of various types to the "nuclear family" of husband-wife-children. Underlying this are the changing functions of the family, as the workplace becomes separated from the home, and children are educated in schools rather than as apprentices in family enterprises. The state gradually takes over responsibility for education and care of the aged, and, as individual rights increase, divorce rates rise and the percentage of single women grows. But the nuclear family, with its typical gender division of labor—husband as breadwinner and wife as homemaker—remains the norm. The authority of the husband as "head of the family" is endorsed by orthodox elements in all major religious traditions.

As the "face of the future," however, this model has some serious flaws. However much it may be valued, the male/breadwinner-female/homemaker-nuclear family household is a dying form in the United States and Europe. Increased economic


3. The statistics are well known. What has to be added is that there has actually been no society in which women did not spend a good deal of their time working in "productive" or "economic" activity along with
pressures—and opportunities—make it now the norm for married women to work for wages outside the home. Meanwhile, the combination of part-time employment opportunities and some level of welfare payments (however meager) makes it possible for single women to raise families (one reason why conservatives attack the welfare system). Social security, described by early family sociologists as “revolutionary” in its implications for the family, has not only given the elderly the wherewithal to live independently from their children, it has also vastly increased the number of single-member households.

New family forms, including alternate living arrangements—more adult children residing with parents, single-member families, gay and lesbian couples sometimes with adopted children—are becoming more and more prevalent in Europe and North America. Male domination in the family is also being challenged and contested as values of equality spread and the women’s movement gains influence. The gender division of labor in the family is changing as women take paying jobs and men begin to involve themselves more in child care. At the same time, the spread of values such as “children’s rights” breaks through the solidity of a family based on the acceptance of an (almost always male) adult authority.

Some feminists are now beginning to speak of “post-modern families.” Judith Stacey, for example, argues that the United States is in “a transitional and contested period of family history, a period after the modern family order but before what we cannot foretell.” In fact, the definition of the family is so contested and so much in transition that, as Betty Friedan reports, a 1979 White House Conference on the Family in the United States had to be renamed a conference on “Families.” (The conference was going to be chaired by a Black professional single mother, until conservatives got up in arms and blocked the move!)

While “flexible” and “post-modern” families are becoming the order of the day in the North, the family structures of the South are also changing and are not easily put into the single box of the traditional “joint family.” A simplistic agriculture-to-industry modernization perspective seriously neglects the varieties of traditional (i.e., precapitalist) cultures, a variety that is seen in family forms perhaps more than anywhere else. Compare for instance the more egalitarian, near-matrilineal societies of Southeast Asia with the patrilineal, patriarchal castes of India or the clans of China; compare the heavy controls on women and arranged marriages with the freedom that women enjoy in most indigenous (“tribal”) societies. In fact, if we are looking for a model of

their purely domestic work. In agricultural societies women typically do one-third to one-half or more of labor connected with agriculture itself, even though this is usually not measured adequately in national censuses. Industrial societies also rely on women’s work outside the home. The nuclear family with a “non-working” wife was a predominant form only during a short phase of history even in the industrializing period of the North. This form is changing as more and more women are working in industrialized countries, while countries of the South are industrializing to a large degree on the labor and sweat of young women themselves, often recent rural migrants.


5. Friedan, Second Stage, p. 106.

democratized, egalitarian families, many of the non-Western communities of the world offer better prospects than the patriarchal heritage of European Christian cultures.

Further, experiments in new family forms are seen among the supposedly traditional societies of Asia as much as in the North. These include assertions of the rights of women to live as single “female heads of families” (either individually or in movements of such women), and efforts among young progressive activists to challenge the traditional gender division of labor within families and to create new “companion” or partnership families. In the face of conservative appeals to “tradition,” social movements have been laying a basis for democratized forms of family and community life.

In a period in which economies and states themselves are rapidly changing, the “future of the family” is very much an open question—in the North and in the South. The need—and the struggles—for democratization and change apply as much to the industrial-model “nuclear family” as to the extended (and frequently more patriarchal) families that are thought to be typical of agricultural societies. The future is being created before our eyes; it does not exist already in the models of development that countries in North America and Europe have embraced.

The Debate about Liberalization

It is striking that in the debate about the effects of a turn to the market, the most persuasive arguments for liberalization point to its positive impact on agriculture and agriculture-related enterprises, while the most telling arguments against liberalization have focused on the destructive impact it has had on women—primarily in the decline in social spending, that is, the provision of health, education, and welfare services by the government. I will briefly review these arguments with a focus on rural women.

For “liberalization”: Arguments for liberalization often begin from a critique of the discrimination against agriculture followed by the import-substitution, state-commandist regimes that came into being in most countries following World War II. The phrase “getting the prices right” had its earliest and most typical application, in fact, to agriculture. The core of the argument against this model is that government policies designed to favor the development of heavy industry, primarily have a “bias against agriculture” (the title of a book edited by Bautista and Valdes).7 In the language of World Bank economists, agriculture was “directly taxed” through policies that held down prices for agricultural products (from actual levies and purchases by marketing boards and other parastatals, to such things as zoning restrictions and export bans), and “indirectly taxed” through macro-economic and trade policies that kept import prices (and thus prices of agricultural inputs) high and export prices (especially crop prices) low. The degree of negative subsidy or “taxation” for eighteen countries studied by one World Bank project is estimated to be -25.2 percent for Asia (with a large variation between

Women and sustainable agriculture is a major theme of alternative development paradigms. Here Sangli women get advice on growing high-productivity vegetables (for consumption and/or sale in the market) on small parcels of land with only "waste" water and plant residue as inputs. Note the importance of male help—a reality overlooked by romanticists.

a high of -32.1 percent taxation in South Asia to a low of -18.1 percent in East Asia).8

Such policies lay a major burden on agricultural economies and on the masses of rural people dependent on them. As Dale Johnson has argued, "there is no historical precedent for the wide prevalence of negative protection extending over long periods of time such as prevails in many developing countries today."9 Liberalizers have argued that diminishing the role of the state would not simply aid economies by reducing expenditures on "rent-seeking" bureaucracies, by forcing industries to meet competitive challenges more efficiently, and by attracting foreign investment; it would also directly aid agriculture and other primary-sector activities (as well as such traditional exports as textiles) by removing the discriminating obstacles that these sectors have faced. The direct beneficiaries of such changes would be the rural population, including the rural poor, of these societies.

Arguing for proper pricing in agriculture and for liberalization policies that reduce the state's direct role in the economy does not mean that the state has no economic role to play. Indeed one of the early academic spokesmen for "remunerative prices" argued that

[O]ver the long run, governments can more effectively meet the full range of food policy objectives by using price policy as part of the incentive package that induces greater food production from millions of small farmers. Programs and projects can then provide targeted food subsidies to protect the very poor until they find jobs and higher incomes that result from the new policy environment.10

The arguments for liberalization are fairly simple: in a complex economy, there is a limit to how effectively governments can fix prices, provide subsidies, and run enterprises. If government economic plans are not undertaken cautiously, all of the schemes that go by the name of "socialism" or "welfare" will simply lead to stagnated development, ultimately impoverishing the masses and destroying the environment.

Against "liberalization": Opponents of "liberalization" prefer to focus their opposition on "structural adjustment" policies, pointing out that these have been imposed on unwilling Third World countries by international institutions such as the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund (IMF), with the intention of benefiting international (primarily U.S.-based) corporate interests. As a result of this "recolonization," opponents claim, indigenous industries would be subordinated and destroyed by more powerful multinational corporations, "globalization" or integration with the world economy would result in greater instability, economic growth would be halted, and devaluation leading to price increases along with cuts in social spending would have its greatest impact on the poor.

Fears about cuts in social spending, in particular, have been quite pervasive, particularly in terms of their effects on women. As one survey, The World's Women, puts it,

Economic crisis and stabilization and adjustment programs...have particularly affected women...[They] have been disproportionately squeezed out of public sector employment. Cuts in such government services as health, child care, family planning, and education have hit women particularly hard, setting back women's early gains.... The burden of inflation has fallen heavily on women who are responsible for procuring staple goods for the household. Often stabilization and adjustment plans have mandated wage freezes and... women have had to increase their working hours just to ensure their families' survival.11

Social spending cuts, it is argued, affect women not only generally due to losses in health care and services, but also specifically by increasing their workload, since the family is forced to provide the services that the state has cut back on. With rising prices, women are obliged to look for more wage work, or


"food security" is also an unsustainable one; though it may agriculture. The opposition between "cash crops" and "food crops" implied in this argument about Vol. 29, NO.4 (1997) to the analysis of economists who claim that previous policies "taxed" rather than "subsidized" subsidies while protesting against industrialized agriculture). Thus, the "small farmer" is seen as needing to be defended from the market economy.

Of "intellectual property rights" with global economic integration would prevent farmers from increased dominance of the market and property rights would lead to the loss of land by marginal farmers would lead to unacceptable ecological consequences and the loss of biodiversity; that forced adoption of "human development" performance. There have, however, been tremendous national-level variations, and the South Asian countries as a whole remain poor performers.

Above all, and interestingly enough for those who see the era of liberalization as one of "rolling back the state," general welfare spending has increased in most Asian countries. (See table 2, which also gives data for industrialized economies. Note that the data show that Reaganism and Thatcherism did not result in a "roll-back of the state" as far as the United States and the United Kingdom are concerned.) Perhaps it is this continued welfare spending that lies behind the generally impressive record of East and Southeast Asian societies in improving their human development performance. In fact, in every region of the world, human development indicators (HDI) have improved, even when economic growth rates declined or were negative; they improved all of gender development indicators (GDI).

If we consider the decade and a half since the 1980s to be the "era of liberalization" in Asia, Asian economies have not been overwhelmed by foreign multinationals, marginalization has not increased, and food security has not suffered. Industry and agriculture have both prospered. Table 1 gives some indication of "human development" performance. There have, however, been tremendous national-level variations, and the South Asian countries as a whole remain poor performers.

12. The specific arguments about the effects of structural adjustment on agriculture are not very convincing. Opponents of liberalization have argued that it would result in loss of food security as farmers would be impelled to grow cash crops for export rather than food crops; that government subsidies for agriculture would be taken away (here the references have been partly to the food subsidies given through public distribution schemes and partly to various types of fertilizer subsidies); that increasing "industrialization of agriculture" replacing traditional sustainable farming systems would lead to unacceptable ecological consequences and the loss of biodiversity; that forced adoption of "intellectual property rights" with global economic integration would prevent farmers from preserving their own seeds or using their own plants; and that the entry of corporate farming and the increased dominance of the market and property rights would lead to the loss of land by marginal farmers, driving them off the land. Thus, the "small farmer" is seen as needing to be defended from the market economy.

In part these arguments appear contradictory (for instance, the effort to defend existing fertilizer subsidies while protesting against industrialized agriculture). In part they do not even attempt to reply to the analysis of economists who claim that previous policies "taxed" rather than "subsidized" agriculture. The opposition between "cash crops" and "food crops" implied in this argument about "food security" is also an unsustainable one, though it may be useful to distinguish taking the feeding to compensate for their inability to purchase prepared foods, for instance, by spending more time cooking at home. These arguments have had a wider appeal than even the general fears about multinational domination or overall impoverishment and inflation that are said to result from liberalization.12

Liberalization and Social Welfare

These arguments have been around for some time, as various countries of Asia (and the rest of the South) have been moving fitfully in the direction of market liberalization. Looking at the general record, it would seem that neither the fears of the opponents nor the extravagant hopes of some of the liberalizers have been realized. If we consider the decade and a half since the 1980s to be the "era of liberalization" in Asia, Asian economies have not been overwhelmed by foreign multinationals, marginalization has not increased, and food security has not suffered. Industry and agriculture have both prospered. Table 1 gives some indication of "human development" performance. There have, however, been tremendous national-level variations, and the South Asian countries as a whole remain poor performers.

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But is this general advance in human development indicators proof that the dire predictions about the negative effects of "structural adjustment" have been wrong—or is this advance an indication that the prescriptions to cut down government spending were resisted successfully? In fact, the need to maintain social spending in a liberalized economy has been universally accepted and the slogan put forward in 1987 by UNICEF, "structural adjustment with a human face," has now attained near hegemony. The World Bank itself talks of "good governance" not only for general equity and social justice, but also for the overall competitiveness of an economy in the global market.

Yet what a country does in the fields of health and education (so important to women and the family) is only loosely connected with broader liberalization or statist policies. While liberalization may indeed give a boost to economic growth, this is not enough to ensure a genuine concern for human welfare. India and the rest of South Asia, again except Sri Lanka, have worse records in regard to issues of health and education than many countries in Africa, let alone in East and Southeast Asia. And this seems to be a result not so much of their choice for a more statist rather than a market-oriented economy, but of basic social values and traditions, including contemporary histories of social struggle. This is the conclusion of Jean Dreze and Amartya Sen, who study liberalization in the context of social opportunity, looking particularly at the extremely poor record of India in providing basic education and moving towards gender equality. Dreze and Sen use comparative data from other Asian and African countries (and a comparison of Kerala within India) to show that the drastic backwardness of India in basic health and primary education has little to do with economic constraints. Listing various ideological reasons for government neglect, they point first to "the conservative upper caste notion that knowledge is not important or appropriate for the lower castes."15

In The Child and the State in India, another study linking child labor and the lack of compulsory primary education, Myron Weiner argues equally trenchantly that basic, caste-linked cultural values are at work: The negative side of this analysis is that deeply and widely shared attitudes, not simply of a handful of policymakers but of educators, social activists, and trade unionists, who elsewhere have been in the forefront of reform movements for the abolition of child labor and the establishment of compulsory education, stand in the way of effective policies.16

Insisting on the importance of specific national and social traditions (including caste and the specific character of Indian patriarchy) does of the local population versus earning export income as priorities, in fact there is no inevitable contradiction and certainly there are no crops that can be designated automatically as "for food" versus "for cash" (for instance, vegetables and fruits—the main "villain" of export-oriented cash crop production—are also food, and where local cultivators grow these for cash one often sees the local spread of their consumption also; conversely rice and wheat are preeminent cash crops in many areas). Indeed it appears more accurate to say that previous import-substitution policies (including readiness to import American wheat or accept food aid) destroyed food security by removing incentives of local farmers to produce food. International data show that "food security" has generally increased over the last decade, particularly in Asian countries that have gone in for liberalization and the growing of cash crops (for example, food production per capita index in 1988-90 [with 1979-81 = 100] stood at 115 for developing countries overall, 113 for South Asia, 132 for East Asia, and 114 for Southeast Asia; see Table 13 in UNDP, Human Development Report, 1993.)

14. See the various Human Development Reports.
would direct government policies towards building a sustainable market economy, one which would have as its basis not a relatively few, urban-centered large corporations (subsidized and on the traditional practices of peasants, artisans, and indigenous model emphasized in the statist and protectionist policies of the past (such as the “Nehru model” in India), but also from the peoples. In contrast, liberalization aimed at small producers “globalization,” idealizing instead a subsistence economy based environmentalist romantics today. The latter tend to reject all dation for growth itself.

While the “political will” of a society to spend on social welfare is relatively distinct from its economic policies, different types of development do make a difference. Here we come to questions of how alternative development—specifically a more environmentally and socially harmonious, renewable energy-based form of economy—fits in with the question of liberalization.

In this respect an important point is made by Jazairy and others of IFAD, whose State of World Rural Poverty puts forth a model of alternative development that emphasizes increasing the productivity of the rural poor not just providing for their welfare. The “dominant paradigm,” according to the IFAD authors, has had various forms ranging from statist “import-substitution” models to export-orientation and “structural adjustment” models. At the same time, alternative movements have also taken various forms, from a “basic needs” emphasis to “poverty-reducing growth” (the World Bank). But most of these, it is argued, have only dealt with the welfare and distributional aspects of growth. IFAD argues instead for focusing on building the productivity of the rural poor as a foundation for growth itself.

This small-producer, dispersed agro-industrial approach differs not only from the heavy industrial model emphasized in the statist and protectionist policies of the past (such as the “Nehru model” in India), but also from the version of “alternative development” being promoted by many environmentalist romantics today. The latter tend to reject all involvement with the market economy, export orientation, and “globalization,” idealizing instead a subsistence economy based on the traditional practices of peasants, artisans, and indigenous peoples. In contrast, liberalization aimed at small producers would direct government policies towards building a sustainable market economy, one which would have as its basis not a relatively few, urban-centered large corporations (subsidized and given cheap land, power, and other kinds of help under the name of protecting infant industries or fostering comparative advantage), but innumerable often rural-based small enterprises (including agricultural and small industrial or service enterprises).

This approach moves beyond “subsistence” production. It requires a recognition not only of the significance of the market for rural producers but also of the export value of much of the agricultural and artisan products of countries like India. Furthermore, it insists both on state support for production and market-education and upgrading of skills of the basic producers and for rural producers but also of the export value of much of the entrepreneurs in these fields, for they are among the least reached

### Table 3: Human Development Indicators (HDI) Values by Region, 1960-92

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>All developing countries</td>
<td>0.260</td>
<td>0.347</td>
<td>0.428</td>
<td>0.541</td>
<td>0.281</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Industrial</td>
<td>0.799</td>
<td>0.859</td>
<td>0.889</td>
<td>0.918</td>
<td>0.119</td>
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<tr>
<td>World</td>
<td>0.392</td>
<td>0.460</td>
<td>0.519</td>
<td>0.605</td>
<td>0.213</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sub-Saharan Africa</td>
<td>0.200</td>
<td>0.255</td>
<td>0.306</td>
<td>0.357</td>
<td>0.156</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Middle East/North Africa</td>
<td>0.277</td>
<td>0.363</td>
<td>0.480</td>
<td>0.631</td>
<td>0.354</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South Asia</td>
<td>0.202</td>
<td>0.248</td>
<td>0.290</td>
<td>0.376</td>
<td>0.174</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South Asia excl. India</td>
<td>0.188</td>
<td>0.231</td>
<td>0.270</td>
<td>0.358</td>
<td>0.170</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>East Asia</td>
<td>0.255</td>
<td>0.547</td>
<td>0.686</td>
<td>0.861</td>
<td>0.446</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South-East Asia and Oceania</td>
<td>0.284</td>
<td>0.373</td>
<td>0.469</td>
<td>0.613</td>
<td>0.329</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Latin America/Caribbean</td>
<td>0.467</td>
<td>0.568</td>
<td>0.682</td>
<td>0.757</td>
<td>0.290</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Source:** Human Development Report, 1994, Table 5.5, p. 95.

### Table 4: GDI Rank and Share of Earned Income

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Share of earned income (%)</th>
<th>GDI</th>
<th>HDI rank minus GDI rank</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sweden</td>
<td>41.6</td>
<td>58.4</td>
<td>0.919</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>USA</td>
<td>34.6</td>
<td>65.4</td>
<td>0.901</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thailand</td>
<td>34.6</td>
<td>65.4</td>
<td>0.798</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Malaysia</td>
<td>29.2</td>
<td>70.8</td>
<td>0.768</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sri Lanka</td>
<td>25.1</td>
<td>74.9</td>
<td>0.660</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Philippines</td>
<td>21.1</td>
<td>78.9</td>
<td>0.625</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indonesia</td>
<td>25.3</td>
<td>74.7</td>
<td>0.591</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>China</td>
<td>31.2</td>
<td>68.8</td>
<td>0.578</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Viet Nam</td>
<td>44.9</td>
<td>55.1</td>
<td>0.560</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Myanmar</td>
<td>30.0</td>
<td>70.0</td>
<td>0.448</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Laos</td>
<td>37.8</td>
<td>62.2</td>
<td>0.405</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>India</td>
<td>19.2</td>
<td>80.8</td>
<td>0.401</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pakistan</td>
<td>10.1</td>
<td>89.9</td>
<td>0.360</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bangladesh</td>
<td>22.8</td>
<td>77.2</td>
<td>0.334</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nepal</td>
<td>26.4</td>
<td>73.6</td>
<td>0.310</td>
</tr>
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</table>

**Source:** Human Development Report 1995, Table 3. A positive difference in HDI/GDI means a country performed better on gender issues.
by education and health in Asian societies today. There are, in fact, good reasons to think that the comparative advantage of countries like India lies not in fostering one or another kind of capital-intensive manufacturing (at least not at this stage of their development), but rather in agriculture, in agro-industries (including processing), and in some services (including computer programming and medicine).

There are many obstacles to such a policy, quite aside from the obvious political clout of large-scale capitalists. It is still difficult for most policy makers to see the vast rural "masses" of their countries as a resource and not as a burden or a "target group" for welfare distribution.

Intellectual elites are inclined to have a profound anti-agricultural bias. In India, for instance, while the Marxist elite sees rural producers either in terms of peasant backwardness or kulak capitalism (and would willingly subordinate agriculture to industry), the newer and younger ecological elites romanticize subsistence production and traditional ways of life in ways that stigmatize farmers and forest dwellers who are interested in their incomes and the market as cultural traitors. Most Marxists and environmentalists in India today are inclined, whatever their rhetoric, to opt in practice for as much of a statist version of a capitalist economy as possible. Even when agriculture is seen as central to development (as, for instance, in the rhetoric of the current United Front government in India) the way forward is seen to be through public investment and subsidies.

It is the argument of this paper that such policies, though well-intentioned, serve bureaucratic and industrial interests far more than those of the rural poor and women in whose name they are often put forward. Efforts made in the name of "socialism" to maintain a regime of statist subsidies are only leading to intensified economic crisis in countries like India. 17 A rural, small-producer-centered alternative development model provides the greatest economic support for rural women and the family in general.

Reversal of the "bias against agriculture" would help the development of the basic economy on which rural women depend—agriculture and related agro-processing, handicraft, textiles, and other small nonfarm rural industries. Cutting down on the state bureaucracy—a proposal that alarms organized public employees—will not take away their jobs, but it will remove some of the regulatory obstacles to the expansion of their production. If social spending, in particular on health and education, is maintained and expanded, and expensive and irrational subsidies (most public distribution systems fall in this category) are replaced by an effective development of social security, this will aid both the family and women's work in the home by providing for children and the aged. If overall economic growth increases—and if policies are oriented to serve small producers rather than top-heavy, male-dominated large corporate producers—rural women along with their whole families will benefit. 18

However, as in the case of building a genuine welfare state, this is only a step in the right direction. A small-producer-oriented market economy brings us to the rather crucial fact that small producing units are almost invariably built around families. What is the place of the changing families, then, in such a process of liberalization?

Families and the Market

In Smallholders, Householders, economic anthropologist Robert Netting argues that small family farmers are the most efficient producers in agriculture. 19 In terms of energy and financial inputs, this is at least potentially true for most primary and artisanal producers (especially when they are not forced to compete with highly subsidized large corporations). 20 Such small family-based producers are the majority in Asia, even today. In

17. The amounts spent on the public distribution system (PDS) are reaching unmanageable heights without really affecting the "food security" of the poorest, reluctance to raise petroleum prices is leading to huge foreign exchange problems; efforts to maintain populist prohibition policies result in huge losses of revenue and deaths from adulterated, bootlegged liquor; inability to resist the demands for pay rises and bonuses for government employees leaves little for social spending, and so on. On PDS, see the devastating data about its lack of coverage given in the most recent rural survey of the National Council of Applied Economic Research: Human Development Profile of India, Inter-state and Inter-Group Differentials, Vol. I: Main Report, and Vol. II: Statistical Tables (New Delhi: NCAER, November 1996).
18. At this point many of my friends will ask, what does all this have to do with socialism? In fact, I believe that healthy people in a healthy society will find their way ahead on their own, without too much help from dying dogmas. However, I would see steps toward genuine socialism not through increasing the statist economy, but rather through decentralization and a democratic, small producer-based society, a social market economy moving in the direction of market socialism.
20. For example, in the much publicized area of fish exports (especially shrimp farming), reports in Business India indicate that large companies have entered the area and are failing whereas relatively small farmers...
India workers in the “informal sector” (including agriculture) comprise 90 percent of the working population. As a group they are poorer than wage and salary earners in the organized sector. The most recent available data (from 1980) show workers in the organized sector earning an average of Rs 10,851 a year—compared to an average of Rs 3,000 for cultivators, Rs 1,703 for agricultural laborers, Rs 4,871 for nonagricultural wage workers in the informal sector, and Rs 5,066 for self-employed workers in the nonagricultural informal sector. Since 1980, the gap between the organized and unorganized (informal) sectors has increased.

Rural enterprises, whether or not they employ wage workers, are primarily small family enterprises. They rely for their success both on localized (often traditionally passed on) knowledge, on their ability to deploy labor flexibly, and on the fact that workers have more than a wage relationship with one another. (In this sense family employment is akin to “self-employment.”) As studies of women’s microenterprises have pointed out, they are by nature “embedded” in kinship structure—primarily the nuclear family but also more extended kinship networks. It is through such family structures that investment is drawn, production is organized (with “unpaid family workers,” as they are called in census classifications), and marketing takes place. To a large degree, training has also been organized by families, whether in formal apprenticeships or not. A microenterprise may be only one part of a family’s overall economic strategy. Others in the family may work as wage laborers off the family land, or in business or other enterprises outside the village.

(Obviously not all “family businesses” are so “micro.” Large landholdings, estates, and major small and large industries with numerous employees, may also be “embedded” in kinship structures. These are run as a family holding even though the various units may have no formal or legal connection with one another. Nevertheless, rural family businesses are largely small enterprises, and frequently microenterprises, in contrast with the bureaucratic and increasingly professionalized structure of corporations.)

Because of the continuing importance of kinship structures, traditional family forms become important. (In India, caste hier-

One of the larger, more capital-intensive forms of dispersed agro-industrialization is the sugar factory. Village women tour a local progressive factory in Sangli district, one of 109 now in rural Maharashtra. These are also in a way “family businesses” though the men who control most of them are usually called “sugar barons.”


Girls have few choices and women, after they marry, have very little in the way of resources with which to combat whatever oppression they may find in their husband's family. In India, traditional family structures have changed very little in the fifty years since independence. While reformed laws give legal property rights to women, in practice they do not exercise them and they do not inherit. Women remain propertyless, powerless, and resourceless.

Kinship structures of this type are responsible for the poor showing of most South Asian countries (Sri Lanka is a notable exception) on gender issues; their women are worse off, on the average, than some otherwise more backward countries in Africa. Unless such patriarchal family structures can be tackled, in the case of India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, and Nepal, it is unlikely that women will enjoy many of the fruits of development. And even in the case of China, which has had a much better record in terms of women's education, life-span, and health, the sex-ratio continues to be low and the rigors of the "one-child" norm and other forms of women's oppression continue.

