Ethnicity, N

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Identity in Crossroad Civilisations

Ethnicity, Nationalism and
Globalism in Asia

Edited by
Erich Kolig, Vivienne SM. Angeles *and* **Sam Wong**

ICAS

Identity in Crossroad Civilisations

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1   Introduction: Crossroad Civilisations and Bricolage Identities

Erich Kolig, Sam Wong, Vivienne SM. Angeles

Globalisation seems to be taking an unexpected turn: the hegemon that has driven it so far appears to be weakening, succumbing to the competition emanating from elsewhere. The process of decentring of Europe and North America is rapidly advancing, shifting the focus of economic and socio-political dynamic perceptibly 'eastwards'. As the pathos of Western hegemonic reproduction withers, a new hegemon appears to be descending the cultural and technological birth canal. Combined with its traditional diligence and sheer force of numbers, if 'Asia' had the energy resources of the Middle East and the technologies and missionary zeal of the West, humankind would be speaking Mandarin by now instead of English,[1] and Beijing would have the status of Washington DC or New York. It does not require excessive imagination to foresee that Asia would be the vortex of global civilisation drawing, in ever increasing circles, the rest of the world into its orbit. Somewhat belatedly, this is beginning to take shape now. It is unclear whether this is the consequence of the catastrophic decline of the Western hegemon – as, for instance, Friedman (1994, 2006)[2] has argued – or whether this is simply a phase in the cyclical development in which the cosmopolitical epicentre shifts from time to time with law-like inevitability.

However, as the West is gradually sliding into global eccentricity, it is important to realise that 'Asia' is far from being a coherent and homomorphous civilisation in any way comparable to 'the West'; nor is it a series of internally integrated major civilisations such as Sino-Confucian, Malay, Japanese and Hindu-Indian, and their respective satellite civilisations. Cutting across this, there are the deep, traditional, cultural cleavages of religion, language and custom of a multitude of ethnicities. And then there are globally relevant fault lines, cleavages that Asia shares with the rest of the world and which are important in the formation of identity, and divide it internally. These dissect Asia in many ways, producing a richness, multi-chromatism and complexity that rivals the dazzling best the world can offer elsewhere. This intricate and often baffling complexity questions Samuel Huntington's concept of 'civilisation'[3] which, though alluring in its splendid simplicity, reveals itself to be largely fictitious, ignoring as it does the finer detail that is so

very important for the formation of people's identity. The 'Clash of Ci-
vilizations and the Remaking of World Order' turns out on closer in-
spection to be rather less than macro-cosmic as the socio-political rea-
lity falls into a confusing pastiche of cross-cutting, competing and con-
flicting identities, political interests and social and cultural units,
giving the lie to the vision of a profoundly and clearly segmented world
order. Syncretisms and antagonisms, cultural repulsion and attraction
sit side by side in a bewildering global kaleidoscope – and nowhere in
greater and more colourful complexity than 'Asia'.

Despite its popularity and admiration in political circles, Hunting-
ton's thesis has rightly been under attack for offering a monolithic un-
derstanding of civilisations and paying little attention to the multiple
layers of personal and collective sense of Selfness and identity (Philips
2002: 598). It has also been criticised for being overly simplistic in un-
derstanding the complex process of identity building and the negotia-
tion of different actors between civilisations. Among others, Amartya
Sen (2006) questions Huntington's concept of an inevitable clash
along civilisation lines. He proposes that the root cause of violence is
the failure to see the multiple affiliations of individuals. For example, a
working-class woman from a low caste is not just 'Indian', a caste
member placing her in largely pre-determined, pervasive relationships
with other Indians and belonging to a particular economic class and
consumer group; at the same time she also fulfils a multitude of other
social roles and identities: as a daughter of her parents, a mother of
her children, a doting wife, possibly a member of a religious organisa-
tion or a political party and a union organiser. The multiplicity of iden-
tities requires individuals to negotiate and juggle their competing
needs, roles and fragmented self-awarenesses. Edward Said (2001)
rather scathingly critiqued Huntington's thesis, satirising it as 'the
Clash of Ignorance' and as a 'gimmick'. He suggests that the way Hun-
tington – whom he calls a 'clumsy writer and inelegant thinker' – di-
vides the world into a few basic civilisations and closed 'civilisation
identities' is a falsification of reality. Civilisations are not 'sealed off
identities purged of the myriad current and countercurrents' that pro-
duce exchange, cross-fertilisation and sharing. Although dynamic and
competitive interactions of cultures can lead to conflict, they can also
offer solutions, fertile syncretisms and seminalities.

Samuel Huntington presents identity in a broad scope, in terms of a
'civilisation identity' defined by common objective elements, like lan-
guage, history, religion, customs, institutions, and by the subjective
self-identification of people (Huntington 1993: 24). This view tends to
present a picture of rigid structures – coming to us unchanged from
the 'mythical' past – as underlying the world. Especially in an age of
globalisation, this hardly seems adequate any more.

Globalisation[4] and its effects on culture and identity formation have been a major subject of contemporary studies (Appadurai 1996, 2003; Tomlinson 1999). While largely visible in the economic sphere as demonstrated by the exchange of goods and services and by the proliferation of multinational business all over the world, globalisation has affected self-consciousness and given rise to new connectivities, promoted innovative ways of looking at the world and of viewing the Self. As people, for instance, become transnational migrants and as ideas travel in cyberspace, old notions of identity and nationalism that have been rooted to particular geographic places and parochial interests are challenged and redefined to reflect new realities. Globalisation requires fundamental reorientation of traditional identities to take note of one's embeddedness in a world-wide context. In a sense everyone becomes 'diasporic'.

This view of identity and belongingness as fluid and constructed at the same time also raises questions about the idea of nationalism in a continuously changing world, where one in every 35 persons is an international migrant.[5] Huntington coined the expression 'Davos Man' for the global elite for whose transnational if not supra-national activities national boundaries were obsolete, a vanishing nuisance. Today's transnationalism goes well beyond the financial and business elite assembling in Davos every year. An increasing number of people become transnationals with multiple loyalties. In fact, one might say Islam has bred Davos men for centuries.

How individual actions and motivations align with collective goals has become a topic of great interest in the politics of identity building (Cerulo 1997). Identity can be explained as 'the way individuals and people understand themselves along with the way they see themselves as relating to other people, the natural world and the spiritual world' (Richter et al. 2005: 21). It is also a very complex notion in another respect, as explained by Croucher (2004: 40), who uses the term 'belonging' as a way of recognising both the 'affective dimensions of attachment and identity while preserving an awareness of their fluidity and constructedness'. Croucher further recognises the multiplicity of identity with its varying levels of centrality for the individual and the group. Always formed in reference to an 'Other', identity is then redefined and reconceptualised in response to an increasingly globalised and complex society.

It seems more appropriate under present circumstances to speak of 'identity bricolage'[6] so as to link the micro- and macro-process of identity building. The idea is built on Anthony Giddens's structuration theory (1984) and Benedict Anderson's idea of 'imagined communities' (1991). The notion of 'identity bricolage' highlights human agency in shaping, and adopting, individual identity and the complex and often

less-than-conscious motivations in drawing on identity to weave webs of interaction and obtain access to resources, both material and immaterial. It acknowledges the fluidity and permeability of identity building through a process of negotiation and contestation. That said, one needs to be aware of the influence of structural constraints and institutional settings in shaping identity. The agency-structure duality is, therefore, useful in providing a sociological lens to examine the complexity of identity building by underlining the structure and different sources of social identity over time. It also helps break down the unnecessary binary divisions of identity.

Benedict Anderson, in his classical work *Imagined Communities* (1999), defines a nation as 'an imagined political community'. His concept of 'imagined community' examines the complex process through which individuals become attached to their communities and nations. He is particularly interested in finding out how identity emerges from sociability, how community members feel connected by developing shared identities, although many of them do not engage in direct interpersonal relationships with other community members. He suggests that myth-making and its promulgation by the print media are central components to developing 'imagined communities', and the psychological aspect of identity politics is as important as social and political forces.

The idea of 'identity bricolage' provides a useful metaphor for building on Anderson's imagined communities and exploring how the interactions between subjectivity, institutions and structures facilitate and constrain the imaginative process of building not only nation but also identity (see Haesley 2005). 'Identity bricolage' also helps to understand the process of construction and dismantling of 'imagined communities' and the changing meaning of individual identification over time. We acknowledge that the imagining process is not without limits. Neither do all individuals share the same capacity and resources to draw on 'myths' to make claims (Wong 2007). We are also aware of the paradoxes of shared identity: while it helps anchor people, the process can also exert strong coercive pressures towards conformity (see, for instance, Calhoun 1991).

Anderson (1999: 4) asserts that 'nationality or nation-ness as well as nationalism are cultural artefacts: that once created, they become modular, capable of being transplanted, with varying degrees of self-consciousness, to a great variety of social terrains, to merge and be merged with a correspondingly wide variety of political and ideological constellations'. Thus, it is subject to change over time, and such change depends to some extent on how people 'imagine' themselves in a changing world. Some 25 years after Anderson's book first came out, the electronic media has outpaced the print media in terms of speed and

quantity. The proliferation of electronic devices like the internet, cable television and cell phones, to name a few, has opened up new ways and new vehicles for imagining nations and now beyond that: imagining global connectivities. Anderson's views on 'nation-ness' or nationality continue to resonate in this age of electronics. Thus, it becomes all the more necessary to see the linkages among identity, nationalism and globalisation.

The Papers:[7] a dialogue with Huntington and Anderson

The ruling identity-forming factors in today's world – if it hasn't always been like that – are not stable cultural macro-entities, but volatile processes and dynamics that can produce ephemeral, fast-changing, unstable results: socio-cultural quarks in an unpredictable quantum mechanics. The socio-political and ideological world discourses today can be seen to be ruled by three major centrifugal forces which compete in trying to pull humanity in quite different identity directions: globalisation, nationalism and ethnicity.

It is tempting to place these forces in an evolutionary framework to establish a satisfactory classification relationship between them: modern-day ethnicisation being a throw back to the pre-state condition of socio-political grouping; state formation and nationalism as the next developmental step; and globalisation and socio-political internationalisation as the world-spanning last phase of identity development, the inevitable step towards bringing humankind under one all-encompassing awareness. In this perspective, globalisation can be linked with modernism, the global hegemon of the West mobilising forces of political economy to move the world in a certain direction, which supposedly offers a glimpse of the future. Some would argue this process has stalled now as the agens movens, the hegemon, is declining, and the mission of global modernisation has remained incomplete. But Asia resists such easy categorisation.

Globalisation works mainly as a process of global intertwining in the form of internationalisation in all areas of human activity and thought, seemingly drawing the world along a homogenising trajectory at the end of which there will be putatively a single world culture. Largely still perceived as an offshoot of Westernisation, if not Western imperialism, it is seen by some as a spent force. Others see it as still strengthening and thus becoming an impulse for cultural resistance, a reactionary force that in turn sparks off an array of small, culturally based identities (see, for instance, Harrison 1999; Grillo 2003). The ethnicisation process we observe, and its cultural politics, are either the result of a decline of the modernist hegemonic mission, allowing opposition phe-

nomena to come to the fore, or in a mechanistic sense, its unrelenting course provoking ever stronger and more obvious counter-forces for fear of eventual universal homogenisation.

In this process of ethnicisation, ethnic cultures are vying for survival, sometimes aspiring to separatism and possibly more: dominance over competing others.

Cutting across these three forces and arraigned against globalisation – but often provoked by it, especially when it is perceived as clandestine Westernisation – there are the forces of regionalisation. Elena Asciutti's essay describes (East) 'Asian' ideological regionalism with its attempts to create a specific identity that is designed to resist globalising – perceived to be Westernising – processes, from its point of view embodied especially by the human rights agenda. Asian regionalism offers an interesting paradox: it goes beyond both ethnicisation and nationalism, yet offers no acceptance of a globalised identity, in fact negates all of that. It offers an identity that has been inspired by globalisation, yet resists it. A parallel exists in the united Europe arising from the economic-political construct of the European Union, which struggles with a new identity that transcends narrow and very entrenched nationalisms yet formulates itself in sharp contrast to the rest of the world.

The contributions enter into a dialogue not only with globalisation and with Huntington's civilisational concept, but also and especially with Benedict Anderson's notion of national identity. Nationalism is another major ideological and political force. It emphasises the sovereignty and exclusive powers of the State and especially the cultural messianic properties of the nation-state. Nationalism, one might say, is a European invention that exerted an especially strong effect in the 19th century. After it had served to divide up Europe into nation-states, the idea was forcibly extended onto the rest of the world through the efforts of colonialism. The enforced creation of territorially defined nation-states brought along its own political difficulties, many of which had to do with the ideal of such a state to be mono-ethnic and mono-cultural. If conditions were not in conformity – for instance, by not forming a culturally monochrome polity – they had to be pressed into a straitjacket of cultural and ideological uniformity, if necessary by force. Romantic visions of a culturally homogenous fatherland or motherland, whatever the terminology may have been, helped to entrench this political reality emotionally. In Europe, J.G. Herder, J.G. Fichte and other philosophers propagated and romantically embroidered this cultural monochrome to make it a desirable ideal. The Third World found its own propagandists of this notion, peddling the high value of an 'organic' communitarianism in preference to liberal individualism. It sets aside the liberal political theory of Locke and Smith

that envisaged the individualist, freely choosing persona opposed to the communal, societal and national constraints.

Achieving an 'imagined community' may come at a price. Creating community with a national identity may be closely aligned with cultural imperialism and intolerance towards minority and client cultures. It is often combined with monoculturalism and the hegemony of a dominant identity over minority interests. Malaysia, as analysed by Toru Ueda, sets an example of a government-induced, relatively gentle form of creating and instilling a national identity and culture that still seeks to embrace cultural diversity. Other countries are more ruthless in the pursuit of cultural nationalism. Rup Kumar Barman describes Bhutan's monocultural nationalism – state regulated and legislated and paradoxically combined with a process of democratisation. It alienates and excludes significant minorities and drives them literally into exile. In a still stronger sense, trying to impose a national culture in an effectively pluralist, multicultural situation can also produce exceptionally virulent, aggressive forms, as Sali Augustine's paper argues with regard to fanatical Hindu nationalism.

Asia has taken its own course, obscuring what may elsewhere seem like a clear-cut evolutionary development. In Asia the force of nationalism and the insistence of the sovereign powers of the state – defending it against the claims of ideological globalism – are probably the strongest, with China setting the glaring example. While engaging forcefully in the economic side of globalisation and doing so on the level of nation, in other respects it has retained a much more diversified picture. Sam Wong, drawing on his experiences with Chinese migrants from mainland China to Hong Kong, shows the absence of a pan-Chinese identity and instead a fluidity of subnational choices. He examines how Chinese migrants' identities change almost chameleon-like in different contexts. Critically viewing Huntington's thesis, he argues that migrants develop different identities in order to cope with their everyday lives in the host society.

Arraigned against the other major identity-producing forces, there is ethnicisation, i.e. the emergence or maintenance of culturally or religiously based subnational identities, insistence on minority rights, assertions of cultural, ethnic or religious autonomy and political separateness. In its sub-national expression it often comes into conflict with nationalism. Sometimes there is freedom to assert ethnic – or tribal – identity, but it comes at the price of being left behind by the mainstream, either ignored and forgotten, or struggling to hold its own against being swamped by national interests. As India's traditional caste system sits side by side with newly emergent socio-economic groups such as working class, middle class and modern entrepreneurship, tribally or ethnically based, small-scale economies co-exist with

powerful, internationally intertwined national economies. So-called 'primitive tribal communities' in India seem to belong to a different era and are now struggling against the forces of a nation powerfully striving to take a leading position in the 21st century – as Samar Kumar Biswas's paper describes.

These forces define and redefine the Us-versus-Them divide by drawing a circle of inclusiveness around the in-group identity and dividing it sharply from the out-group. The distinguishing criteria are of a cultural kind: just as on a larger scale Huntington's model of civilisations relies on an exaggerated boundary-emphasising delineation. Sen's, Säävälä's and Chang's essays demonstrate the opposite: the fluidity and permeability of such cultural boundaries, and how syncretisms and composite self-definitions are created through cultural 'osmosis', vitally contributing to and enriching identity formation.