Tackling these aspects of gender oppression is not a matter of simply organizing to stop violence against women, or of arguing for one form of economic development or another, or even of guaranteeing women political representation (though all of these may be important). It is necessary to confront head-on the fundamentals of women's subordinate status, and central among these is the question of property rights. The relevance of women's property rights, especially land rights, takes on added urgency in a situation of liberalization that encourages small enterprises. Property is not only a source of resources (assets); it is livelihood itself (rural women in India understand this). The issue of property is relevant even in the more egalitarian regions; the erosion of women's rights is evident in the independent states that have come into existence since the colonial period in a situation of liberalization in which ability to compete in a market economy without being fully proletarianized depends on property rights (and, it could be added, education and skills). The overall historical pattern of development has seen patriarchy increase with class inequality. This must be reversed now in the age of sustainable development, democratization, growing demands for human rights, and liberalization.

Is this possible? Yes, for several reasons. First, because as I have argued, a sane market-oriented economy does make possible the growth that will provide resources for a struggle. Second, because human rights and gender equality have at least won a place on international and national political agendas; third, there is a contradiction within the heart of liberalism itself (rural women in India understand this). The issue of property is relevant even in the more egalitarian regions; the erosion of women's rights is evident in the independent states that have come into existence since the colonial period in a situation of liberalization in which ability to compete in a market economy without being fully proletarianized depends on property rights (and, it could be added, education and skills). The overall historical pattern of development has seen patriarchy increase with class inequality. This must be reversed now in the age of sustainable development, democratization, growing demands for human rights, and liberalization.

Struggles for Land Rights

Within India, the first attempt to give land rights to women occurred in the 1980s, in a campaign of dalit (ex-untouchable) landless laborers in Bihar. The Chhata Yuva Sangarsh Vahini, a socialist youth group that had been organizing laborers on a huge religious trust in the Bodh Gaya area, seemed close to an initial victory in 1983 when the women in the organization spoke up and demanded to be given land in their names as well. "If you give the land in our men's names, they'll only become more arrogant and beat us more," the women said. This led to the realization, for perhaps the first time, that the common practice of giving "land to the landless" means—in the absence of gender consciousness—giving land to the heads of landless families, i.e., to men. The activists of the Sangarsh Vahini then decided that the first thousand acres won would be given in the names of the landless women. This decision led to a protracted struggle, including resistance from many men—both laborers and activists in the Sangarsh Vahini—and from government officials who were amazed at this innovation. "If you get land," they asked, "what is to ensure that you will stay with your husband?"

Another step forward was taken when the Shetkari Mahila Aghadi, the women's wing of a powerful farmers' organization in Maharashtra, took up the land rights issue. In response to demands from poor peasant women who insisted "We want our hissa" (our share), the Mahila Aghadi passed a resolution on property rights at its founding convention in 1986. At that time, however, few thought that this resolution would lead to much. By its second convention, in 1989, however, there was a growing national consciousness about the land rights issue. It had been discussed in a large conference of feminist and mass organizations of women in Bihar in 1988, and Madhu Kishwar, editor of the most widely circulated women's journal, Manushi, had initiated a national debate by arguing that anti-dowry campaigns were useless unless the women's movement tackled the basic question of property rights.

In its Amraoti conference, in which Kishwar and other feminists participated, the Mahila Aghadi vowed to take up the issue again, resolving as a first step that the men of Shetkari Sanghatana should take the initiative by putting a share of their own land in the name of women in their families. At first (after a number of earlier discussion sessions) the resolution was only to give women the rights to income from the land; but then, in one village after another, the process of giving actual land rights was begun. The campaign, taken up with enthusiasm by many Shetkari Sanghatana activists, was called the "Laxmi Mukti" program. "Laxmi" is the name for the Indian goddess of wealth and prosperity, and women especially in the rural areas were typically called the "Laxmi" of the family. This was therefore a recognition that these sources of prosperity were themselves enslaved, and needed to be liberated. ("Mukti" is the common term for liberation.) Villages in which 100 or more families gave land in the names of women were to be described as "Laxmi Mukti" villages. (See photograph below.)

As in the case of Sangarsh Vahini, the campaign ran into obstacles from government officials. Local officials were reluctant to transfer land shares without bribes. Besides, an official government order was still in effect that forbade splitting up land under five acres to prevent "land fragmentation."

Both the Shetkari Sanghatana and the Sangarsh Vahini movements have found it difficult to sustain momentum. Official obstacles have blocked their way and there has been little practical support from the wider women's movement or other social

forces. A recent major study by Bina Agrawal, *A Field of One's Own*, has emphasized the issue of land for women, and sought to influence policy makers.26 The response of the state, however, has been to stress giving “joint pattas” (land ownership rights) in the names of both husband and wife. This is now done in many areas where waste lands or forest lands have been given to the landless. Joint ownership rights mean in effect that the husband cannot sell the land without his wife’s written permission. What seems to be operating here is a deeply held notion among Indian policy makers (and some of the party-linked women’s organizations that support joint pattas) that family solidarity cannot survive in the presence of individual property rights, as an official in Bihar so crudely expressed it.

In spite of the resistance they have faced, women in more than 300 villages in which the Shetkari Sanghatana campaign was held have succeeded in winning rights to land. In some cases there have been actual legal transfers of land, but in other cases women have received only a Sanghatana certificate and they still await official recognition of their rights. These examples show, however, that campaigns for women’s land rights are possible even in the most patriarchal regions of South Asia.

**Liberalism, Property, and Women**

In an era of liberalization, property rights are an important aspect of human rights. It is time for progressives to overcome their reluctance in dealing with this issue. (Agrawal notes in the introduction to her study that the idea that “we’re fighting for socialism, not property” is heard most frequently when left activists are confronted with the issue of women.)27

Property, in fact, represents one of the most crucial contradictions within the heart of liberalism itself and not only when it comes into conflict with other human rights (an aspect that Marxists do emphasize). Property is justified, according to Locke, by the fact that human beings have mixed their labor with the earth to make it fruitful; and the state is justified insofar as it protects property, along with life and liberty.28 But what if large sections of the population have no property? Then the state would either be illegitimate or it would have to exercise its responsibility and grant property rights to this large section of producers. This is the logic that has led from “classical liberalism” to “social liberalism.”29 Social liberalism can mean either using the state to compensate for propertylessness (through various types of social welfare programs) or using some form of public action to redress propertylessness. Here the goal is not the abolition of property, but the generalization of property, the creation of a genuine “democracy of property owners.” Rather than replacing the market by state (bureaucratic) distribution, this approach seeks to render it more equitable, in other words to follow a radical democratic logic.

Collectivization is antithetical to the logic of “land to the tiller” reforms to the extent that bureaucratization deprives producers of real decision-making power and subordinates them to state power. It is striking here that while collectivization and similar state controls over agriculture on the whole have been a historic failure, land reforms have been successful nearly everywhere they have been tried and to the extent they have been tried.

Applying the significance of property rights to women is not a big logical step, but it does go to the heart of issues of forms of the family. Recent feminist political theory has scathingly criticized early liberalism for its assumption of a social contract made between male family heads; Locke himself is a primary example of this, for though he took a progressive stance in trying to ensure maternal and not just “paternal” authority within the family, he nevertheless assumed that it was male labor, and male property, that constituted it. The social contract, in Pateman’s phrase, has thus been a “sexual contract.”30 A consistently liberal society would have to confront the contradictions in liberalism itself in order to assure not only land reform and the widest

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possible access to education, skills, and the like, but a guarantee of the rights of women in particular.

Conclusions

Liberalization can improve a society's rate of growth, but its impact on "human development" (particularly in regard to women) depends on government policy, on improving social services in the fields of health and education, and on developing social security schemes. At the same time, and still within the framework of a market economy, "alternative development" strategies must focus on the capabilities and contributions of small producers, especially in the primary sector and related industries. But since small enterprises are most of all "family enterprises," embedded in kinship structures, change is crucial at this level—most especially in the case of women's property rights. This involves a strategy that takes advantage of one of the most fertile contradictions in liberal ideology, a radical democratic path that seeks the generalization of property rights.

Finally, all of the foregoing implies that changing the family in India as elsewhere should move in the direction of democratization. The question is not one of rejecting wider kinship networks and the "extended-family aid" that often comes with them, but of ensuring human rights to all family members, so that the cooperation and solidarity shown in family activities becomes a voluntary one, not one enforced by the sheer lack of alternatives (as is the case for so many women). If issues such as property rights and autonomy can be genuinely taken up, then we will be far along the way to realizing the feminist revision of the revolutionary goals of "liberty, equality, and community."

Women marching at the start of a 2-day dharna (sit-in) at the Sangli district headquarters, January 1990. More than 300 women from 36 villages, scattered over three districts, participated. This was the first "purely women's" sit-in in Sangli.

Development and Rural Women in South Asia: The Limits of Empowerment and Conscientization

There is general agreement that women, and particularly poor rural women, need special consideration within the development process. Awareness of the problem has increased in recent years, as have attempts at appropriate strategies, but effective responses are hard to find. This paper examines the idea of "empowerment," widely used in the context of women's development but incorporating elements from at least two distinct theoretical frameworks, those of Barbara Solomon and Paulo Freire. The activities of the Grameen Bank and several NGOs in Bangladesh are discussed, and their limitations from the point of view of effective "empowerment" are evaluated.

by Santi Rozario

Prior to 1970 it was assumed that the "development process affected men and women in the same way." Development planning during this period not only failed to take any note of the significance of the sexual division of labor, but it also avoided facing the issues of class differences among groups of people, relying on the assumption that the benefits of development would gradually trickle down to the lower classes.

In the 1970s development agencies began to give serious consideration to the affairs of women in their development planning in the Third World. During the "Decade for Women" (1975-85), women began to be included, even if only nominally, in most development planning. Equality between the sexes was the rhetoric of the day during this decade, with full support from the international women's movement. Class differentiation between women was noted, and poor women were identified as the target group of many development agencies.

Initial attempts to include poor rural women in the development process had limited success. In South Asia, women were simply integrated within existing development projects for the most part, without any restructuring of the process of development. Income-generating activities were developed in an effort to better the situation of poor women, but most of these activities (e.g., sewing, poultry rearing, handicrafts, processing rice for sale) conformed to the existing gender division of labor of South Asian cultures. When poor rural women were later incorporated into some of the income-generating projects traditionally associated with males (e.g., roadwork construction and canal excavation) they were exploited as much as the poor men who normally did this work.

The United Nations' Global Survey of the Role of Women in Development states that in the 1980s the global economic situation experienced "one of the longest periods of growth ever recorded; but...development, as it has been understood in its broadest sense in international development strategies, has not been occurring. This is particularly true for women." Rouaq Jahan points out that in the last two decades "more women have joined the ranks of the world's poor in both North and South" and "inequalities have grown between the North and the South: between the rich and the poor."

Since the 1980s there has been a gradual increase in awareness—one that is reflected in the beginnings of a substantial body of literature on the differential effects of development on women, including a number of significant case studies from South Asia (see sidebar on next page).

The Concept of Empowerment

While there is no clear perspective about how to tackle this complex problem most satisfactorily, it is safe to say that governments, nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), and international agencies are all united in their conviction that progress can only come through empowerment.

But is empowerment really a new and more effective approach to the apparently intractable problems surrounding women and development in societies such as those of South Asia? To answer this question, it is useful first to look at the various assumptions behind the concept and then to examine what happens in practice in South Asian organizations that have adopted the empowerment approach.

Empowerment discourse flows from two main sources. The first was the social work setting in poor Black communities in the United States. The key text here is Barbara Solomon's

Resources on Women and Development


Rouaq Jahan and Hanna Papanek, eds., Women and Development: Perspectives from South and Southeast Asia (Dhaka: Bangladesh Institute of Law and International Affairs, 1979).


Naila Kabeer, Reversed Realities: Gender Hierarchies in Development Thought (New Delhi: Kali for Women, 1995).


Barbara Rogers, Domestication of Women: Discrimination in Developing Societies (London: Tavistock, 1980).


K. Westergaard, Pauperization and Rural Women in Bangladesh: A Case Study (Comilla, Bangladesh: BARD, 1983).


Solomon’s shift in focus from direct to indirect blocks is an interesting and problematic one. Without questioning her personal motivations, it is tempting to see the emphasis on “negative valuations” in her work as a response in part to the unwillingness of U.S. society to commit the resources needed to deal with the more “direct” power blocks: the lack of access to education, job opportunities, adequate health care, and other resources. Two other points that should be noted about this model of empowerment are that it is based on empowering the individual, not on encouraging collective social action by the oppressed, and that it tends to assume that those who are being helped are both ignorant and powerless.

In the context of development, “empowerment” in this sense is highly problematic. Majid Rahnema has stated that the empowerment concept was introduced “to provide development with a new source of legitimation.” Use of the concept, Rahnema believes, may lead to the devaluing of traditional and vernacular forms of resistance, and to persuading subject populations to participate in development processes that will never provide them with concrete benefit.

“Empowerment” in current usage, however, has developed considerably beyond this relatively passive and individual-centered approach. It now implies at least the possibility of collective action against an oppressive social system. The main source for this wider concept of empowerment, often mentioned directly and present still more often implicitly, is the late Brazilian educator, humanist, Marxist, and radical Roman Catholic theo-

6. Ibid., p. 12.
7. Ibid., p. 19.
8. Ibid.
11. Ibid., p. 123.
rist Paulo Freire. Jill M. Bystydzienski, in the introduction to her book Women Transforming Politics, states that empowerment in contemporary feminist usage implies

a process by which oppressed persons gain some control over their lives by taking part with others in [the] development of activities and structures that allow people increased involvement in matters which affect them directly...[P]ower...is generated and shared by the disenchanted as they begin to shape the content and structure of their daily existence and to participate in a movement for social change.12

Bystydzienski then illustrates this concept of empowerment with a discussion of Freire's work.13

In fact, Freire himself was unhappy with the term "empowerment" and preferred not to use it. In a 1984 dialogue with Ira Shor, he explained some of his ambivalence:

Freire: [I]t is interesting to me how people in the United States are so preoccupied in using this word and concept "empowerment."...My fear in using the expression "empowerment" is that some people may think that such a practice simply empowers the students, and then everything is finished, over! I don't believe in self-liberation. Liberation is a social act....

Shor: There is no personal self-empowerment?

Freire: No, no, no. Even when individually you feel yourself most free, if this feeling is not a social feeling, if you are not able to use your recent freedom to help others to be free by transforming the totality of society, then you are exercising only an individualist attitude towards empowerment or freedom.14

The term Freire used was "conscientization"—with its explicit reference to a group process. In his best-known work, Pedagogy of the Oppressed, Freire argues that "education is either for the domestication of people or the liberation of people."15 Conscientization aims at awakening a critical awareness of the social ills responsible for oppressive circumstances. "Conscientization cannot stop at the stage of revealing reality. It becomes authentic when we experience the revelation of the real world as a dynamic and dialectical unity with the actual transformation of reality."16 In other words, conscientization goes beyond mere consciousness-raising to include political action that transforms the oppressive structures in which the oppressed find themselves. As Shor argues, "underlying Freire's definition of education as politics is a critique of domination and a commitment to challenge inequality and injustice."17

The Freirean approach to "empowerment"—with its emphasis on conscientization and radical social action—underlies the "alternative vision" in the "DAWN manifesto" (as presented by Gita Sen and Caren Grown).18 Concepts like "conscientization" and "consciousness-raising" are used commonly among NGOs and allied organizations in Bangladesh and elsewhere in South Asia. Yet few development projects have been able to go very far toward putting these concepts into practice; the established power structures of rural life have proven to be too strong. To see why this is so, I move now to examine the practice of conscientization and empowerment among four organizations working in Bangladesh, the Grameen Bank and three NGOs: BRAC, Proshika, and Nijera Kori.

13. Ibid., pp. 3-4.
The development scene in Bangladesh is dominated by bilateral and multilateral agencies that work in conjunction with government development programs in areas such as public health and family planning, rural development and primary education, relief, and welfare. While these programs bring occasional benefits to some of the poorer people, they do so without questioning the existing relations of production or the rural power structure. In fact, they work most often through the power structure that already exists within the village. As a consequence, most of what they offer to villagers benefits those who are already relatively rich and powerful. These large-scale programs also reinforce class and gender inequalities and—in the judgment of many critics—make the situation even worse in many cases for poor peasants and poor women.19

The Grameen Bank and the three NGOs considered here are a relatively small part of the development activity in Bangladesh, but their work is noteworthy because they attempt to deal with problems such as these by working directly with the rural poor.

The Grameen Bank Model

The Grameen Bank, which is the least radical of the four organizations, has received extensive international publicity in recent years and its approach has been advanced as a solution to rural poverty—in Bangladesh and elsewhere. The term “empowerment” turns up over and over again in the rhetoric surrounding the Grameen Bank and in the titles of books written about the bank, e.g., In Quest of Empowerment and Managing to Empower.20

The inspiration for the Grameen Bank came from Professor Muhammad Yunus, who wished to establish a lending institution that would serve the credit needs of the village poor in a deliberate fashion.21 After an early successful experiment with giving personal loans to landless poor, Professor Yunus received support from the Bangladesh Bank (the country’s central bank) for an expansion of his financial venture. With support from the Bangladesh Bank, the Grameen Bank was established in 1979. The stated aim of the Grameen Bank, which became an independent national bank in 1983, was to provide unsecured loans to landless households so that they could develop “income-generating activities such as rice processing, rickshaw driving, live-stock rearing, weaving and trading.”22 Initially supported by loans from the central bank, the Grameen Bank rapidly attracted extensive funding from international donor agencies such as IFAD (International Fund for Agricultural Development), NORAD (Norwegian Agency for International Development), and SIDA (Swedish International Development Authority).23 From the start, the bank made a deliberate effort to give most of its loans to women. By August 1993, it had 1,579,127 female members and 100,637 male members spread across 33,080 villages;24 the total number of clients climbed to around two million by 1997.25 The bank has some 14,000 staff, and a reported loan recovery rate of 98 percent.26

There seems to be little doubt that a substantial number of poor people in Bangladesh have been able to improve their situation significantly with the help of Grameen Bank loans.27 However, there are built-in limitations to the Grameen Bank model that must be noted. Loans from the bank do help the poor cope with their situation by enabling them to engage in income-generating projects, but the bank does not encourage its clients to challenge the principles of gender hierarchy or class hierarchy. As a consequence, the bank’s efforts at empowerment remain in the realm of Solomon’s individual-centered approach.

Naila Kabeer voices another criticism of the Grameen Bank model, noting that the bank’s emphasis on matters such as the improvement of physical deportment, while useful, is really a “‘male’ model of empowerment”—one that originates not from the poor rural clients themselves but from a “certain class-based view” (on the part of the bank personnel).28 Kabeer contends that Grameen philosophy stresses the familial benefits that are likely to flow from its investments in women members of the family rather than the transformatory potential of its work. Consequently, there may be constraints at work which prevent Grameen women’s groups from taking on a more political role in the process of development.29

19. For example, the peasants’ cooperatives and women’s cooperatives funded by these schemes generally made no distinction in terms of class. As a result resources went directly to the rich who were able to invest them in ways that enabled them to exploit the poor even further. For instance, the rich use the deep tube wells (bought with NGO funds or loans) to irrigate the fields of poor peasants at exhorbitant rates.

20. The word grameen is derived from gram, meaning village.


23. Ibid.


26. Holcombe, Managing to Empower.

27. Ibid. See also Mizan, In Quest of Empowerment, Pieter Streefland et al., Different Ways to Support the Rural Poor: Effects of Two Development Approaches in Bangladesh (Dhaka: Centre for Social Studies, Dhaka University, 1986); Pieter Streefland et al., “Credit and Conscientization: Effects of Different Development Approaches in Bangladesh,” Public Administration and Development 13 (1993): 153-169.


29. Ibid., p. 257.
The small loans that these NGOs give to poor women are used for paddy husking, livestock rearing, and other small-scale businesses that merely help women to survive while doing nothing to alter their economic position in any sustained fashion. (Women weaving reticulated bags, made with jute, in a project supported by Grameen Bank loans. Photograph by Salah Uddin Azizee. Courtesy Grameen Foundation/Washington, D.C.)

In summary, the Grameen Bank has made real achievements, but it must be stressed that the bank has neither the intention nor the ability to mount a real challenge to the political and economic system of either the village or the wider society in Bangladesh. Nor is the bank in the business of enabling poor women to challenge the authority of their husbands or the existing gender inequities in Bangladesh society. Instead, the bank provides the resources for some degree of self-improvement among "deserving" members of the rural poor—but only insofar as the recipients accept the values and the model of financial discipline of what is ultimately Western capitalism. By contrast, the nongovernmental organizations we study next are, in theory at least, more radical in their orientation than the Grameen Bank, and their rhetoric tends more toward the Freire-influenced type of empowerment discourse.

The Radical NGO Model

NGOs in Bangladesh typically have small budgets (by comparison with government and bilateral and multilateral donor agencies) and so their emphasis tends to be on small-scale and pilot projects. Their thinking is that these projects will be replicated on the local level and that this will lead to changes in the situation of rural people in other locales. Besides the relative size of their budgets, NGOs differ from the larger development agents in their "radical" insistence that decision-making should take place at or near the field level, that private or vested interests should be subordinated to the interests of the poor beneficiaries, and that leadership roles should be occupied by people who have a sincere commitment to the work.

It is in this orientation of the "radical" NGOs—if anywhere—that we might hope to find the process of "conscientization" at work. I would argue, however, that in practice the achievements of such NGOs have failed to measure up to the challenge of their analysis. To make my case, I examine the aims and practice of three representative NGOs: BRAC, Proshika, and Nijera Kon.

Bangladesh Rural Advancement Committee

Established in 1972, the Bangladesh Rural Advancement Committee (BRAC) is by far the largest of the three nongovernmental organizations, serving 1.2 million members with a staff of 11,000 (in 1995). Inspired by Freirean ideas of "liberating education" and conscientization, BRAC's founders enunciated two major goals for their organization: poverty alleviation and the empowerment of the poor. Aditee Nag Chowdhuuy notes that BRAC "is regarded as the pioneer" of the so-called "target group" strategy and of programs that include the participation of the poorest of the poor in programs directed towards their own development. BRAC makes a deliberate effort to improve the situation of the rural poor, "not merely by macro-economic growth-oriented programs, but by making the poor aware of the reasons for their poverty, enabling them to analyse the mechanism of exploitation. It was hoped that once the resourceless groups became conscious of the basic causes of their poverty, they would be able to unite and take part in programmes for their uplift". The training that BRAC offers to its staff and members in human development includes consciousness-raising (conscientization), leadership development, functional education teachers' training, entrepreneurship development, management development, group dynamics, and development communication.

Proshika Manobik Unnayn Kendra

The second of the three NGOs—Proshika Manobik Unnayn Kendra (Human Development Training Centre), "Proshika" for short—developed out of BRAC's programs of human development training. Founded in 1976 by social workers trained in BRAC, Proshika designs and conducts training programs "in both formal and non-formal settings" both for its own workers and for members of landless, small peasants, and women's groups. In addition to training, they help the target groups develop "irrigation assets" such as deep tube wells and they

33. Ibid.
34. Chowdhury, Let Grassroots Speak, p. 67.
35. Ibid., p. 68.
36. Ibid., p. 71.
37. Ibid., p. 112.
extend credits to enable the groups to improve their bargaining power in relation to the rural rich. By early 1992, Proshika claimed to have 900 staff servicing over 25,000 groups spread across the country. About 50 percent of these groups were made up exclusively of women.38

Nijera Kori

The third NGO, Nijera Kori (Bengali for “We Do It Ourselves”), shares aims that are similar to those of BRAC and Proshika but with one major difference: Nijera Kori does not provide “petty loans” because it maintains that these do not solve the problem of poverty in the long run. Instead, Nijera Kori organizes village-based groups of men and women in rural areas of Bangladesh, giving them “flexible need-based” training courses with the intention of providing them with the tools of social analysis. The groups are mobilized politically and encouraged to struggle for social justice.39 While the target groups of Nijera Kori do not receive credits, they are given moral and social support, sometimes in the form of legal assistance.40 Since its founding in 1977, Nijera Kori has placed a special emphasis on gender-based issues.

Mobilization and Conscientization

BRAC, Proshika, and Nijera Kori share a stated commitment to mobilization and conscientization of the poorest sections of the rural population. There is no doubt that they have some real achievements to their credit. There are many instances in which groups associated with the three NGOs have benefitted from their training in conscientization. Landless men and women have worked together to resist unfair wages and oppressive behavior in Integrated Rural Works Programmes and Food for Work Programmes. Women’s groups have organized successfully to protest against having to give bribes to authorities and to prevent various injustices against women, e.g., assaults on women, dowry demands, polygamy, or failing to give alimony to women on divorce.41 Village women have been able to use popular theatre to expose patterns of exploitation to the wider community.42

In addition, although the income-generating activities associated with these groups might seem to make only a marginal difference to the economic situation of their members, small gains may actually be quite significant for the individuals and families concerned, given the extreme poverty in which people in Bangladesh are living. For instance, income-generation programs and other types of assistance may mean “not having to sell their last possessions to the money lender; to have grain during lean months; to learn some preventive health measures; [to have the opportunity to] acquire skilled training; saving enough to have a tin roof and buy some clothes, utensils, etc.”43

The common perceptions within the empowerment model are (1) that women’s participation in paid employment is a definite indicator of an improvement in their status, and (2) that participation in paid work will automatically give women more decision-making power. These perceptions, however, are naïve and often misplaced—in the South Asia context at any rate. It has long been common in rural Bangladesh and India for poor women to take up paid employment, usually in highly exploitative situations, e.g., domestic work for wealthier households, or more recently earthcutting or food-for-work programs. Yet, paid employment has done nothing to improve the status of the poor women involved. Indeed, in a society where a family and a community’s honor is defined by women’s purity, women’s increased mobility outside the households is a problem for their families, since it is seen as compromising their purity.44 Thus, until recently, only the poorest of the poor would leave their households in search of paid work.

It would be a mistake to assume that poorer women who work for pay enjoy more equality with men than do middle- or upper-class women who do not work for pay. As Sarah White warns, the argument that poor women enjoy more gender equality than middle-class women because they work outside the home comes close to implying that “poverty is good for women.”45 From her field research with Bangladeshi village women involved in small-scale business ventures of the type funded by Grameen Bank and BRAC, White has argued that women are still defined by their relationship with their husbands and their husbands’ families and that it is here that we should look for their power. Women use their resources not so much to be independent of their husbands and their husbands’ families as much as to strengthen their position within a traditionally dependent family structure.

This appears to be what is happening with the poor women who have been able to earn income through credit extended to them by Grameen Bank, BRAC, and Proshika. While BRAC female members say that they are now given respect by their family members, what this usually means is that their families appreciate the income they bring home. But even this conditional “respect” is a significant achievement—one that may have deeper implications in women’s relationships with their families. However, given the temporary nature of NGO activities such small and temporary incomes are unlikely to lead to any sustained changes in the overall relationship of dependence of women on men in Bangladeshi society.

While it is true that, amongst the poor, women with an income tend to have more say in household affairs than women without an income, few of these women engaged in income-generating activities have actually transformed their position within the household. Women continue to be excluded from decision-making about issues such as land, housing, and capital expenditures, Nailing Kabeer contends. It is taken for granted (and institutionalized in rules and practices) that decisions in areas such as these can be made only by men and that certain types of work such as housework should never be done by men. Power is “more fluid, more pervasive and more socially embedded,” Kabeer argues, “than the conventional focus on individual decision-making would suggest.”46

40. Ibid.
41. The Self-Employed Women’s Association (SEWA), and Women’s Development Programme (Rajasthan) in India, as well as Saptagram in Bangladesh (an NGO managed entirely by women at every level), all take an active role on these women’s issues (see Kabeer, Reversed Realities).
42. Kramsjo and Wood, Breaking the Chains. Popular theatre (jatra) is not new in Bangladesh, but its use as a tool to deal with social injustice is quite new.
43. Chowdhury, Let Grassroots Speak, p. 203.
44. Rozario, Purity and Communal Boundaries.
45. White, Arguing with the Crocodile, p. 25.
were purely economic. There were no changes in her relationship with her husband and her position in the gender hierarchy remained the same. Rohima, whose father had died, had been sent back to her brother's house to arrange for a dowry for her husband. She was taken back by her husband without a dowry after much pleading by her impoverished brothers, only to be thrown out again, this time permanently. Her husband remarried and Rohima's small children were eventually taken away from her. Rohima's situation was not changed in any of these respects by her involvement with BRAC. In fact, Rohima's story supports Westergaard's judgment that NGOs like BRAC may have some impact on gender roles, but they have none at all on gender relations.

Writing some years after Chen, Chowdhury states that the BRAC groups have not expanded on their own nor have they succeeded in changing their socio-economic condition more than marginally. What one notices is that no remarkable changes have occurred in the lives of the people by participatory activities in the socio-economic aspects, although small changes have occurred, especially in the spheres of group solidarity in women's projects.

**Limitations of the Radical NGO Model**

There are a number of reasons, I submit, why BRAC, Proshika, and Nijera Kori have failed to deliver the kind of radical social transformation that their rhetoric envisages. (Some of these reasons apply to the Grameen Bank as well.)

- **Discrepancy between theory and practice.** Despite their explicit concern with empowerment and conscientization of the poor, there is a large gap between the rhetoric and the practice of the three nongovernmental organizations. In theory they target only the poorest sectors of the population, but in reality matters are more complicated. Problems with internal group structure stand in the way of the efforts of conscientization and mobilization. Class divisions are rarely clear cut, and local groups, which ideally should share similar interests and be homogeneous in their class position, may actually include landless laborers, marginal peasants close to being driven off their last bit of land, petty traders, and small sharecroppers. In addition, the local groups include so-called "class allies" such as village doctors, school teachers, and family-planning workers.

Michael Nebulung notes that "in many project areas the groups are controlled by the better-off members or even by influential outsiders." Furthermore, it has been argued that in many cases the main beneficiaries of the credit offered by BRAC are villagers who are already influential and comparatively wealthy. (Some of these wealthy recipients have reportedly obtained up to four separate loans.) Women who receive BRAC loans are often middle class. Where credit is extended to poor women, it is often, in practice, simply used by their husbands. Critics charge that, by and large, BRAC has not been able to help the poorest of the poor.

In addition, the small loans that these NGOs give to poor women are used for paddy husking, livestock rearing, and other small-scale businesses that merely help women to survive while doing nothing to alter their economic position in any sustained fashion. (This is true, as well, for loans from the Grameen Bank.)

When an NGO closes down a project in a particular village, the economic position of the women who had been associated with the project may be as bad or worse than before the project started.

The Novartis Foundation notes, with reference to their NGO activities in Bangladesh: "The real frustration comes from know-
Class and status disparity between NGO staff and village people.

While the NGOs make an effort to train their staff about how to deal with the poor, one cannot underestimate the significance of the class and status gap between the village poor and NGO field staff. A short training course cannot and does not rid field staff of the class and status consciousness with which Bangladeshi culture is imbued. Poor village people differ from the mainly middle-class and urban staff in language, mannerisms, and dress. In addition, their poverty makes them unequivocally chotolok (low status, "little people") not baralok (high status, "big" or important people), in terms of the fundamental class distinction that runs through both village and urban Bangladesh. Despite the formal absence of Hindu caste norms in Bangladeshi Muslim society, chotolok carries associations of "dirty" and "polluted," so upper- and middle-class people (baralok) will not sit with or eat with poor village people (chotolok). Field staff, themselves mostly from baralok and educated backgrounds, have much more in common with the middle-class and wealthy villagers (the local baralok) than with the poor villagers they are supposed to be assisting.

An added dimension here is the new dependency relationship that arises from interactions between the villagers and the NGOs. Bernard Hours argues that while NGOs have had limited success in breaking down the dependency relationship between poor peasants and rich families, "a new type of dependence is emerging between the initiator of the project and the target group." Chowdhury adds that BRAC "has become a new political elite in the village, taking the place of political parties without a strong programme to defend its activities."

Constraints imposed by foreign donors.

Even if NGO staff were serious about conscientization and were somehow able to overcome the cultural distance between themselves and the village poor, the wider economic context within which these NGOs operate prevents them from mounting any real challenge to the prevailing economic and political regime. Bangladesh today is heavily dependent on foreign aid—aid that is increasingly political in character. The aid given to Bangladesh in the early 1970s (after the War of Liberation) was largely humanitarian in nature. But today, as Rehman Sobhan has argued, donors are increasingly political in character. The aid given to Bangladesh in the late 1970s was to the extent to which NODs can translate their beliefs into action, let alone develop them into a radical critique of the existing power structures of village life.

This leads to a situation of systematic deception and dishonesty at all levels. As Hours observes,

developmental projects [in Bangladesh] are creating a client-patron relationship between the population and the developers. The projects which have become small enterprises, must show some positive results to motivate the donors and as such, these results are being concocted through fictitious scenarios of people's participation. Similarly, the government is lying to the international public-aid donors, the local employees of the NGOs are lying to their patrons who on their part make lies to the respective donors. This is happening because of the simple fact that the cult attached to the attained objectives, demands a result, even if fictitious, according to a well-established technocratic reasoning.

Any attempt to transform rural society and change the situation of the poor in any radical way would involve a direct confrontation with the world economic system and its development machinery. No Bangladeshi government since independence has been in a position to challenge the demands of the donor agencies, even had they wished to do so. In fact, they have no desire to do so, since their primary concerns have been to remain in power and to keep the international aid flowing to Bangladesh.

Absence of appropriate political apparatus.

As Tom Heaney points out, the success of the Freirean model of literacy campaigns through conscientization in Brazil and Nicaragua depended in large part on the presence of a favorable political environment.

The literacy campaigns upon which Freire’s work was based occurred in the context of revolutionary social change. The political apparatus was at hand into which the released energy of liberated minds and bodies could flow. Opportunities for collective action were antecedent to learning; land redistribution was underway; technical and financial support were available for economic development, elections were to take place.

By contrast, the Bangladeshi political apparatus is far too fragile and too vulnerable to the pressures from the local business elite and international aid agencies to allow the energy from conscientization to bring about real social change. Neither of Bangladesh’s two major political parties are at all willing or able to effect the type of total social transformation envisaged in Paulo Freire’s model.

Forging links between learning and action, consciousness and conscientization—a key facet of Freire’s pedagogy—is not easily done in Bangladesh. As DAWN emphasizes, “women’s empowerment can come about only by examining all internal contradictions of race, class and nationality. The empowerment of women must, therefore, address oppressive structures on different levels simultaneously.”

There is little evidence, however, that this is happening in the NGOs we have examined. Conscientization may be part of the rhetoric of these organizations, but there are real limits in the extent to which NGOs can translate their beliefs into action, let alone develop them into a radical critique of the existing power structures of village life.

Conclusion

The models of empowerment in development work used by the NGOs described above have problems that can be summarized as follows: The Solomon-derived model is inadequate because it assumes that most of the problems that poor rural women experience arise because of a lack of understanding or ability. The solution, then, is to change attitudes. Solomon’s

Men and women participating in a training session for rural development workers at a village in Bangladesh. (FAO photograph by E. Kennedy/FAO 10215)

analysis is based on the assumption that dealing with "indirect [internal] power blocks" (i.e., the client's negative self-valuation) can lead to real change, at least on an individual basis. However, the impediments that poor rural South Asian women (and men) confront on the path to development are, for the most part, "direct power blocks" such as the lack of access to basic resources or to any real political power within or beyond the village community.

Although the "conscientization" paradigm also puts too much emphasis on a change in consciousness, at least it admits that real change has to recognize the wider picture and risk confronting rural and national structures that determine inequities in the distribution of resources. But, as we have seen, nongovernmental organizations that try to put "conscientization" into practice face their own unwillingness (and, perhaps, a structural inability) to challenge the wider system. The reluctance or inability of NGOs like BRAC, Proshika, and Nijera Kori to make a genuine political commitment makes it impossible for poor peasant or women's groups to rely on them when confronting the rural power structure.

Freire himself pointed out that the conscientization process must beware of the limits "historical reality imposes on it." 61 Sometimes it happens that the people's action, moving toward the demasking of oppressive structures of a given society, though partial, is not the political expression of historical viability. In other words, it can happen that the masses of the people comprehend the immediate reasons that explain a particular event, but that they do not grasp, at the same time, the relationship between this event and the total picture in which they participate—where the historical viability is found. 62

Freire's point about "partial" and "total" understanding provides another explanation for the relative failure of NGO activities in Bangladesh. The poor rural women with whom BRAC, Proshika, and Nijera Kori work are encouraged to confront only a partial picture of their reality and to tackle only the consequences—rather than the causes—of their poverty-stricken, subordinate position. 63 Women may be urged to rebel against dowry payments, or even against polygamy, but they are not encouraged (a) to question the gender ideologies and economic factors that perpetuate these practices, (b) to challenge the gender hierarchy as a whole, (c) to confront the root causes of power imbalances in rural areas, or (d) to analyze the broader relations of exploitation, both at the national and international level, including those being perpetuated by the development establishment.

Given the wider political context within which the NGOs and the Grameen Bank operate, it is hard to see how they could do otherwise than they are doing.

It would be nice to end on a more promising note, but it is difficult to see much scope for effective "empowerment" of poor rural women in countries like Bangladesh today. On the whole, NGOs continue to use the terms "empowerment" and "conscientization" loosely in descriptions of their numerous developmental activities with women. But this blurs the vital distinction between small changes in the economic status of women and real changes in their overall position, socially, politically and culturally. The NGOs may speak of conscientization, but in practice they evade any confrontation with the "total picture" that affects villagers' lives.

If there is a better approach, perhaps it will arise out of the actual experience of working with these women, just as the approaches of Solomon and Freire derive their validity from the contexts in which they developed. 64 It may be significant that the relatively few cases in South Asia of successful "empowerment" of rural women seem to be those in which most of the initiative was local, and outsiders were assistants and facilitators at most. 65 Yet even here, changes in the economic status of women or in the levels of their participation in local politics seem to be easier to achieve than a genuine transformation in the oppressive nature of South Asian gender relations.

63. Brooke A. Ackarley points out that for BRAC and the Grameen Bank empowerment of women is subordinated to the goals of empowerment of the poor: "Testing the Tools of Development: Credit Programmes, Loan Involvement, and Women's Empowerment," IDS Bulletin 26, no. 3 (1995): 56-68. It is perhaps understandable that poor peasants and poor rural women take what material advantage they can from NGO programs. When the NGO withdraws, they know that they will be left to deal with the village leaders as before, and so they cannot afford to alienate them.
64. For example, both Solomon and Freire were initially working in urban contexts, with very different opportunities for both individual advancement and collective political action than are found in a typical South Asian village.
Symposium on Prasenjit Duara’s
Rescuing History from the Nation

Chinese, Dogs and the State
that Stands on Two Legs

by John Fitzgerald¹

I have been asked to touch on the history that Prasenjit Duara rescues in Rescuing History, rather than on the theoretical apparatus employed in his attempt. The two are not easily separated in any case, but here the customary distinctions among empirically verifiable evidence, explanatory strategies, and historical method are especially tenuous. Duara goes well beyond the relativist claim that historical “facts” are selective and partial records of events, implicated in historians’ choices of competing explanations, to mount the broader claim that competing explanations (“narratives”) are the stuff of history. In view of the fusion of theory and practice in Duara’s study of narratives, I should like to consider the significance of Duara’s method for the study of China’s history and then explore in some detail one of the claims put forward in his comparison of the distinctive narratives of Chinese and Indian history: specifically, the relative importance of colonial representations of the people of China and India for the emergence of the modern national subject.

All histories, Duara argues, are organized around a “master-narrative” of Enlightenment History that presupposes the awakening-to-consciousness of the citizen and the nation. It follows that historians are better occupied trying to identify the particular forms that Enlightenment narratives happen to take from one time, or place, to the next than in adjudicating among them to establish which happens to be the correct one. So Rescuing History traces a series of overlapping and competing narratives of events and themes put forward by historical actors and historians of twentieth-century China and India. Little time is wasted compiling evidence in defense of this or that argument. Instead, Duara shows that China’s recent history can productively be approached as a series of contests over authenticity between this and that narrative. His role, as historian, is to reveal the cunning of reason that enables some narratives to take precedence over others in the manufacture of the modern nation and in the recording of its history.

Duara makes two important claims about history and nations that have significant implications for the study of China’s history. The first is that historical actors and historians incorrectly assume that nations are cohesive and self-conscious collective subjects. The second is that nationalist consciousness is emphatically not a new or modern form of consciousness, unique and without precedent in history. The twin assumptions of cohesive subjectivity and historical uniqueness have gained wide currency in studies of nationalism through the work of Karl Deutsch, in the 1960s, and in more recent studies by Ernest Gellner and Benedict Anderson who, for all their skepticism on other matters, assume that the nation is a novel and cohesive subject in their studies of the social, cultural, and economic institutions held to be responsible for its creation.

The first claim, that Enlightenment History invariably pictures China as a “self-same, national subject evolving through time,” presents historical studies with a challenge on two fronts. On the one hand, this claim calls into question a widespread assumption that there is a cohesive, self-conscious community (the nation) that corresponds to the instrumental ideology of the modern state. In the field of Chinese studies, attempts have been made to specify what this self-conscious nation “is,” and to trace how the “re-awakened” nation relates to its assumed antecedents in earlier communities of empire. But few do so without falling back on untenable distinctions between the modern and the traditional. On the other, this claim implicitly challenges one of the key assumptions underlying “China-centered” histories. Paul Cohen has warned against imposing alien frames of reference on the indigenous cultural, social, and economic patterns of China’s past.¹ Following Duara, the search for a “true” China may be as
remains the emergence of the centered, awakened, modern (and unreflective) subject.

of a people” (p. 224). The grand theme of China’s history thus twentieth century, Duara asserts that “opposition to imperialism was chiefly political and economic and did not present the urgent need to root out imperialist ideology in the very self-perception promoted the emergence of a postmodern, de-centered subject.

fight off imperialist economic and political oppression, he sug­gests, Chinese elites never had to confront disfiguring imprint of imperialist representations of their own culture. Sun finished his lectures with numerous illustrations and elaborate explanations of why Chinese should take account of their influence happened to be felt in different ways. Duara’s argument highlights the need for further research in this area. Historical surveys of the anti-imperialist movement in China are needed to establish the extent to which political and economic considerations outweighed cultural or psychological ones, and to identify the dynamics of Chinese political discourse that appear to have lent pre-eminence to political and economic factors over “psychological” ones. Only then, it seems, can we assert with any confidence the connection between colonial representation and modern subjectivity in Chinese nationalist discourse.

A clue to the relationship between the political, economic, and “psychological” aspects of imperialism is to be found in one of the canonical texts of Chinese nationalism, Sun Yatsen’s Three Principles of the People. In his opening lectures on the Three Principles, delivered in 1924, Sun focused on the economic and political aspects of foreign intervention in China. Toward the close of the lectures, however, he paused to advise members of his audience to avoid spitting and burping in public, to brush their teeth, and to trim their fingernails. Here he was echoing the clichés of foreign visitors. Paradoxically, Sun’s scorn and advice were motivated by an urge to drive the political and economic imperialists from China. “Why can we not govern China?” he asked. “What reveals the fact to foreigners?” Sun answered on behalf of his audience: “They can see that we are very much lacking in personal culture.” China’s political and economic independence required, it seemed, a revolution in personal culture. Sun finished his lectures with numerous illustrations and elaborate explanations of why Chinese should take account of racist representations of their customs and habits, in every case assuming these to be accurate representations of the Chinese as a people. Sun was not alone in this conviction. Two decades earlier, Liang Qichao had compiled an inventory of flaws in the

Certainly opposition to imperialism in China took overtly political forms and focused on imperialism’s economic effects. Yet it is not at all certain that opposition to imperialism grew simply from political or economic sources of discontent. Admittedly, little research has been undertaken into the “psychologi­cal” effects of colonial representations of the Chinese on the scale of Frantz Fanon’s studies of the black subject of the French colonial empire or Ashis Nandy’s work on the psychology of the colonized South Asian subject. Still, there seems no reason to assume that colonial representations of the Chinese as a people were any less significant for the anti-imperialist movement in China than in India—or for that matter in the Antilles—even if their influence happened to be felt in different ways. Duara’s argument highlights the need for further research in this area. Historical surveys of the anti-imperialist movement in China are needed to establish the extent to which political and economic considerations outweighed cultural or psychological ones, and to identify the dynamics of Chinese political discourse that appear to have lent pre-eminence to political and economic factors over “psychological” ones. Only then, it seems, can we assert with any confidence the connection between colonial representation and modern subjectivity in Chinese nationalist discourse.

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Chinese character that mimicked the catalogues of vices compiled by Western missionaries and commercial agents. He proposed creating a model New People (xin min; also New Citizen) who would be cleansed of the traits that were mocked and derided by colonials. And ten years after Sun delivered his final lecture on the Three Principles, Chiang Kaishek launched the New Life Movement to put an end to spitting and burping, once and for all, with military rigor. It is said that Chiang decided to mount the New Life Movement after he came across an unkempt student lolling about in the streets of Nanchang, and, in the words of The North China Herald, “thought he perceived one of the main causes why some foreigners appear to despise the Chinese people.”

Chiang, like Sun Yatsen and Liang Qichao before him, despised the Chinese people chiefly because foreigners did, and, like his predecessors, he tried to ameliorate the political and economic effects of imperialism by remaking the customs and habits of his people. The nationalist vision of a new and improved Chinaman illustrates in its deference to colonial representations of the Chinese a paradox at the heart of Chinese nationalism: the New People of Liang Qichao, Sun Yatsen, and Chiang Kaishek were mirror images of John Chinaman, effectively reversing the traits ascribed to the Chinese in colonial texts.

While Duara acknowledges the significance of the motif of the “people reborn” in nationalist rhetoric, he is inclined to trace its recurrence to a different paradox arising from the need to claim a cohesive national subject while denying the nation’s historical past. He suggests that the solution to this paradox was twofold: mobilizing a new people for the nation through “charismatic power” and associating “unwanted” forms of community with foreign aggressors (pp. 110-11). As Duara presents it, the assimilation of feudalism with imperialism was limited to encounters with the political and economic face of imperialism. In fact, though, Chinese nationalists also confronted an archive of hostile representations of their people that obliged them to incorporate key tenets of imperialist ideology in their programs for national revival. The self-image of the Chinese was surrendered to the imperialists once their economic independence and political sovereignty were compromised.

When the Chinese state was held ransom by the Western powers in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, the self-image of the Chinese people was taken captive as well. European visitors painted word portraits, made etchings, took photographs of the people and landscape of China and captured numerous specimens of the “Chinaman” to pin down in their ethnographic scrapbooks and parade around Europe. When Chinese nationalists came across these caricatures of John Chinaman late in the nineteenth century, in their reading and their travels, they found his features vaguely recognizable, but strongly resented the mockery and derision that the caricature now engendered in European society. They vowed to set free not just their country but the Chinaman of the European imagination. As they began to explore the character of the Chinese people around the turn of this century, they did so in full consciousness of competing European claims to define the characteristics of their people. In the main, nationalist ethnography came to bear an uncanny resemblance to essentialist, racist European writings on the curious habits, customs, and morals of the Chinaman of the European imagination. China’s nationalists asserted the authority to define and describe the people of China in fiction and popular ethnography as a first step toward the political and economic independence of the country.

The competition to assign national characteristics was intimately linked to the wider economic and political contests between the colonial powers and China. Foreign visitors, for their part, insisted on assigning China a “point of rank... in the scale of civilized nations,” and their rankings invariably coincided with the country’s ability to defend its territory and preserve its sovereignty as a state. Within China, competition between states came to be understood as a free-for-all among races, nations, and cultures for a place in history, and not as a contest between armies and states alone. Liang Qichao made the connection explicitly: “Officials come, after all, from among the people,” he wrote, “they are not members of a separate race.... The fruit of a tree is only as good as its roots.” It seemed that national states represented, however unwittingly, bodies of people possessing unique national cultures each of which could be reduced to a set of finite and quantifiable characteristics. Every national culture, in turn, could be evaluated by the relative success of its national state in trade, diplomacy, and war because each was thought to endow its state with the capacity to win or to lose in international competition. Hence the national “characteristics” of a people—which to Liang Qichao’s way of thinking included everything “from morals and laws down to customs, habits, literature, and fine arts”—were thought to contribute to the capacity of the state to defend its territory, uphold its sovereignty and establish its autonomy in the international state system. The Emperor of China was no match for the King of England, it seemed, because John Chinaman was no match for John Bull.

“Civilizing Mission” of Imperialism

Liang Qichao’s remarks echoed similar sentiments from the colonial side. When China’s failure as a state exposed failings among its subjects it summoned up the spectre of a civilizing mission to remedy them on the part of the colonial powers. The colonial determination to intervene in affairs of state was matched by a consuming interest in the moral improvement of the Chinese people. Only the crudest of colonial expatriates felt this should be effected through direct intervention. Among missionaries and other observers salvation appeared to lie in convincing the Chinese that they could not remain themselves and expect to find a place in the new world order—and that it would be best for all concerned if they would take this burden upon themselves. “Nobody wanted to conquer China,” recalled one sympathetic foreigner in 1923, “but everybody wanted China to conquer herself.” On this point the civilizing mission of European

imperialism found common cause from Beijing to Delhi and wherever else the natives could be persuaded to embrace "the new forms of a civilized and rational order." This was the order of the modern, self-conscious, national citizen and the sovereign, self-governing, nation state.\textsuperscript{12}

On the colonial side, the civilizing mission of imperialism was taken very seriously before the expansion of empire came to be accountable to a balance sheet—before "imperialism in the age of capital" as it came to be known. Old imperialists feared that the crass pursuit of wealth would diminish imperial aura in the eyes of colonial subjects. There was, at any rate, no simple correspondence between the quest for knowledge and the cruder business of empire. Imperial traders were the first of the economic reductionists and were roundly condemned on this account for failing to acknowledge the relationship between "knowledge and power." "There are too many in the world," complained W. C. Taylor in 1834, "... who desire much to see the power [of empire] increased and perpetuated, but neglect the knowledge which is its first element." In an address to the Royal Asiatic Society, Taylor dwelt at length on the relationship between commerce and learning in an extended reflection on the fate of successive empires over the past two millennia. Learning came first. So the acquisition of India demanded intensive inquiry into the nature of the colonial subject over a far wider range of disciplines than had ever before been undertaken, in order to embrace all of the elements that made up the "national character" of the Hindoo. Similarly, relations with China "demand a most extensive and accurate knowledge of customs and institutions peculiar to the Chinese." The knowledge so acquired was to play an instrumental role in managing the empire and impressing upon the natives the foundation of British superiority in knowledge itself. "The foundation of our empire in the East," Taylor concluded, "is the opinion entertained of our intellectual superiority."\textsuperscript{13}

The relationship between knowledge and power was no less familiar to Chinese nationalists than to colonial pundits. By the 1920s, Chinese intellectuals had begun to suspect that foreigners knew more about them and their country than they did about themselves—or at least the imperialists knew about China in a more authoritative kind of way than they themselves did. They did not always like what they learned. So the struggle to reclaim China's economic independence and political sovereignty was matched by a struggle to reclaim knowledge of the Chinese for China. Imperialism had taught this much at least. "Imperialism overlooks nothing," observed the novelist Lao She after accidentally stumbling across the oriental corner of the Royal Botanical Gardens in London, sometime in the mid-1920s:

[Imperialism] doesn't confine itself to usurping a people's land and destroying a people's country. It really does take away all people possess for investigation—animals, plants, language, customs, geography—all are investigated. This is the terrible part of imperialism. Imperialists are not only specialists in military tyranny. Their knowledge is overwhelming too! Knowledge and military power!\textsuperscript{14}

The fiction of Lao She, Ba Jin, and other writers of the New Culture Movement reflects an increasing awareness of the colonial "representation" of the Chinese as a people, and traces in outline the narrative history of resistance to these representations within the broader anti-imperialist movement.

Ba Jin's short story, "The Dog" (gou), is one of many accounts of the "self-awakening" (zijue) of the modern subject to appear in the fiction of the New Literature movement, and one of a number featuring dogs.\textsuperscript{15} In this case, the narrator "awakens" to discover that he is a dog. Before considering this short story in detail, it is worth recalling the place of the dog in nationalist rhetoric.

The most celebrated example of colonial representation of the Chinese is, of course, the legendary sign said to have barred entry to "Chinese and dogs" from a park in the Shanghai International Settlement. The legend itself may be a case of "misrepresentation," but it is no less revealing on this account. In a style characteristic of British municipal administration the world over, the sign listed a number of regulations governing use of the park including one concerning the entry of dogs and another dealing with the admission of local Chinese (and permitting entry by Chinese servants of Europeans).\textsuperscript{16} The intervening regulations needed to be elided with an editorial stroke of the nationalist imagination to arrive at the condensed statement that dogs and Chinese were forbidden. The point at issue here is not whether a sign barring "Chinese and dogs" ever saw the light of day but how and why the nationalist imagination should have come to elide the intervening regulations on the notice-board and focus on this sign as a symbol of Han humiliation.

Initially, it seems, few Chinese residents in Shanghai appear to have noticed or taken offense at the sign. The association between Chinese and dogs was not at all clear, in part because the sign failed to make the comparison explicit and in part because the comparison made little sense to Chinese passing by. So long as the Chinese community of Shanghai thought of itself as part of the spectacle of modern metropolitan life, not apart from it, it was at liberty to imagine that the only dogs in the city went about on four legs. The curious legend that built up around the sign indicates how rapidly these perceptions began to change from the turn of the century. The people of Shanghai gradually had to learn that their daily routines and personal habits were linked to the welfare of the nation before the sign could reveal itself with such elegant simplicity.