In this process of taking India into a new era, syncretisms emerge, if reluctantly recognised (especially when they bring up shades of the colonial past), which are a by-product of globalisation unwittingly bringing change and excoriating national identities. Krishna Sen examines how the English language and English studies in India interact with class consciousness today in a way quite different from colonial times. Using an historical approach that critically appraises the British colonial rule through to the post-colonial administration, she suggests that independent post-colonial India does not offer a simple binary of 'nativism' versus 'globalism'. Instead, the foreign import enhances and underpins an Indian middle-class identity. Very much the same may be said about birthday cakes. Minna Säävälä uses birthday cakes in India as an example to illustrate how they, being seen as archetypically 'Western', can yet strengthen the new middle-class Indian's national cultural Self and how they negotiate apparently contradictory cultural meanings. In a similar vein, Eddy Chang investigates the 'Germanic' music import of Beethoven's *Ode to Joy* to Japan, to become an expression of Japanese groupism, creating an identity that blends traditional Oriental features with Occidentalism.

Multicultural coexistence does not always offer a happy solution of mutual permeation. Not unusually, there are problems with identities in a multicultural situation. Charlene Rajendran draws on her thespian background and her experience with a theatre director's attempt to overcome ethnic barriers in Malaysia's pluralist, multicultural society. Ethnic identities may be recognised and officially tolerated in Malaysia, but in the daily social discourse they easily evoke xenophobic feelings towards the cultural 'stranger'.

The final two essays by Vivienne Angeles and Erich Kolig deal with the special case of Muslims as national minorities – a fateful combination that is easily bent to a suspicion of 'strangeness'. Muslim identities

tend to sit poorly in a culturally or religiously different majority society. A strong Muslim sense of religious and cultural exceptionalism makes it difficult for a majority society to enfranchise a minority of such distinctive identity. Where Muslims form a minority – be it in a diasporic sense as in New Zealand or where they are indigenous as in the Philippines – they show an unfortunate tendency in today's world to pose a prominent challenge to nationalism's imagined community. Muslimness not only generates a strongly binding force that unites a global *umma* (including the Muslim minority now resident in the Western world) but can assume outright political overtones when it is combined with aspirations of creating a global *khilafa*. Even a harmless cultural element like adopting a Middle Eastern sartorial code may raise suspicions about the loyalties of such a conspicuously transnational identity. At best, the relationship between nationalism and Islam becomes the subject of a close scrutiny as to their compatibility (see, for example, Zubaida 2004).

Religion, too, may be welcomed as a cement of social solidarity usefully underpinning the nationalist notion and forming a salient ingredient in the national characteristic. However, the emphatic elevation of religion as a collective identity could also achieve the exact opposite: it may become an exclusionary factor for other religionists, as the Philippines demonstrate.

The New Zealand example reminds us of the ambiguous position of nationalism in the West. The kind of romantically conceived nationalism that relied on the characteristic predominance of one culture to define the national character and inform the national identity appears to be retreating in the face of globalisation and its homogenising forces. Globalisation undermines nationalism and the cultural monochrome on which it is founded in several ways: juridically, emotionally, economically, culturally and socially. Juridically, national boundaries become softened through international – often UN sponsored – agreements, conventions and legislation, which intervene ever more strongly in national political and legal processes. National economies lose their parochial encapsulation and internal self-sufficiency. Migration on a global scale breaks open cultural and social isolation, creating distinct cultural pluralities. Ethnic identities, long thought lost and submerged, perhaps eradicated, come to the fore and clamour for recognition. They challenge a nation-state's right to enforce homogeneity on a cultural level as much as diasporic enclaves. Constrained by the force of international legislation as well as the impersonal forces of global cultural nivellation, concessions have to be made, albeit grudgingly. Emotionally, the solidarity with and loyalty to one nation called patriotism becomes mellowed and replaced by new networks of loyalty, of which double and triple citizenship are obvious examples. Identity politics based on a

liberal political theory pose one of the greatest challenges to national-ism. Previously marginalised and culturally suppressed groups assert themselves and their identity. Thus, a liberal democracy produces weak national identities, often fragmented.

Identity politics redefine the concept and shape of citizenship and pose their own challenge to monochromatic nationalism. Policies of as-similation have been abandoned in favour of the right to maintain and choose one's ethnic and cultural identity, to adhere to various forms of lifestyles regarded as intolerable or outlawed only a few years or dec-ades ago. No longer enforceable is the classical imperative: '*si vivis Ro-mae Romano vivito more*' (when you live in Rome you live according to Roman custom – often abbreviated to: when in Rome do as the Ro-mans do).

Celebrating pluralism and multiculturalism is stridently bemoaned by some as a slippery slope towards loss of identity and a dangerous cultural alienation (see Fukuyama 2005, 2006; Huntington 2004).[8] It leads to the proliferation of political parties with anti-immigration, anti-minority platforms and culturally intolerant agendas (tolerant New Zealand produces phenomena faintly similar to those described from Bhutan and India). The attempt to preserve a national identity – and sometimes to create a new one – inclines towards engendering xeno-phobism to an alarming degree. Even the mindless and violently ag-gressive extreme right-wing often tries to give itself political legitimacy with an invidious culture-preservationist agenda in which violence and patriotism perform the most fantastic logical pirouettes.

One may wonder how New Zealand fits into a volume on Asian identity? Asia's boundaries are not fixed and are not of geographic fact, as is the case for instance with America or Africa; more like Europe's case, they are a matter of perception than anything else (see for in-stance Turkey seeking incorporation in Europe in a political, economic and cultural sense; or the question of whether Russia is part of Europe proper). Asia as a mental construct can assume many different forms. In geopolitical and economic terms, the notion of 'Asia' is often much narrower in a peculiar sense than geographically. Politically and espe-cially in an economic respect, there is a linguistic tendency in the Eng-lish-speaking world to subsume under the term 'Asia' primarily the eastern and southern portion of the continent – the Far East (from a Eurocentric viewpoint) – and tacitly exclude issues relevant to the Rus-sian northern parts, the Middle East and the Caucasus area. This kind of Asia also forms a category of contested attributes but in a diffuse sense conjures up visions of vibrant and dynamic economies, huge fu-ture prospects and resilience, but also dangerous population explosions and disproportionate masses of humanity.

Nevertheless, the concept of 'Australasia' has been coined in recognition of an economic and political regionalism that at least terminologically embraces Australia and New Zealand (as well as PNG) as part of Asia.[9] This denies the West Asia fault line while important Asian leaders such as Dr. Mahathir Mohamad vociferously agitated against the larger definition of Asia. Mahathir's more parochial regionalism with regard to APEC was eventually overruled by other Asian nations. Despite the resistance of conservative views on both sides – Asia's as well as Australia-New Zealand's – which perceive Australia and New Zealand as essentially Western and therefore not Asian, the interlinking of the two sides is becoming more and more a modern-day reality. APEC (Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation) as well as ASEAN (Association of Southeast Asian Nations in which New Zealand is a 'dialogue partner') as well as a host of other linkages draw the two Western nations increasingly into an Asian regionalism. Orbiting around Asia makes much economic and strategic sense and is based on more than just recognition of geographic proximity. A substantial Asian immigration and multifarious diasporic linkages also begin to underscore this linkage with Asia and the absence of rigid civilisational delineations.

Notes

1   Already, Mandarin is the language spoken by most people (native speakers) with 873 million, followed at some distance by Hindi with 450 million, and English in third place with 341 million.

2   Huntington (1996: 81) calls it 'the fading of the West'.

3   Samuel Huntington, (1996), *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order*. New York: Simon & Schuster.

4   David Held, in his 'Democracy and Globalization' (1998: 13), views globalisation as 'a multidimensional phenomenon involving diverse domains of activity and interaction, including the economic, political, technological, military, legal, cultural and environmental'. Kent Richter (2005: 10), in *Understanding religion in a global society,* adds religion as one of the forces that promote the globalisation process.

5   http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/shared/spl/hi/world/04/migration/html/migration_boom. stm (Accessed 10 October 2008)

6   With an appropriate bow to Claude Lévi-Strauss. Applying the image of bricolage as a complex artifice and assemblage made of 'bits and pieces' to identity formation is of course not new (see for instance Chandler 1998; Bouma 2003; Laurent 2007). The image, however, is loaded with considerable ambiguities: in myth-making bricolage refers to the creation of new integrated entities, while in the field of self-awareness it accentuates a dynamic aspect of interchangeability and fluidity.

7   The papers were presented at the 4th and 5th ICAS, 2005 in Shanghai and 2007 in Kuala Lumpur, respectively. Most papers were revised in 2008 at the invitation of the editors. Even though the papers had to be coordinated to relate at least vaguely to a common theme, they do not cohere in the sense that they expressed one kind of argument. On the contrary, they represent quite a wide diversity of viewpoints on 'identity and nationalism' and pursue quite different lines of enquiry.

8   A particularly strong example – in relation to the Muslim diaspora in the UK – is
    provided by Phillips 2006.
9   There is also an ecological understanding of the concept of Australasia that links
    Australia and PNG to Indonesia, but excludes New Zealand.

2   Asia and the Global World: Identities, Values, Rights

Elena Asciutti[1]

Introduction

Asia has rejected the universality of human rights on the grounds that human rights, as they are conceived in the West, do not fit the Asian condition. The concept of Asian values has been launched instead, placing the universality of human rights under critical attack because they do not take into account Asia's history and culture. This view was presented and supported during the Regional Meeting for Asia of the World Conference on Human Rights and translated into the Bangkok Declaration (1993). Since then, a highly politicised debate on the antithesis between the universality of human rights and Asian values has been going on. When proposing Asian values, the supporters of this concept announced the existence of a 'common identity', shared by the inhabitants of Asian countries. A fundamental concept of 'Asia' is then needed – a new political geography of Asia that differs from the conventional one, in order to contrast it with the concept of 'the West'. This in turn refers to the debate on 'Orientalism' and 'Occidentalism', which can be traced back to the late 1970s and to Edward Said's *Orientalism*. Through the analysis of the concept of the 'Self' and 'the Other', the debate will be reviewed, trying to get beyond the dichotomies of East vs. West and the universalist view vs. relativist view of human rights.

As is generally known, globalisation is a protracted evolutionary process, which encompasses every nation and every part of the world in a global political system (Attinà 1999). In other words, globalisation is a process that creates a far-reaching system in which no event and no action, whether significant or not, is confined to the geographical area where it was generated. Technological innovations have stimulated and amplified this process, making states much more permeable and interdependent than in the past. The traditional concept of political geography (in terms of time and space) has been altered: space has 'shrunk' (McLuhan 1960), consequently giving the perception of the world as a compact entity, a *unicum*. However, the originality of globalisation consists in being able to involve not only states in this process of interdependence, but also individuals, creating an arena for cultural inter-

change which goes beyond the mere interdependence of the states themselves. The complexity and multidimensionality of globalisation can be summarised through the pattern proposed by Andrew Hurrell (1995: 346; emphasis in the original): 'First of all, we have witnessed an increase in "density" and "depth" of economic interdependence. Secondly, technology and the revolution in information have played a fundamental role in the diffusion of knowledge and ideas. Thirdly, these developments have created material infrastructures that consolidate the interdependence between individuals [...]. Finally, all this causes an exceptional and growing awareness of global problems [...], and develop[s] the feeling of belonging to one *human community*'.

The reference to the individual as part of the global interdependence raises two pivotal issues for the international community: freedoms and rights. They represent a peculiar normative system, whose legitimacy is based on the *opinio iuris* of the majority of the subjects who act within the global system.

However, globalisation does not imply uniformity. States and individuals do not have the same reaction in the face of global phenomena: there are differences between the geographical areas and regions, as well as between the fields where the phenomena take place. Globalisation carries its contrary: fragmentation. This process could be described as a swinging movement undertaken by states under international (globalising) pressure, which aims at building up a mechanism of international rules and domestic pressures on the one hand, and at safeguarding internal interests on the other (Clark 1997). In this context, fragmentation does not have to be interpreted as a state's hostile reaction to globalisation, but as a particular/local interpretation of it. In other words, fragmentation can be considered as the transformation of the world into an 'omnipresent patchwork' (Geertz 1996). Within the interactive process of globalisation, the dialectic 'convergence/divergence' takes place (Robertson 1992). This dialectic determines the crumbling of big contexts, as the emergence of diversities seem to promise some possibilities of orientation in the global phenomena.

Given all this, it is possible to state that Asia could be seen as one of the fragments of globalisation. Nowadays, the importance of the Asian continent for the globalisation process cannot be underestimated. Firstly, Asia has become the privileged point of reference for the West. The interaction between East and West has achieved the status of a dialogue between equals, owing to the ability of the Asian continent to carry out an autonomous development. Secondly, Asian development cannot be considered as a mere outcome of the acceptance of the 'Western model'. It is better explained as the effect of a local approach to the global context. Therefore, in the exploration of this 'new geography',[2] it is useful to set aside the methodological instruments com-

monly used in Western countries, such as the concept of 'modernisation', and exploit some instruments elaborated in a local context, such as the concept of 'Asian values'.

This paper is divided into two parts. The first part deals with the creation and the evolution of the 'Asian values' concept. The second part analyses the way in which 'Asian values' have been used as a kind of resistance against human rights. My contribution will try to avoid falling into the trap of Orientalism,[3] even though this might be difficult to achieve, due to the limits imposed by the use of an established terminology.

Some definitions

Here Asia is not considered as 'an inert fact of nature. It is not merely *there*, just as the Occident itself is not just a *there* either. [...] as both geographical and cultural entities [...] such locales, regions, geographical sectors as "Orient" and "Occident" are man-made. Therefore as much as the West itself, the Orient is an idea that has a history and a tradition of thought, imagery, and vocabulary that has given it reality and presence in and for the West' (Said 1978: 4-5). The concept of 'Asia', therefore, entailed a complex work of cultural translation including an effort to *reduce the Other to the Self*. Hence, the concept of 'Asia' represents a construction created by the West in order to provide a comprehensive description of the 'Other', thus giving origin to the West/East dichotomy.

Through a semantic analysis of the concept of Asia, some scholars, such as Koselleck (1986) and Kristeva (1980), have concluded that the term 'Asia' traces its origins to the classical Greco-Roman times, when it was used to define the East, namely the Eastern areas outside the boundaries of the Greco-Roman territories. In doing so, the relation between the Self and the Other was established. When the term 'Asia' received the implicit connotation of 'barbarians', the relation between the Self and the Other became asymmetric: *we* – representing the Greco-Roman-European civilisation – and the *Others* – all those non-civilised populations. This tradition of thought and imagines was inherited by the philosophy of history during the 19th century. On this issue, G.W.F. Hegel (1837: 103) wrote: 'Here [in the East] the external Sun rises, and in the West it sets: but for this reason here [in the West] the interior Sun of the self-consciousness rises, diffusing its major brilliance.' For the German philosopher, therefore, East and West would be placed at the two ends of a continuum that represents universal history. This vision is the renewal of the dichotomised relation construed during the

Greco-Roman times: the self-consciousness of the West is created through the reflected image of the East (Shimada 2000).

In the 19th century, with the diffusion of the Western geographical maps, the concept of 'Asia' arrived in the East, where it was translated from various European languages into Asian languages. 'The definition given by another culture was accepted. Asian countries placed themselves within this classification. In this process of adaptation, the relation with the West was already implicit. Indeed, the starting point of the perception of the self was not the self itself but the vision provided by the other. At this point, the semantics of asymmetry became the foundation for the self-definition. [...] the *self* obtained its own meaning in virtue of the *other's* look' (Shimada 2000: 148).

If defined as the distinction between the Self and the Other, the concept of 'Asia' appears as a unified space which, however, does not exist mainly because of the ambiguous extension of its territory. It is, indeed, very difficult to find a homogeneous unity within the Asian continent from cultural, ideological, economic, political and religious points of view. This is also confirmed by the need to create more detailed geographical indications: Central Asia, South Asia, Northeast Asia, Southeast Asia and East Asia, where the starting point of perception is still the Western Self. In this analysis, the concept of 'Asia-Pacific Region' (henceforth Asia-Pacific) will be used to show a neutral position in relation to the two points of perception, the Self and the Other. From a geo-cultural point of view, it could be said that Asia-Pacific includes all the countries that have been deeply influenced by Chinese culture. This is the case of a 'Confucian pole' made up of China, Taiwan, Vietnam, Singapore, the Korean Peninsula and the Japanese archipelago. If we take into account the geo-economic point of view, this space becomes even bigger, going beyond the borders of the Sino civilisation and including the Indo-Chinese Peninsula, the Malaysian Peninsula, Indonesia and the Philippines. The enlargement of the Confucian pole can be attributed to two main factors. Above all, Japan first and China later – the Confucian powers in a strict sense – have represented the driving economic forces that have provided the neighbouring countries with the economic model of reference for their development. Therefore, the fast economic growth represents an element of homogeneity among the countries in this area. Secondly, 35 million expatriate Chinese living in this area have contributed to the diffusion of some elements of Confucian thought. From a political point of view, the countries of the Asia-Pacific region belong to 'ASEAN plus Three',[4] a regional cooperative framework whose aim is economic cooperation through regular intergovernmental summits and international agreements. Finally, from a methodological point of view, Asia-Pacific countries have opposed the concept of 'modernisation', as it creates another

dichotomy: the modern West and the pre-modern non-West. 'Historically, modernity has been opposed to its own historical precedents; geo-politically, modernity has been opposed to what is not modern, or more specifically, to what it is not Western' (Sakai 1997: 154).

In this way, the concept of 'modernisation' is the outcome of the universalism of the philosophy of history, as it assumes a time conception corresponding to the one shared by Western culture. This does not mean that the non-West is unable to develop, but that the two spaces are not able to develop simultaneously: a pre-modern West and a modern East cannot coexist. Besides, the logic of the philosophy of history cannot accept models of development that are different from the one established in the West. Therefore, the development of the non-West has to follow the development of the West: by emulating the West, non-Western countries are doomed to become similar to Western society – an implicit assumption for example made in the 'theory of the end of history' by Francis Fukuyama (1992).

Nowadays, the importance of the Asian continent within the process of globalisation is undergoing a new phase in the interpretation of the West/East dichotomy. The East is indeed the privileged point of reference for the West, and their interaction has resulted in an egalitarian dialogue, thanks to Asia's autonomous ability of development. Indeed, Asian development cannot be considered a mere product of the 'Western model', but the result of a local approach to a global trend. In this context, the universalistic logic shows the inadequacy of the use of Western methodological instruments when applied to a global context. Therefore, it has been necessary to find new exploration tools in order to interpret the economic and social development of Asia-Pacific, while focusing the analysis on its endogenous factors. The consequence of this reasoning is the creation of an 'Asian values' concept that interprets the need for an intercultural dialogue based on universal concepts to make the West understand the East. The concept of 'Asian values' has placed emphasis on the existence of different forms of modernity, which require mutual recognition among cultures. 'Asian values' have become a relevant tool for scientific social research, and this is confirmed by the widespread use of the concept both by the scientific literature and the mass media.

Asian values

The concept of 'value' can be considered as a nucleus where specific groups of subjects – it does not matter whether individuals or states – define their identities and/or their interests. Values measure inclusion and exclusion, as they distinguish the boundary between the Self and

the Other. In the same way, the concept of 'Asian values' has become relevant for the definition of the identity and the collective interests of Asia-Pacific states, as they underline their diversity in relation to Western states. Many scholars concluded that the debate on Asian values came to an end after the financial crisis of 1997 that affected some countries belonging to Asia-Pacific.[5] The sudden arrest of economic growth had in fact removed the *raison d'être* of Asian values.[6] My analysis, instead, maintains that the debate on 'Asian values' is not over, because the philosophical and juridical aspects of 'fragments' contrasting globalising pressures are still to be grasped.

The 'Asian values' concept was introduced in Singapore in the 1970s. In the late 1980s, the former Prime Minister of Singapore, Lee Kuan Yew,[7] spread the 'Asian values' concept among Western scholars. In the 1990s, other Asian politicians adopted the concept, among them Kishore Mahbubani,[8] the former Minister of Foreign Affairs in Singapore, and Mahathir Mohamad,[9] the then Malaysian Prime Minister.

First of all, the concept of 'Asian values' was created *ad hoc*. On the one hand, 'Asian values' embodied the political representation of the economic success achieved through the integration of some Asian economies in the international system in the last decades of the 20th century. 'In seeking to understand the economic success of certain Asian societies, due credit must be given to the role of these "Asian values". It is not enough to analyse such economic success in culture-free economic terms, or as a result of the adoption of specifically Western values. In the process of developing modern political systems in Asian societies due recognition must be given to the need to ground these systems in the specific Asian cultures in which they are to be situated. It is not acceptable to reform or criticise such societies solely on the basis of liberal-democratic forms developed in Western societies' (Milner 1999: 2).

On the other hand, they represent the reaction to the increasing international relevance given to human rights after the Second World War: a kind of relativism versus the universality of human rights. The basic political feature of the 'Asian values' concept makes it inevitable to turn from a philosophical perspective to a political one. The political feature has been used to create a local identity[10] able to constitute a homogeneous political, economic and cultural space among the countries in the Asia-Pacific region. In this space, it has been possible to combine Asian successful economic performance with a new social design, as well as to reconcile the citizens' rights with the state's integrity. So defined, the 'Asian values' represent a normative framework through which states justify and exercise their power, thus creating a legitimate economic and social project, which can be carried out only through the exertion of the state power itself.

What exactly are 'Asian values'? Their semantic definition is hardly explicit. Hence, in this context it is important to analyse the positions taken by the above-mentioned Asian politicians in order to provide a clear definition.

In Lee Kuan Yew's opinion,[11] the concept of 'Asian values' is based on the critical judgement against the foreign policy of the USA, which has imposed its own system on other societies. According to Lee's point of view, the main purpose of the East is to have an ordered society in which everyone enjoys the benefit of liberty, while Westerners have abandoned the idea of an ethic foundation for their society. According to Lee, this difference between East and West is based on the fact that in the East the individual exists within his/her own family, which increases the possibility for survival. Hence, from a political point of view, the peculiarity of Asia-Pacific originates from the relevance of the family alongside the capacity of establishing a synthesis between the institutions that originated in the West and the social relationships established in the East. As a consequence, the Western model, though considered universal, cannot fit all the components of globalisation. The Western model needs to go through a process of localisation, which causes it to change. Finally, taking into account the capitalist economic model, Lee states that economic and technological development changes the individual's mental habits, although the time during which the change occurs is not as short as it is in the cultural systems of values. In other words, for Lee there is no structural correspondence between economic development and liberal democracy.

Another relevant position within the debate on 'Asian values' is the one proposed by Mahathir Mohamad. 'It is possible to consider the economic emergence of Asia as historically inevitable, and it is even possible to presume that Asia will become the new centre of world economy in the next century, but Asian people should not follow the historical change in a passive way' (Ishihara and Mahathir 1995: 24). Against the stream of the philosophy of history, Mahathir opposes Asian values, meant as hard work, respect for authority, discipline, priority assigned to the interest and well-being of the majority, and filial piety. According to Mahathir, these values are culturally embedded, as much as Western values are. They can summarise the Asia-Pacific cultures and support the action of resistance against the West. 'The Western cultural hegemony is no longer acceptable. The Western cultural arrogance is no longer acceptable. The Western myopia and stupidity are no longer acceptable. The attempt to impose something on someone else is immoral and counterproductive, and cannot be tolerated by 21st century Asia' (Mahathir 1997: 5).

In the position advanced by Kishore Mahbubani, there is no contraposition between West and East. The concept of 'Asian values' does not

contrast with the Western model, but it attempts to describe a 'Pacific Way' (Mahbubani 1995). According to Mahbubani, Asia-Pacific will become one of the centres of global power, together with Europe and the USA. 'Western thinkers have strong difficulties in finding the right paradigm that describes a world non-Western powers are emerging into. Their natural impulse is to presume that these powers, when they reach success, will become more similar to Western societies; or they presume that there will be a "clash of civilizations". None of the two solutions is probable. The difficulties of Western thinkers in understanding East Asia come from the fact that we are witnessing a historical phenomenon without precedents: the fusion between the Western culture and the Far-eastern one in the Asian region in the Pacific. Only through this fusion, it is possible to explain the explosive growth of the Pacific and to offer the possibility of peace and prosperity in the Region' (Mahbubani 2004: 159). This will lead to the creation of a community of the Pacific, which could give birth to an explosive creativity never experienced before. This is a new regional model, founded on the interpolation of elements with different cultural backgrounds, which nevertheless do not destroy the existing cultural layer. In other words, the model proposed by Mahbubani consists in the combination of a local culture and a Western method, where Asia-Pacific values of reference ('Asian values') remain unchanged, despite the relevant socio-economic and political changes. The 'Asian values' would then provide the guidance, suitable for the interpretation of global inputs on a local basis. The position of Mahbubani seems to present a *biunique line of development*, where the West and the East could learn a lot from each other.

All three positions identify the concept of 'Asian values' with the 'primacy of collective interests in respect of community and social harmony, respect for older people, the care for order and stability alongside the care for family and parents, the interest for the nation and the community; the value of frugality and parsimony and hard work; the willingness to sacrifice oneself for the family, the deferment of present gratification for a long-term benefit; the value of commitment to education' (Ehr-Soon Tay 2002: 695).

This interpretation of the concept of 'Asian values' confirms the political representation of the economic success of Asia-Pacific. Asian values would then represent a normative frame, which would contribute to the definition of an Asian form of modernity that aims at backing up economic growth through the preservation of political stability and control by the state power. The point here is that the global diffusion of modernity has generated a series of multiple modernities 'realizable through autonomous human agency' as 'the premises on which the social, ontological, and political order were based, and the legitimation of

that order were no longer taken for granted. An intensive reflexivity developed around the basic ontological premises of structures of social and political authority [...]. The degree of reflexivity characteristic of modernity [...] gave rise to an awareness of the possibility of multiple visions' (Eisenstadt 2000: 3-4).

'Asian values' have also built a bridge between politics and culture, as they derive from the scheme of cultural relativism, the uniqueness of cultures and the need for an inside analysis of cultures. 'Asian values' have indeed shown that it is not always possible to use a universalistic method of interpretation in order to understand the events linked to globalisation. They have also destabilised the following consideration: modernisation can be initiated only on social-cultural Western-style structures. Therefore, it is possible to affirm that 'modernization started with individualism in the West, it was then continued in the centralized economy of the North [ex Soviet Union], and has been recently enhanced by the Eastern man, who is oriented to organization. [...]. Every region changes its own approach (not always successfully) when different problems linked to modernization occur, even if a fundamental regional orientation continues to exist' (Rozman 1991: 3).

In the attempt to emancipate Asia-Pacific from Western cultural domination, often understood as American and sometimes as European domination, the concept of 'Asian values' presents some limits. One limit is to make use of a universalistic tool. This is not negative *per se,* but it becomes a limit when 'Asian values' try to develop universalistic assumptions in order to oppose the Western universalistic vision. The second limit consists of picturing Asia-Pacific as a whole system bereft of any cultural changes. The third limit is represented by the possibility of reproducing the dichotomy between West and East, therefore running the risk of assuming the superiority of one kind of development over another: Orientalism might then become Occidentalism.

On this point, it may be useful to reconsider the relation between Asian values and Confucianism. Even if the reference to Confucian doctrine may sound unrealistic and naive, Confucianism is to be considered as the hegemonic political ideology[12] responsible for the emergence of the discourse of 'Asian values'.[13] Indeed, the above-mentioned visions of Asian values are an expression of Confucianism, in particular of its moral philosophical aspect, according to which society is inclined to order and harmony. The reference to Confucian tradition shows that the traditional Asian society has neither disappeared nor been replaced by the Western model. On the contrary, Asia-Pacific has pursued its own economic and social development, strengthened by its cultural traditions. The supporters of Asian values have used Confucianism in an instrumental way, reducing the significance of the Con-

fucian doctrine itself, and repeating the West/East dichotomy. For the 'Asian values' theorists, in order to attain social order and harmony, individuals have to respect the social duties of the group they belong to, through the recognition of their specific social position. Therefore, the West/East dichotomy can be expressed as follows: individual/rights (West) versus group/duties (East). At this point, it is worth remarking that the Confucian doctrine was not originally conceived as a mere contrast to the West. Therefore, the opposition between the East and the West (implicit in the 'Asian values') is likely to be transformed into some logic of convergence. In other words, it is not possible to exclude the creation of a development model through cultural interaction within in the global context. This pattern might prevent one culturally specific value from prevailing over the other (Monceri 2002).

Finally, the central issue has turned out to be the development of an Asian social and intellectual path different from the Western one, as the supporters of Asian values tend to believe. The functionalist-type explanations should help Asian societies to interpret their own modernity without falling into anti-imperialistic and nationalistic rhetoric. In other words, although groups of states create cultural and religious self-images, an identity would only work if these groups of states (sharing a common understanding) try not to extend their common identity beyond their social and geographical boundaries and thus impose their own culture on other groups of states.

'Asian values' and human rights

The process of emancipation of Asia-Pacific from Western cultural domination has also involved resisting the concept of 'human rights'. In this way, the Asia-Pacific states have used the concept of 'Asian values' as a common denominator in order to claim that the universalism and indivisibility of human rights, as understood in the West, do not fit Asian conditions. The transposition of 'Asian values' in the field of human rights has put forward Asia-Pacific's criticism of the Western approach to human rights, mainly based on four arguments. According to the first argument, cultural features can affect the 'prioritising of rights', which matters when rights conflict, and it must be decided which one to sacrifice.[14] The second argument concerns the recognition of the pluralism of values[15] for the 'justification of rights', as cultural traditions can provide the resources for local justification of human rights. The third is an argument for moral pluralism. Cultural peculiarities call for different moral viewpoints in relation to the Western ones. The fourth argument embodies the need for modifying the current 'West-centric' human rights regime.

The corollary of this critique is the inviolability of the principle of state sovereignty.[16] In other words, if human rights are the historical result of a particular political and legal culture, their universalism,[17] as proposed by the West (and presented in Article 2 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights[18]), would result in cultural domination and homogenisation. The imposition of human rights would also represent a new ethnocentric and imperialist attitude of the West. Further, the indivisibility of human rights would not take into account the peculiarities of the Asian societies, which are struggling to attain socio-economic development. According to the supporters of Asian values, the Asian specificity is based on two elements: economy and culture. According to the former, economic growth is considered crucial for the survival of nations. Therefore, more attention is given to economic, social and cultural rights, while the protection of political and civil liberties is not considered indispensable for economic development. Growth and political stability are connected in a complex and delicate way: individual rights are balanced by a community's requirements, and the government concretely governs taking care of the development needs of the society (Kausikan 1996). Hence, the transposition of 'Asian values' in the field of human rights imposes a precise hierarchy of rights: implementation of social and economic rights first and then civil and political rights.

From the cultural point of view, the most important element is the value placed on community and social harmony as well as societal consensus and respect for authority. 'Asia has never considered the individual above the society' (Lee in Minchin 1993: 210). Individuals do not act in an isolated way, they try to balance their own interests with those of the community they belong to: family, clan, neighbourhood, nation. The result of this communitarian attitude is the acceptance of 'a wider sphere of responsibility and of intervention by the government' (Kausikan 1996: 267). Hence, within Asia-Pacific societies, there will be a balance between individual rights, which guarantee personal freedoms, and social duties determined by the need for discipline and political stability within the society (Kausikan 1997). These elements will therefore define the Asian version of the social contract: governments will keep law and order and will satisfy the needs of citizens in relation to employment, accommodation, education and health. Moreover, governments have the duty to treat their citizens with loyalty and humanity. In exchange, citizens have to respect the law and governmental authority, to work, to save money and to motivate children to be educated.

If these are the cultural and social assumptions of 'Asian values' as interpretative instruments of human rights, it is then possible to detect a core of human rights as accepted and respected by the Asia-Pacific states: the binding rights of the International Covenant on Civil and

Political Rights (ICCPR)[19] and the Right to Development.[20] The point here is not to reject humanity as the normative idea of the international community (Arendt 1958), but rather to allow for the possibility of putting together the normative idea of humanity with cultural pluralism, so that the human rights regime reflects the outcome of an international dialogue between peoples of different cultures.

This critical position was officially formulated by 34 countries in the Regional Meeting for Asia at the World Conference on Human Rights and translated into the Bangkok Declaration (1993). This declaration represents the main document containing the Asian vision of human rights. It consists of a preamble and 30 articles. A double interpretation can be applied to it: on the one hand, it reaffirms the adherence of Asian countries to the principles of the Universal Declaration on Human Rights (1948), recognising the universality, interdependence, objectivity, indivisibility of human rights and sustaining the relevance of avoiding double standards in the implementation of human rights; on the other hand, the Bangkok Declaration affirms that the promotion of human rights is based on cooperation and consensus, and not on the imposition of incompatible values. Moreover, the Bangkok Declaration stresses the need to democratise the United Nations, to maintain respect of sovereignty and territorial integrity, as well as the duty of Asian states to promote and protect human rights, and discourage Western countries from using the respect of human rights as a necessary condition for offering economic support and aid. Finally, the document focuses on the regional and national peculiarities as well as the religious and cultural substrates in the implementation of human rights.[21] Hence, the Bangkok Declaration presents a strong contradiction between the formal acceptance of the human rights doctrine and its principles by the Asian states and their claim for the respect of the principle of state sovereignty.