The dog was a familiar symbol of racial subjection. Han Chinese had long attributed bestial features to "barbarians," who

\textsuperscript{11} North China Herald, 26 May 1923.


\textsuperscript{14} Lao She, Er Ma (Ma and son) [1929]. Jean M. James, trans. (San Francisco: Chinese Materials Center, 1980), p. 204.


were thought to be distinguished from themselves by outward signs of skin color, odor, body hair, gait, and manners. 17 Bestial images were turned against Christian missionaries in the Boxer uprising, and were employed in the propaganda of the republican revolutionaries against scions of the Manchu Qing Dynasty. The revolutionary anarchist Wu Zhuhui, who felt little remorse upon learning of the deaths of the Empress Dowager and the Guangxu Emperor in 1908, recorded their passing as "Manchu Dogs, one male and one female ... nothing but a bunch of dog slaves making up lies." In the same essay Wu referred to the Tongzhi Emperor as a "piglet." 18 But Han Chinese were not generally accustomed to thinking of themselves as dogs and pigs. It seems to have come as a rude shock to discover that foreigners treated the Han with the derision they reserved for others. Once the sign in the park was read and understood in the light of Han sensitivity to bestial imagery, the prohibition against "Chinese and dogs" was rapidly converted into an icon of Han subjection. By the 1920s, it was no longer possible for a Chinese person to stroll past the park without reflecting on what it meant to be "Chinese and dogs," whatever the sign happened to say.

**Fiction of the 1920s**

In the fiction of the 1920s, procedures of racist representation were accepted and reversed in an attempt to refashion the people of China so that they would stand on their own two feet and no longer resemble dogs. In Ba Jin's "The Dog," we noted, the troubled narrator awakens to learn that he is a dog. The author dwells on this species metamorphosis in a tone of morbid fascination, identifying the physical features distinguishing Chinese from Europeans and then touching on the relations of power between them that stamped Chinese physical traits as an indelible mark of racial inferiority:

I have yellow skin, black hair, black eyes, a tiny nose, and a short, slight frame. But there are in this world others with white skins, yellow hair, blue eyes, long noses, and tall big frames. They walk on the road and on the pavement with great strides, one, two or three of them, raising their heads haughtily to take in all around them, singing at will, shouting at random and laughing without control as if they are the only three people on the pavement. Other people walk past them nervously, or timidly keep their distance.

Ba Jin was an anarchist at the time of writing, committed to the humanist ideals of individual equality and the fraternity of humankind. Yet the first discovery to dawn on the narrator is that the ideal of common humanity is a fraud. There are no such things as human beings (ren) but instead two distinct classifications of beings resembling people: "Above the kind of people I usually mix with there is another and far greater order of people." The line between "the kind of people I usually mix with" and the "greater order of people" is drawn satirically around the habits and manners of treaty-port colonials. The author invites reflection on what it is that makes the "greater" people so great. It is certainly not their morals: "I have often seen these greater people on the streets. They are always smiling, singing, and shouting, or beating people with wine bottles, or pawing the faces of women. At times I have even seen them sitting in rickshaws with a pair of those lovable pink legs sitting on their laps."

The narrator's disdain for the crude behavior of the colonials can barely disguise his own longing for a pair of "lovable pink legs" draped across his own lap. The dog imagery of Chinese nationalist texts, Rey Chow has observed, is both a metaphor for the subject nation and a sign of male impotence, here expressed in masturbatory fantasies. 19 The observed colonial is a gendered model to which the male nationalist cannot but aspire. In the meantime, however, he settles for being a dog. It is, in fact, the "great man" who calls him a dog. The narrator savors the word and embraces it as his own: "'Dog!' I clearly heard the great man spit the word from his mouth... I understood at last that I was indeed a dog." 20

Ba Jin's disingenuous tone and heavy irony betrays an underlying determination to stir his readers to throw off the racist slurs of the Europeans. Still, his keen eye for the detail of his own skin and hair, his eyes, his nose, his frame and bearing, and his acknowledgment of sexual impotence in contrast to the "greater order of people" from abroad betray signs of psychological scars inflicted through intimate personal knowledge of the shame of a subject people who had been taught to associate their impotence with their physical traits. The author's irony reinforces a racist critique of the Chinese people in the process of exposing and resisting it.

Other writers preferred exhortation to irony. In a novel published two years earlier, *Ma and Son (Er Ma, 1929)*, Lao She drew upon his personal observations in England to recount the hilarious cross-cultural encounters of a Chinese family running a store in London. Lao She also dwelt on the racist association of Chinese and dogs:

In the twentieth century attitudes towards "people" and "country" are alike. Citizens of a strong country are people, but citizens of a weak nation? Dogs! China is a weak country, and the Chinese? Right! People of China! You must open your eyes and look around. The time for opening your eyes has come! You must straighten your backs. The time for straightening your backs has come unless you are willing to be regarded as dogs forever! 21

Lao She conceded the aptness of the comparison before turning it back upon his countrymen in an exhortation to self-improvement so that they would not remain "dogs forever."

In trying to represent his fellow countrymen in fiction, each writer felt obliged to accept the foreigners' curse on the Chinese as dogs in order to bestir them to become "people." Lao She was bitterly conscious of the stock Chinese of the popular English cinema who, he recalled, "would smoke opium, smuggle munitions, mutilate dead men and conceal their heads under beds, rape women whether old or young... the Chinese have been transformed into the most sinister, filthy, repulsive, debased creatures on two legs in the whole world!" 22 Until they reclaimed the right to say who they were and discovered the will to say it forcefully, on their own two feet, Chinese would remain dogs. In the

22. Ibid.
The critical distance of the rational narrator of modern fiction located the author in a European discourse on the Orient that alienated him from his own compatriots. Lao She showed sensitive awareness of the first problem in Ma and Son when he presented "a Chinese view of the English view of the Chinese." When he rocketed his first-person narrator to a land of cats in his novella, City of Cats, he revealed an equally acute awareness of the problem of authorial distance. Lao She was the rational observer and China a land of beasts. In City of Cats "real" people are, with the exception of the narrator, all Occidental. Chinese are depicted as creatures of another species. Their continued existence as a distinct civilization seems to place the Chinese in perpetual and flagrant violation of reality, which is located across the sea in Europe. Their salvation is also to be found in European rationality: the voice of a Chinese narrator who speaks from a critical distance as broad as the span separating England and China. So Lao She's intentions are at their clearest in his detailed descriptions of the flaws of his cats, which are pictured quite as opiated, cruel, superstitious, corrupt, selfish, and irresponsible as the film Chinamen of the English cinema. It is no coincidence that the narrator is a Chinese person. Lao She takes on the perspective and characteristics of a rational Chinese narrator in order to reflect from afar on the faults of his fellow-countrymen, and to urge rectification and renovation in the name of the Chinese nation. The irony of City of Cats is the irony of Chinese nationalism itself. The novel is a parable, in its inversions, of the nationalist reclamation of the people from colonial representation.

Shen Congwen's novel Alice in China (inspired by Alice in Wonderland) presents a variation on the theme of the alien traveller. In this case, Alice appears as something more than an Occidental traveller through whom a Chinese readership might reflect upon itself. Alice is a colonial, and she discovers in China a land where the power of cultural representation has already been appropriated by fellow colonials. Her first acquaintance with the characteristics of the Chinese is a Guidebook to China, written by an English China expert, that details the dirty habits and grasping demeanor of the Chinese. Alice tests these prejudices against her personal experiences in the company of the March Hare. In Shen's hands, Alice is converted into a device for exploring the ways in which the Chinese have come to be represented by the Occident and for measuring the accuracy of these representations—and, ultimately, for ironic reflection on the fact that Shen's own exploration of Chinese characteristics must take serious account of the observations of a young English girl and a colonial hare.

Not all of this literature was intended for a Chinese audience. Perhaps the most eloquent and forceful challenge to the colonial specimen of John Chinaman ever to appear in English was Lin Yutang's My Country and My People. Lin was conscious at every turn of the scrivings of the colonial journalists Rodney Gilbert and H. G. Woodhead, whose unfailing remarks on "Chinese characteristics" seemed to him to misrepresent the people of China. The Chinaman of Gilbert and Woodhead was, in Lin's view, a grotesque caricature of the ordinary Chinese—a "stage fiction" he called it—that could only be redeemed by casting them as misrepresentations and then correcting them. Lin went looking for the real, authentic Chinese among the great mass of "common people." With the aid of an intellectual compass pointing unerringly in the direction of the new, rational sciences of the humanities, he knew where to find the real China, how to interpret what he found and (when he found them) how to defend his country and his people against the scandalous, racist representations of Treaty Port colonials.

Lin was not alone in borrowing Western sciences to defend his people from Westerners. By the 1920s, reaction to the mis-representations of colonial racism had developed into a thriving industry bent on redeeming the national character. Two of its redeeming symbols were particularly important for China's political revolution: women and the Chinese peasant. The most racist of colonial pundits anticipated Chinese nationalists in regarding the position of women as the source of China's shame and in anticipating that the peasant might prove to be the country's salvation. In colonial discourse, the female condition served as an indisputable sign of the unredeemed barbarity of the people of Asia. "That no Asiatic state has barbarized itself," Thomas de Quincey pronounced in 1857, "is evident from the condition of WOMAN at this hour all over Asia." De Quincey was one of the most intense critics of the Chinese of his day yet his views on women were widely shared and frequently reiterated by more sober critics. As a man's stand on the question became a mark of character in Europe and America, so it became the benchmark for distinguishing civilization from barbarity in the colonies. Reference to the treatment of women in Asia, Partha Chatterjee has observed, was one of the foundations upon which the "entire edifice of colonialist discourse was fundamentally constituted." Chinese nationalists could ill afford to ignore the complaint. Arguments for the liberation of women in the twentieth century rested less on premises of right and justice than on the assertion that the reputation of the Chinese people could not be redeemed until the women of China had been liberated. Only when women had been unbound, educated, employed, and treated as men's equals would China become a match for the foreigners. The "woman question" made its way into the mainstream of nationalist debate as an act of resistance against colonial racism.

Along with women came the common peasant. Liang Qichao felt that the failings of the ruling elite were necessarily those of the...
common people because all belonged to the one national culture: the slavish mentality, stupidity, selfishness, mendacity, timidity, and passivity of China's officials were all rooted in popular culture.28 Liang's explanation inverted the white supremacist argument that excused the flaws of John Chinaman by tracing them to the literate elite. "The Chinese literati," explained Rodney Gilbert, "are always and always have been a cautious, timid, evasive cult of physical weaklings, with passive rather than active—defensive rather than aggressive—minds." Commoners were tainted with the affliction through historical contact with the literati who "conveyed" their attitude to the people.29 Left to themselves, it would seem, the Chinese people might have developed all of the qualities that Gilbert and Liang Qichao admired among Europeans. But so thoroughly had they been contaminated by the literati that the Chinese people retained their pristine manliness only in remote pockets of the countryside, far removed from the baneful effects of effete high culture. Hence China's redemption lay in tapping the resourcefulness of her untainted peasants. "Among the Chinese," Gilbert announced on behalf of the colonial community of China, "we like the rough mountaineers and the border folk better than the more highly cultivated natives of supposedly pure breed; we like the primitive and uncouth.countrymen better than the effete town-dwellers, and we like the illiterate better than the cultured. The ruffian from the 'black blocks' in China is the less essentially Chinese and therefore the fellow with whom we savages from the West, we conquerors and exploiters of the world, with our delight in virility and fair play, find most in common."30

"Mao Zedong's rural revolution was not just a political, economic, and social enterprise. Mao restored to China's rural and urban populations a measure of authority over their own self-representation."

China's nationalists shared Gilbert's preference for the uncouth countryman. By the 1920s, nationalist ethnographers announced their intention to go hunting for authentic Chinese culture and tradition in the highlands and the backwoods where they expected to find, intact, whole communities of people who had escaped the influence of city life and Confucianism. When the historian and ethnographer Gu Jiegang set off in search of "natural genius" in remote mountain villages he was delighted to discover that remote country folk possessed all the qualities that colonial racism ascribed to "primitive and uncouth countrymen": spontaneity, anonymity, freshness, imagination, even a capacity to absorb "new things and foreign influences."31 Similar qualities could be found among the New People of the cities. But these New People were insufficiently "Chinese" to serve as a model of nationalist resistance. While the New Culture Movement promoted progressive, scientific culture in place of the old "feudal" one, it never managed to establish its New People as a credibly Chinese substitute for the old people they were meant to replace. By the 1920s, the literary archetype of the "fake foreign devil" (jia yangguizi) had taken its toll on the figure of the modern man and the modern women. As the New People of the cities grew indistinguishable from foreigners, a gap opened between nationalist representations of the consumptive culture of the old rural elite, on the one hand, and representations of an effete westernized elite in the cities. This gap was filled in the nationalist imagination by the figment of the idealized peasant, which was all but indistinguishable from Rodney Gilbert's "primitive and uncouth countrymen."

There was, however, one important distinction. If urban New People were insufficiently Chinese to mount a defense of China, China's peasant villagers were insufficiently "New" to rescue the nation without first being renovated themselves. Being uncouth and primitive was not quite enough. The peasants needed to undergo revolution. Rural revolutionaries sought not only to discover the authentic Chinese of the villages—ethnographers had already done that much—but also to remake them into New People. Faith in the transformative capacity of rural revolution was founded in the hope that China's peasants could be persuaded to make the necessary transition to becoming New People through mobilization against the old feudal order in the villages. And in the process of becoming New People, they would realize their potential as authentic peasants.

That is to say, Mao Zedong's rural revolution was not just a political, economic, and social enterprise. Mao restored to China's rural and urban populations a measure of authority over their own self-representation. He was fully conscious of the political, military, and economic aspects of imperialist oppression and wrote extensively on the strategies for liberating the country from the twin forces of "imperialism and feudalism." In this he succeeded where others failed. Yet his peasant revolution owed much as well to the broader ethnographic reclamation of the "common people" that had been under way for half a century and more in response to colonial representations of John Chinaman.

When Mao ultimately reflected on the source of his optimism that China would emerge victorious from the war against Japan, he was not content to observe—as Gu Jiegang had done—that peasants were spontaneous, bold, and imaginative. Peasant bravado was no match for an invading foreign army. Mao recalled Sun Yatsen's morbid fear that China might lose its state (wangguo) to a foreign power and perhaps fall into a state of decline comparable to colonial India if the people did not awaken to the dangers confronting them. But China's social and cultural development over the intervening years offered new grounds for hope. Mao's communists were busy turning peasants into New People of a kind that Liang Qichao, Sun Yatsen, and Chiang Kaishek had only ever dreamed of creating:

If, a few decades ago, China had been conquered militarily by a great imperialist country, as England conquered India, then we could hardly have avoided losing our state. But today things are different. Today, in particular, China has progressed: there are new political parties, new armies and a new type of people, and this is the basic force for defeating the enemy.32

Pressed to identify the country's redeeming features, in its greatest hour of need, Mao pointed to three: political parties, armies, and a new type of people. His manufacture of the revolutionary peasant was a fitting conclusion to the dialogue

30. Ibid., p. 170.
that had engaged China's nationalist elites and Treaty Port colonials since the last years of the Qing dynasty. His peasant revolution put an end to imperialist economic and political oppression, and transferred to the sovereign Chinese state the right to say who the people of China were, and what it was that made them distinctively Chinese.

Rescuing History is likely to be welcomed widely outside the field of Chinese history because it dares to ask and to answer a question of some contemporary significance: why does Indian history appear so precociously post-modern in temperament, and Chinese history so unabashedly modern? This important question is rightly placed at the center of Duara’s inquiry. It is certain to invite many different answers.

Anti-imperialist Sentiment

Duara’s own answer is, I feel, an incomplete one. The triumph of the modern, awakened subject in Chinese nationalist discourse (pp. 86-90), in contrast to its ambivalent record in India (pp. 210-214), cannot be attributed to the absence of “imperialist ideology in the very self-perception of the people” (p. 224). The awakening of the modern Chinese subject was stirred over half a century of dialogue between colonial representations and elite resistance in fashioning the Chinese nation. When foreign colonials pointed out what was wrong with John Chinaman, they promised that if he made the necessary improvements he could have his country back. Overthrowing imperialism was part of the contract with imperialism. And meeting this contract entailed close consideration of the “national character” of the Chinese in light of colonial reflections on the faults of John Chinaman.

Needless to say, no single aspect of the colonial presence in China—political, economic, social or cultural—can fully account for the strength of anti-imperialist sentiment that has characterized Chinese nationalism to this day. The intensity of nationalist opposition to imperialism in the republican period was quite out of proportion to the size of the foreign sector of the economy; the Christian community targeted in the movement against “cultural imperialism” was small; and popular resentment aroused by the presence of colonial police was unrelated to their number and influence. No matter what measure of foreign influence we might employ or however many instances of oppression we might enumerate, the intensity of nationalist resistance in China is difficult to account for on a simple balance sheet of opposing forces in the economy, the polity, the society or the culture of the country. Attempts to devise an accurate measure of foreign economic or political influence in the hope of accounting for the strength of anti-imperialist sentiment are likely to be incomplete unless they also take account of the humiliation, impotence, and rage felt by China’s elites in the face of colonial representations of their country and their people. This humiliation knew no political boundaries: the resistance mounted by liberal, republican, and revolutionary forces followed similar patterns. The New People of Liang Qichao, Sun Yatsen, Chiang Kai-shek, and Mao Zedong were all identified and made “new” through a process that involved accepting and then reversing practices of racist representation that were initially pioneered in colonial discourse on the character of the Chinese people.

The cumulative impact of European racism contributed to a racial sensibility that was acutely sensitive to the faults of the Chinese as these were identified in Treaty Port newspapers, guidebooks, and religious tracts designed for foreign and domestic consumption. In colonial critiques of the Chinaman, nationalists confronted a kind of knowledge about their people that they could not repudiate without calling their own modernity into question. On the whole, they accepted key elements of the colonial critique and debated remedies for rectifying them. Debate among and between elites and colonials over the character of the Chinese people then proceeded at a pace to match the formal negotiations between the governments of Beijing and representatives of the Great Powers over political sovereignty and economic independence. The remaking of John Chinaman, in fiction and ethnography, was a condition for reclaiming the right to negotiate treaties with imperialist powers and to enter into contracts with foreign firms on an equal footing. In time, the contest over colonial representations of the Chinese people entailed deep cleansing of all traces of imperialist ideology in the “self-perception” of the people, from the Anti-Christian movements of the 1920s to the Cultural Revolution of the 1960s.

To what, then, can the characteristic differences in the nationalist narratives of China and India be attributed? It would be, at best, unfair to note the inadequacy of Duara’s answer without positing an alternative. My own view is that the difference probably derives from the relative ease with which Chinese nationalists accepted colonial representations of John Chinaman as the foundation for their program for fashioning a “new kind of people,” and from their relative success in subsuming this popular renovation within a broader and highly effective political and economic revolution. This revolution yielded a state far more powerful than that of post-independence India, and a state whose ideology has tended to confirm the role of intellectuals as awakeners or remakers of the people. The revolution also made available to the nationalist elite all of the managerial instruments of a powerful socialist state. It may well be the case that the survival of this state remains the last bastion of the modern awakened subject, and that this subject will continue to speak the uninflected language of modernity as long as the state can show that it “stands up” for China.

When Mao Zedong declared in September 1949 that “the Chinese people have stood up,” few among his audience at the Chinese People’s Political Consultative Conference can have imagined that he was referring merely to the attainment of political and economic independence. He was also proclaiming that the people of China had “straightened their backs,” had shown once and for all that they were capable of standing on their own two feet. It took a political and economic revolution to ensure that no one, anywhere, would ever again confuse “Chinese and dogs.” For the same reason, sustained emphasis on political sovereignty and economic development in contemporary Chinese nationalism should not be confused with an indifference to the psychological scars associated with memories of John Chinaman.

Mongols, Buddhism, and Modernity

by Uradyn E. Bulag

The following are the comments of a historically trained anthropologist and a specialist in Mongol society and Mongol-Chinese relations. Duara’s study of some key words vis-à-vis shaping identity politics in relation to state-building explains not only the demise of Chinese civil society and local autonomy, but also “regional nationalism autonomy” in China. Duara’s bifurcated history, in the deconstructionist sense, is anti-foundational; it debunks meta-narratives and calls for counter-narratives or counter-histories. If I read him correctly, a bifurcated history does not conform to linear time, or to what L. O. Mink calls the River of Time. Rather than conforming to a linear progressive meta-narrative, which destroys as much as constructs, historians should “spatialise” time to rescue the dispersed and repressed moments or histories. Such a model is particularly appealing to someone like me who struggles to find a meaning for an ethnic self in the totalizing representation of Chinese history as practised, guarded, and sanctioned by the “Chinese” state.

In this sense, bifurcated history does not pretend to be scientific and objective. It is a moral enterprise in which the practitioner is ethically if not politically motivated by the goal of rescuing history from the nation. Duara is explicitly seeking for signs of the public sphere or civil society in the fissures of the History of modern China. However, as effective as it is unsettling to History as a mythical construction of modern nationalists, such an approach is vulnerable to charges of ethnocentrism. In other words, such an approach would confuse one’s analysis of what actually happened on the ground with what a historian thinks ought to have taken place. In his overt sympathy for civil society, Duara writes as if there is a single model of civil society in the West or in the world, or at least as if there ought to be such a model. Chris Hann has rightly argued that even in the West, “despite much heavy talk of [the emergence of] ‘world civil society’ in the context of globalization, there is as yet no sign of any plausible alternative to the state as the primary institutional framework within which security and solidarity can be established in late twentieth-century social conditions.” Hann further points out: “Yet the more elusive the realisation of civil society becomes, the more its virtues seem to be extolled in some quarters and, in the case of Eastern Europe, the more blame is piled on to communists and their predecessors for making it so difficult to replicate the conditions of western civil society in the east... Perhaps the biggest puzzle is why so many people in the modern west have faith in this model and preach it to others, when it offers only a partial and misleading guide to the organisation of their own societies.” Duara is now implicated.

Duara’s study is part of a major debate on civil society in China studies that emerged after the Tiananmen Square incident in 1989. Although he may not see himself as engaged in a historical search for civil society, I would argue that he invokes the notion of civil society at the center of his analysis in writing China’s modern history. For Duara, civil society is not a term or a notion understood and professed by Chinese historians or politicians, rather it becomes a historian’s mission to “find elements of a civil society and even a public sphere in both rural and urban China (p. 149).” Duara’s search for civil society and public sphere is intended to critique an equilibrium Dumontian paradigm of the Chinese society in which the political encompasses the religious (or moral) culture. The signs of civil society and public sphere to which Duara has devoted much attention are popu

5. Page references standing on their own are to Rescuing History.

"Duara writes as if there is a single model of civil society in the West or in the world, or at least as if there ought to be such a model."

In exploring his notion of aporia in nationalist histories, Duara points a disjuncture “between the atavism of the nation and its telos of modernity” (p. 28). In other words, there is a deep tension between traditional time and modern time; the former is defined, following Ricoeur, as cyclical and the latter as linear. Duara extends Ricoeur’s argument by suggesting that “traditional, cyclical conceptions of history which mark or emphasize return are not only alternative ways of constructing continuity, but also produce less anxiety than linear histories which expose the uncertainty of a voyage into the future without return” (p. 28). In his formulation, linear History is modern, associated with evolutionism. Using this dichotomy Duara sets out to resolve the problem that “historical efforts to resolve the aporias of time

1. My thanks to Caroline Humphrey, Mark Selden, and Peter Zarrow for their comments on an earlier version of this essay.
4. Ibid., p. 10.
produces rifts in the narrative which in turn become implicated with the politics of nationalism" (p. 29). As impressed as I am by his sophisticated analysis of this aporia, I remain deeply skeptical of the essentialized and generalized insistence that "traditional" societies invariably embrace cyclical conceptions of time. Even societies with a cyclical time notion may also have linear time. In fact anthropologists have cogently argued that "the notion of cyclical recurrence is logically dependent on the idea of linear time, because only in linear time can cyclical event sequences be said to recur." 8 In my view, Duara's model excludes those communities that had deep-rooted notions of linear time even before "modernity." How would Duara's model of aopia account for their transition from "tradition" to "modernity"? How would one take a moral attitude in treating such histories? I will illustrate my approach to the issues with reference to the Mongols.

The sixteenth century was a turning point for the Mongols, for many reasons. After being driven out of China, Mongols fell into disunity, each fighting for supremacy, not only among Chinggisid rulers, but also between non-Chinggisid Oirad nobles and Chinggisid rulers. In 1578, Altan, chieftain of the Tu-med—one of the six Tumens (a military unit of ten thousand troops) of Chinggisid Mongolia—granted the title Dalai Lama to Sonam Gyatso, leader of the Gelugpa sect of Tibetan Buddhism, proclaiming him to be an incarnation of Pagspa Lama. The Dalai Lama, in return gave Altan the title Khan, declaring him to be the reincarnation of Khubilai Khan. The alliance between Altan and Sonam Gyatso, invoking historical precedent, provoked a chain reaction in Mongolia. Challenged by Altan Khan, the Mongol emperor Tumen Zasagt Khan established relations with a lama of the Red Sect. Later, chieftains of other Mongolian groups rushed to go to Tibet or invite Tibetan religious leaders to receive titles from them. Consequently, almost all major chieftains of Mongolia received the title Khan, and even non-Chinggisid Oirad chieftains began to wear the title of Khan. The example of Altan's conversion to Buddhism established an entirely new political culture in Mongolia. Buddhism itself became less a practice of cultivation and learning than a power or knowledge that serious Mongol leaders could ill afford to ignore. This is very much like Gellner's perceptive argument about the role of scientific knowledge: "One particular style of knowledge has proved so overwhelmingly powerful, economically, militarily, [and] administratively, that all societies have had to make their peace with it and adopt it. Some have done it more successfully than others, and some more willingly or more quickly than others; but all of them have had to do it, or perish. Some have retained more, and some less, of their previous culture." 9

A number of "traditions" developed in Mongolia. The old political legitimacy was radically transformed, moving from claims to descent from Chinggis Khan, as the source of preordained absolute rulership, to claims to Buddhist sponsorship. In the race for this new legitimacy, the reigning emperor Ligden Khan, legitimate according to the traditional standards, was marginalized, and explicitly named as a Khan of the Chakhar Tumen, i.e., a tribal leader. Buddhist sage kings, then, set out to civilize their own societies by rooting out shamanism. Subsequent Mongol historiography established a meta-narrative of the spread of Buddhism among Mongols, praising the meritorous deeds of Mongol leaders who supported Buddhism. In this Mongol historiography, we can hardly find any trace of Mongol shamanism, purportedly most rampant after the expulsion from China and prior to the Mongol conversion to Buddhism. In the new narrative of the Buddhist Mongolian communities, little was heard of those Mongol communities such as the Buriats or Urianghai, who were relatively less influenced by Buddhism and among whom shamanism retained dominance.

Here, we may notice a clearly Buddhist History, in which other voices are suppressed, and the earlier principle for legitimacy is certainly sidelined. The History was also linear in time, establishing aopia typical of the modern nation-states, i.e., the national subject, here represented by Mongol elites said to have originated long ago in India. Then migrating via Tibet, they came to Mongolia. In between was a long time of war and destruction, and the Buddhist sage kingship was revived by Altan Khan. Later a succession of Mongol Khans took on the mission to "spread the doctrine like the sun" among the Mongols. We may say that the Buddhist Mongolian meta-narrative had a typical renaissance style. It was certainly oppressive, ruthlessly suppressing counter-narratives expressed by shamans, and not only delegitimizing them ideologically, but destroying them physically. Surely, in such an "enlightenment" mode of political culture, to stage a counter-narrative, or argument or even rebellion was either to play the fool or to engage in suicidal actions. Of course I do not claim that there was a total suppression of anarchic shamanic thought. Some shamanic ideas were incorporated into the larger Buddhist framework, and shamanism was marginalized and feminized in Buddhist-dominated regions.

In such a society, everybody was governed by two notions of time: the so-called cyclical time of karma and linear time. But karma can only be improved in linear time; it is a gradual, cumulative process. "The final goal of human endeavour is the state of perfection: nirvana characterised by happiness. This state of perfection is the telos of human aspiration; it consists in man fulfilling his function through the development of his potentiality in accordance with a specific conception of a goal or end," argues Damien Keown.10

How did Mongol Buddhists and Buddhist intellectuals react to modernity early in this century? Agyan Dorjiyev, the leader of the Buriat Mongolian Buddhist church, and other Buddhist leaders and scholars in Buriatia in Russia and Mongolia (earlier called Outer Mongolia) actively campaigned to reform Buddhism. Dorjiyev, for example, argued that Buddhist doctrine was largely compatible with communist tradition. He proposed the consonance of Buddhism with dialectical materialism, as the latter did not doctrinally assert the existence of God and so was a "religion of atheism." In a planned but undelivered speech in 1926, Dorjiyev singled out four key humanist ideas originated by the Buddha that, he maintained, were highly relevant to modem Europeans. Here is one: "Shakyamuni's second great notion is the Buddhist sage kingship was revived among whom shamanism retained dominance. The History was also linear in time, establishing aopia typical of the modern nation-states, i.e., the national subject, here represented by Mongol elites said to have originated long ago in India. Then migrating via Tibet, they came to Mongolia. In between was a long time of war and destruction, and the Buddhist sage kingship was revived by Altan Khan. Later a succession of Mongol Khans took on the mission to "spread the doctrine like the sun" among the Mongols. We may say that the Buddhist Mongolian meta-narrative had a typical renaissance style. It was certainly oppressive, ruthlessly suppressing counter-narratives expressed by shamans, and not only delegitimizing them ideologically, but destroying them physically. Surely, in such an "enlightenment" mode of political culture, to stage a counter-narrative, or argument or even rebellion was either to play the fool or to engage in suicidal actions. Of course I do not claim that there was a total suppression of anarchic shamanic thought. Some shamanic ideas were incorporated into the larger Buddhist framework, and shamanism was marginalized and feminized in Buddhist-dominated regions.

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it follows that the world is infinite in time and space, [that it] has neither beginning nor end, that nothing can arise from nothing, and that something existent cannot be utterly destroyed. Everything is in a constant state of flux—something that exists in a given moment ceases to be the same in the next moment. In Europe it became possible to speak of such things only after the development of the exact sciences, which emerged as the result of a continuous struggle waged against the theistic ideologies by the European peoples, who still are, on the whole, under the influence of Biblical-Christian theism.\footnote{11}

We should not dismiss this statement as the teleological reading of a Buddhist leader under pressure to legitimate the existence of Buddhism in an atheistic communist state. What is interesting is that most Mongols did not feel Buddhism and communism were incompatible; rather, the incompatibility was imposed upon them by the Soviet communists, who held that any religion was necessarily spiritual opium. It is remarkable that Mongols maintained in the early decades of the twentieth century that Buddhism in its essence was precursor to the young European mode of thought. The interpretation of the Buddhist time by Mongols was that it was in a state of flux, while the Christian time at least in some interpretations was cyclical. In Buriatia, although the ideal of communism had become less appealing in the 1970s, paradoxically it was "to be found where one would least expect it, in the Messianic prophecies of the oldest generation."\footnote{12}

This Mongol experience of an aspect of "modernity" from at least 400 years ago eloquently shows that Buddhism rejects the dismal picture of the ego-centered, culture-encapsulated life. Unlike Confucianists who are tortured by notions of betrayal and loyalty to the principle of "culture," hence often finding themselves in a dilemma when faced with modernity, Buddhists are, in the words of Nolan Jacobson, "self-corrective communities." Jacobson writes,

It has been difficult to dislodge from the uninformed "modernizers" of the West the prejudice that Buddhism has not been interested in the improvement of life, not to mention outright revolution. Much confusion would have been forestalled if the distinctions had been kept clearly in mind from the start between westernisation by the forward stampede and the perfectibility of life [to] which Buddhism has always been committed.\footnote{13} From a Buddhist perspective, it can be taken as a truism that the fate of humanity, and perhaps of all but the most elementary forms of life on the planet, rests firmly upon the ability ordinary men and women can now develop for breaking the strands of compulsive behaviour and choosing the path of emancipation and purification.

This short survey of Mongol history from the perspective of linear time does not pretend to represent a definitive Mongol history or histories. My point is that I find it difficult to take a conventional moral stand here. Aihwa Ong, in her comments on two papers, posed two interesting questions to anthropologists that may be equally valid for historians: (1) Do we have a moral obligation to understand how power relations work? (2) How should the anthropologist’s morality interact with the morality of cultural others?\footnote{14} Duara certainly has clearly displayed his own morality in his discussion of civil society, but we are yet to be told of the morality of the Chinese people. Perhaps it is not simply a matter of the dichotomized morality of the author versus the society under study. Native historians or historically trained anthropologists should also address the historicity of morality in their own societies! Dominant narratives at various stages of Mongol history were simultaneously empowering and destructive. The Chinggisid rule was established on the destruction of the institutional basis of shamanism; Buddhist legitimacy successfully marginalized Chinggisid legitimacy and "cleansed" the Mongol societies of shamanic influences; Buddhism was however to be destroyed by the Bolshevik forces despite strong arguments for compatibility. And now in Mongolia, following the defeat of communism, Buddhism, Shamanism, and Chinggisid legitimacy have achieved more or less equal status under a nationalist secular Mongolian state.

\"Most Mongols did not feel Buddhism and communism were incompatible; rather, the incompatibility was imposed upon them by the Soviet communists, who held that any religion was necessarily spiritual opium.\"

I would now like to briefly discuss Duara’s theory of nationalism in premodern China. In his attempt to explain the ethnically motivated political boundary-hardening process in history without invoking Ernest Gellner and Benedict Anderson’s modernist evolutionary model of nationalism, Duara puts forward a notion of descent, a neologism that tries to combine "descent" and/or "dissent." Through narratives of descent, argues Duara, a community privileges certain cultural practices to mark off the boundary between itself and others: "Communities with hard boundaries will the differences between them" (p. 66, emphasis added). The narrative of descent "asserts a deliberate mobilization within a network of cultural representations towards a particular object of identification" (p. 66). Duara not only shows how this descent worked in late imperial China and Republican China, but how "even when this closure [of boundaries and identities] is successful, it will unravel in time" (p. 67). This is an attractive but simplistic model. It is very much reminiscent of Frederick Barth’s situationalist theory of boundary maintenance, which holds that the "critical focus of investigation ... becomes the ethnic boundary that defines the group, not the cultural stuff that it encloses.\footnote{15} One problem with this model is that it privileges the capacity of a community or individual to define itself in relation to others. In discussing the politicization of the Chinese culturalism that became a criterion for defining a

Han political community, Duara pays too much attention to the role of reactive response on the part of the Han vis-a-vis barbarians, but not enough to a conquering "barbarian" state's "maintenance" of ethnic boundaries. In other words, Duara privilege the "will" of self over the "will" of the other in creating ethnicity or political communities. In my view, the Mongol Yuan dynasty clearly "willed" to have four hierarchical political communities, and Chinese civilization was deliberately set apart from other cultures or civilizations.

When the Ming dynasty "willed" to "re-civilize" all the Ming subjects by ordering them to give up Mongol styles and customs and by prohibiting Mongols from marrying among themselves, Mongols who had remained in Ming territory quickly lost their identity. On the other hand, during the Qing dynasty, Mongols were kept apart from the Chinese as a reserve force; without this state's will, the maintenance of the Mongol identity within Qing would have been less tenable, if not impossible.

Excessive attention to the role of narratives in defining community (national or ethnic) necessarily ignores the role of other forces such as the state. The state not only rests on narratives but also on laws and decrees as well as taxing the population. Colonial or otherwise, states objectify cultures or identities by assigning labels through such institutions as the census in colonial India, or nationalities policy as in the People's Republic of China. The Barthian model of ethnic boundary maintenance cannot explain the fact that not all situations permit or require manipulation of identities.

This leads me to a minor point that I feel Duara has ignored. In his projection of the Chinese model of polity in pre-modern China, Duara mentions the notion of "universal kingship" in "imperial China." This is an essentialization that fails to distinguish the dynastic differences, or indeed the fundamental differences between a mono-ethnic dynasty and a multi-ethnic dynasty in China. While the mono-ethnic dynasty based on the Han was inclined to be assimilationist, multi-ethnic dynasties like the Mongol Yuan and the Manchu Qing were less so. We should also closely scrutinize and probably eliminate all but very carefully defined uses of the term "Han" that homogenizes much that had large diversity within it. The unity under the Mongol or Manchu dynasties was not a civilizational unity. In such a polity, one may see that the state represented by the Mongols or Manchu struck different deals with different ethnic communities. It seems to me that the Qing emperors did not contain one model; it had at least three models. In addition to the model of universal or Confucian moralist kingship of the Han, for Buddhist Tibetans and Mongols the Qing emperor was a bodhisattva, or a reincarnation of Manjusri. Even the notion of Son of Heaven or rule by the Mandate of Heaven was radically different for Chinese and Mongols. For Chinese, emperors should follow the Way and be subject to scrutiny by gentry. For Mongols, Qing emperors, in addition to being incarnations of Manjusri, were also incarnations of Chinggis Khan; they were pre-ordained by Heaven to rule the Mongols. In this Mongol conception, "the right to rule over the whole world had been conferred by Eternal Heaven (mongke tengeri) on Chinggis Khan and his successors, who were considered in this system as the counterpart of Heaven on earth. The khans of the imperial line ruled as universal sovereigns on the strength of their 'good fortune' and by the very power of Heaven."20

In such multi-ethnic dynasties, in my view, emperors were not simply centralizing rulers, but managers. They were flexible, insofar as their supremacy was not undermined. Under such universal kingship, different realms enjoyed enormous autonomy that may resemble a Chinese fengjian model, but that autonomy was not designed to check the absolute authority of the state.

By and large, despite the above reservations, Duara's book should stimulate any reader concerned with theories of nationalism and history to think beyond the Enlightenment model. It is laudable that Duara sees the Chinese culture "not as a zone of shared meaning but as a zone of disagreement and contest."21 Although Duara unwittingly equates Chinese with Han, for a non-Han citizen, his approach has a capacitating power. It allows for what Dipesh Chakrabarty calls "provincialising 'Europe' " in writing "a history that deliberately makes visible, within the very structure of its narrative forms, its own representative strategies and practices, the part it plays in collusion with the narratives of citizenships in assimilating to the projects of the modern state all other possibilities of human solidarity."22 Provincialization of "Europe" is not to discover the varieties of Europe in Europe; rather it is to see the modern as inevitably contested, to write over the given and privileged narratives of citizenship other narratives of human connections that draw sustenance from dreamed-up pasts and futures where collectivities are defined neither by the rituals of citizenship nor the nightmare of 'tradition' that 'modernity' creates.23 Duara's book also encourages one to write about what Gyanendra Pandey calls "fragmentary" points of view, that is, to resist "the drive for a shallow homogenization and struggle for other, potentially richer definitions of the 'nation' and the future political community."24

23. Ibid.
Rummaging through the Dustbin of History

by John Lie

Being neither a Sinologist nor a historian, I am in double jeopardy as I discuss Rescuing History from the Nation. The honorable thing would be to type a few words of praise for what is surely an outstanding contribution to recent historiography of China and leave it at that. I would like, however, to raise some questions about Prasenjit Duara’s principal theme: the entwining of the modern nation-state and linear history (history with capital “H”). I recognize that in forsaking the form of a modal book review, I risk transforming an assessment of his book into a disquisition of my own.

Stating his central concern Duara writes: “My principal argument is that national history secures for the contested and contingent nation the false unity of a self-same national subject evolving through time. This reified history derives from the linear, teleological model of Enlightenment history” (p. 4). In other words, in national history, the master narrative effaces non- or anti-national communities, movements, and discourses, and posits an evolutionary, even deterministic, trajectory from the past to the present (and presumably into the future). Duara seeks to “rescue” history from being in the thrall of the nation-state and advocates a bifurcated history that avoids squelching alternative voices and visions.

Duara is right in grosso modo: many works of modern history are fundamentally concerned with the trajectory of the nation-state; they narrate a triumphant (linear and often deterministic) tale. However, the tendency toward reified, national, and linear narrative in modern historical writings is strong but not hegemonic. Insofar as Duara exaggerates this tendency, he makes the dominant view much more powerful than it was or is and, in so doing, elides diversity and dissension in historical writing.

Even before Elie Kedourie or Benedict Anderson, there were powerful criticisms of national, linear history. Frederick Teggart, one of the pioneering sociologists in the United States, wrote in his 1916 volume Prolegomena to History that the dominant historiography of his time rendered history as “memory’s mouthpiece for his countrymen.” He rejected both national, narrative history and evolutionary, deterministic history, and insisted on the transnational character of all history. Indeed, his magnum opus, Rome and China, articulated the transnational influences between ancient Rome and China, which vindicated his world-historical vision. “The study of the past can become a disquisition of our own. The study of the past can become a disquisition of our own.

Duara risks consigning alternatives to the dustbin of History. This is probably as true of Chinese historians as it is for Western historians of China. The “Enlightenment” historians, believing in the importance of progress and modernity, undoubtedly derided other, non-modern historians for their interest in picayune matters such as regional history or minority peoples. In modern Japan—about which I can write with more confidence—alternative historical writings have proliferated and challenged state-led modernization and state-dominated knowledge production. Working primarily outside of the state-sponsored academe, writers on the peripheries and the margins have constituted a resilient counterhegemonic effort. Surely, they deserve to be rescued from the condescension of their contemporary academic counterparts as well as from the simplifying historical accounts of historians and their works.

Duara’s work is also important because he struggles to rescue history from being reduced to the nation-state’s mouthpiece. “The powerful repressive and appropriative functions of national History need to be continually challenged,” he contends (pp. 232-33). But this insight is neither new nor necessarily appropriate for all national history. Karl Popper, in his much-maligned book The Open Society and Its Enemies, discusses the possibility of all sorts of—in fact, an infinite variety of—history. He laments that “the history of political power...is elevated into the history of the world. But this, I hold, is an offence against every decent conception of mankind. For the history of power politics is nothing but the history of international crime and mass murder.”

National history is, furthermore, far from being monolithic; Duara conflates national history with state-centric history. National narrative may be state-centric, but it may also be counterhegemonic, as in anti-colonial, national narratives. History of the “people,” albeit nationalist in a sense, can connote and have histories, that these histories run concurrently and in the same world, and that the act of comparing is the beginning of knowledge.”

As these examples suggest, historical writings on China have featured alternative approaches to the dominant national and linear history. Perhaps the waxing and waning of different modes of historical writing suggest the cyclical, rather than linear, nature of historiography.

“Should it be surprising that masterpieces of historical imagination—ones marked by a profound understanding of concrete people in particular places and times—are read and re-read, while historiographical works gather dust on library shelves?”

inspired emancipatory aspirations. Consider in this regard the national and revolutionary history of Jules Michelet.  

I am also skeptical about Duara’s contention that national history “derives from the linear, teleological model of Enlightenment history” (p. 4). Rather than the phenomenology of linear time, national narrative relies on simple distinctions. The form of nation-states is essentially isomorphic (e.g., all nation-states have territorial boundaries and a panoply of institutions, practices, and symbols such as flags and anthems), but their substance must be heteromorphic (i.e., nations performe have different flags and anthems). In other words, the play of synchrony, not diachrony, fuels the dialectic of national distinctions. Sacred national symbols and characteristics change—and this is not merely an artifact of the transactional nature of history, or the contemporary invention of the past—because their principal functional importance in national discourse or history is to differentiate one nation from others. The idea of Chineseness or Japaneseness is an empty and floating signifier; there is nothing essential except essentialization.

Let me close on a cautionary note. Although it may seem hypocritical for a self-styled social theorist to express reservations about the use of theory in history, it has always struck me as a good thing that historians have been so resistant to the lure of theory, insisting rather on brute empiricism (as indefensible a theoretical position as this is). E. P. Thompson, for example, memorably sought “to rescue the poor stockinger, the Luddite cropper, the ‘obsolete’ hand-loom weaver, the ‘utopian’ artisan, and even the deluded follower of Joanna Southcott, from the enormous condescension of posterity.” For Thompson, it is not so much theoretical profundity, but rather political commitments and mundane skills—such as rummaging through archives and other dustbins of historical knowledge—that revive the repressed, the neglected, and the defeated. Should it be surprising that masterpieces of historical imagination—ones marked by a profound understanding of concrete people in particular places and times—are read and re-read, while historiographical works gather dust on library shelves?


A Response

by Prasenjit Duara

One advantage of being engaged in an ongoing research program is that by the time a review of one’s earlier work appears, one is well into the next project. As a result, the knocks and bruises to the scholarly ego—disavowed in the name of rational inquiry (that forbidden emotional frontier that mocks a rationality accustomed to penetrating every other recess of feeling)—smart a little less than they might have earlier. But sensitivities should not be so dull that they fail to react to the provocations of critical reviews. There is much in these reviews to provoke me and there is also much to reflect upon; I hope I can combine these stimuli to learn more about what Rescuing History is about.

One thing these reviews are not about is the bulk of the book. John Lie focuses mostly on chapter one, John Fitzgerald, mostly on chapter seven, and Uradyn Bulag on some fairly focused themes that occur in two or three chapters. I grant that the book may not lend itself easily to a discussion as a whole, but my point, quite simply, is that there is more to Rescuing History than appears in this discussion.

Uradyn Bulag faults me on two paradoxically related issues. One is that I impose my own (Western?) bias onto Chinese history when I discuss the repressed history of civil society. Second, that I am insufficiently attentive to certain modern or proto-modern historical forces—such as linear time—in pre-modern societies like Mongolia before the twentieth century.

On the first point, I believe that Bulag seriously misunderstands me. The thrust of my argument proceeds from the evidence (whether the evidence is contestable is not the issue here) that once the Enlightenment mode of History became available and desirable, certain segments of society sought to mobilize historical resources performatively to produce a civil society—the “sprouts of parliamentarianism” in China. My argument for the fleeting presence of a civil society follows what I believe to be an effort by twentieth-century historical actors in China to construct (and destroy) it. My focus is on the role of political intellectuals to deploy a narrative to shape social materials—some amenable, some not—into a civil society. Whether or not I am a partisan for civil society, I do not posit its existence independent of these efforts.

Bulag’s second point about the presence of linear time (within cyclical time) in Mongolia is suggestive. I certainly believe that a society has multiple conceptions of time; but I also believe that there is a hegemonic conception of time that obscures and subordinates other conceptions. This point is perhaps not as well developed in Rescuing History as in some of my later writings. In the same spirit, while I do not make explicit distinctions between different types of dynasties, I believe that my distinction between culturalist and racialist models and my citing of Pamela Crossley’s Manchu model of rule (p. 67), indicates that these qualifications are not incompatible with my mode of analysis. Incidentally, on narratives of discent, I believe that its most interesting feature is how it mobilizes the translation of narratives into policy—into social and state practices of differentiation in the process of “boundary hardening.”

To return to Bulag’s second point. In making his point, Bulag goes on to perform what he (wrongly) accuses me of doing...
in his first point; i.e., suggesting that there is something more naturally or structurally continuous between Buddhist conceptions of time and linear time of the modern nation. Even if there are real compatibilities (and I certainly do not deny that these can play a role) between the two conceptions of time, the moral and epistemological frames in which they develop their full meaning are so different that it behooves us to rethink the problem of historical causation. The contribution of poststructuralism (the split between signer and signified) to history is its complication of the problem of continuity and change. The problem is less that some historical forms change and some persist; it is rather that a continuity in code (signifier) can mis-signal a changed practice (signified) or vice versa. This is indeed one of the central conceptual questions explored in the book—one that none of the reviewers has taken up.

"The ability to criticize the self demands some distance from a powerful, objectifying Other. Or perhaps it demands that the Other be principally internalized in the self, thereby providing a curious autonomy from a real Other standing over the self."

I do not think that John Lie has engaged the book with any seriousness. The reason I have written Rescuing History is not to claim to be the first or only person to say what I have said about history and the nation-state. Moreover, I am hardly making the claim that every historian (or the sociologists in his examples) subscribes to this view. My effort is to show how nationalist traps are entwined in the assumptions of historiography; it is about how historical knowledge is constituted and organized. Linear evolutionism refers to the way historiography constitutes the object of inquiry as a bounded entity (like a species) that grows or should grow to some level at which a criterion of success is attached (whether this be competitive ability vis-à-vis other species or nationality, or simply self-consciousness). It is constituted differently in traditional historiographies that often derive their moral meaning by turning back to an ideal of authenticity.

Even in chapter one, I lay out the mechanisms of periodization and the model of evolutionism whereby complex historical accounts can still be found to conform to assumptions about the continuity of the nation in the mode of a "species." These "general histories" (tonashi) written by the most important Chinese historians of the time account for at least half of that chapter. Moreover, Lie's rejection of the relationship between national histories and linear, teleological history and his explanation of national history only begs the question of why and how this evolutionary form emerges. It is not responsible for "a self-styled social theorist," who complains about historians doing theory (thus reifying and policing disciplinary distinctions), to ignore the major part of the book that deals with empirical histories. Finally, I would like to put a stop to the now oft-heard policeman's piety about the best remembered books on history being empirical histories and not theoretical or methodological ones. I cite Lie's own last reference to make my point.

John Fitzgerald's approach is rather more gentle, but his densely illustrated re-examination of a single claim that I make regarding the different weight of the critiques of modernity in India and China is penetrating. The implications are manifold and speak perhaps to my own subject position as an Indian nationalist. Fitzgerald's conclusion that the sources of Chinese and Indian self-images in Orientalism were perhaps not so different after all is certainly worth examining further, analyzing them comparatively as well. But I remain convinced that there is a difference that I have not been able to specify sufficiently. Perhaps his suggestion that the differences have to do with "the relative ease with which Chinese nationalists accepted the colonial representations of John Chinaman as the foundation for fashioning a new kind of people" represents not an alternative, but a new question—one that might call forth extremely illuminating responses.

The lack of "ease" on the part of Indian nationalists, I believe, has to do with the presence of everyday, colonial rulership, whether in India, Korea, or Algeria. Although this does not hold for every person or even every group in the colonized society, the strongly dualistic or Manichean relationship between colonialism and nationalism makes it very difficult for these nationalists and intellectuals to be self-critical in the May 4th way. The space for self-examination is often filled by a defense mechanism that sanctifies the self—or a part of the self. One might make the argument that this is the reaction of bourgeois nationalists only. It is true that they probably have a greater stake in the status quo than radical nationalists, but a cursory look at multicultural politics, say, in the United States today reveals a recognizable similar process that suggests that it might also have to do with the everyday confrontation of identities constructed as self and other. The ability to criticize the self demands some distance from a powerful, objectifying Other. Or perhaps it demands that the Other be principally internalized in the self, thereby providing a curious autonomy from a real Other standing over the self. This, of course, gets me into psychology, a field in which I can claim no expertise, so it is a good moment to stop. But I will conclude with the thought that this self-criticism—while valuable as a practice—is, of course, no guarantee of liberation.

1. The May 4th movement, which took place on 4 May 1919, was a protest against the Treaty of Versailles decision that permitted Japan to retain Chinese territories seized from Germany during World War I. The protest movement is seen as part of a national movement of cultural regeneration in opposition to all forms of authority.
Notes from the Field

Farmers, Women, and Economic Reform in China

by Govind Kelkar and Wang Yunxian

A striking feature of Chinese political economy since the early 1980s has been a seemingly steady march of economic liberalization and development. This march has been accompanied, however, by rural protests and a decline in the position of women. This in turn has reopened debates about the meaning and processes of market formation where the visible hand of the state and other patriarchal agencies still plays a major role. Are there any early indicators of the implications of “market success” for social processes and welfare in the countryside and for gender equity in the restructuring of rural economic relationships? Several research studies and official United Nations reports confirm that during the past decade women have lost some entitlement; their labor input is no longer counted separately, and violence against women has increased.¹

This article attempts to put together micro-evidence to construct an emergent complex of market reforms in the economic and social life of farmers and in changing gender relations. It focuses mainly on four aspects of rural China: socio-economic disparity and land management; women’s work and entitlement in agriculture and households; increasing crises and outbreaks of farmers’ resistance; and intra- and inter-household conflicts over resource management.

In attempting this indicative analysis, it needs to be stated that the market is still in an incipient stage of development in rural China, and care must be exercised in interpreting these field notes. The data base of this study is derived from two field research trips from March to July 1994 in three villages of northern and southeastern China: two villages in Hebei and one in Zhejiang Province.

During our car and bus rides from Beijing to villages in Hebei and from Shanghai to the countryside of Zhejiang, we noticed empty stretches of farmland punctuated by two- to three-story factory and office buildings, with neighborhoods of similarly styled houses for the villagers. It was rare to see a farmer (man or woman) working in the fields. We wondered whether it was not yet spring planting season. In the past, at this time of the year, farmers used to be very busy with land preparation. We also noticed that the fields were full of weeds (which we initially mistook for wheat). The neglect of farmland was evident in the many bricks and stones we saw lying in agricultural fields.

We wondered where the farmers were. Why were the fields not being cultivated? Why did they appear to be abandoned? We have concluded that the spread of magnificent concrete buildings in the Chinese countryside covers an imbalance in social development and agrarian relations.