Following the logic of the cultural appraisal of the Bangkok Declaration, the differences between the universalistic approach and the Asian one towards human rights could be summarised in the following way: 'duties versus rights'; 'cultural relativism versus universality of human rights'; 'interests of collectives versus individual rights'; 'economic and social rights versus civil and political rights'; and 'state sovereignty versus conditionality of human rights'. Bearing in mind that human rights are commonly designed to protect and enhance the individuals' ability to lead the lives they wish (Ignatieff 2001), a further reflection on the above-mentioned dichotomies might help to demonstrate how the 'Asian values' discourse on human rights can go beyond the contraposition between the Self and the Other as well as overcome the dichotomy between the universalism of the Universal Declaration on Human Rights and the relativism of the Bangkok Declaration.

As for the dichotomy 'duties versus rights', in some cases, concepts of rights and duties have merged, at least where internationally recognised rights have been transposed to a national level. For example, the right to elementary education has become an obligation to submit to such schooling. Moreover, some initiatives, such as the African Charter of Human and Peoples Rights (1981)[22] and the Universal Declaration on Human Responsibilities (1997), seem to suggest that the concept of duties as such is not incompatible with international human rights law. The main obstacle that international lawyers have encountered in sustaining the idea of creating duties for individuals by international instruments is that the state, and not the individuals, has been conceived as the subject of public international law. This divide is increasingly redundant in a world where individuals are recognised both as limited subjects and as objects of rights and duties under international law. The problem might arise when the exercise of rights is made conditional on the performance of duties, or where performing duties implies the exclusion of some meaningful rights.

The dichotomy relativism/universalism is primarily an issue of the philosophical and historical foundation of human rights. The Universal Declaration was written in circumstances where the instruments of human rights promotion 'were not a triumphant expression of European imperial self-confidence but a war-weary generation's reflection on European nihilism and its consequences' (Ignatieff 2001: 4). In other words, the Declaration is part of a broad re-organisation of laws and international relations after the war, aiming at avoiding new outbursts of barbarity from 'civilised' Europe. Therefore, human rights incarnate a new age of rights, where 'natural rights are historical rights [...] having their origins in a specific situation, characterized by *struggles for freedom against old powers*' (Bobbio 1990: 135-136; emphasis in the original). It is necessary, then, to distinguish analytically between the genesis of rights and the status and legitimisation of rights (Hoffe 1997) because 'the struggle for freedom against old powers' (a mere set of ideas) has become an issue cutting across regional, social and cultural boundaries. The struggle can begin again with various modalities and in different places. This does not threaten local cultures, but affirms the universality of the goal: the attainment of freedom against old powers. Hence, the universality of human rights supports the key interests of human beings in their autonomy and well-being, such as freedom, which should not be sacrificed for the sake of greater efficiency or prosperity or for any aggregate of lesser interests under the heading of the public good (Waldron 1993).

The third dichotomy concerns the interests of communities and individual rights. In this respect, it could be said that universalism conceptualises both the individual-society relationship and the individual-

individual relationship in terms of competing or potentially competing
interests. While it is undoubtedly true that this dualism is maintained,
it is not true to suggest that the international human rights corpus has
been incapable of transcending it in certain instances. The pre-eminent
example is the right to self-determination, which is granted to peoples
in the ICCPR and the ICESCR (International Covenant on Economic,
Social and Cultural Rights). As for the concept of 'people', it is not a
question of amalgamating numbers of individual rights. Individuals
cannot invoke their rights. On the other hand, the concept of 'people'
is meaningless without the individuals who make it up. The formula-
tion is perhaps closer to some Asian concepts of the relationship be-
tween individuals and the community. According to the states signing
the Bangkok Declaration, there is an inevitable conflict between civil
and political rights on the one hand, and effective development and
growth (economic and social rights) on the other. 'When poverty and
lack of adequate food are commonplace and people's basic needs are
not guaranteed, priority should be given to economic development'.[23]
Amartya Sen (1999) has conducted relevant research on this issue in
order to show how human rights guarantees can often play an instru-
mental role in the promotion of capability expansion and the fulfilment
of basic needs. Indeed, his work in this field has contributed to the
growing body of literature on economics and institutional conditions
by establishing that democratic forms of government and civil and poli-
tical rights protections can be critical in determining incentives for gov-
ernments and for public policy responses to social and economic
shocks. For example, Sen (1999) has argued that the patterns of risk
and investments that predispose countries to financial and economic
crisis can be partly explained by lack of transparency, disclosure and ac-
countability in business, strong family links between the government
and the private sector, and lack of public participation in and scrutiny
of financial and business arrangements; and that governmental re-
sponses to economic and financial crises, and the chances of effective
restructuring and reform, are critically affected by the absence or pre-
sence of democracy and human rights protection (Sen 1999). Accord-
ing to the 'Asian values' vision, even though human rights have an in-
ternational aspect, they are still primarily an issue under the jurisdic-
tion of domestic law. It might be said that this is true for all the
countries in the world: the State has to be the first to promote, protect,
respect and fulfil human rights in favour of its citizens. Consequently,
the conflict between domestic law and international law, as emphasised
by the Bangkok Declaration, should not exist. Moreover, in the context
of a growing interdependence among states, the Westphalia concept of
state sovereignty needs to be revised, as the State is no longer enough.

Therefore, there is a need to take into account other actors, such as international organisations and NGOs, even in the field of human rights.

This analysis shows some possibilities of reconciliation between the universalistic position and the 'Asian values' relativist approach on human rights.[24] However, if 'a human rights regime is supposed to protect our basic humanity – the fundamental goods (or needs or interests) that underpin any "reasonable" conception of human flourishing' (Bell 2006: 72), it is then possible that Asia-Pacific political actors endorse a somewhat different set of fundamental human goods than their counterparts in Western societies now and for the foreseeable future. Hence, beside prohibitions against slavery, genocide, murder, torture, prolonged arbitrary detention, and systematic racial discrimination, which human goods are fundamental?

To this purpose, Culture can provide some possibilities of orientation. In fact, if cultures interpret human experience, and experiences can be shared by peoples in different societies and different cultures, cultural systems – such as that of the human rights doctrine – can make sense and have an ethical force across national borders and traditional cultural boundaries. Cultures refer to the beliefs, values, norms, sentiments, and practices that support and give meaning and value to human lives. This definition is neutral between Asian and Western cultures. It is also neutral between individualist and collectivist cultures. The essence of beliefs, values, norms, sentiments and practices represents the universal features of Culture. So, who is the most competent, morally and epistemologically, to interpret the beliefs, values, norms, sentiments and practices of a particular culture? The most competent interpreters of a culture are those whose culture it actually is. We cannot respect cultures unless we have reliable knowledge of what type of Culture those cultures represent, and we cannot have reliable knowledge of cultures unless the voice of the people is clearly heard (Freeman 2000). Cultures would not then oppose the promotion and the protection of human rights; on the other hand, they would determine the *thicker* meaning of rights, by defining their content, foundation and aim as well as by establishing the juridical instruments and the mechanisms of execution at the local level. The definition of 'thicker meaning' of human rights would follow the international standards in matters of human rights, which are defined in a 'thin' way, highly indeterminate and unclear.[25] Universal validity proposes a common set of minimum conditions, not for a world of cultural uniformity, but rather for all world peoples to achieve a life of dignity. As a whole of minimum moral conditions, compulsory for political institutions and fundamental for individuals, human rights should not be compromised in their interpretation and implementation by cultures.[26] Hence, reconciliation between the universality of human rights and the affirmation of

the Asian cultural peculiarities might be found in the fact that human rights norms are quite general, and must be interpreted and applied in specific human rights practice (Chan 1995), taking into account *circumstances* and *individuals*.

Governments have often spoken for the people by interpreting the culture of their people. From a theoretical point of view, elites might be able to understand the people's culture, but they might also lack the incentive to understand it. Empirically, elites have often disregarded people's culture, and misused it for exploitation and oppression. At the same time, 'human rights diplomacy' has tried to persuade others of the value of human rights challenging local cultural traditions.

Listening to many voices is a useful tool in refuting or accepting common proclamations about human rights, and building on local cultural traditions can help win the struggle to promote human rights. A real thrust in this approach is the ability to develop a schematic method to identify relevant actors and evaluate their standpoints in the human rights and cultural values debate in any country involved. In this sense, there is also a need to go beyond the vision of social relationships as always occurring among autonomous and equal individuals, where every individual is considered as the owner of his own person, even in a position of inferiority or inequality. People have to be listened to inside their own reality, which is always changing and different from what we think it might be, in a concrete context of interrelations, and in a fusion of contexts and different viewpoints.

The foundation for human rights might still be difficult to demonstrate in a rational and largely shared way because of cultural specificity.[27] Nevertheless, it is still possible to believe in the protection of human rights at a global level. People who contribute the most to their culture agree that human rights are needed, and the awareness of 'Asian values' allows human rights activists to draw on the most compelling justification for human rights practices. In this way, many rights battles will be fought within societies according to local norms and justifications. The very purpose of human rights is then the protection and enhancement of people's *agency*, meant as the ability to achieve intentions that do not involve obvious harm to other human beings. People's agency deserves also the higher level of protection that can be found in internationally agreed standards, by giving individuals the civic courage to stand up when states implement unjust laws and order them to do wrong (Ignatieff 2001).

Some concluding remarks

The elaboration of the concept of 'Asian values' has created an original image of Asia-Pacific, independent from the West, at least on three different levels.

On the global level, 'Asian values' have represented a reply to both the globalisation and internationalisation of law and human rights. 'Asian values' have focused on the role played by local cultures within the globalisation process, rediscovering the importance of 'fragments'.

At the macro level, the concept of 'Asian values' incarnates the criticism of the philosophy of history and liberalism.[28] Hence, Asian values represent the attempt to give consistency to Asia-Pacific uniqueness, as an *autonomous Self* that is independent from the Western Other. Asian values have helped to rehabilitate Asia-Pacific to its own peculiarities, to recover its active role in the context of globalisation, which was earlier put in doubt. In other words, Asia-Pacific has shown that it is able to react to the inputs from other places: 'Modernisation without Westernisation'. By taking into account the Confucian heritage, 'Asian values' lose the conflict-laden feature in relation with the West, and instead propose a model of modernisation free from Western cultural determination. Therefore, the main characteristics of the Asia-Pacific model of modernisation do not rule out a political elite governing without the democratic participation of ordinary citizens so long as the state has an obligation to secure the conditions for people's basic material welfare, an obligation that has priority over competing political goods (Bell 2006). Conceived in this way, 'Asian values' would not represent the reiteration of a dualist vision of the world, but rather an alternative vision. In the long term, therefore, the intercultural confrontation might reduce the influence of one dominant culture, leading to a more balanced interaction between the Self and the Other.

At the micro level, the concept of 'Asian values' has opposed the notion of the universality and indivisibility of human rights, in order to support a relativistic approach based on economic and cultural reasons. The 'Asian values' discourse has shown the existence of conceptual pluralism (where human rights come from) and normative pluralism (which goods or interests are to be protected) based on local cultures and traditions. The dualism between universalism and cultural relativism can be overcome if Asia-Pacific cultural peculiarities are used to define the 'thicker' social meaning of human rights in local context, which otherwise would remain general and abstract principles.

Nevertheless, the debate on 'Asian values' goes beyond manipulative politics and old polarities: universalism versus relativism, individualism versus communitarianism, economic and social rights versus civil and political rights. It has raised an important question about the uni-

versality of ethical values as phrased in international human rights documents and challenged the argument of Western liberalism as the only moral foundation of human rights. For this reason, the discourse of 'Asian values' is likely to continue to influence international relations and the domestic and social politics of Asia-Pacific. The need for a reconceptualisation of the universality of human rights has emerged, the awareness notwithstanding that human rights belong to the wider normative system of post-war international relations, designed to create firewalls against barbarism and abolish hierarchy in civilisations and cultures. The task of reconceptualisation stems from the plurality of different approaches to questions of the good and of the right, as the discourse of 'Asian values' has confirmed. Hence, human rights could represent minimum moral standards, an international political-legal tool, which protect people's *agency* vis-à-vis their states.

What has just been mentioned can be defined as a 'human rights dialogue'. This kind of dialogue has to be started by governments, but it should not be monopolised by them. All human beings are interested in participating in dialogues about human rights, as they represent a set of necessary minimum standards for leading a respectable life. The dialogue runs from international organisations, which provide for international tools, to governments implementing policies, and to individuals, who interpret culture, evaluate values, endorse norms, engage in the practice, and live the consequences of their interpretation. This process can also start from the opposite direction, from the bottom up, as the request for human rights can also come from the individuals directly. These processes make cultures complex, contested and constantly changing.

Hence, the problem of human rights universalism is the problem of cross-cultural communication, consisting in the modalities and limits within which it is possible to get to know values and concepts belonging to different cultural systems. International law and human rights law have a global reach and have become an instrument of interchange, as well as economy, politics and goods of consumption. Nevertheless, the language of human rights fractures – one of the fragments is the concept of 'Asian values'– when it encounters different ways of reasoning as well as philosophical and political orders. There is, then, the need for constructing a theoretical understanding of human rights that might act as a common framework within which competing non-relativist systems of thought and being can agree on a *modus vivendi*. It should not be a completely theorised agreement, but rather an *incompletely theorised agreement* (Sunstein 1995), which 'involves the development of a theory which provides space for various groups to have their own independently justified morality, the overlaps between which comprise the support structure of international political and legal instru-

mentalities and human rights declarations' (Langlois 2002: 102). The result of this reconceptualisation would allow *autonomous selves* to support human rights without competing on the universal foundation of human rights.

This point brings us back to the context of globalisation, which was the starting point of this investigation. Understood as large-scale economic integration, worldwide environmental issues, rising prominence of international organisations, the originality of globalisation lies in its ability to involve individuals, creating an arena for cultural interchange, which goes beyond the mere interdependence between states, and developing 'the feeling of belonging to one *human community*' (Hurrell 1995: 346). This human community needs an essential common code, so that all individuals can flourish in their own diverse ways. Human rights are but a rational response to the demands for an efficient governance faced by every single nation in a world of rising complexity. At the same time, human rights empower individuals against this complexity and improve their *agency* for the attainment of freedom that has now become a global challenge within the 'omnipresent patchwork'.

Notes

1   The paper was presented in the panel 'Violence against women, state violence and human rights: discourses and advocacies', on 4 August 2007, at ICAS 5 in Kuala Lumpur, 2-5 August 2007. I would like to thank the organisers and the staff of the Political Science Department of the Sant'Anna School of Advanced Studies in Pisa, Italy. I would also like to thank Geneviève Domenach-Chich and Bai Guimei for the valuable conversations and insights on human rights during my stay in Beijing. Many thanks also to Letizia Guglielmino, who assisted me from far away. Finally, my biggest appreciation goes to the activists struggling for the attainment of freedom, both globally and locally.

2   To be considered new from the author's point of view.

3   I will not consider 'the relation between East and West as a question of power, domination, and other and various forms of hegemony, [...] based on the superiority of a position, which allows the Westerners to cultivate the most diverse forms of relation with the East without losing its own relative prevalence' (Said 1978: 15).

4   Member nations of the Association of South-East Nations are: Indonesia, Malaysia, Philippines, Singapore, Thailand, Brunei, Vietnam, Laos, Myanmar, Cambodia. Plus Three: People's Republic of China, Republic of Korea and Japan.

5   Thailand, Malaysia, Indonesia, Republic of Korea and Taiwan.

6   Here, the following idea is supported: the economic crisis that took place in some of the Asia- Pacific countries in 1997 (Thailand, Malaysia, Indonesia, Republic of Korea and Taiwan) was only a temporary arrest of their economic growth. It is evident that their economic recovery has rapidly increased in the last five years. Moreover, some other countries in this area supporting the concept of 'Asian values', such as China and Vietnam, did not suffer from the 1997 economic crisis. Randall Peerenboom (2002) has supported the idea that the debate on Asian values has developed and continues to develop in two rounds: the first one has a political nature and is elabo-

rated by some Asian politicians; the second round instead has a philosophical nature and follows the 1997 crisis. In the second round, the concept was analysed by many scholars studying the possibility of adaptation between Asian values and Western concepts. See, for example, Bauer and Bell (1999); Chan (1995).

7   Lee Kuan Yew was the First Minister of the Republic of Singapore from 1959 to 1990. During and after holding office, he has been one of the most influential politicians in Singapore.

8   Kishore Mahbubani is now dean of the Lee Kuan Yew School of Public Policy at the National University of Singapore. From 1971 to 2004, he worked as a diplomat. Mahbubani also worked in the academic world of Singapore, at the Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, Institute of Policy Studies, Lee Kuan Yew Exchange Fellowship and Institute of Defence and Strategic Studies. He also writes for some newspapers and reviews, such as *Foreign Affairs, The New York Times* and the *Wall Street Journal.*

9   Mahathir Mohamad was the First Minister of Malaysia from 1981 to 2003. He is also considered as the promoter of the modernisation of Malaysia.