We read and heard through confirmed reports that in the period between mid-November 1992 and early-January 1994, there were several farmers’ demonstrations in front of the provincial government building in Feng Yang county, An Hui Province—the very place where China’s household responsibility system was initiated. The demonstrations were organized by the farmers themselves. Some 370 peasants from four villages participated, driving fourteen four-wheeled tractors and shouting slogans.² In 1990, 110 groups of farmers demonstrated or “visited” the Shanxi provincial office; 160 groups demonstrated again in 1992. In February 1993, 300 villagers entered the provincial government building to complain about their conditions and to protest the takeover of rural resources without their knowledge by outside investors.³

Although the purpose of our visit was not to look into these questions, we felt driven to explore the complexity of economic reform policies and practices in the areas in which we travelled. With confirmed reports of economic growth in rural China, why was there discontent among the farmers? Why has the position of women declined since the launch of the economic reforms? Furthermore, what is the explanation for farmers abandoning their lands and rushing to the cities, or, alternatively, idly relaxing at home or gambling in town?

New Economic Development

China’s rural reform program started in 1978 with the household responsibility system, in which land was contracted to individual households. The new policy was implemented on a wide scale, however, only in the period from 1981 to 1983. By 1990, 98.2 percent of villages, 96 percent of households, and 98.6 percent of arable lands had been brought under the household contract responsibility system.⁴


2. Gu Lijun and Dong Ziqing, “Fengyang nongmin jiti shangfang shengfu” (Farmers in Feng Yang collectively petitioned the provincial government), Shi dian (Focus Point), May 1993.


Rural reforms generated strong economic expansion and brought about a series of social changes. Much greater autonomy in production on privatized lands—compared with the earlier collective farming system—was reported to be benefitting farmers. Incentives to increase productivity were being instituted with success. Contracts were extended to fifteen years and subsequently indefinitely in order to give farmers an incentive to invest in the land. Improvements in agricultural productivity released a lot of surplus labor. The mushrooming of industries in the countryside and “open-door” employment policies in urban centers enticed younger men and women to become wage earners in non-farm activities.

In the years from 1978 to 1992, the average annual growth rate of the total value of production in China was 5.91 percent. In township and village enterprises the annual growth rate of total value of production was 34.19 percent and the average annual growth of farmers’ per capita net revenue was 13.5 percent. In 1993, the national economic growth rate remained high at 13.4 percent.

Village Governance and Land Management

The economic reforms program separated political and economic authority and introduced a system of townships (formerly the communes), administrative villages (formerly the production brigade), and village groups (formerly the production team). The township government is responsible for administration of political and social affairs as well as for county plans for the local economy, though it is officially discouraged from undertaking economic activities and from interfering in production and the management of individual households and larger enterprises. The administrative village covers a geographical area made up of one large or several small “natural villages,” with between 200 and 400 households.

Land has been reallocated among the members of each production team—often a village or a clan spread out over many locations. The size of land holdings varies between natural villages and clans, but the variations are not significant. A family with more male laborers benefits more from privatization because property and resource titles are issued in the names of men. Thus, the clan system—which traditionally favored men—has been strengthened even further.

Under the household responsibility system, the structure of the cadre system has changed. There are two groups: one is the administrative group, which deals with village affairs, including village economic management (the “village committee”), and the other is the party organ, which organizes the masses and takes care of ideological work (the “sub-branch of the party”). In practice, the sub-branch of the party takes the lead in all village affairs, from agricultural allocation to the implementation of family planning. At the local level, there are two sets of cadres, but in order to lighten the burden on the farmers, one person usually assumes the responsibility for both of these positions. For example, one person (in most cases a man) functions as secretary of the party sub-branch and also as vice-chairman of the village committee.

In the three villages we studied, we noted that these functionaries or their close relatives were usually managers and/or contractors in local industries. In the village in Zhejiang, for example, the party secretary was the director of the chemical factory; his wife was the accountant in the paper-making factory and director/head of the women’s association; his wife’s sister was the cashier for the village committee; her husband was the director of the silk factory; and the director of the village committee was also the deputy director of the brick factory. The cadres were usually paid between 100 and 350 yuan per month depending on the level of economic development in the region. The Zhejiang and Hebei villages each have a seven-member village committee. The one woman on each of the committees has the responsibility for monitoring the villagers’ adherence to population control policies. Women on the village committees

Rural women work inside and outside the household—on contracted land, on private plots, in sideline activities, in family-run businesses, in the management of household chores, and in child care. In the Hebei village, women did the plowing as well. (Photograph by James Wickum, Lingling Prefecture, S. Hunan, spring 1998.)

Problems we identified in our study included: (1) a decrease in land area devoted to agricultural production (caused largely by urban and industrial expansion and by the construction of houses); (2) under-reporting of the extent of environmental degradation; (3) the neglect of attempts at sustainable development at all levels of production; (4) a low level of agricultural mechanization (with the exception of land preparation and paddy threshing); and (5) the absence of any collective management, especially over rural resources such as forest, water, and irrigation facilities. Most people we contacted seemed to realize the importance of some collective management in agriculture and they acknowledged difficulties in maintaining individual households. They recognized that the ecological advantages of collective land utilization and soil construction during the slack seasons (using organic fertilizers) were disappearing and that irrigation facilities were inadequate. Before men went out to work as non-farm labor, the farm households were pleased with returns from their work on the farms (compared with the labor and the benefits they formerly had). In those days, rural infrastructure was still well maintained. Now, after ten years, short-sighted behavior has led to a deterioration in the infrastructure. In the face of all of these problems, however, it is noteworthy that nobody we talked to was ready go back to the old system.

Those who subcontract land from others often have no other employment opportunities in the non-farm sector. They usually use the contracted land for cash crops (like vegetables and fruits), making utmost use of family labor. Few engage in large-scale grain farming.

In the village in Zhejiang, many farmers were no longer interested in growing wheat. This was the case in households that...
terest in agricultural land can be explained by the income security they have through the expansion of rural enterprises and the consequent power in the local political and labor market scene, as Ashwani Saith noted in another village of Zhejiang Province.

The enterprise which took over land previously contracted out to peasant households undertook to take on one member from each affected household as a worker in the enterprise. No other compensation was paid. This is an example of monopolistic power, since most of the other workers in the enterprise would receive the same wages as these new workers from the displaced households, but without having lost their household contract land to the enterprise. Effectively by giving workers from the displaced households preferential access to employment, the managers would have succeeded in acquiring the land for zero cost. This could happen only if the displaced households could command little bargaining power whether in the local political or labor market scene.

Approximately every three to five years, the village committee reviews contract obligations for reallocation of different parts of land in order to adjust for births, marriages, and deaths in each household. The term “readjustment” (tiaozheng) is used to refer to the changes in distribution of economic and political responsibilities between households and the village.

Socio-Economic Disparities

While the urban services and industrial sectors are becoming prosperous and profitable, the agricultural sector has suffered from stagnation. From 1980 to 1992, the share of agriculture in total output of rural society declined from 68.9 percent to 35.8 percent. In 1993, while the value-added in industry increased 21.1 percent over 1992, value-added increases in agriculture were only 4 percent. The absolute fall in grain production in the south of China, the two-year decline in cotton production (1992-93), the widening income gap between rural and urban areas (from 1:1.71 in 1984 to 1:2.33 in 1992), and the drop in rural investment for total productive fixed assets (from 22.2 percent in 1989 to 18.2 percent in 1992) are all clear indications of problems in the countryside.

Further, the growth rate of agricultural production does not suggest a corresponding increase in farmers' income. The total rural social production has been expanding astonishingly, but the actual benefit to farmers has been little.

Rural economic growth during the period 1989 to 1992 has demonstrated an entirely different characteristic in contrast to that of the previous period: in spite of the all-round increasing supply of agricultural products, farmers’ income has basically kept at a standstill. In the period from 1989 to 1991, subtracting the inflation factors, net per capita income for farmers nationwide registered an annual growth rate of only 0.7 percent. Taking the rehabilitative growth of 5.9 percent in 1992 into account, the average income growth rate was a mere 1.88 percent over the four years. In the same period, however, a calculation based on constant price reveals that the average annual growth of agricultural production was 5.1 percent; grain production increased by 2.9 percent.

Who has been benefitting from this situation? Why are farmers not abandoning the land and rushing to work to the urban centers? In its “Review and Prospect,” the Research Center for Rural Economy of the Ministry of Agriculture (Beijing) states:

The income gap is widening conspicuously between farmers in different parts of the country. In 1992, the income ratios between west, central, and eastern parts of China were 100:115:166 respectively. Income in the province with the highest income (where Shanghai is located) was 4.49 times higher than in the province with the lowest income (Gansu). In 1983, the corresponding ratios were 100:126:144 and the income gap was only 2.69. Between 1989 and 1992, a period of slow growth in farmers’ income, the annual growth rate of farmers’ income in the eastern part of the country was 2.29 percent, while in central and western parts, the respective rates of growth were only 1.44 percent and 1.27 percent. This indicates that the income gap for farmers from different parts of the country tends to be widening even more. In recent years farmers from quite a number of localities have seen their net income either at a standstill, or even declining.

The major cause of stagnation in the growth of farmers’ income is the deterioration of agricultural trading terms. The price index of agricultural products, which is controlled by the state, increased by 10.87 percent from 1988 to 1992. But the price index of agricultural production materials, increased by 33.59 percent during the same period. Prices of manufactured goods are also soaring. For example, the urban street price of a simple jacket jumped from 15 yuan to 150 yuan overnight. A common saying in the village in Zhejiang is, “one kilogram of paddy buys just one cigarette, not a pack.” In another saying, village cadre pokes fun at the way the central government holds meetings and assigns production targets to the administrative heads in times of agricultural and grain crises:

The city mayor would urge the county governor (Xian Zhang);
The county governor would instruct the township governor (Xiang Zhang);
The township governor [gives instructions] to the village chairman (Chuan Zhang);
The village chairman to the head of household (Hu Zhang);
The head of household does not care and continues his Mah Jong.

The peasants are at the end of the line and they are the victims of the unequal exchange. They follow orders unwill-

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8. Ibid.
13. Ibid., p. 15.

Table 1 Annual Growth Rate of Agricultural Production and Farmers’ Income in Different Stages

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Period</th>
<th>Growth rate of agricultural products (%)</th>
<th>Growth rate of farmers’ income (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1978-1984</td>
<td>6.5</td>
<td>15.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1985-1988</td>
<td>4.1</td>
<td>5.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1989-1992</td>
<td>5.1</td>
<td>2.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

ingly, knowing full well that it is not worth their while to protest. They see that they have no other options.

See table 2 for a tally of cost and income of the early rice crop per mu (one mu = 1/6 acre).

There is an invisible pipeline from village to city, from agriculture to industry. Historically, a unified state procurement policy obtained reserves from agriculture for the development of industrialization. According to the analysis of the Ministry of Agriculture:

In the period from 1952 to 1978, due to unequal exchange of agricultural and industrial products, financial resources flowing from agriculture to industry amounted to renminbi (RMB) 391.7 billion [and] industry-bound financial resources from taxation channels amounted to RMB 93.5 billion. The two sources total RMB 485.2 billion. Subtracting the funds that are returned to agriculture by the state treasury, the net outflow from agriculture is RMB 312 billion, equivalent to 73.2 percent of the value of non-agricultural fixed assets of all state-owned enterprises in the same period.15

Since 1985 when the Central Committee [of the Chinese Communist Party] revoked the state-monopolized grain purchase and sales system, the range of agricultural products still subject to that system has narrowed considerably. However, with regard to certain grains and industrial raw materials, the state-monopolized grains purchase and sales system still adversely affects the development of the rural economy. As a result of a one-time decrease in the output of grains, the grains-purchase-system reverted back to state-ordered purchase from the contractual purchase system that had been in effect since 1985. After a series of price jumps, grains prices are approaching the market prices, but market regulation of grains prices is still out of the question because the state-ordered purchase system has a mandatory implication of obligation and taxation. State-designated purchase orders are carried out in the countryside by evenly distributing to every rural household the obligations of “grain sales due.” This in reality curtails farmers' behavior, adjusting the industrial structure and allocating resources well according to price signals from the market.16

In discussions with the local cadres we learned that the invisible subsidy to industry in 1993 was equivalent to 250 yuan from every Chinese farmer. Furthermore, farmers complained that even though they were selling their agricultural products at lower prices, they had to settle for “promissory notes”—not cash—because the state was experiencing bottlenecks in revenue circulation.

Farmers cited numerous examples of the increasing gap between city and countryside. They pointed to people enjoying earnings, stealing, and temporary workers; they also had a higher rate of unemployment. Women were more likely to be employed as low-paid, temporary workers; they also had a higher rate of unemployment. Gender discrimination persists in the workplace. A 1995 United Nations report showed that Chinese women comprised 43 percent of the work force, but the ratio of women to men in administrative and managerial positions was only 13:100 in 1990.19

**Table 2 Cost and Income Tally of Early Rice Crop (per mu)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Cost</th>
<th>Income</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Land preparation</strong></td>
<td>30 yuan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Pesticides</strong></td>
<td>15 yuan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Fertilizers</strong></td>
<td>50 yuan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Seed</strong></td>
<td>20 yuan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Labor (13 days)</strong></td>
<td>130 yuan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>planting 4 days</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>protecting 6 days</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>harvesting 3 days</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Electricity and irrigation</strong></td>
<td>30 yuan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>275 yuan</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Source: Authors' field notes in China, 1994.*

Occupational differences between women and men in the urban labor market appear to correspond to stereotypes about the abilities of the sexes. In 1981, for example, women made up more than half of the work force in catering, health, medicine, clothing, textile manufacture, and pre-school education.17 By 1993 the occupation sectors in which women made up more than half of the work force had decreased to just three: healthcare, sports, and social welfare.18 Furthermore, our discussions in Shanghai pointed out that in an effort to reduce production costs, urban factory owners lay off women workers, particularly those in the thirty-plus age group who are thought to lack the skills necessary for high-tech work. Women were more likely to be employed as low-paid, temporary workers; they also had a higher rate of unemployment. Gender discrimination persists in the workplace. A 1995 United Nations report showed that Chinese women comprised 43 percent of the work force, but the ratio of women to men in administrative and managerial positions was only 13:100 in 1990.19

**Feminization of Agriculture: Women's Work and Entitlement**

Women and men do not have equal access to rural resources, like water, forests, and land. Low returns from farming have pushed men to work outside for cash. Low returns also mean that the land cannot be sub-contracted. So to retain rights to the land, women are designated to be the keepers of small plots of land. Even if there are opportunities for women to work outside, they are forced to stay at home. An additional factor is that national grain policies do not allow land to be left idle; something has to be planted. With agriculture increasingly being left in the hands of women, many scientists and planners began to express concerns that the agricultural sector would fall farther and farther behind because women (and the aged) were considered to be uninterested in technological change. Few raised any concerns about the constraints that this development pattern forced on women.
As state and collective funds are redirected from the traditional agricultural sector to town and village enterprise development, disparities begin to appear in returns to labor between men working in enterprises and women engaged in agriculture in grain production. Scenarios are very different for women depending on their age and marital status. Unmarried young girls often find it easy to find jobs in the non-farm sector, at least in village enterprises. After they marry they have to quit their jobs and move to their husband’s native village. With the burdens of housekeeping and child rearing to contend with, they do not find it easy to secure new employment. They end up maintaining the family, carrying on grain farming, and keeping the house as a “safe harbor” for their husbands and children. Thus, economic changes have forced a return to traditional roles for rural Chinese women.

The burdens on rural women have increased overall. Men who do not have employment opportunities outside of agriculture spend their time gambling while the women do the work. Women who cannot get work in non-farm activities are thought to be “not capable.” Defined socially as “naturally incapable,” women figure that they might just as well stay at home and work in agriculture. Given this stigma—not to mention the enormous demands that agriculture makes on a household’s labor resources—it is no surprise that every effort is made to find jobs off the farm.

Rural labor force statistics for 1991 indicate that women account for 41.2 percent of the rural labor force in agriculture and rural enterprises, versus 18.66 percent in water conservancy, 33.67 percent in animal husbandry, 32.2 percent in forestry, 26.63 percent in fisheries, and 22.96 percent in agricultural services. The government’s White Paper on the status of women in China says, “China boasts more than 100 million workers in township business and 40 million of them are female.”

Of women involved in agricultural production in 1991, 32.69 percent had a primary school education and 38.2 percent had studied at the middle or high school level. Only 0.53 percent of the women had university or college training. According to the White Paper, “in 1992 the number of women [engaged] in scientific research and comprehensive technological services, Party and government organs and social organizations, and in financial and insurance establishments were for 34.4 percent, 21.6 percent, and 37.3 percent respectively.” While these figures indicate that a considerable number of Chinese women have attained positions of power and technical expertise (especially in comparison to women in other parts of Asia), it is still thought that the role and responsibilities of women should be restricted to family and household economic matters. “In order to improve their living conditions and become rich quickly, it is very logical [that] the wives [should] support their husbands to find odd jobs in cities [while] they themselves stay at home voluntarily to do the farm work.” Moreover, women’s taking up farm work while men do other non-farm work is thought to be “reasonable and sensible” in the sense that it helps women acquire “an independent economic position and consequently enhances their self-confidence and self-consciousness.” (FAO photograph by F. Mattioli, Shanghai, 1978/FAO 8501)

This new division of labor does nothing to challenge the continuous strengthening of patriarchal forces in the countryside. The position of women does not necessarily increase as men leave the agricultural sector. A June 1993 survey reports: “’Entitlement’ is not provided to women who contribute to production, management, and the conservation of the human, physical, and natural resources that affect their households, communities, and national economies, as caretakers for future generations. With market reform and greater personal autonomy, there is less visibility to women’s work.” Furthermore, in a recent analysis of economic reforms and rural women, Gao Xiaoxian says:

Although women spend a lot of their time and energy on agriculture and depend on agricultural products to make a living, they still play

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a supportive role. At the present stage, men still manage to take charge of the family agricultural production. It is still men who decide what to grow, how much to grow, and where to sell. Although they do farming in addition to whatever jobs they have in towns, they have the final say and they come back to do the spring plowing, summer and fall harvests.27

When we asked the leading members in the community (all male) how they understood the policy “women hold up half the sky,” we were told: “Women are beneficiaries of development activities”; “they manage both agriculture and utensils at home”; and “agricultural work is light and does not require much skill.” (The more skilled work, like construction and other jobs in the cities, is usually done by men.) Women we interviewed showed us title deeds indicating that land and housing plots are still in the names of men, even though women do all the agricultural and household work.

When lands are allocated to individuals, it is clearly stipulated that women and men are to have equal shares. In general terms this appears to be the reality in China’s rural areas. But a closer look reveals that an unmarried man gets 2.3 shares of land (including one share for his future wife and 0.3 for his future child). By contrast, an unmarried woman is allotted only one share of land, as she is supposed to leave her village after she marries. Therefore for at least their first twenty-two years—the legal age for marriage—women in China have much less land than men.

Though it is clearly written in the constitution (the Law of Protecting Women’s Interests and Rights) and even in the government’s White Paper that rural women and men have equal rights in obtaining contract- or subsistence-land, housing plots, and common property resources, in reality, resources in the countryside are not evenly divided. As a result, families with more female members are often at a disadvantage in obtaining land, water, and other resources.

In the county women’s federation of Zhejiang Province, four women spoke with us about the burdens that the current marriage customs lay on married women. By law men and women have equal rights to marry and to live in or outside of their home villages. In practice, if a rural family has one or more sons, all of them can marry and remain in the native village with their wives. Daughters, on the other hand, are expected to marry outside of the village. If a woman prefers to remain in her native village after she marries, she must pay for this privilege. In one county we visited, wives were obliged to pay 2,000 yuan and their husbands had to pay 6,000 yuan to live together in the wife’s village. If a family has no sons, one (and only one) of the daughters can remain in the village after marriage; the rest have to move to their husband’s village (unless the wife and husband are from the same village). When a woman marries an urban resident, the situation becomes even more ridiculous. On the one hand, she is not permitted to register her name in the city because she is a rural resident. On the other hand, she may not register her name in her home village if she has brothers (and is thus supposed to move to her husband’s village after marriage).

In some cases, women have been shown sympathy and allowed to register their names in their native village, but they have no rights to allotted land or common resources. We learned of one case in which a woman who married an urban resident did receive a share of forest resources. But later, when the resources were redistributed and the group of beneficiaries reconsidered, she was eliminated from the list because she was a woman and should have married out of the village. That she had been allowed to register her name in the village in the first place was an “act of kindness” on the part of village. She complained that she married before the implementation of the new regulation, and she therefore had the right to land and other resources, but the village officials ignored her arguments.

Increasing Crimes and Farmers’ Resistance

Gender disparities and imbalanced economic growth in China’s rural areas mean that only a part of the rural population controls and benefits from the allocation of resources. This leads to resentment and resistance by those who lack power and connections. The result is social instability. In fact, instability is already very visible in China’s countryside. In 1993, for instance, protests involving large numbers of peasants were reported in eleven provinces.28

China’s rural population shares a growing fear of being poor.29 Some mothers are able to afford to send their children to school while others struggle just to provide their families with the basics: food, clothing, and shelter. Such feelings arise not only from income disparities among village families, but also from the effects of the elimination of community health services and cutbacks in basic educational services. Cutbacks in social services make it increasingly difficult for rural populations to meet their basic needs. (Interestingly, schools are funded by the village committees, but villagers with whom we spoke did not consider this arrangement “stable.” We learned that additional funds are raised in the Hebei and Zhejiang villages in order to supplement the village budgets.)

Traveling in China’s countryside, whether alone or even with a group, is no longer safe. The crime rate is alarmingly high. The types of crimes reported include stealing, robbery, violent murders, brutal rape, and gang involvement in the trafficking of drugs and people. Trains and trucks laden with materials are frequently robbed in the countryside and local bullies have been known to stop buses and forcibly collect “pass-by fees” from the passengers. The Taizhou region in Zhejiang Province may be among the tops in the number of markets it has developed and the volume of its commercial transactions, but it also evidences an alarmingly high incidence of crime.

 Trafficking in women is rampant. It takes many forms. Young women—even university graduates—have been lured from inner China (e.g., Sichuan or Guizhou) to coastal regions in the east and northeast by the possibility of employment in non-farm activities. Buying a woman for a wife is a crime in China, but it is not perceived to be so in the areas we visited. In one of the Hebei villages we studied, a girl in her early teens told us about three cases of “buying a wife.” One of the wives escaped in the dark of night, but the two others were kept under strict control by watchful family members and neighbors. Four women in the village in Zhejiang, we learned, were also bought as

Economic Reforms.

Petty. Stealing materials from factories in urban areas has been engaged in the collection of waste materials from factories and whole of societal structures and strengthen the desire to get rich quickly. But some of the middle-aged women often do not have as many opportunities as others to get rich quickly. For example, peasants might participate in demonstrations in order to convince government officials to designate their locale to be a development area, hoping that development projects such as the construction of railways or highways will bring them prosperity. Conflicts sometimes reach a heated stage as in the province of Sichuan where farmers attacked government authorities to protest proposed changes in construction plans for a national highway in their area.

The "taxing" of peasant income is another source of friction. In many cases, one-third of a peasant's income has to go to the collective accumulation fund. This is especially burdensome in rural areas where local cadres collect all sorts of taxes and levies from the farmers in order to compensate for low levels of industrial development.

Conflicts involving local cadre are numerous and are at a critical point. Cadres are accused of violating laws and regulations, abusing farmers, and benefitting from the gross misuse of collective funds. We saw evidence of the growing unpopularity of the village committees in the three villages we studied. In one village, the cause of the discontent was related to the large concentration of political and economic power in the hands of certain individuals who were described as "the new landlords, always busy filling their pockets." In the village in Zhejiang, the village committee went against the wishes of the villagers and leased fifty acres of village land to an individual for seed development for commercial crops. Village committee members in the Hebei villages reported that they became unpopular because they had to assist the local government in raising unpopular agricultural taxes.

In almost all cases, the authorities cite "ignorance of the law" as an explanation for complaints by farmers and they criticize demonstrations as "a tendency toward general anarchy." In one county in An Hui Province, the local cadres violently suppressed demonstrations by local farmers, beating to death one young farmer who insisted on being vocal. Farmers contend that the law does not protect them and that they have no one to represent their interests. When farmers submit the required grain quota to the government, they are given "promissory notes" instead of cash because the state claims that it has no funds to make cash payments. But farmers cannot be even a day late in paying their electricity bills. This kind of unequal relation between the state and farmers was said to be a major cause of Table 3 Crimes in Taizhou Region of Zhejiang Province

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Total cases</th>
<th>Murder</th>
<th>Explosion</th>
<th>Fire</th>
<th>Poisoning</th>
<th>Rape</th>
<th>Stealing</th>
<th>Robbery</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1973-78 (6 years)</td>
<td>9,689</td>
<td>99</td>
<td>110</td>
<td>73</td>
<td>213</td>
<td>187</td>
<td>89</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1979-84 (6 years)</td>
<td>14,350</td>
<td>96</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>282</td>
<td>725</td>
<td>38</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1985</td>
<td>2,417</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>2,132</td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1986</td>
<td>2,097</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>174</td>
<td>1,734</td>
<td>12</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1987</td>
<td>2,464</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>2,071</td>
<td>12</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1988</td>
<td>3,964</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>85</td>
<td>3,405</td>
<td>44</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1989</td>
<td>6,171</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>116</td>
<td>5,326</td>
<td>80</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1990</td>
<td>17,148</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>123</td>
<td>15,931</td>
<td>140</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1991</td>
<td>16,901</td>
<td>154</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>405</td>
<td>15,626</td>
<td>270</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1992*</td>
<td>11,907</td>
<td>68</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>192</td>
<td>9,448</td>
<td>874</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

*In 1992 the cases were established according to new criteria that are less strict.

Source: Chen Zhezhong, "Jinji tizhi zhuangui guocheng zhong de fanzui qushi ji duice" (The trend of crimes in the economic transition and the measures), in Zhejiang shehui kexue (Zhejiang Social Sciences [Hangzhou]), no. 5 (1993): 103.

Factors contributing to the rise in crime in rural areas are said to include a decline in the level of education, a lack of ideological education, conflicts between cadre and the masses, conflicts over surplus labor and limited resources, and regional and urban-rural disparities.

In the three villages we studied we saw no signs of abject poverty. Farmers appeared to have enough food and warm clothing. The motive for robbery, then, was not for the purpose of subsistence or productive consumption, but for money to spend on lavish drinking, smoking, and prostitution. The lack of education regarding laws and legal measures and blatant challenges to the authority of law and society are seen to be contributing factors to the general breakdown of social security and to the increase in crime. The driving force behind such crimes seems to be the desperate position of each social group and conflicts of interest among them. In earlier times there was not much stratification in levels of labor or occupational positions. Now, however, levels are clearly delineated, giving rise to feelings of superiority and inferiority.

Regional disparities give rise to resentments toward the whole of societal structures and strengthen the desire to get rich overnight. Rural middle-aged women often do not have as many opportunities as others to get rich quickly. But some of the women have get-rich schemes of their own—some of them quite petty. Stealing materials from factories in urban areas has become a shortcut for meeting daily needs, in particular for women engaged in the collection of waste materials from factories and urban residences. The smart women opt for various services and temporary employment in hotel, restaurants, and factories and as maids.

Societal instabilities in China's rural areas are aggravated by conflicts on a number of levels:

First, there are conflicts between the national interest and the interests of individuals and collectives. For example, peasants might participate in demonstrations in order to convince government officials to designate their locale to be a development area, hoping that development projects such as the construction of railways or highways.

Second, there are conflicts between the collective accumulation fund, the authority of law and society, and the interests of individuals and collectives. We saw evidence of the growing unpopularity of the village committees in the three villages we studied. In one village, the cause of the discontent was related to the large concentration of political and economic power in the hands of certain individuals who were described as "the new landlords, always busy filling their pockets." In the village in Zhejiang, the village committee went against the wishes of the villagers and leased fifty acres of village land to an individual for seed development for commercial crops. Village committee members in the Hebei villages reported that they became unpopular because they had to assist the local government in raising unpopular agricultural taxes.

In almost all cases, the authorities cite "ignorance of the law" as an explanation for complaints by farmers and they criticize demonstrations as "a tendency toward general anarchy." In one county in An Hui Province, the local cadres violently suppressed demonstrations by local farmers, beating to death one young farmer who insisted on being vocal. Farmers contend that the law does not protect them and that they have no one to represent their interests. When farmers submit the required grain quota to the government, they are given "promissory notes" instead of cash because the state claims that it has no funds to make cash payments. But farmers cannot be even a day late in paying their electricity bills. This kind of unequal relation between the state and farmers was said to be a major cause of
farmers’ protest. Though the government has issued repeated directives to stop these practices, the system of “promissory notes” continues unabated in many rural areas of central and northern China.

Local cadres often set up their own informal courts and detention systems and they enjoy the protection of higher-level government officials whenever they have a dispute with the peasants.

Undercover methods of resistance to the strict control of the state are even more widespread than the cases of open confrontation. In many situations, feelings of resentment lead to deliberate attempts to escape the watchful eyes of local cadres in order to have more children. Whatever humiliation they may suffer now, the peasants believe that when they have more children, particularly sons, they will be powerful and nobody will dare to bully them.

Increases in intra- and inter-household conflicts in the countryside are said to be related to marital problems, property disputes, production operations, debt, housing plots, and gambling. Additional factors are changes in the system of rural production, growing consumerism and capital accumulation, profit-centered morality, and delayed decision-making caused by the lack of support and strength that the local government agencies feel.

Reports about quarrels over housing and the use of water were heard frequently everywhere we went. The diversification of crops, for example, has led to difficulties in collective coordination. For instance, one small patch of land planted with vegetables might need water, while the plot right next to it—planted with wheat—needs no water at all. Another problem that all village committees face is the waste of electricity and water. In a village with a population of 2,000 (500 households), this waste drains about 180,000 to 200,000 yuan a year from the collective development fund. Established more than fifteen years ago, when China’s collective economic system was operating well, these collective development funds are now getting smaller and smaller.

The self-centered behavior of farmers makes the management of water resources, forests, and housing plots even more difficult. People with easy access to water do not care about the needs of others at the end of line. They throw grass and other materials into the water, blocking the already narrow water channels for those downstream. Complaints about water use were heard everywhere, even among people living on the banks of big rivers. In the past farmers never worried about how to irrigate their plots; now they spend night after night at the task.

The burden of securing water for irrigation falls heaviest on women who care for small patches of land while the men in their families are working outside the village.

Village committees keep no clear accounts of their operations. In keeping with ancient Chinese customs, wise village gentry are simply expected to support “good works” like the construction of roads and schools—otherwise they will be considered “not virtuous.” The newly emerging village gentry are taking advantage of this lax accountability by using the collective accumulation fund to purchase shares in some rural industries. The only thing they have to do is to get permission from the Land Management Office at the county level to construct these industries on community land. (The government is so keen on industrial investment that it never says no to the use of land for rural industries, as it takes pride in the growth and expansion rate of industry.) Part of the profit from investments such as these returns to the village for construction projects, but if there is a loss, the collective accumulation fund bears the full weight. The village gentry escape untouched.

Villagers did not appear to be aware of these subtle ways of transforming community resources and means of production into individual or common property. But they were angry at the takeover of forest lands for so-called village welfare projects. When the national reforestation effort was launched in the village in Zhejiang, villagers were told to plant trees and that the trees would then belong to them. The villagers worked hard planting trees, passing up the chance to harvest and eat the young bamboo shoots in favor of letting the trees grow to maturity. But after the trees and bamboo matured, the village committee took over the forest and sold the bamboo for cash. The cadres claimed that cash from those forests was needed for village welfare projects such as the construction of a factory building. Not surprisingly, if a fire broke out in one of these factories, villagers would not rush forward with barrels of water to save what was supposed to be their “collective property.” The state—particularly bureaucrats and cadres from the level above the county—still has strong authority among the people; when they plant the trees, nobody dares to destroy them. However, no such authority rests with the village committees. As a result, when a village committee plants trees, vandalism and the theft of forest products are rampant.

Farmers occupy as many house plots as possible. Farmers are not allowed to build houses on agricultural land, but they get around this restriction by building their houses on self-retained land that is meant for the cultivation of subsistence vegetables. Self-retained land is thus being transformed into residential land and agricultural land into plots for subsistence crops. There is no longer any distinction between self-retained vegetable land and farm land, as the latter is used for diversified cash crop cultivation.

An additional problem is that farmers are being encouraged to build small shops near highways or by irrigation channels because these shops are considered to be good for the village. The construction of these non-residential structures, however, is often damaging to basic facilities such as roads and irrigation channels.

State authorities contend that ignorance of the law and the low educational level of farmers are the major causes of revolts and uneasiness in China’s countryside. Social analysts point to the imposition of various taxes as the major cause of rural discontent. But these analyses miss the point. Even if no taxes at all were levied, farmers would still have reason enough to complain because their income is so low. (If the farmers earned as much as their counterparts in the urban areas, they would not mind paying some taxes for construction of roads, school buildings, and so on.) The real reasons for farmers’ resistance and the growth of patriarchal forces in rural areas need to be understood accurately in order to carry out judicious distribution of resources and benefits among the disadvantaged and dispossessed.

Serious attention must be given to minimizing the many causes of rural discontent and an effort must be made to create a socio-economic welfare infrastructure that allows for the reorganization of farmers’ associations and the equalization of gender relations: securing and safeguarding equity-based women’s rights to land, housing, and decision-making power, while increasing the income of farmers and promoting agricultural development.


Campaign Notes

Bases by Another Name: U.S. Military Access in the Philippines

by Stephen R. Shalom

In September 1991, the Philippine Senate cast a historic vote, rejecting a treaty to allow U.S. military bases in the Philippines.

For forty-four long years, U.S. military facilities had been fixtures on the soil of the independent Republic of the Philippines. Clark Air Base and Subic Naval Base were among the largest U.S. foreign military installations in the world. At the end of World War II, U.S. military planners had described Philippine bases “not merely as outposts, but as springboards from which the United States armed forces may be projected” into Asia. In the major U.S. military interventions that followed—in Korea from 1950 to 1953, in Indochina from 1965 to 1973, and in the Persian Gulf after the Cold War in 1991—the Philippine bases provided crucial logistical support. The bases also housed transmitters for communicating with nuclear missile submarines, anti-submarine warfare aircraft, and, at various times, nuclear weapons.

Over the term of the Military Bases Agreement the U.S. government agreed to all sorts of cosmetic changes in the official terms of the agreement as a way to blunt nationalist protests. The essential purpose of the bases, however, remained unchanged: “[N]owhere else in the world,” U.S. officials noted in 1972, “are we able to use our military bases with less restrictions than we do in the Philippines.” Even when the United States agreed to fly the Philippine flag on the bases and to refer to the bases as “U.S. facilities on Philippine bases,” Washington was assured “unhampered military operations involving its forces in the Philippines.”

To protect its access to the bases, Washington frequently intervened in Philippine internal affairs, spearheading a counter-insurgency campaign in the early fifties and embracing Ferdinand Marcos when in 1972 he declared martial law to quash domestic opposition. When Marcos was finally ousted in 1986, anti-bases sentiment was strong; the new Constitution adopted the following year insisted that any new foreign bases or troop postings after 1991 would have to be secured in a treaty approved by a two-thirds vote of the Philippine Senate (instead of by executive agreement, as previously). Moreover, the Constitution declared that, “the Philippines, consistent with the national interest, adopts and pursues a policy of freedom from nuclear weapons in its territory.”

A new bases treaty came up for ratification in 1991. U.S. officials lobbied mightily—warning of the severe economic dislocation that would follow rejection of the bases treaty—but the Philippine Senate, reflecting strong nationalist pressures, would have none of it. It rejected the treaty. The United States withdrew its troops, but even before the last U.S. soldier was gone U.S. officials were already working behind the scenes to assure continued military access to the Philippines. Knowing that the bases had become powerful nationalist symbols, Washington looked for other arrangements that might accomplish its purpose.

The Pentagon is now seeking to secure military access rights by executive agreement, thereby circumventing the Philippine Constitution, which requires Senate approval for a foreign military presence, and avoiding the expense and provocation of permanent installations. In November 1992, the commander of U.S. forces in the Pacific concluded a limited access agreement with the Philippines, providing for U.S. port visits, aircraft transits, and small-unit exercises. Since then United States and Philippine officials have been negotiating an Acquisition and Cross-Servicing Agreement (ACSA), which would considerably enlarge the scope of U.S. access. Officials involved have been quite reticent about the terms, but periodic revelations of some of the details have led to public protests in the Philippines.

In the fall of 1997, two new developments brought the ACSA issue to the fore. First, the U.S. and Philippine governments began talks on a Status of Forces Agreement (SOFA) that would grant partial diplomatic immunity to U.S. military personnel in the Philippines. The proposed agreement is reminiscent of the policy under the Military Bases Agreement whereby U.S. soldiers were often able to escape punishment for crimes committed in the Philippines, including the killing of Filipinos. Second, construction work at the Philippine port of General Santos City suggests that the harbor is possibly being prepared for U.S. military use.

The documents below reflect the opposition both inside and outside the Philippines to U.S. military access. First is an Open Letter to President Clinton signed by more than 300 U.S. and European peace activists and academics. This is followed by a statement issued by the Nuclear Free Philippines Coalition (NFPC), the leading Philippine organization in the struggle against bases in their old and their new incarnation. Next is an

alert put out by the Philippine-based Coalition Against Trafficking in Women, warning of the multifaceted consequences of U.S. access. Finally, there is a letter by Daniel B. Schimmer of the U.S. organization Friends of the Filipino People, describing the current situation and urging continued public opposition.

OPEN LETTER TO PRESIDENT CLINTON ON U.S.-PHILIPPINE RELATIONS (October 1997)

Dear President Clinton,

On September 30, 1997, in Washington, D.C., high civilian and military officials of the Philippine and United States governments held a meeting to negotiate a new Status of Forces Agreement (SOFA). These negotiations were made necessary because of Washington's demand, as put forward by Admiral Joseph W. Prueher, commander-in-chief of the U.S. Pacific Command, that the Philippine government grant "partial diplomatic immunity" to U.S. military personnel on duty in the Philippines. The U.S. government demanded and got diplomatic immunity when it imposed U.S. bases on the Philippines at the beginning of the Cold War. This diplomatic immunity was clearly a defeative aspect of the infringement of Philippine sovereignty that the U.S. bases brought with them. U.S. soldiers were not bound by Philippine legal procedures, and when they committed crimes they were often spirited out of the country by U.S. military officialdom.

With the democratic upheaval that overthrew the Marcos dictatorship, the U.S. bases were removed, and Philippine national sovereignty strengthened. The attempt of the Pentagon to restore diplomatic immunity is part of its larger effort to restore the strategic military use of the Philippines that the bases provided Washington. The proposal for a new SOFA is therefore closely connected to the Pentagon's effort to foist an Acquisition and Cross-Servicing Agreement (ACSA) on the people of the Philippines. This agreement would allow the U.S. military to use most of the important ports of the Philippines for ship visits and military exercises. When first proposing ACSA in June 1993, Admiral Charles R. Larson, then chief of the Pacific Command, declared the agreement would in effect return the Philippines to its previous function as stepping-off point for U.S. military interventions in Asia and the Mideast. The U.S. military high command gave the Philippines this alien role after the imperial conquest nearly a century ago, and so it continued for many years until the Philippine Senate voted to remove the U.S. bases in September 1991.

Mr. President, you have proclaimed the promotion of democracy to be the keystone of your administration's foreign policy. We therefore call upon you, as Commander-in-Chief, to order the U.S. military to cease its attempt to take from the Philippine people—by means of SOFA and ACSA—the democratic gains they have won through the peaceful exercise of their political rights. To do otherwise is to remain complicit in an exercise of hypocrisy that tarnishes our nation in the eyes of the world.

4. Minor elisions have been made in the NFPC statement and the Schirmer letter.

PRESS STATEMENT (30 September 1997)
Professor Roland Simbulan
National Chairperson, Nuclear Free Philippines Coalition
Manila, Philippines

"A New Task and Challenge for the Philippine Senate"

The Philippine Senate is currently facing the challenge of being bypassed by an agreement which would surrender the national sovereignty, dignity, and self-respect of the country as it celebrates the centennial years of its anti-colonial struggle and independence. We protest this breach of our territorial integrity and jurisdiction. For the Philippines is about to sign away its territorial integrity through a Status of Forces Agreement (SOFA) or a similar agreement that would grant immunity from criminal prosecution for American troops without a formal treaty ratified by the Philippine Senate. In fact, according to Karen S. Heath, U.S. Assistant Secretary of the Navy for Manpower and Reserve Affairs, in a letter to Fr. Shay Cullen, U.S. Forces, September 15, 1997, the United States has already done so.

In the light of these disturbing developments, the Senate is once again called upon:

First, to assert its constitutional mandate and responsibility (i.e., treaty-ratifying powers) to the Filipino people. The 1987 Philippine Constitution specially assigns the following treaty-ratifying roles to the Senate:

- "No treaty or international agreement shall be valid and effective unless concurred in by at least two-thirds of all the members of the Senate..." (Sec. 21, Executive Department)

- "All existing treaties or international agreements which have not been ratified shall not be renewed or extended without the
concurrence of at least two-thirds of all the members of the Senate...” (Sec. 4, Art. 8, Transitory Provisions)

- “After the expiration in 1991 of the agreement between the Republic of the Philippines and the United States of America concerning military bases, foreign military bases, troops or facilities shall not be allowed in the Philippines except under a treaty duly concurred in by the Senate, and when the Congress so requires, ratified by a majority of the votes cast by the people in a national referendum held for that purpose and recognized as a treaty by the other contracting state...” (Sec. 25, Art. 18, Transitory Provisions).

Second, Status of Forces Agreements (SOFA) are normally granted only to countries hosting U.S. facilities and military bases. It would be unprecedented and an abuse of the right of legislation to extend the diplomatic immunities and privileges that we grant to diplomats (i.e., ambassadors, nuncios, envoys, minister, chargés d’affaires) to visiting foreign military personnel. If U.S. or other foreign military forces are already committing wanton violations of the Philippine Constitution through port visits of foreign warships for “rest and recreation” and military exercises in the absence of a formal treaty as called for by the Constitution, can these unconstitutional acts now be corrected by an even more serious surrender of our territorial and criminal jurisdiction over visiting foreign military servicemen? In fact, it is really a question of whether we will allow the courts of another country to sit in judgment on the act of foreign soldiers committed within our own country. A SOFA or similar agreement will extend the grant of extraterritoriality or exemption of foreign troops from local jurisdiction.

Third, the Senate and the Filipino people must see through and reject the sinister moves to append supposedly “economic provisions” to the proposed SOFA agreement being negotiated as this is too obviously a form of icing to cover up the infringement of our criminal customs, fiscal, immigration, and statutory regulations to be given up to visiting foreign military personnel. Furthermore, shall we now reserve the economic conversion of the former bases which have created thousands of jobs and more than when our people’s dignity and self-respect was blighted by foreign military forces using the country as a brothel? It has also been reported that the Philippines and U.S. panels in the SOFA negotiations are conspiring to look for a new name for this SOFA agreement to make it more palatable to the public.

Fourth, the Senate should investigate U.S. complicity in moves to amend the Charter. Since 1992, efforts have been made by the United States to bypass if not ignore the Constitutional provisions banning nuclear weapons from Philippine territory and those provisions that prohibit foreign military forces in the absence of a formal treaty....

The United States government must also not be let off the hook from its responsibility of bases clean-up in the light of the established toxic contamination in the former bases. U.S. Ambassador Thomas Hubbard should stop issuing blanket denials of toxic contamination because he is merely opinionating baselessly against scientific and technical evidence of massive toxic contamination. Will the Filipino people now allow this toxic contamination to be extended in the twenty-two ports all over the country being eyed under the coverage of ACSA and SOFA agreements?

The United States government should respect the independence of this sovereign country which is commemorating the centennial of its independence next year [1998]. Or will the United States once again repeat its expansionist history started 100 years ago by snatching our independence, trampling upon our sovereignty, and making our Republic a short-lived one?

We ask that the Senate rise up to this challenge and task and fight for this country’s national sovereignty if it wishes to be true to the ideals of the 1896 revolution and our independence struggle.

INFORMATION ALERT
Originally released in June 1997, this alert was reissued during the NFPC press conference on 30 September 1997.

The Coalition Against Trafficking in Women Metro Manila, Philippines


The sketchy information filtering through the press about the imminent signing by the United States and [Republic of the Philippines] government of a Status of Forces Agreement (SOFA) is cause for grave alarm on many counts. The lack of transparency and public debate with which these talks have been conducted raise justified questions about possible attempts to circumvent provisions in the Philippine Constitution, particularly those governing military treaties and the entry into or presence of nuclear weapons in Philippine territory. The guise of commercial or executive agreements being pushed in no way masks the military nature and intent of the proposed movements and activities of the U.S. military in the Philippines. In fact, in the name of “security,” renewed U.S. military presence in the Philippines poses grave threats to Filipino sovereignty, risks of environmental damage, and, especially, social harm to Filipino women and children.

The United States, through its policy of neither confirming nor denying the presence of nuclear weapons on its military vessels, and condoned by an apparently helpless Philippine government, has in the past violated the Philippine Constitution with impunity and can fully be expected to continue to do so in and around the twenty-two Philippine ports that the U.S. Navy wants to obtain access to. In this connection, it is worth noting the curious fact that the Philippines, the only Asean member state to have a nuclear-weapons-free provision in its Constitution, is also the only Asean state not to have signed and ratified the 1995 Southeast Asian Nuclear Weapons Free Zone Treaty. It may be speculated that the inordinate influence of the United States on Philippine political decision-making could be playing a role in this matter.

The pressure being exerted by the United States for the signing of a SOFA was recently felt when U.S. Ambassador Thomas Hubbard publicly posed the threat that with delays in the signing, “the greater the risk that the security relationship will drift.” Apart from objecting to the bullying undertones of that statement (and that relationship), we would do well to reexamine the very concept of human security misappropriated by militarism by recalling the heavy social and environmental impacts and costs of past U.S. military presence in the country: the thousands of dislocated lives of sexually exploited women, abandoned and marginalized Amerasian children, environmental damage through military toxic wastes and military exercises, the subversive economies, [and] the crimes of rape and murder of women. Past experience clearly show[s] that the security of Filipino people, especially women and children, from the U.S. military
was never taken into account. Now, it is to be feared that human security will be sacrificed once more as a result of the present government's attitude of accommodation of and identification with U.S. interests.

A true understanding of human securities sees through and goes beyond the lethal power games that military establishments through history have falsely named and appropriated issues of security. Again, allowing U.S. Navy port calls, this time in twenty-two cities and towns in the Philippines (Laoag, San Fernando, Lingayen, Legaspi, Subic Bay, Manila, Batangas, Masbate, Romblon, Calbayog, Tagbilaran, Tacloban, Baybay, Cebu, Iloilo, Roxas City, Bacolod, Dumaguete, Zamboanga, Cagayan, Davao, Puerto Princess) as well as allowing military exercises augurs ill for the vulnerable populations and the ecological integrity of those sites. It will also demonstrate once more the Philippine government's position of weakness to defend its own Constitution and national interests. More concretely, what this will mean for the twenty-two cities where the U.S. Navy proposes to dock for “R & R” and to hold military exercises can include:

1. The risk of oil, toxic, low-level radioactive or other wastes leaked or dumped at sea or in port;
2. risk of nuclear accident;
3. environmental damage including soil and water pollution and destruction of flora and fauna by beach landings and military exercises;
4. unexploded ammunition and accidental fire;
5. displacement of local population;
6. dislocated local economies;
7. prostitution and sex businesses, child sexual abuse, unwanted Amerasian children;
8. spread of STDs [sexually transmitted diseases] and HIV/AIDS.

It is an indisputable and historical fact, unfortunately of recent confirmation in Okinawa where a school girl was raped by U.S. servicemen and in Korea where a bar woman was brutally murdered, that militarism integrates a culture of racism, sexual aggression, and other forms of violence. In our own country, too, such crimes have been committed against women and girls. Women's organizations in the Philippines that have long worked on these issues are dismayed by the Philippine government's seeming willingness to go back politically to square one: this time not just with an Olongapo or Angeles City bearing the brunt of intolerable social impacts on women and children, but with twenty-two cities and towns in the Philippines that will be sacrificed in the name of military and political interests that are not our own. We call on the mayors [and] the local and provincial governments of the cites above named to vigorously oppose such military exercises and installations made to order, so to speak. At General Santos City the issue has been joined, and the time is now.

Politicians in Mindanao and nationally are divided, with many of President Ramos' own party in favor of landing rights. (Fidel Ramos has supported U.S. military access to the Philippines ever since the Philippine Senate's 1991 rejection of U.S. military bases.) But popular resistance is organizing with a new urgency. Warming of impending "moral, social and environmental decay" if U.S. troops are allowed to use local facilities, Catholic Bishop Dinauldo Gutierrez of General Santos City has called for a massive demonstration of opposition there.

Sponsors of the October Open Letter believe there should be a U.S. response to this new situation: to help counter any Pentagon effort to put SOFA and ACSA into effect in General Santos City and to show support for Filipinos organizing to prevent this threatening renewal of U.S. military domination. Previous Philippine newspaper coverage of the October Open Letter was welcome, but given the present urgency we would like our position to get even more attention. For this reason we propose to run the October Open Letter... as a newspaper ad in Manila and General Santos City early in 1998, and for this we ask your help.

Sincerely yours,

Daniel B. Schirmer
Boston Friends of the Filipino People
Campbell Notes

Okinawa Citizens, U.S. Bases, and the Dugong

Masamichi Sebastian Inoue, John Purves, and Mark Selden

The rape of a 12-year-old Okinawan schoolgirl by three U.S. servicemen in September 1995 reigned long-simmering issues surrounding the fifty-year U.S. military domination of Okinawa. When Washington ended its post-World War II occupation of Japan in 1952, it retained the substance of Japanese military subordination in the form of a security treaty, U.S. bases on Japan’s main islands, and continued U.S. sovereignty over Okinawa. It then set about constructing a network of military bases to transform Okinawa into—as Gen. Douglas MacArthur had envisaged—America’s “Keystone of the Pacific.” Okinawa’s strategic military value was demonstrated in the Korean War and then, particularly, in the Indochina War when it housed the B-52 bombers that pounded Vietnam, Laos, and Cambodia. When Okinawa was formally returned to Japanese sovereignty in 1972, U.S. bases remained intact. Now, a quarter-century later, nearly a decade after the end of the “cold war,” and in the face of sustained Okinawan protests demanding the end of U.S. military domination of the islands, Japan footed much of the bill while Okinawa remains the fulcrum of the U.S.-Japan strategic relationship. The two powers, working in condominium, impose on the Okinawan people a disproportionate burden of the U.S. bases and military forces in Japan: 75 percent of all U.S. military in Japan are located in Okinawa and 28,000 of the 45,000 U.S. troops in Japan are stationed there.

In the face of this formidable power, Okinawan citizens in the poor northeastern coastal area of Nago, and their allies throughout the islands, have mounted a powerful moral and political challenge to U.S. military dominance of the islands. Japan’s main islands, and continued U.S. sovereignty over Okinawa. It then set about constructing a network of military bases to transform Okinawa into—as Gen. Douglas MacArthur had envisaged—America’s “Keystone of the Pacific.” Okinawa’s strategic military value was demonstrated in the Korean War and then, particularly, in the Indochina War when it housed the B-52 bombers that pounded Vietnam, Laos, and Cambodia. When Okinawa was formally returned to Japanese sovereignty in 1972, U.S. bases remained intact. Now, a quarter-century later, nearly a decade after the end of the “cold war,” and in the face of sustained Okinawan protests demanding the end of U.S. military domination of the islands, Japan footed much of the bill while Okinawa remains the fulcrum of the U.S.-Japan strategic relationship. The two powers, working in condominium, impose on the Okinawan people a disproportionate burden of the U.S. bases and military forces in Japan: 75 percent of all U.S. military in Japan are located in Okinawa and 28,000 of the 45,000 U.S. troops in Japan are stationed there.

In the face of this formidable power, Okinawan citizens in the poor northeastern coastal area of Nago, and their allies throughout the islands, have mounted a powerful moral and political challenge to the U.S. military, demanding the closure of the Futemna Marine Corps Air Station and a return of the land to its Okinawan owners. Their protest calls into question not only the post-cold war U.S. military posture in Asia but also the developmental and social consequences of Japanese and U.S. policies.

For half a century, but with renewed urgency and militance since 1995, Okinawans have protested against the sacrifice of their islands and way of life to the U.S. military. The most pressing concerns include the following:

- U.S. military domination has distorted and destabilized the Okinawan economy, creating a milieu that revolves heavily around bars, prostitution, and the servicing of U.S. troops.
- Over the years, Okinawans have been victimized by repeated instances of sexual violence and other crimes. They enjoy scant protection under a legal system dominated by the U.S. military. In several cases prior to the highly publicized rape incident of 1995, accused servicemen escaped local prosecution by fleeing Stateside.
- The U.S. military is omnipresent. The constant test firing of weapons and low-level flights by military aircraft bring noise and air pollution as well as injuries to Okinawan citizens from bases in or near densely populated areas.
- Many Okinawans reject the central premises of the U.S.-Japan Security Treaty and the resulting U.S. military and nuclear presence that has turned their islands into a fortress, even in the post-cold war world of today. Despite several widely hyped U.S.-Japan agreements to reduce the military base burden on Okinawa, little has actually been achieved. While the number of facilities has been halved during the 25-year post-reversion period, four marine battalions remain and the amount of land occupied by the military has decreased by only 15 percent.