10 Identity is a very broad concept. It might refer to ethnicity, culture, religion, politics or any other variables. The aspect of identity that appears to be most crucial to international affairs is the orientation that countries take toward the use of force. However, it has not played any role in the construction of the Asian local identity.

11 Zakaria (1994).

12 Providing a normative world view and ethical discourse for society, and rationalising relations between government and society and the individuals.

13 This position has received a lot of criticism, questioning the fact that Confucianism is considered the common culture in Asia. Indeed, there are three theistic and/or personal world religions linked to the discourse of 'Asian values': Islam, Buddhism and Christianity. Islam plays major roles in Malaysia and Indonesia and constitutes subnational minorities in Thailand, Singapore, the Philippines and China. Buddhism is dominant in Myanmar and Thailand and is present throughout the rest of mainland Asia-Pacific to different degrees and in a variety of forms. Christianity has become a cultural force in several Asia-Pacific countries.
Ehr Soon-Thay (2002) writes, 'Asia is not a monolithic culture [...] Confucianism can be the substrate of some Asian cultures, but not of all of them. Confucian values can be found in every culture, in different degrees and in variable proportions; in every historical époque'. Amartya Sen's (1997: 11) point of view is: 'There is a great deal that we can learn from studies of values in Asia and Europe, but they do not support or sustain the thesis of a grand dichotomy (or a "clash of civilizations"). Our ideas of political and personal rights have taken their particular form relatively recently, and it is hard to see them as "traditional" commitments of Western cultures. There are important antecedents of those commitments, but those antecedents can be found plentifully in Asian cultures as well as Western cultures. The recognition of diversity within different cultures is extremely important in the contemporary world, since we are constantly bombarded by simple generalizations about "Western civilization", "Asian values", "African cultures", and so on. These unfounded interpretations of history and civilization are not only intellectually shallow, they also add to the divisiveness of the world in which we live. The authoritarian readings of Asian values that are increasingly championed in some quarters do not survive scrutiny. And the grand dichotomy between Asian values and European values adds little to our understanding and much to the confounding of the normative basis of freedom and democracy.' According to Rozman (1991: 5): 'Some social relations and institutions represented the Confucian sphere of influence. [...] The main institution where Confucian values were present include family, the educative system and the government'.

14 Asia-Pacific governments have often asserted that a right must be temporarily cur-
    tailed in order to deal with an unfortunate set of particular social and political cir-
    cumstances.

15 Some scholars have used the term 'values in Asia'. This term is 'sensitive to the plur-
    alism of values within Asia yet retains the implication that such values can pose chal-
    lenges to Western liberal approaches to human rights' (Bell 2006: 54).

16 Article I. 5 of the Bangkok Declaration (1993) says: 'Emphasize the principles of re-
    spect for national sovereignty and territorial integrity as well as non-interference in
    the internal affairs of States, and the non-use of human rights as an instrument of
    political pressure'.

17 'Human rights universalism' has two dimensions. According to one, determined
    rights can be considered universal in the sense that all the individuals belonging to a
    specific class are entitled to the protection of rights. In the case of human rights, this
    class corresponds to the whole of humankind. The other dimension holds that rights
    are universal as they represent an ethic and/or legal code that is universally recog-
    nised. It is a universally comprehensible code that puts values common to all of
    humanity together.

18 'Everyone is entitled to all the rights and freedoms set forth in this Declaration, with-
    out distinction of any kind, such as race, colour, sex, language, religion, political or
    other opinion, national or social origin, property, birth or other status. Furthermore,
    no distinction shall be made on the basis of the political, jurisdictional or interna-
    tional status of the country or territory to which a person belongs, whether it be inde-
    pendent, trust, non-self-governing or under any other limitation of sovereignty'.

19 'Every human being has the inherent right to life. This right shall be protected by
    law. No one shall be arbitrarily deprived of his life' (Article 6.I); 'No one shall be sub-
    jected to torture or to cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment. In par-
    ticular, no one shall be subjected without his free consent to medical or scientific ex-
    perimentation' (Article 7); 'No one shall be held in slavery; slavery and the slave-trade
    in all their forms shall be prohibited' (Article 8.I); 'No one shall be imprisoned
    merely on the ground of inability to fulfil a contractual obligation' (Articolo 11); Prin-
    ciple 'nullum crimen, nulla poena sine lege' (Article 15); 'Everyone shall have the
    right to recognition everywhere as a person before the law (Article 16); e il diritto alla
    libertà di pensiero, di coscienza e di religione' (Article 18). 'It makes a great deal of
    difference if the West insists on humane standards of behaviour by vigorously pro-
    testing genocide, murder, torture, or slavery. Here there is a clear consensus on a
    core of international law that does not admit of any derogation on any grounds' (Kau-
    sikan 1993: 39).

20 'The right to subsistence is the right of every individual to enjoy free and equal condi-
    tions of life, which include both political conditions of non-violence, security of their
    lives and social conditions of maintaining a minimum living standard. All indivi-
    duals and all of humanity are entitled to these rights. The right to development is an
    effective instrument used by developing countries to safeguard their own interests
    and opportunities' (Li Zhenghui and Wang Zhenmin, 2002).

21 Article 5 of the Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action (A/CONF.157/23, 12
    July 1993): 'All human rights are universal, indivisible and interdependent and inter-
    related. The international community must treat human rights globally in a fair and
    equal manner, on the same footing, and with the same emphasis. While the signifi-
    cance of national and regional peculiarities and various historical, cultural and reli-
    gious backgrounds must be borne in mind, it is the duty of States, regardless of their
    political, economic and cultural systems, to promote and protect all human rights
    and fundamental freedoms'.

22 Preamble of the African Charter of Human and Peoples Rights: 'The enjoyment of rights and freedoms also implies the performance of duties on the part of everyone'.

23 Liu Hiaqiu, Chinese Delegate at the World Conference on Human Rights, Vienna 1993.

24 At this point, it should be also noted that criticism of the universality of human rights has also come from non-Asian theorists: Communitarianism and the clashing civilisations put forward by Samuel Huntington (1993) are another example of cultural relativism. The criticism of the universality of human rights has been also presented by scholars who do not belong to the culture of 'Asian values', whereas another version of cultural relativism can be found in the theory of the 'cultural clash' of Samuel Huntington. The relativist approach to human rights can be summarised in the following way. First of all, human rights cannot be rationally justified. Secondly, if human rights are a product of Western culture, they could incarnate the traditional civilising mission (imperialistic) of the West. Finally, through the deconstruction of the rational individual, the limits of the atomistic vision of human beings have emerged, putting in doubt the universalistic language of human rights. For example, gender studies criticise the fact that the language of human rights identifies the beneficiary of rights only with the adult male.

25 The concepts of 'thick' and 'thin' have been borrowed from Michael Walzer (1994).

26 From a practical point of view, this kind of interpretation corresponds to the doctrine of 'margin of appreciation' already adopted by the European Court of Human Rights in order to combine the cultural differences and to avoid that member states limit their support for this Court.

27 Asia-Pacific governments have shown that the argument on Western liberalism as the only moral foundation for human rights is no more valid.

28 In particular of the political features of liberal democracy.

3   Creating 'Malaysians':
A Case Study of an Urban *kampung* in Kota Kinabalu, Sabah, Malaysia

Toru Ueda[1]

This chapter analyses how a government-generated national culture is practised in an actual social context in Malaysia. It is based on anthropological research, which focused on identity formation in a newly built *kampung,* an urban community in Kota Kinabalu, Sabah. By looking at the way a cultural event, *Tadao Kaamatan,* is narrated, it seeks to clarify the impact of the project of creating 'Malaysians' in the daily life of the *kampung* residents as they appropriate and redefine the national culture. The analysis of these dynamics reveals the national enterprise of creating 'Malaysians'.

Nation-making and culture in Malaysia

Nationalism, especially the state-sponsored variety, is a modern project designed to create a culturally and socially homogenous people in a given territory. Thus, a nation is shaped through governmental intervention such as by census taking or classification, with the aim of making it appear as a community. Here I want to look at government-led nationalism in Malaysia and analyse the process of creating a homogenous people and how this is manifested in daily life. Ian Hacking (2002, 2004) points out that we should pay attention not only to official discourses aimed at shaping one kind of people, but also to the face-to-face interactions in a daily context. He asserts that the dialectical process of these two important aspects, which he terms 'looping effect', should be analysed. Over the past few decades, a considerable number of studies on nationalism that included both specific area studies and general theoretical enquiries has been undertaken in various disciplines. However, only a few studies focus in detail on the daily perspective and on the acceptance or rejection of government-induced nationalism.[2] For example, governments may make use of various kinds of local cultural elements for the purpose of creating a nation, but this project is interpreted and appropriated by the people in their daily lives in various ways. It is important to consider the resulting dialectical looping processes. Using a case study of an urban community in Kota Kinabalu, Sabah, I will show how the government-led project of mak-

ing 'Malaysians' with reference to 'national culture' is practised in the daily social context.

Malaysia's characteristic as a multi-ethnic state is a legacy of colonialism. In such a situation the ethnic groups are part of what Shamsul (1998: 24) calls a 'nation of intent', i.e. they have their own notion of their identity and of 'the nation'. That is to say, each of them have their discrete image of this communion, or as Anderson (1991: 6) says: 'the members of even a small nation will never know most of their fellow members, meet them, or even hear of them, yet in the minds of each lives the image of their communion'. But after Dr. Mahathir, the former Prime Minister of Malaysia, had announced '*Wawasan 2020* (Vision 2020)', a national programme aimed at making Malaysia a fully industrialised and developed country by the year 2020, creating a cohesive Malaysian people became a new national political agenda. Dr. Mahathir emphasised nation-building as one of the most important challenges of the vision. Various kinds of programmes were launched in the attempt to make this vision a reality; among them social self-networking organisations, *Rukun Tetangga*, which aim at making 'Malaysians' at the grass roots level, and launching the National Service Programme (*Program Khidmat Negara, PKN*), started in 2003 by the Ministry of Defence. *Rukun Tetangga* was expected to foster friendship at the grass roots thus leading to the creation of a national community. PKN was intended not only to address social problems among the youth, but also to promote national integration through the reconfiguration of national culture.

More than 30 years have passed since Clifford Geertz (1973: 237) addressed nationalism in this region as follows: 'Nationalism – amorphous, uncertainly focused, half-articulated, but for all that highly inflammable – is still the major collective passion in most new states, and in some it is virtually the only one.' In recent years, the borders of nation-states seem to have weakened due to advancing globalisation. It appears that the era of nationalism has already passed. Nevertheless, we can still see in the contemporary world many examples of the endeavour to create a national spirit bearing a common identity, and where nationalism is still the major collective passion.

Culture and nation

Ideally, a nation is expected to have one national culture. However, the official discourse involving the Malaysian government clearly shows that the Malaysian nation does not have one single national culture. The images circulated in the course of national cultural events in the form of pamphlets reflect the existence of five main ethnic groups: Ma-

lay, Chinese, Indian, Iban and Kadazan – or so it appears (see Plate 3.1). The national culture in Malaysia was supposed to be Malay-based or Bumiputera-based, as Shamsul (1998) pointed out, because of this group's hegemony. Aspects of Bumiputera or Malay culture were regarded as the core of Malaysia's national identity, although cultural symbols of other ethnic groups were also recognised to be important components.

Plate 3.1   *Pamphlet for promoting tourism distributed by the Ministry of Culture, Arts and Tourism. Five women from the main ethnic groups are represented*
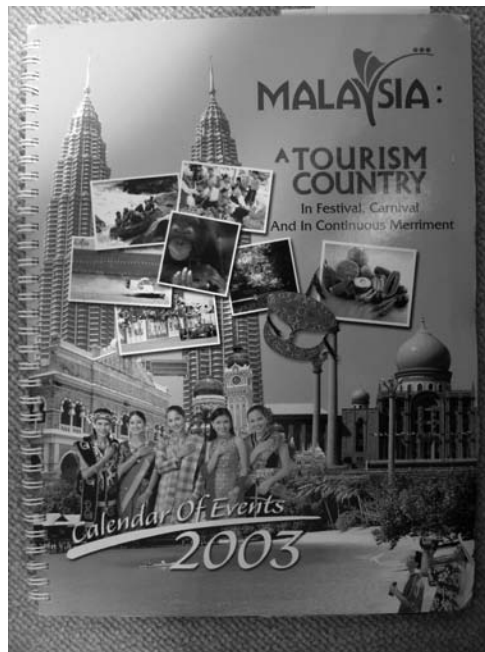
As some cultural events show, each of the five main ethnic groups is obviously acknowledged as a vital component of national culture. For example, since 2002, the Malaysian government has been holding official cultural events called 'Open House' to observe 'national celebration day'. It was held six times in 2003 in the name of 'harmony in diversity', namely to celebrate *Hari Raya* (celebration after the fasting month of Ramadan) for Malays, Chinese New Year for Chinese, *Depavali* for Indians, *Gawai* for Iban in Sarawak, *Kaamatan* for Kadazandusun in Sabah, and Christmas for Christians.[3] The purpose of these cultural events is to provide the people with an opportunity to celebrate each other's festivals and to show integration of the nation not only to outsiders, but also to the nation itself. The celebrations are relayed

through live broadcast by the state-operated television station. According to local newspapers, there are usually at least 50,000 participants in these events (see Table 3.1 and Plate 3.2).

Table 3.1   *Open House in 2003 (compiled by author from local newspaper)*

Name	City	Date	Estimated participants
Chinese New Year	Petaling Jaya, Selangor	8 February	200,000
Kaamatan	Kota Kinabalu, Sabah	18 May	100,000
Gawai	Sibu, Sarawak	14 June	n.d.
Deepavali	Penang	24 October	50,000
Hari Raya Aidilfitri	Kuching, Sarawak	13 December	100,000
Hari Christmas	Kota Kinabalu	27 December	100,000

As the 'Open House' implies, the core of the national Malaysian culture has been reconfigured. That is to say, the cultures of the five ethnic groups have been upgraded to be part of the national culture and juxtaposed as equals in the official discourse. This upgrading of ethnic cultures to the national culture is worth considering. In the section that follows, we will consider the way one of the national cultures in the official discourse is practised within the actual social context, with special attention to *Kaamatan* representing the Kadazandusun of Sabah.

Plate 3.2   *Notice board about Kaamatan organised at the national level*

Kadazandusun

Kaamatan is the festival for the Kadazandusun people of Sarawak on Borneo. Kadazandusun is an amalgamated word that was created through political negotiation in Sabah. In the official discourse, 'Kadazandusun' refers to the ethnic groups in Sabah, in eastern Malaysia, who are regarded as one of the main indigenous ethnic groups. According to the census taken in 2000, the population of Kadazandusun is estimated at around 470,000 of the 2,600,000 or 20% of the total Sabah population.

Kadazandusun is a combination of 'Kadazan' and 'Dusun', the names of two ethnic groups that were counted separately in the former census.[4] Kadazan originally means the people living in the Penampang area, which is close to the state capital. Dusun, which means orchard in Malay, was the name used by outsiders, such as the British colonisers or Brunei Malays, to denote the people living in the interior area and speaking several mutually intelligible dialects. When Sabah became a state of the Federation of Malaysia, some leaders from Penampang attempted, around 1960, to make Kadazan a term for all native people of the interior of Sabah (Roff 1969). This attempt, however, was met with opposition, and people living in places other than Penampang chose to use Dusun to identify themselves as they had previously done.

A few years after Sabah joined Malaysia, as Muslim leaders came to power, non-Muslim Kadazan and Dusun sought to unite as a group in opposition to the government. In order to underline the mood of unity, Kadazan and Dusun were combined to terminologically create a new category. It began to be used especially in the political discourse, when the confrontation between the central government and Sabah came to the surface. It also underscored the cleavage between Muslims who supported the federal government – where Muslims exercised hegemony – and non-Muslims in Sabah. Nowadays, Kadazandusun is often used in the political discourse to refer to the non-Muslims indigenous to Sabah and sometimes incorporates another ethnic group, the Murut, who are also non-Muslims.[5]

Kaamatan

Kaamatan (Harvest Festival) is a cultural event in Sabah, which celebrates Kadazandusun belief in the spirit of rice (*Bambaazon* or *Bambarayon*). Although most, if not all, Kadazandusun are now Christian, they have an earlier belief in a spirit world which looked after the harvest. Appreciation after harvesting the crops was shown in a thanksgiving ritual called *magavau* or *maga'au,* led by a female religious priest

bobolian or *bobohizan.* Its purpose was also to secure a good harvest for the following year.