Okinawan frustrations have not been limited to U.S. military policy and presence. The Japanese government, both before and after its resumption of sovereignty, has marginalized Okinawa, consistently sacrificing its interests to those of the forty-six other prefectures, above all by maintaining the preponderance of U.S. military forces there. The Japanese government has not ignored Okinawa. But its nearly five trillion yen investment in the years 1972-96, largely in the form of public works, has done little to create a basis for sustainable development in Japan’s poorest prefecture. Quite the contrary. The agricultural and fishery economy, the distinctive biological and zoological endowment, and Okinawan society have suffered vast social, economic, and ecological damage as a direct consequence of Japanese-financed construction.

The 1995 rape incident propelled Okinawan resistance to new heights. A mass movement unfolded that initially drew strength from the leadership of Governor Ota Masahide, an eminent historian of the Battle of Okinawa and long-time critic of the bases. Ota, the present governor, was elected in November 1990 on a platform of opposition to the Japan-U.S. Security Treaty and a commitment to secure the return of lands currently occupied by U.S. bases to their rightful owners. A historic protest by 85,000 Okinawan people on 21 October 1995 forced the U.S. and Japan to establish a “Special Action Committee on Oki-

1. Thanks to Laura Hein and Steve Shalom for suggestions and criticisms.
nawa” (SACO), ostensibly to examine ways to ease the military base burden on the people of Okinawa. In February 1996, Japanese Prime Minister Hashimoto Ryutaro and U.S. President Bill Clinton agreed that the Futenma Marine Corps Air Station, located in densely populated central Okinawa, would be wholly returned within five to seven years, and that the total amount of land occupied by U.S. forces would be reduced by 21 percent. Okinawans’ initial euphoria was dashed, however, by news that Futenma would neither be phased out nor eliminated. Its operations and troops would instead be relocated to another area within Okinawa. With U.S. and Japanese political interests converging—Okinawa’s location makes it ideal as a site for U.S. post-cold war strategic designs in the region, while Japanese leaders seek to distance the US. military from the main islands—Okinawans face formidable opposition to their desire to demilitarize and recover their land.

In November 1996, Japanese Defense Agency Chief Kyuma Fumio presented Okinawans with a U.S.-Japanese plan to create a sea-based heliport facility in the sparsely populated northeast coastal Nago region (population 55,000), already home to four U.S. military facilities including the large Marine Camp Schwab. The outmoded Futenma facility would be replaced at Japanese expense with a state-of-the-art heliport facility built to accommodate 60 helicopters and vertical take-off fighter planes. This plan aims to reduce social friction by relocating the base to a thinly populated region. Although a Nago city council resolution immediately opposed the relocation, the heliport option was adopted in the text of the SACO “Final Report on Futenma Air Station” on 2 December 1996. The year ended with 22,000 demonstrators protesting the decision to transfer Futenma’s functions within Okinawa.

As preliminary surveys for the heliport began in May 1997, strong resistance surfaced, both in Nago and beyond. A public opinion poll found that more than 78 percent of Okinawans favored removing the Futenma Base from the prefecture or unconditionally eliminating it.4 On May 6, surveyors conducting feasibility studies were picketed by citizens (including members of the “Society for the Protection of Life,” based in Henoko [population 1,400]), who shouted and waved placards proclaiming “Life is more important than money and wealth” and “The sea is the mother of all life.” That evening, nearly 300 local residents gathered in protest. Three days later, labor unionists and representatives from the Henoko PTA, Women’s Association, and Senior Citizens Group braved a driving rain to protest the surveying.

By this time, U.S. and Japanese military authorities were committed to a heliport site offshore near Henoko, an area with one of Japan’s few remaining relatively intact coral settings and home to many endangered species. Henoko has been in severe decline since the 1970s when the 200-300 honky-tonk brothels that serviced U.S. Vietnam-era soldiers on R & R closed their doors. In the midst of this economic desolation, citizens of

2. Gavan McCormack has provided a compelling ecological critique of the consequences of Japanese-sponsored development on Okinawa. “Okinawan Dilemmas. Coral Islands-Concrete Islands,” forthcoming, Japan Policy Research Institute. McCormack shows that bases and development, rather than being counterposed alternatives, have both had disastrous economic, social, and environmental consequences for Okinawa.
3. Estimates for the replacement of the Futenma facility range from 400 billion to one trillion yen.
Henoko and Nago—farmers, fisherfolk, homemakers, artists, and others—launched a movement that turned discussion of the heliport into a referendum on a range of issues related to the U.S. military, the U.S.-Japan-Okinawa relationship, peace and war, the social influences of U.S. forces, Okinawan development, the Japanese government’s treatment of Okinawa and the Okinawan people, and the environment. Environmental concerns included the fate of the dugong, a large endangered marine mammal weighing up to one thousand pounds, and other protected natural treasures, some unique to coastal Okinawa.

On June 6, 1,300 heliport opponents, including local labor unionists and opposition political party members, gathered at Nago City Hall for the launching of a “Council for the Promotion of a Referendum on the Construction of an Offshore Heliport.” Charging that Mayor Higa Tetsuya’s decision to permit the heliport survey to proceed was undemocratic, the group set out to secure more than 10,000 signatures on a referendum petition. Many also demanded his resignation for having flouted the views expressed at two large opposition rallies and in a city council resolution. On June 4, the beleaguered mayor stated that local approval was “necessarily required if construction of the heliport was to proceed.” He would soon have to eat those words.

On August 13, the anti-base group submitted a referendum petition containing 19,734 signatures, from more than half of all of Nago’s eligible voters. The city authorities submitted the bill to the City Council. “This is the first step toward real democracy... the result of the common sense of the citizens of Nago,” anti-heliport leader Miyagi Yasuhiro commented. For the first time anywhere in Japan, a referendum would be held giving citizens the opportunity to express their views on the construction of a U.S. military base in their community. While not binding on the Mayor or the Governor, the unprecedented referendum nevertheless carried great moral and political weight.

Referendum issues were intimately related to the future of the local economy. In a speech at the Japan Junior Chamber of Commerce Forum in Okinawa on August 23, the Prime Minister unveiled a “Northern Promotion Plan” that included the establishment of a National Technology College. Hashimoto’s pledge to develop Okinawa’s northern area propelled a group of Nago businessmen and conservative politicians to form the “Citizens Union.” Regional Promotion Policy. The plan called for (1) infrastructure improvements conducive to industrial development as the centerpiece of a regional economy embracing tourism, farming, forestry, and fishing; (2) human resource development featuring the construction of a national high school and human resource center; and (3) environmental preservation by locating the heliport offshore and compensating local people for any inconvenience by financing such amenities as community centers and sports facilities.

On September 19, the Invigoration Society kicked off its pro-heliport campaign at a large hall in Nago with drinks and food provided for close to 6,000 people and with the lure of jobs and prosperity paid for from Japanese government resources. Spokesperson Arakaki Seifuku called the heliport “a once in a lifetime” opportunity to secure substantial funds from Tokyo. On the same day, the “Council for Opposing Offshore Base Construction” (formerly the pro-referendum group) held its own rally, bringing out 6,500 people for a march in Okinawa’s capital, Naha.

As the referendum campaign proceeded, Governor Ota faced powerful cross pressures between anti-base advocates and government officials in Tokyo. The Prime Minister urged Ota to recognize that Futenma’s relocation was the precondition for “consolidating the U.S. military presence in Okinawa.” He reminded the governor that the reversion of Naha Military Port—agreed upon by U.S. and Japanese negotiators in 1974(!) had been stalled for more than two decades. He warned that the same could happen not only to Futenma but also to the planned relocation of activities from the Sobe Communications Facility to Camp Hansen in Kin, parachute training from Yomitan Auxiliary Airfield to Ie Island, and the handback of the Northern, Aha, and Gimbaru Training Areas. In short, the Prime Minister made clear that the status quo on U.S. bases would continue if Okinawans refused to accept the inevitable relocation proposed by Tokyo and Washington.

Prime Minister Hashimoto was in Okinawa on November 21 to commemorate the twenty-fifth anniversary of reversion and to unveil his “Twenty-first Century Plan for the Okinawan Economy.” As anti-heliport citizens demonstrated outside, the Prime Minister listed the three elements in his package: (1) a free trade zone system that offered corporations significant tax reductions and incentives; (2) duty-free shops and simplified visa procedures for the benefit of foreign visitors; and (3) investment tax incentives to encourage tourism and communications. The package conspicuously included funds to improve transport and communications in the northern region.

The Prime Minister alluded to the “Bankoku Shinryo” inscription on a bell at Shuri Castle (dating from the fifteenth century, during the Ryukyu Kingdom period) that conveys a sense of Okinawa as a bridge to all the countries of the world. Yet, rather than building on that open and cosmopolitan spirit, he made clear that the U.S.-Japan security alliance, given expanded definition just months earlier with plans for intensified joint U.S.-Japan military activity, remained the crux of regional peace and stability, and that the heliport was vital to it. Governor Ota responded by noting that more than twenty-five years after reversion there had been no diminution in the U.S. military presence in Okinawa. Welcoming free trade zone expansion and implementation of measures to boost the local economy, Ota reiterated Okinawa’s commitment to peace and prosperity.

On December 5, 1997, The Okinawa Times revealed the Japanese government’s strategy to “buy” the outcome of the referendum by linking heliport construction with a three-pronged Northern Regional Promotion Policy. The plan called for (1) infrastructural improvements conducive to industrial development as the centerpiece of a regional economy embracing tourism, farming, forestry, and fishing; (2) human resource development featuring the construction of a national high school and human resource center; and (3) environmental preservation by locating the heliport offshore and compensating local people for any inconvenience by financing such amenities as community centers and sports facilities.

On December 11, the Nago Government officially announced the referendum for December 21 and began accepting absentee ballots. Of Nago’s 38,176 eligible voters, absentee
that he was resigning immediately as mayor. Back in Nago, the

Defying the vote of his constituents, he stated that he would

endorse the construction of the Nago heliport, and, moreover,

representatives to argue that the decision was up to Mayor Higa

and Governor Ota. The battle was far from over.

That only 2,372 votes separated those

spokesperson Miyagi was elated, stating that "the common sense

campaign to secure a significant victory with 53 percent of voters

opposing the heliport and 45 percent favoring it. Anti-heliport

protesters, a David and Goliath contest. Whatever the outcome of

the Naha Branch of the Defense Facilities Administration Bureau ordered 200

doctors to go door to door, distributing pamphlets promoting the heliport and allaying fears

about environmental destruction. Local members of the Japanese Self-Defense Forces were also sent out
to lobby. A large women's rally opposed the heliport,

a group of junior high school students wrote an

anti-heliport composition and distributed it on foot
to adults in their community, and elderly men and

women gathered at the "hut for struggle" in Henoko
to say "No" to the proposal. In the streets, the men assigned by
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The breakdown of voting in the heliport referendum were as follows:

1. I approve—2,562 votes (8.13 percent)

2. I approve because I expect there to be economic benefits for the Nago region and that appropriate measures will be taken to protect the environment—11,705 votes (37.18 percent)

3. I oppose—16,254 (51.63 percent)

4. I oppose because I expect neither economic benefits for the region nor appropriate measures to be taken to protect the environment— 385 (1.22 percent)

[*] Spoiled ballots, no preference selected, etc.—571 (1.82 percent)

Total votes—31,477 (82.45 percent of eligible voters)

Opponents of the heliport had overcome a well-financed

campaign to secure a significant victory with 53 percent of voters

opposing the heliport and 45 percent favoring it. Anti-heliport

spokesperson Miyagi was elated, stating that "the common sense of the people prevailed." That only 2,372 votes separated those

for and against the heliport, however, led In­

vation Society representatives to argue that the decision was up to Mayor Higa

and Governor Ota. The battle was far from over.

When Ota and Higa met the Prime Minister in Tokyo on

December 24, the Mayor issued a double-barrelled announcement.

Defying the vote of his constituents, he stated that he would

endorse the construction of the Nago heliport, and, moreover,

that he was resigning immediately as mayor. Back in Nago, the

Mayor explained his decision to accept the heliport as "a step

toward the reduction of the U.S. military presence in Okinawa,"

then compounded this tortured logic by citing the bottom line: the Prime Minister's "solem­

promise" to implement a positive economic promotion package for the northern region. The

Mayor's announcement triggered a new wave of anti-base anger in Nago and Henoko, intensified by a sense of betrayal at his
decision to ride roughshod over the preferences of his constituents. In the mayoral election slated for 8 February 1998, Deputy

Mayor Kishimoto Tateo, the pro-heliport candidate, will face

anti-heliport candidate Tamaki Yoshikazu.

Since 1995, anti-base movements in Okinawa have posed
critical challenges to the post-cold war designs of the U.S. and

Japanese strategic planners, to the economic and social priorities of Okinawan development, and to the democratic process. Presi­
dent Clinton has the opportunity to move decisively in ways that

broaden the democratic process and scale back superfluous and provocative base structures in Okinawa. But all indications

suggest that base issues will continue to pit the Okinawan people

against the combined weight of the U.S. and Japanese govern­

ments, a David and Goliath contest. Whatever the outcome of

the Nago mayoral election and the heliport decision, these issues

will continue to reverberate throughout Okinawa, Japan, and

across the Pacific.

***

The following message, prepared jointly by the Council for

Opposing Offshore Base Construction and the Society for the

Protection of Life, and translated by Masamichi Sebastian Inoue,

was circulated prior to the 21 December 1997 referendum on


10. Ibid., 26 December 1997.
violations of basic human rights that the people of Okinawa have burden of the bases on Okinawa. Rather, it will perpetuate the
86
0.6 percent of Japan's total land mass, Okinawa prefecture has long suffered. It consists twenty-two citizens', labor, and political organizations in

Nothing new, and other crimes have repeatedly been committed by U.S. military personnel. Pollution, noise, and military accidents would also be transplanted to the northern part of the island of Okinawa. Not only dugongs, turtles, and other marine life, but also humans, would then keep away from this area. After all, the construction of the offshore base will be tantamount to the destruction of an ecosystem we have counted on.

Finally, we would like to point out that the construction of the offshore facility will lead to enhancing and modernizing functions of the bases in Okinawa. In light of peace, we believe, it is to swim against the tide of armament reduction in the post-cold war era on the one hand, and to further undermine the war-renouncing constitution of Japan, on the other. During the Second World War, Okinawa became the sole field of battle on Japanese territory, wherein more than 120,000 residents (a quarter of the total prefectural population) lost their lives. Should the offshore base be built in Henoko in exchange for Futenma Air Station, Okinawa would continue to be the "Keystone of the Pacific," and as such, would remain a potential target of attack from outside. We do not want the tragedy to be repeated.

A Nago City referendum concerning the construction of the sea-based military facility is scheduled for December 21. Tokyo has taken and will take every possible measure to realize its plan, including offering massive economic incentives to Henoko, to Nago, and to Okinawa. It will be extremely difficult for us Nago citizens to prevent the construction, so we sincerely request people throughout the world to extend support and solidarity to this citizens' movement that can say "No!" to the offshore base.

Specifically, because of the urgency of the matter, please:
1.) send us a message, which will hearten us greatly;
2.) circulate this letter; 3.) insert this letter in your bulletin, organ, and/or journal—when that happens, please send us a copy; and
4.) if you intend to express your views on this matter to the Japanese and/or U.S. governments, please let us know.

We hope to cooperate with you. Thank you very much for your attention. We look forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely yours,

Miyagi Yasuhiro
President, Council for Opposing Offshore Base Construction
1-19-14 O-higashi, Nago City, Okinawa 905, Japan.
Phone: 81+980-53-69 92; Fax: 81+980-53-6993;
Home Page: http://www.jinbun.co.jp/heliport/index.html

Nishikawa Ikuo
President, Society for the Protection of Life
243 Henoko, Nago City, Okinawa 905-21, Japan.
Phone and fax: 81+980-55-3131

(The Council for Opposing Offshore Base Construction comprises twenty-two citizens', labor, and political organizations in Nago City, including the Society for the Protection of Life in Henoko.)
Short Review


by Alvin Y. So

The history of Hong Kong has until recently been badly neglected by the community of scholars. Monographs on the history of Hong Kong have been so rare that some British studies published many decades ago are still considered to be the authoritative works on the subject. For instance, E. J. Eitel's *Europe in China: The History of Hong Kong from the Beginning to the Year 1882*, first published in 1895, was reprinted by Oxford University Press as late as 1983.

As author Jung-Fang Tsai points out, many of these British studies are not only dated but they are also written from the British colonists' perspective—one that portrays the colony "from outside" and "from above." The approach of British studies is "colonial" in the sense that it portrays the British as the principal actors in the period, the initiators of action. The development and execution of British policy are the main concerns of this older history. These British studies were heavily Eurocentric, with little room given to discussions of the Chinese individuals who played important roles in the politics and economy of the Chinese community in Hong Kong. Furthermore, most scholars in Hong Kong studies have stressed the colony's growth, development, stability, and the alleged political apathy of the Chinese population. British studies pictured Hong Kong Chinese "as willing subjects of a foreign government rather than as involuntary slaves of a conquering colonial regime" (p. 37).

In contrast to the "colonial" approach of these British studies, Tsai's book explores the social history of Hong Kong from the perspective of the Chinese people, who constitute the overwhelming majority of the colony's population.

**Hong Kong's Chinese Community**

The first three chapters of *Hong Kong in Chinese History* trace the formation and the changing nature of the Chinese community in Hong Kong from the 1840s to the 1880s. These chapters examine, in particular, the pattern of elite domination and the complex relationships among Hong Kong's merchant elite, the local populace, the colonial government, and Chinese officials in Canton. Parallel with the gentry elite's management of public affairs in late imperial China, the merchant elite in Hong Kong sought to establish its hegemony over the populace by community service, philanthropy, mediation of conflict, and the cultivation of loyalties based on vertical ties of occupation, kinship, and native place. This group also endeavored to promote social consensus based on Confucian ideas and values.

The British segregationist policy in the mid-nineteenth century allowed the Chinese merchant elite to manage Chinese community affairs in Hong Kong. Since the 1880s, the colonial government had tried to coopt wealthy, prominent Chinese merchants by appointing them to be "unofficial members" in the legislature and granting them honorary titles and other forms of official recognition. In addition, close and extensive ties to foreign capitalist interests prompted the Chinese merchants in Hong Kong to support British colonial rule. British colonial authorities did not give the merchant elite a free hand, however. Their management of community affairs was limited. They could hire night patrols to protect their shops and communities, for example, but their security guards were not permitted to carry weapons.

The geographical proximity of Hong Kong to the Chinese mainland and the close socio-economic connections across the border meant that the colony's Chinese merchant elites were also subject to the political influence and control of Chinese officials. Since both Canton and Hong Kong authorities claimed their allegiance, merchant elites in Hong Kong found themselves in a difficult situation, serving two masters.

Economic dependence on foreign capitalism, however, did not silence political protests by Hong Kong merchant elites against foreign capitalist domination and control. As a result, Tsai argues, an ambivalent relationship of collaboration and resentment had developed between the local merchant elites and the colonial government and foreign businessmen.

**Hong Kong's Workers**

Tsai also studies the Chinese working people in Hong Kong who rely on manual labor for a meager living. As she explains, her interests are not only the wealthy Chinese merchants surrounded by their concubines in their magnificent residences overlooking the Victoria harbor but also the sweating sedan chair coolie bitten by a dog owned by a European, the riotous Chinese crowd spitting on the British imperial troops patrolling the streets of Hong Kong, and a ricksha puller spitting blood at the end of a long hard journey. (p. 6)

Tsai's chapter on the working people of Hong Kong examines the wages, cost of living, housing, and general living conditions of various groups of coolies. Group ties among those who spoke traditional dialects prompted coolies to live together in houses and areas with others who spoke their dialect. Coolie-house fellowship stimulated competition between rival coolie factions for better working conditions. But when confronted with a common foe, coolie houses provided the basis of a larger organization for the promotion of boycotts and strikes.

To the masses of coolies, the "foreign devil's" rule in Hong Kong often seemed arbitrary and unjust. Coolies were often brought to trial without the benefit of counsel. The result was most often a guilty verdict and either a fine or imprisonment. *Hong Kong in Chinese History* reveals how the coolies fought back in symbolic ways. They sarcastically labeled the botanical...
foreign powers. These Hong Kong merchants advocated com­
interested only in promoting international trade for the benefit of 
nation-state. A number of Hong Kong Chinese merchants and 
pushed for collaboration with Britain to help regenerate China. 
professionals, like Ho Kai and Wei Yuk, were genuinely worried 
about the possible partition of China and her absorption by 
economic interests (against foreign competition and domination 
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nessmen in Hong Kong and China) and a public concern for China as a 
dimensions. The responses of the Hong Kong merchants to the 
nationalism is Janus-faced, taking a different form according to 
the circumstances of modern Chinese history. Nationalism has a 
anti-foreign boycotts, for example, suggest that the merchant 
coolies were thinking primarily in terms of 
their common interests against the regulations and power of the 
regulations; they were 
rarely took collective action against employers whose power was 
dominating. Yet, outside of these enterprises, 
Hong Kong had large numbers of cargo coolies employed by 
foreign companies, public chair and ricksha coolies, hawkers, 
and boatmen. It was these laborers who frequently articulated 
their common interests against the regulations and power of the 
colonial authorities. Coolies were thinking primarily in terms of 
how their livelihood was being affected by colonial government 
regulations; they were not concerned about Chinese nationalism. 
Tsai notes that it was their immediate economic interests and 
mundane needs that were of primary importance to these laborers 
as they struggled day after day to earn a living.

The second type of social unrest—like the anti-American 
and anti-Japanese boycotts—is related to the “elite nationalism” 
espoused by the merchants and the intelligentsia. For Tsai, 
nationalism is Janus-faced, taking a different form according to 
the circumstances of modern Chinese history. Nationalism has a 
socioeconomic dimension in addition to its cultural and political 
dimensions. The responses of the Hong Kong merchants to the 
anti-foreign boycotts, for example, suggest that the merchant 
patriots were motivated by both a private concern for their 
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Chinese nation-state, and they insisted that merchants and busi­
nessmen were the backbone of the nation. The merchants also 
pushed for collaboration with Britain to help regenerate China. 
They conceived of Britain as a benign, liberal imperialist power 
interested only in promoting international trade for the benefit of 
both the British and the Chinese. Tsai calls the Hong Kong 
merchants “collaborationist nationalists” because they collabo­
rated with the imperialists, sacrificing sovereign rights in the 
hope of eventually building a strong nation to resist imperialist 
aggression.

The third type of social unrest is “popular nationalism.” 
Elite nationalism often failed to address local issues that involved 
the pressing social needs and economic problems of Chinese 
workers. Consequently, the nationalist causes in 1887-1900 won 
little support from the colony’s working people. Tsai observes 
that coolies would respond to a nationalist cause if it was fused 
with an appeal to their social needs and economic interests. One 
example is the T'ung-meng-hui revolutionaries who succeeded in 
organizing workers in Canton and Hong Kong to support the Chinese 
revolution in 1911 because they “stooped” to work with them.

Tsai’s book makes several significant contributions: it un­
derlines the importance of the Chinese as agents in the making 
of Hong Kong’s history; it studies Hong Kong’s history “from 
below”; and it captures the changing nature of social unrest and 
the growth of Chinese nationalism under British colonial rule. 
The book is well-written and well-researched. It should be of 
to any student interested in Hong Kong’s history, British 
colonialism, Chinese merchants and workers, and nationalism.

This book has important implications for studies of the 
1997 transition as well; its findings help to correct several 
manipulating arguments. First, it refutes the views that Hong 
Kong’s economic development is due mostly to the effort of the 
colonial government and that the Hong Kong Chinese should be 
forever grateful to the British for making this economic miracle 
/make. As Tsai shows, the Chinese were important agents in 
Hong Kong’s history; they also had a long tradition of popular 
animosity toward British colonial rule. Second, many observers 
treat Hong Kong Chinese as a homogeneous group, saying that 
Hong Kong society either wholeheartedly welcomes (in main­
land China’s media) or totally rejects (in the Western media) the 
1997 transition. As the book points out, Hong Kong society is 
sharply divided into different classes, each with its own interests 
and concerns. Like the coolies in the late nineteenth century, 
members of Hong Kong’s modern-day working class may be 
more interested in their daily livelihood than in abstract issues 
such as human rights and democracy. Like the merchants in the 
late nineteenth century, Hong Kong’s bankers and industrialists 
today may be more interested in “collaborating” with mainland 
Chinese officials in joint ventures than in protesting Beijing’s 
intrusion into Hong Kong’s affairs. Finally, some observers 
analyze the 1997 transition as a political struggle between Bei­
jing’s nationalism and Hong Kong’s democracy. As Tsai insists, 
nationalism possesses an economic dimension in addition to its 
political and cultural dimensions. Like the merchants in the late 
nineteenth century, the Hong Kong business community today 
is pushing for an “elite nationalism” model that will make them 
the backbone of Hong Kong society and polity. In this respect, 
the 1997 transition can also be perceived as a class struggle 
between the “elite nationalism” model of the Beijing-Hong Kong 
business community and the democratic model of Hong Kong’s 
middle class. Unless Hong Kong’s democrats address the daily 
livelihood issues of the urban working population, their abstract 
human rights and autonomy model may not arouse enough 
popular support to challenge the business community’s “elite nationalism” model.

Types of Social Unrest

Tsai distinguishes three types of social unrest. The first type 
was the coolie strikes. Coolies employed in Chinese enterprises 
rarely took collective action against employers whose power was 
centered in vertical, paternalistic relationships. The Chinese 
merchants also worked cooperatively with the colonial authori­
ties to maintain law and order. Yet, outside of these enterprises, 
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jing’s nationalism and Hong Kong’s democracy. As Tsai insists, 
nationalism possesses an economic dimension in addition to its 
political and cultural dimensions. Like the merchants in the late 
nineteenth century, the Hong Kong business community today 
is pushing for an “elite nationalism” model that will make them 
the backbone of Hong Kong society and polity. In this respect, 
the 1997 transition can also be perceived as a class struggle 
between the “elite nationalism” model of the Beijing-Hong Kong 
business community and the democratic model of Hong Kong’s 
middle class. Unless Hong Kong’s democrats address the daily 
livelihood issues of the urban working population, their abstract 
human rights and autonomy model may not arouse enough 
popular support to challenge the business community’s “elite nationalism” model.
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Contact Peter Zarow at <p.zarow@unsw.edu.au>