As traditional beliefs changed, this cultural event was exploited around 1960 by some political elites to symbolise integration of the local people in Sabah. According to Yamamoto (2002, 2006: 147-148), *Tamu Besar* was one of the models for the *Kaamatan* festival. It became an annual event after 1955, organised by the colonial administration to allow it to survey activities of 'the natives'. To attract them, events such as beauty contests, costume contests, football games, theatrical performances and others were incorporated. Yamamoto (2006: 146) identified yet another event as one of the models for the *Kaamatan* festival. This was a harvest festival held in the interior areas like Keningau, Tambunan, Bingkor in April 1957, upon the suggestion of native chiefs. For example, OKK Sedomon bin OKK Gunsanad, a native chief of Keningau, called on the colonial government to launch a festival for 'native people', such as the Dusun and Murut, in his area. The colonial government accepted this request and decided to inaugurate the three-day long festival especially for the interior area.

Using traditional precedents such as spirit beliefs and the festive events mentioned above, *Kaamatan* was later created as a statewide cultural festival. Since 1961, 30 and 31 May have been designated public holidays to celebrate this festival. After Sabah joined Malaysia, *Kaamatan* was practiced statewide as a political symbol of the integration of the Kadazan and Dusun people rather than as a harvest celebration. At the same time, in the 1990s, it gained a position as one of the national cultures, representing Sabah culture after Dr. Mahathir had put forward *Wawasan 2020.* In this capacity it represented national integration. We need to have a closer look at this kind of cultural appropriation and redefinition of the *Kaamatan* to be able to contextualise it within the larger project of nation-making.

Case studies from Kota Kinabalu

Let me begin by presenting some general information about the research site (*kampung K* in Malay or K village) where I have carried out anthropological research since 2003.

K village is located on the slope of a forest-covered hill adjacent to the centre of Kota Kinabalu, the state capital of Sabah. According to the 2002 census, K village has a population of about 1,500 and about 300 households. It started in the 1970s, when a few people squatted there on government-owned land, and it was appropriately labeled '*setinggan* (squatter)' area. Initial demands that they leave were not heeded. Even after the land was gazetted as a legal *kampung* in the late

1990s, the impermanent nature of K village has not changed. The people in K village even today often say 'this *kampung* is just for temporary living'. Most of them have come to Kota Kinabalu just to look for jobs and maintain that they would like to return to their village of origin after they have retired from work. The following story illustrates the transitory character of this village. When I visited K village in August 2006, an old woman died. Her body was taken away to a gravesite in another *kampung,* which has existed longer than K village. A friend of mine explained to me: 'because we have no place here to bury, all of us will leave this *kampong* ... at the latest when we die'.

Most of the people in the *kampung* are classified by officials under the label of Kadazandusun, which is also the ethnic identity accepted by them. Some of my friends who live outside of K village, also characterised K village as a Kadazandusun's *kampung*. The people, although accepting the label Kadazandusun as an ethnic entity in the official discourse of the government, prefer to use Dusun with particular locality for self-identification. In certain contexts they emphasise the differences among the various sub-ethnic groups of Kadazandusun people and explain how different their customs, cultures and languages were.

Kaamatan represented

In 2004, *Kaamatan* was held twice in K village and once in the residential zone next to it. In my description I will focus on the largest event.[6]

Kaamatan was publicised through official channels such as notices on the message board in the village, posters and a flag-like white cloth with the meeting's date displayed inside the *kampung*. Before the day of the event, application forms for the beauty contest (*unduk ngadau)* were distributed by the organising body through the village headman *(ketua kampung)*. The place of the event was prepared on the day before by some residents working as organisers.

The main guest of the day was an elected member of the local assembly, Yang Berhagia (YB). Three speeches were read on the day –by YB, the village headman and the chairperson of the organising committee, each conveying the meaning of *Kaamatan* to the village. (These speeches shall be analysed below.) Following the speeches, a gong was beaten seven times to launch the event. Next the 'traditional' dance show, named 'special show' *(persembahan khas)* was held on stage. The dance group consisted of nine young girls dressed in local ethnic costumes, namely of the Kadazandusun from Papar, Penampang and Bajau.[7]

Plate 3.3   *Special show (Persembahan khas)*

Plate 3.4   *Playing gongs during unduk ngadau*

The climax of the event was a very popular beauty contest. The beauty contest has always been at the core of *Kaamatan* since it started as a statewide festival. Its origin lies in the myth of a traditional godhead who sacrificed his daughter and made her body into essential crops for the benefit of the people in Sabah. This mythical motif was exploited to become a popular component of *Kaamatan* festival. Now, the beauty contest is described in the official discourse as a commemoration of the great mercy of the godhead's daughter and is clearly used to attract people's attention to the celebration. This cultural device is also very popular in this village. Five finalists were chosen from seven participants. After the winner was chosen as a 'queen', the guests left and the event was closed, although some of the people remained, with beer in hand, until night came.

As mentioned above, three speeches *(ucapan rasmi)* were read in this event. One was directed against the official characterisation of *Kaamatan,* while another one sought to mediate.

Official speeches are an interesting object of anthropological inquiry. For example, Parkin (1975) pointed to the inherent performative power of political speech. Official speeches are not necessarily just full of flowery rhetoric and empty words, but are interpretations of some particular issue and are intended to influence the audience. In short, the official speech is performance oriented. The chairman started his speech in the official manner with respectful words of thanks for some guests, but also for the people, especially those who had donated for this gathering. He characterised *Kaamatan* in K village as follows: 'Celebration of *Kaamatan,* as we know, is a festival celebrated by the ethnic group, namely Kadazandusun and also Murut. After working so hard on the rice-field, it is the time for them to be delighted by opening the festival as their token of gratitude for the spirit of rice.'

This is similar to what *YB* said in the first part of his speech. Juxtaposing *Kaamatan* with the important Muslim festival of *Aidilfitri* and the Chinese New Year, he said: 'Celebrating and welcoming any festival such as *Aidilfitri*, Chinese New Year and so forth, is a good and noble practice', thus making a direct comparison between the ethnic groups of Malays and Chinese, but also drawing the Kadazandusun Murut into it. In doing so, all three cultures are placed on a par in multi-ethnic Malaysia. In other words, *YB* recognised the *Kaamatan* owned by Kadazandusun and Murut living in Sabah as one of the national cultures in Malaysia. This narrative expresses the view of the Malaysian government in general.

But *Kaamatan* in this village was not entirely consistent with the government-made narratives. A few days after *Kaamatan,* I met with one of my friends (J) who had been working with the organising committee of the festival. As we talked about *Kaamatan* over some pictures

I had taken, he said: 'Did you go to *Kaamatan?* Certainly it is impor-
tant. But it had some strange points ... Look, this is a costume usually
worn by Dusun in Papar and this is Penampang's one. We do not have
so many friends from Papar and Penampang here. It was strange ...
for example the design of these clothes is different from the one in my
natal *kampung* [Tambunan] ... We, in Tambunan, use red as a color of
the stitch, not yellow.' It was clear that J was not totally satisfied with
the cultural event, although he was committed to it as a member of the
organising body. The *Kaamatan* reminded him of the communal tradi-
tions of local Kadazandusuns, but it was not the same in K village. Cul-
tural factors, such as the stitching, were different, and he was disap-
pointed with the festival, which had lost authenticity for him. J often
questioned the classifying of the Kadazandusun people as one group.
He criticised the way of narrating Kadazandusun as a whole, though
he sometimes started his conversations with remarks that this *kampung*
is Kadazandusun's. But then he would go on to say how different the
Kadazandusun subgroups were. For instance, he explained to me that
he had been afraid of his neighbours when he came to K village for the
first time because they were really cultural strangers to him, although
they were placed in the same ethnic group by the government census.
'I was afraid of them [referring to a family living next to his house] be-
cause I really did not know who they were and what customs *(adat)*
they have.'

From these examples it emerges that the ethnic categorisation used
by the government and that employed by the Kadazandusun differ con-
siderably. While the former emphasises inclusiveness to create larger
categories as components of national culture, the latter is more 'frag-
mented' and has considerable variations. Thus, the manner of repre-
senting *Kaamatan* in K village is ambivalent. When it was narrated in
the government discourse, participants, like J for example, could not
see its relevance and were disappointed. At the same time, *Kaamatan*
in this village cannot follow a particular subethnic way in its search for
authenticity since the origins of the people differ so much. In order to
resolve this dilemma, another way of narrating was used. It is a state-
ment that raises a moderate objection about the way of representing
Kaamatan as Kadazandusun inclusively. For example, the village head-
man pointed out in his opening speech that *Kaamatan* was missing an
important factor. He said: 'Although this *kampung* of ours does not
have land where we can plant rice, we also celebrate *Kaamatan* every
year to remind us of our tradition'. As he described it, there was no har-
vesting aspect in the Harvest Festival. The chairman also mentioned
this in the interview after *Kaamatan*:

'The story [about *Kaamatan* in their original village] I told is an old one. But what we brought here, to the very centre of the city, differs slightly. We brought here [another kind of *Kaamatan*], that's the point as I emphasised in the speech at the event. We do not cultivate rice ... no. No rice cultivation here. Everybody works in a government office, private company, and so on. It varies so much.'

This 'contradiction', however, was resolved in the following remarks in his speech: 'In the individual context we have to come together and interact with one another in order to mature and strengthen friendship *(Silatul-rahim)*, which was established among us without distinguishing between ethnic group and religion'. *Kaamatan* was thus imbued with a new meaning: in K village it was not necessarily concerned with a certain ethnicity, custom (*adat*) or tradition (*tradisi*), nor does it have the government-sponsored interpretation of the official discourse. *Kaamatan* is meant to deepen friendship and relationship within a local community. In this third narrative, *Kaamatan* does not represent Kadazandusun culture. It is an opportunity to have commensality and to meet friends, neighbours, and family members.

Conclusion

In the urban village, *Kaamatan* is located between two narrative poles: the government-oriented one as YB represented it and the one contextualised within a particular local and ethnic setting as J described it. *Kaamatan* in K village officially imitates the government-oriented version and appropriates its vagueness and inauthenticity into the settings. It treats the Kadazandusun as one community or group and does not incline towards recognising specific cultural factors among them. Therefore, it was criticised for its inauthenticity by some. On the other hand, *Kaamatan* in K village cannot be done in the way of a particular locality as some would have wanted, because of differences in language, tradition, and religion. It also lends itself to a new meaning as an event that is useful in deepening friendship and strengthening relationships in the newly built and temporary *kampung*.

The national culture 'created' by the government is appropriated, redefined to fit the actual social situation, and endowed with new meaning. The people deploy the government-made cultural device intended to create a national identity and accept the framework of 'nation' introduced by the government, but perform the event to fit into their lives. The process of nation-making must be understood in terms of this ambivalence. Thus, we have to pay attention not only to the official dis-

course sponsored by the government, but also to what emerges from the official discourse in the context of daily life.

Notes

1   This research was conducted while I studied at the Institut Alam dan Tamadu Melayu (ATMA), Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia with a grant from the Heiwa-Nakajima Foundation. The Economic Planning Unit (EPU) of the Prime Minister's Department of Malaysia generously issued permission for the research. I also wish to express my gratitude to Prof. Dr. Shamsul Amri Baharuddin, the former director of ATMA, and Prof. Dr. James T. Collins for providing useful advice while I was in Malaysia. My thanks also to kind friends and colleagues: Kiun and his family, Chong Shin, Karim Harun, Sarjit Singh Gill and Lee Yok Fee.

2   See for example Abu Lughod (2005) and Herzfeld (1997).

3   Christians are not combined with particular ethnicities like Muslims. They include Chinese, Indian, Iban, Kadazandusun and other minorities.

4   See for instance Sullivan and Regis (1981), Uesugi (2000) and Ueda (2006).

5   Murut is linguistically and culturally different from Kadazandusun, but sometimes categorised within the same group in the political discourse by using the abbreviated label KDM (Kadazandusun-Murut).

6   According to the pamphlet distributed by the organising body on the day, this festival has been held only three times before; the first being in 1999.

7   Bajau is one of the ethnic groups in Sabah, usually not categorised as a variant of Kadazandusun, but as different because of their language, religion and other cultural factors.

4 Ethnic Mosaic and the Cultural Nationalism of Bhutan

Rup Kumar Barman

Bhutan, a landlocked multi-ethnic country, situated in the lap of the Himalayas, has drawn the attention of social scientists around the world mainly because of its ongoing developmental activities, cultural nationalism and the process of democratisation. Democratisation in Bhutan was initiated by the monarchy itself in the second half of the twentieth century when its neighbours initiated the policies for socio-economic and political modernisation. India's independence in 1947 and its planned development strategy plus the emergence of the communist People's Republic of China in 1949 and its move towards a new identity induced King Dorji Wangchuk (1952-1972) to initiate a policy of political and economic modernisation in Bhutan.

However, the process of democratisation in Bhutan is confronted by several internal socio-cultural, political and economic forces. While democracy ensures freedom and liberty for all citizens and provides ample opportunities for political participation, the Citizenship Act as well as the policy of cultural nationalism have created a situation where a large number of genuine Bhutanese, particularly the Bhutanese-Nepalese (called *Bhupali*), effectively lost their citizenship. Many of these Bhutanese-Nepalese took shelter as refugees in the United Nations' High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR) camps and as immigrants both in Nepal and the Indo-Bhutan borderland. Thus, the process of democratisation in Bhutan has led to a parallel development of greater political freedom and deprivation of citizenship rights for some. In this situation, cultural nationalism, multi-ethnicity and the discourse on democracy in Bhutan vitally intersect.

Ethnicity is a state of consciousness in which people who maintain their own customary ways or culture set themselves apart from others. In a broad sense, ethnicity takes shape on the basis of certain characteristics such as language, religion, beliefs, race, caste and other common cultural traditions, which differentiate a particular group from others. A sense of 'Otherness' and a positive desire for a distinguishing identification are the distinct features of a self-aware ethnicity. However, ethnicity is multidimensional as well as 'situational' and 'contextual' and can be used to inspire collective action as 'reactive awareness'. It mobilises ethnic groups to form a politically active social identity

and to assert their share in economic resources and 'power', which they may believe they have been denied by discriminatory policies followed by the state and other agencies. Thus ethnicity as a socio-cultural identity may motivate the members to attain practical goals. Imposition of a national identity by the dominant group on the subordinate ethnic group may push the latter to mobilise its people towards the formation of a separatist identity, even a fictitious one in some cases. Formation of an ethnic group identity thus has two aspects: first, denunciation of the imposed identity and, second, annunciation of their own. In a changing context, however, an ethnic group may change its objectives and characteristics of awareness (Barman 2006: 99-100).

Nationalism, a Eurocentric concept, is very difficult to define within a rigid framework. According to Hans Kohn (1944: 10), nationalism is 'a state of mind, in which the supreme loyalty of the individual is felt to be due to the nation state'. Characteristics of nationalism differ everywhere according to the location of the country and its historical and social background. Generally, it is accepted that 'nationalism, a product of political, economic, social, and cultural factors at a certain stage in history, is a condition of mind, feeling or sentiment of a group of people living in a well-defined geographical area, speaking a common language, possessing a literature in which the aspirations of the nation has been expressed, attached to common customs, venerating its own heroes, and in some cases, having a common religion' (Snyder 1954: 196-97).

Nationalism has also been defined as a 'political, social consciousness centered upon a common national identity rooted in a shared tradition, and the ideological belief in the structure of the modern nation-state as the most efficient instrument of national unity, national independence and national interest' (Norbu 1992: 22).

Traditions, customs and behaviour patterns motivated by common beliefs and values collectively constitute the culture of a particular community. The traditional culture of any community is basically formed through its social institutions, festivals, art, music and other features. The signifiers of culture, however, are not static and may change as new socio-religious ideas, techniques and technologies arise and grow. In addition, the adoption of culture from the outside world and its localisation may stimulate the process of culture change. Among the different constitutive elements of nationalism, 'culture' rooted in language and religion, arts and other achievements may also play an important role.

The relationship between ethnic aspirations and nationalism based on culture is most often antagonistic, particularly when the distinct culture of the dominant group is considered the 'national culture' and is imposed upon the subordinate ethnic culture. Subnational ethnic

groups then assert their self-identity, which may be contradictory to na-
tionalism. Thus, the process of nation-building in a spirit of cultural
nationalism can lead to strong contestation.

This paper seeks to conceptualise the contemporary nation-building
process in Bhutan, which has recently attracted the attention of social
scientists. Bhutan's developmental activities, internal politics and espe-
cially the move towards democracy, underpinned by a policy of cultural
nationalism, have created such a complex situation as to challenge cri-
tical analysis.

Feeling threatened by the rapid growth of the Bhutanese-Nepalese
minority (Nepali-speaking and -descended Bhutanese called *Lhotshm-
pas*), the Royal Government of Bhutan has come to believe that it has a
duty to protect the 'national cultural identity' of this multi-ethnic coun-
try. In order to protect the indigenous culture of the Drukpas (the poli-
tically dominant ethnic group), Bhutan declared a national cultural pol-
icy called *Driglam Namza* (one language, one culture and one nation)
in the 1980s. Its ultimate – perhaps intended – result is the emigra-
tion, statelessness and refugee status of the Bhutanese-Nepalese. Citi-
zenship is a key issue for a meaningful democracy, but in this situation
the violation of rights of citizenship in the question of cultural nation-
alism and move towards democracy run parallel to each other. These is-
sues together with the impact of the internal policies of Bhutan are
highlighted in this paper.

Surface and socio-cultural format

Bhutan, popularly called *Druk-Yul* or land of the Drukpas, is a multi-
ethnic country though culturally and politically dominated by the Druk-
pas. It is the smallest and most mountainous country of South Asia, si-
tuated between the two giants India and China; with a land area of
46,500 square km and divided into twenty administrative districts
(*dzogkhas*). Geographically, this country comprises four major zones:
Great Himalayas, Inner Himalayas, the Southern Foot Hills and the
Duars Plains. The northern side of Bhutan lies within the Great Hima-
layas, with snow-capped ranges rising to 3,700 and 5,400 m above sea
level. The Inner Himalayas lie on the southern side of the Great Hima-
layas. This region forms Central Bhutan with several fertile valleys.
The Southern Foot Hills area varies between 600 to 1,500 m above sea
level and is densely forested. The Duars region is situated in the Indo-
Bhutan border zone connecting West Bengal and Assam of India.

Like its surface morphology, the temperature, rainfall and climate of
Bhutan as a whole vary widely. Climate has influenced the flora and
fauna of Bhutan and its population distribution as well. The Greater

Himalayas and the ranges of the Inner Himalayas are not suitable for human habitation. The high-altitude zones ranging from 3,000 to 3,500 m are sparsely populated. People of this region are dependent on the cultivation of sheep and yaks and production of crops that grow in cold weather. The fertile plain tracts of the Inner Himalayas have a tolerable climate and are moderately populated. The urban centres of Bhutan, however, are densely populated with about 15% of the total population of the country.

There is no standard parameter to estimate the population of Bhutan. However, there are some estimates based on official reports, which place the figure around 582,000 in 1995 and 672,425 in 2000. The population growth rate is 2.19%. There are four major ethnic groups in Bhutan: the Ngalongs (Tibeto-Mongoloids), Sharchops (Indo-Mongoloids), Khengs (earliest inhabitants) and the Lhotshmpas (of Nepalese origin). The Ngalongs are in the majority, forming around 50% of the total population. The Lhotshmpas are the second largest ethnic group comprising 35% of the total population, and the Khengs, Sharchops and other minor ethnic groups make up 15%. From the religious point of view, Bhutanese Buddhists (Lamaistic Buddhist) are in the majority (75%), while 25% of Bhutanese are followers of Nepalese-influenced Buddhism.

Among the Ngalongs (Tibeto-Mongoloids), the Drukpas form the majority, and are largely concentrated in western Bhutan. They migrated to Bhutan from Tibet in the ninth and tenth centuries CE. Most of the ruling elites of Bhutan are of this ethnicity. The Drukpas are followers of the Drukpa Kagyuppa sect of Buddhism (Bhutanese Buddhism). With their own social institutions and a language called *Dzonkha*, the Drukpas constitute the 'mainstream culture' of Bhutan. Like the Drukpas, the Brokpas are also from Tibetan stock but have their own dialect that is of Tibetan origin. One of the earliest communities (Indo-Mongoloids) of Bhutan is the Monpas (Mons) who live mainly in eastern and southeastern Bhutan. They speak a dialect called *Sharchokkha*. Khengs, another ancient community of Bhutan, are speakers of the *Khen-kha* language. This community has a distinct Indo-Mongoloid affinity and is the intermediary between Tibet and the Sub-Himalayan Bengal and Lower Assam of India. The Birmis and the Dayas are minor communities of Bhutan. The Birmis are nomadic and are concentrated in the high altitude region of eastern Bhutan. The Dayas on the other hand live mainly in south Bhutan. Their lifestyle is a mix of semi-sedentarism and semi-nomadism. They are closely related to a smaller neighbouring tribe in India: the Totos. The Lepchas are another small ethnic group who have affinities with the Sikkimese. Nowadays, the Lepchas of Bhutan have been more or less assimilated

by the Drukpas owing to the fact that both groups are followers of Bhutanese Buddhism.

There are a few more ethnic groups in Bhutan, which are the offshoot of the Greater Bodo family of north Bengal and northeast India. Such communities like the Koches, Meches and the Tephoos entered Bhutan between the 15th and 19th century, particularly during the course of the encounter between Bhutan and the Koch kingdom (Cooch Behar) of Sub-Himalayan Bengal and Lower Assam. The Koches are expert agriculturists and followers of Hinduism with their own traditions. They are mostly concentrated in south Bhutan although the Tephoos, another branch of the Koches, are scattered in Spu-na-Kha of north Bhutan. The offshoots of the Greater Bodo family are less influential in the pluralist Bhutanese society.

The Bhutanese-Nepalese are a strong minority community in Bhutan. The Nepalese began to settle in Bhutan in the early 20th century and are now concentrated in the southeastern and southwestern regions of the country. The agricultural knowledge of the Nepalese was encouraged in Bhutan and they were allowed to clear the forestland of southern and central Bhutan to start their agricultural activities. Gradually, the Nepalese population of Bhutan increased. This influx of Nepalese changed the demographic composition of Bhutan, and they now form the majority of the population in five districts of south Bhutan: Sachi, Chhukha, Chirang, Geylegphug and Samdrup Jongkhar. Nowadays at least 35% of the total population of Bhutan is Nepalese.

The Nepalese themselves, however, are not a homogenous group. They migrated from different regions of Nepal and India, with their traditional caste, social and linguistic differences. They belong to the Bahun, Chhetri, Magar, Gurung, Rai, Libu, Tamang and Newar castes (Barman 2007: 16). Besides the Nepalese, a few more Indian communities have also migrated to Bhutan in recent years, especially with the beginning of developmental activities including the construction of roads and the spread of education.

The existence of a pluralist society in Bhutan is the result of its long history of inflow of various communities who impacted on the socioeconomic life of the country. The development of a pluralist society in a nation-state of the Third World often creates social unrest and problems in its social structure. This is certainly true for Bhutan.

Nation-building process and cultural nationalism

The traditional structure of Bhutanese polity is based on monarchical traditions. Although the present monarchy of Bhutan was established in 1907 by the British,[1] its history can be traced back to the 17th cen-

tury. In 1616, Shabdrung Ngawang Namgyal, a monk from Tibet, es-
tablished his rule in Bhutan. He unified the Bhutanese territory with a
dual system of governance (spiritual and administrative). The religious
and state affairs were divided between the *Dhrama Raja* and the *Devar-
aja*. However, after the death of Shabdrung in 1652, this system un-
leashed a civil war between various sects that was to last for two centu-
ries. In 1907, Ugyen Wangchuck, the provincial governor of the Druk-
pa Kargyupa school of Tibetan Buddhism, consolidated his power over
the country and established the hereditary monarchy. It was not an ab-
solutist monarchy, and neither Ugyen Wangchuk (1907-1926), nor his
son Jigme Wangchuk (1926-1952), nor his grandson Dorji Wangchuk
(1952-1972) enjoyed absolute power. In fact, to appease a decentralised
and increasingly restless spiritual order, Dorji Wangchuk decreed in
1968 that the king would abdicate in favour of his oldest son if the
tshogdu (national assembly) gave him a vote of no confidence by a two-
thirds majority. It was Dorji Wangchuk who started the process of poli-
tical modernisation, and in 1953, he initiated one of the most impor-
tant constitutional reforms in Bhutanese history with the establish-
ment of the National Assembly of 150 members.

King Singhe Wangchuk, son of Dorji Wangchuk, ascended the
throne in 1972. He initiated several new policies for the development
of the state and began the process of decentralisation of power. This
process culminated in 1998 when he delegated full executive powers to
an elected Council of Ministers. The National Assembly was also em-
powered by the monarch by establishing a mechanism whereby it can
move a vote of confidence – or no confidence – in the king.

In the process of nation-building, Bhutan also initiated an economic
policy with the adoption of the First Five-Year Plan (1961-66), assisted
by financial aid from India. Bhutan received both financial and techno-
logical help from India consecutively in the first three Five-Year Plans.
However, Bhutan became suspicious of India's assistance after the
merger of Sikkim with India in 1974. In spite of their suspicions, Bhu-
tan continued to implement the policy of rapid development and mod-
ernisation with the help from India.

The development strategy of Bhutan is based on six well-known
principles: self-reliance, sustainability, development and improved effi-
ciency of the private sector, peoples' participation in the development
programmes through decentralisation of power, human resource devel-
opment, and removal of regional imbalances through social and eco-
nomic development. In addition to these, Bhutan also adopted a few
more development objectives in its Seventh Five-Year Plan (1992-97).
This plan stressed mature international relations including aid and
trade, basic economic and social infrastructure, macro-economic man-
agement, stable law and order, and preservation of the cultural heritage

of Bhutan. The development activities of Bhutan have drawn their labour force from different countries of South Asia including India, Nepal and Bangladesh.

Since the beginning of planned development, Bhutan stressed the idea of 'gross national happiness'.[2] The late King Jigme Dorji Wangchuck expressed his view on the goal of development as making the people prosperous and happy, which he also emphasised when Bhutan became a member of the United Nations in 1971. King Jigme Singye Wangchuck followed the same policy of 'national happiness'.

The concept of preservation of cultural heritage as an important point of the development strategy was somewhat ambiguous as it stressed the renunciation of negative outside influence. However, in the 1980s Bhutan reinterpreted cultural preservation as 'a positive and essential means to safeguard national security'. Bhutan also founded a commission called National Council for Social Cultural Promotion in 1980. Its main objectives were the (a) organisation and promotion of social, cultural and educational activities to foster and strengthen a feeling of national community transcending regional loyalties; (b) adoption of schemes to develop the sense of national identity among the youth and make them dedicate their service to the king and the country; (c) initiations of plans and programmes calculated to emphasise the social, cultural, and spiritual aspects of life and to make the youth participate in activities conducive to national development at the rural level. In 1986, Bhutan established the Special Commission for Cultural Affairs with the purpose of the preservation and promotion of the cultural heritage. It should be noted that one of the main points of the Sixth Five-Year Plan (1987-92) was the question of national identity. During this plan period, Bhutan adopted a policy of renovation of old *dzongs* (fort), monasteries and chhortens. Dzongkha, the language of the Drukpas, was adopted and developed as the national language. The Dzongkha Advisory Board was entrusted to produce Dzongkha textbooks from pre-primary to degree levels (Ghosh et al. 2002: 67-68).

Thus, Bhutan launched a series of cultural policies and, in 1989, adopted a code of conduct called *Driglam Namza* (one nation, one people, one language). Traditional dress of the Drukpas called *gho* (for men) and *kira* (for women) was made compulsory for the Bhutanese. Dzongkha became compulsory for elementary education, and the educational curriculum emphasised traditional learning. These aspects provided the basic structure of a national identity, which became synonymous with Drukpa culture.

National identity and statelessness

This policy on national identity and the nation-building process had a negative impact on the nation's multi-ethnic and polyphonic composition. The Bhutanese-Nepalese in particular realised that the policies related to the cultural nationalism of Bhutan were violating their human rights. They were even facing the fundamentally important question of citizenship in a democratic sense. In particular, the *New Citizenship Act of 1985* had denied citizenship to a large number of Bhutanese-Nepalese. This act categorically stated that people who entered Bhutan after 1958 were not citizens of Bhutan. Moreover, knowledge of the national culture, language (*Dzongkha*) and customs were made compulsory in order to acquire citizenship of Bhutan. Under this act a large number of Nepali speakers failed to prove their Bhutanese citizenship. After 1988 Bhutan strictly implemented the *New Citizenship Act*, and as a consequence a large number of people of Nepalese origin were declared illegal immigrants. Implementation of the *Driglam Namza* further increased the number of stateless people. The 'illegal immigrants' were compelled to leave Bhutan and to take shelter in the frontier districts of Nepal, particularly at Jhapa. Some Nepali speakers also left Bhutan voluntarily. The inflow of refugees from Bhutan to Nepal began to increase after 1990. By the end of March 1992, the Bhutanese 'asylum seeker' population had increased to 27,000. The United Nations High Commission on Refugees and the Government of Nepal estimated the Bhutanese refugees of Nepalese background (called *Bhupali)[3]* in 1996 at around 90,700 (who are given shelter in the camp) (Upreti 2004: 92). Bhutanese refuges are still stateless and continue to be so in spite of several bilateral talks between Bhutan and Nepal.

Against this background of refugee problems, a constitution was drafted in Bhutan without representation from the dissident groups, and which remains vague about the monarch's prerogative powers. It also lacks a provision for an independent judiciary and fails to properly acknowledge religious, linguistic and cultural freedoms. At best, it envisages a two-party oligarchy based on the *Drukpa* vision of a homogenous nationhood. However, by the beginning of 2008 Bhutan successfully conducted elections as part of the transition process of the country from monarchy to democracy. But the concept of cultural nationalism remains unchanged.

Conclusion

National identity based on culture is no doubt a complex problem for any multi-ethnic, pluralist society. This problem originates mainly from

the question of subordination of minority communities by the majority. The 'national identity' in the case of Bhutan reflects the cultural identity of the Drukpas, in which the smaller communities have little place. Imposition of the national identity over minorities has led to dissatisfaction and ethnic unrest.

Political experiments in Bhutan, particularly its move towards democracy, have created much interest among minorities. The general elections for the National Council of Bhutan, the upper house of the new bicameral Parliament of Bhutan, were held for the first time on 31 December 2007. On 24 March 2008 members were elected to the National Assembly, the lower house of the parliament. The Bhutan Peace and Prosperity Party, conservative and royalist in outlook, enjoyed a landslide victory, securing 44 seats while the People's Democratic Party, which stands for democracy and human rights, got only 3 seats. Unfortunately, a large number of Bhutanese-Nepalese expelled from Bhutan have been excluded from the election process. This deprivation has created further tension among the new generation of Bhutanese-Nepalese who are now trying to draw the attention of the whole world to their problem.

Notes

1   After the establishment of British colonial power in India, the British Indian government sent several political missions to Bhutan and Tibet. Several conflicts broke out between Bhutan and British-ruled India, but Bhutan never became part of the British empire.
2   The 'Gross National Happiness' (GNH) is a concept associated with the development strategy of Bhutan. It was coined by Jigme Singye Wangchuk in 1972, in order to define quality of life in more holistic and spiritual terms than Gross National Product (GNP). It stands for promotion of equitable and sustainable socio-economic development, preservation and promotion of cultural values, conservation of the natural environment, and establishment of good government.
3   The term *Bhupali* has been derived from *Bhu* of Bhutan and *pali* of Nepali. *Bhupali* means the people of Bhutan of Nepali origin.

5 Religion and Cultural Nationalism: Socio-Political Dynamism of Communal Violence in India

Sali Augustine

Communal violence (especially between Hindus and Muslims, and Hindus and Christians) has shocked India, particularly in the last two decades – despite its post-independence efforts towards democratisation and development. The emerging cultural nationalistic hegemony in India plays an important role in this. The element of identity politics that is emerging in the developing economy, combined with religious sentiments, brings new issues and conflicts in a democratic situation. India's democratic institutions have encouraged mixing religion with politics so as to utilise minority votes to gain political power. This mixing, pursued by politicians as a means of deriving advantages in elections, has caused Hindu-Muslim cleavages to widen. However, these phenomena cannot be understood without placing the social analysis in the context of global change. Thus, understanding the climate of religious extremism in India has to be linked with the situation that can be found on a global level.

Conflict between Hindu and Muslim communities in India has been identified as a major stumbling block to the development of the country and its democratic principles. The term 'communalism' is widely used across South Asia to describe the systematic misuse of religion for political purposes. It refers to the processes of political construction of community identities along religious lines. Communal politics represents one's own religious community in an antagonistic relationship with 'the other religious community'. Thus, socially engineered prejudice, tension and conflict between religious communities constitute 'communalism' (Kapoor 1995). However, by analysing three socio-political and economic factors in modern society, this paper suggests that communal conflict in India has more than one cause and is becoming more complex through the emerging socio-economic and politico-cultural aspects.

Background

It was believed that with the partition of the undivided India in 1947, the Hindu-Muslim problem would be solved, and national leaders such

as the late Jayaprakash Narayan argued that it was 'similar to two brothers fighting to be separated'. Accordingly, it was supposed a separation based on the just distribution of assets would bring about amity between the two parts. This argument implied that if the Muslim demand for Pakistan were accepted, the dispute between the 'two brothers' – Hindus and Muslims – would come to an end. The late Jawaharlal Nehru and others also believed that with the spread of modern scientific education, people's attitudes would change, and communalist strife would become a thing of the past. The implied expectation was that the process of development would engage energies in positive tasks, leaving scarcely any time for squabbles and disputes. Above all, it was assumed that all conflicts would cease through the workings of democratic principles.

Such assumptions appear to have been largely unfounded, as India continues to face the divisiveness and violence of communalism and communal conflict. So far, the socio-economic and socio-political processes have been extremely convoluted. Economic development did not proceed along a straight line, as expected, and the impact of education also fell short of expectations by being limited to a small minority.

Post-independence India witnessed large-scale communal riots with thousands of innocent people killed, and the population became divided on the basis of the Hindu majority versus the Muslim minority (Engineer 2004). Historically, severe and recurrent communal riots have taken place mainly in certain 'riot prone' (Varshney 2002) urban areas. But the recent communal riots in India show a tendency of expanding into the rural areas as well (Engineer 2004). A large-scale communal riot between Hindus and Muslims took place in the Indian state of Gujarat between February and May of 2002. It erupted after an altercation between some Hindus and Muslims at a railway station in Godhra city, which escalated to an arson attack on a train. In this incident more than fifty people were killed. According to official figures, more than a thousand people were then killed in the violence that followed this event, not only in urban areas but spreading to interior areas of the state and lasting for more than two months. Violence in the Indian state of Gujarat in 2002 graphically revealed the vindictiveness and fear that lay beneath the antipathy between the Hindu and Muslim communities, and presented a grave challenge to the minority Muslims (Augustine 2003: 59-76). There are numerous incidents of communal and religious violence and tension in various parts of the country.[1] Each major communal riot further embitters Hindu-Muslim relations.

Multicultural society and identity politics

South Asia as a region is multi-religious and multi-lingual and consists of several communities with distinct identities. Since politics in the medieval period in South Asia was based on a feudal system, and since a feudal system, dependent on monarchical and dynastic power, was essentially non-competitive, conflicts along these lines, if they occurred at all, were not grave (Engineer 2004). All religious and linguistic groups were loyal to one dynasty or other. With the consolidation of British rule, however, politics in colonial South Asia became competitive as different linguistic groups and in particular groups with different religious affiliations began to compete with each other for a share of political power and government jobs. Religion became a source of identity in the mobilisation of political forces, and consequently a source of conflict (Singh 2000). The power elites among both the Hindus and Muslims began to assert the religious identities of their followers, with a view to gaining power on the basis of numerical strength. The electoral system introduced by the colonial powers proved even more divisive. Under pressure from the Muslim minority, the British administration introduced separate electorates for the Muslims ('communal representation') through the Act of 1909. It helped the Muslims by giving them more electoral seats than they would have had on a purely numerical basis (Seth 2000: 302). The Muslims possessed a double vote as the Muslim electorates were superimposed upon the general electorates; and that, not surprisingly, was a source of grievance for other communities, especially the Hindu nationalists.

In such a charged atmosphere, it was not surprising that communalism as a social or political movement, or even as a mere ideology, was strengthened. Communalism and communal violence turned out to be two stages of the same phenomenon. The strengthening of communal tendencies creates the conditions by which collective violence is spawned. In fact, the spread of communalism is an indispensable precondition in the upsurge of communal violence. Therefore, communal violence is not set in motion and cannot be manipulated unless a certain atmosphere has been generated by communalism. Communal issues have formed a vital aspect of political campaigning in India during the past sixty years, and this trend grew steadily stronger during the 1980s. It was precisely during the 1980s and early 1990s that the greatest number of incidents of communal violence erupted in India (Engineer 1989: 65-89).

Three important factors in the period following 1980 are helpful to an understanding of the emerging socio-cultural cleavages in India. The first is the emergence of 'identity politics' in the nation's developing economy, and the second is the global emergence of 'cultural na-

tionalism' in the world. The third factor is the growing 'climate of religious extremism' represented through certain extreme positions of some religious organisations[2] and the terrorist confrontations in India.

Identity politics and economic development

The process of socio-economic development in India that was initiated under numerous five-year plans changed the entire political landscape. The dynamics of development unleashed forces that gave rise to castes and communities becoming divided along socio-economic lines, which produced effects that could be politically mobilised. On the one hand, the process of mobility within the framework of the capitalist economy bred structural inequality, but on the other, it brought about a revolutionary rise in aspirations. It should also be noted that in an underdeveloped society, the process of economic development is invariably accompanied by violence. According to Asghar Ali Engineer (1989: 65-89), the experience of all underdeveloped societies undergoing the process of development, throughout history in general and in the twentieth century in particular, has shown that violence is integral to this process. Engineer concludes that in India's case, violence has erupted in caste, communal and regional forms since development in a capitalist framework began. Inequitable development generates deep grievances within groups that are caste-based or possess religious and regional affiliations, and when these groups have been frozen out of the competitive economic situation, they turn to asserting their separate identities even more vehemently. On the other hand, urged on by their identity consciousness, the privileged caste-based groups, communities and groups with regional affiliations, have become increasingly aggressive about protecting their own privileges. Confrontation has thus been created, and in the process of inequitable development, historical identities have come to assume even greater importance. Inasmuch as identity can be a vehicle of political mobilisation, the process of development has accordingly strengthened caste and communal forces in India.

Historically, Brahmins dominated the socio-political scene. They began to be challenged, however, in the post-independence period. The Brahmins' hold on power began to wane when the middle classes and other castes began to grow stronger in a socio-political sense. The Marathas in Maharashtra, the Reddys in Andhra Pradesh, Vokaliggas in Karnataka, the Rajputs and the Patels in Gujarat, the Yadavas in Uttar Pradesh and Bihar, to name only a few groups, started revealing an attitude of hostility towards the Brahmins and the members of the feudal classes after independence. With the onset of the agricultural revolu-

tion and through the democratisation process, the middle class acquired economic clout and eventually political power. It was observed that the greater the degree of development, the more the capitalist class was strengthened and the feudal classes were weakened.

However, throughout the process, the underprivileged were also becoming conscious of their deprived social conditions as well as their rights. The process of democratisation and development led members of the lower caste, the tribal people in rural areas, and Muslims in urban areas to assert themselves, thereby making the middle class even more aggressive. This type of assertiveness and aggressiveness took the form of identity politics. When the leaders of the Congress Party leaned towards the minorities (Muslims and tribes), those of the Janata party (later BJP) sought to acquire the votes of the upper and middle classes.

In these circumstances it was obvious that the anti-'reservation' agitation of 1981, the subsequent caste riots in the city of Ahmedabad, and the anti-'reservation' violence of 1985[3] were economically and politically motivated. The issue of reservation quotas for 'backward communities'[4] became the focal point for the hostile political mobilisation of the upper castes, who turned violent. The 1981 anti-'reservation' agitation, a reaction to the KHAM[5] coalition policy adopted by the then ruling Congress Party, was channelled into a major communal conflagration in a shrewd bid to check the sharp polarisation taking place among Hindus along caste lines. This, however, took a turn to communalism when political mobilisation began along the lines of Hindu nationalism.

Cultural nationalism in a globalising society

Hindutva is the name for Hindu nationalism as a political movement. Created in 1925 in the state of Maharashtra, the RSS (*Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh* or National Voluntary Corps) is the core institution of Hindutva. This term has been variously identified with cultural nationalism, Hindu fundamentalism, and so on. However, Hindutva is different from Hinduism. The Hindu nationalists' conception of nationalism is rooted in the primacy of culture over politics. According to their interpretation, culture 'is but a product of our all-comprehensive religion, a part of its body and not distinguishable from it' (Panikkar 2004: 6). This naturally implies that the country's national culture is tantamount to Hindu religious culture.

Cultural nationalism, therefore, is a euphemism, invoked in order to mask the creation of a state with a Hindu religious identity. This characteristic of the nation was clearly spelled out by RSS leader M.S. Gol-

walkar in the following words: 'This country, Hindustan, the Hindu
race with the Hindu religion, Hindu culture, and Hindu language com-
pletes the Nation concept' (Louis 2004: 40). The relationship between
Hindutva and Hinduism is also well described in the writings of the
first exponent of Hindutva, V.D. Savarkar. Savarkar had argued that a
Muslim or a Christian, even if born in India, could not claim to pos-
sess the qualities demanded by the concept of Hindutva. The essentials
of Hindutva, according to Savarkar, are '*rashtra* (a common nation), *jati*
(a common race), and *sanskriti* (a common civilization)' (Louis 2004:
36).

Commenting on what takes place in India in the name of religious
fundamentalism, Ashutosh Varshney points out that 'the Hindu na-
tionalists are religious *nationalists,* not religious *fundamentalists*' be-
cause 'the Hindu nationalists are calling neither for Ramrajya (the
Kingdom of Lord Ram) nor for a return to traditional Hindu law'
(Varshney 2002: 70; italics in the original). In this context he remarks:
'The aim of Hindu nationalists is neither to "semitize"[6] Hinduism nor
to enforce religious uniformity and orthodoxy. Rather, it is to create a
political unity among the Hindus, divided otherwise by the various
castes, languages, and doctrinal diversities' (Varshney 2002: 71; italics
in the original).

The historian K.N. Panikkar (2004: 4-8) notes that the concept of
cultural nationalism conceived and propagated by Hindutva is based
on a misrepresentation of the nature of national identity. Nationalism,
like democracy, is indivisible with its constitutive elements – political,
economic and cultural – all intermeshed. Privileging any one of these
attributes tends to undermine the holistic character of nationalism.
There is no denying the importance of culture in the make-up of na-
tional identity, yet culture alone does not mould the national identity of
any country (Panikkar 2004: 6). This was true of India as well where
nationalism emerged and evolved as a part of anti-colonial conscious-
ness. Culture was an integral part of this process of national recon-
struction for those who were trying, by invoking culture as a tool of re-
sistance, to develop a national culture, which was distinct from the co-
lonial and the traditional. Yet, the struggle for a national culture during
the anti-colonial period either remained an epiphenomenon or an in-
strument of political mobilisation. Therefore, the cultural question was
not adequately addressed during the anti-colonial struggle, and Hindut-
va appropriated the space thus left vacant.

The climate of religious extremism

The last two decades have witnessed shocking attacks against Muslims in India, represented through the incidents of the destruction of the Babri Masjid, a Muslim mosque in Ayodhya (Uttar Pradesh) in 1992, preceded and followed by a wave of communal riots targeting Muslims throughout India, and the murderous pogrom against the Muslims in the state of Gujarat in 2002. Against such Hindu aggression, some Muslim extremist organisations turned to revenge in the form of indiscriminate bomb attacks in some important cities.[7] Since the year 2001, several terrorist attacks have shattered major cities in India. Many people were killed instantly and several hundred wounded in these incidents. Some of the most populous centres and places of Hindu religious pilgrimage, like Jaipur (13 May 2008; 80 people killed and more than 200 people injured) and Varanasi (7 March 2007; 28 people killed and more than 100 people wounded) have been the target of attacks. On 18 May 2007, 9 people were killed and many were injured in a bomb blast at the Mecca Masjid (mosque) in the southern city of Hyderabad. Indiscriminate and coordinated bombings ripped through packed commuter trains in India's financial capital of Mumbai on 11 July 2006, killing more than 200 people and wounding hundreds more. These are some of the major incidents in recent years, and virtually all these attacks, as the investigating officials said, were linked to terrorists, some from inside the country and some from foreign outfits. It is clear that it is not just the Islamic *jihadis,* but also separatists like the United Liberation Front of Assam (Ulfa) and Maoist rebels in India who use serial bombings on a regular basis.

There is also a climate of aggression in various parts of the country in the name of defending Hindu culture. The Bajrang Dal organisation, for instance, which describes its mission as to protect the honour and interests of Hindus, organised a vehicle rally in Bhopal on the eve of Valentine's Day, vowing not to allow any Valentine Day celebrations. Hundreds of Bajrang Dal activists rode their bikes in procession while rending the air with slogans like *'Bharatiya Sanskriti par Aakraman band karo'* (Stop the attack on Indian culture). 'We will oppose Valentine's Day tooth and nail because the concept has come from the West and through it an attempt is being made to spoil Indian culture,' said a district convener of Bajrang Dal in Bhopal.[8]

In another incident on 25 September 2004, a group of RSS members attacked the sisters of the Missionaries of Charity at a Dalit (outcaste) colony in Kozhikode, Kerala. The nuns were reportedly invited to the colony by a poor woman, who had been receiving rice and essential provisions as charity from them for over a year and who wanted some of her neighbours too to get such help. The RSS volunteers accused

them of preparing the ground for religious conversion in the Dalit colony. When they were about to return, a mob, allegedly raising the slogans 'BJP-RSS *zindabad* (Victory)' and '*Bharat Mata Ki Jai* (Salute to Mother India)', surrounded the nuns' vehicle and smashed its windowpanes and brutally attacked the nuns.

Violence between Hindus and Muslims was involved in the Ayodhya incident and in the Gujarat riots. Indiscriminate bomb blasts in major cities in India at regular intervals and the confrontations provoked by extremist organisations cannot be considered sporadic or random. How should such incidents be understood in the global context?

Ideological justification

In the context of the changing world order after the cold war, Samuel Huntington (1996) proposed his controversial theory of the clash of civilisations in the widest sense, to explain the phenomenon of expanding conflicts along fault lines of identities. But he was wrong, because the image of identity he conceived as defining civilisations was partly racial, partly geographical, and partly based on religious affiliation and culture. He ignored at the same time the interaction between civilisations, coexisting cultures and various areas of religious syncretism in the world. He noticed a process of confrontation and emerging antagonisms in the world, especially in the form of an 'anti-America' feeling. Huntington approached this sentiment within an ideological framework. But, whether this expresses a clash of civilisations has been seriously criticised ever since Huntington's argument appeared in 1993.

Arjun Appadurai in his *Fear of Small Numbers: An essay on the geography of anger* (2006) offers a compelling explanation about the sources of global unrest, terrorism, and ethnic strife. Rejecting the concept of a clash of civilisations, he explores the idea of a 'clash of *ideocides* or a clash of *civicides*'(2006: 117). What marks today's fractured political world, claims Appadurai, is a return to ideologies, which intensify suspicions and uncertainty among groups and lead to what he calls 'ideocide', a new form of ideological totalism, which targets whole nations and ways of life for extermination. Terrorism, driven by 'ideocide', blurs the line between military and civilian space, and divorces war from the nation (Appadurai 2006: 117).

Huntington's model assumes that civilisation flows from a coherent and unidimensional geographic base such as 'the West' or 'the Muslim world'. Appadurai argues that globalisation has fractured this illusion and has created a disjunctive world where the fear and power assigned to minorities can change quickly and dramatically. The world today is filled with angry diasporic minorities – Sikhs, Basques, Kurds, Tamil

Sri Lankans, Chechenyans, etc. – with the potential for cellular organisations. Members within these communities can morph from one kind of minority – weak, disempowered, disenfranchised and angry – to another kind: cellular, globalised, transnational and armed and dangerous. Their anger can be focussed on specific nation-states, but primarily on America, which is seen by many as the driving force of globalisation.

The geography of anger refers to how social certainties and uncertainties are mapped in complex ways over geographical territory. It oscillates dialectically between forces of permanence and change, between tradition and modernisation, fragmentation and homogenisation. The fuel of the geography of anger is new information technologies, which speed up, circulate and recontextualise local grievances into global settings. The spark is the uncertainty about the enemy within, and the anxiety about the incomplete project of national purity. As national sovereignty is challenged by the forces of globalisation and familiar cultural structures are torn apart, there is an inevitable backlash that stresses blood and soil. Christian, Hindu, and Muslim fundamentalisms are attempts to mobilise the certainties of identity and the sacredness of nation. Violence, especially the spectacular violence associated with terrorism, genocide and wars, is a way of producing a more stable identity and cultural certainty.

According to Appadurai, minorities quickly become a problem in a modern global context because they challenge national narratives of social cohesion and homogeneity. When majorities within a nation are reminded of the slim margins which allow them to maintain their dominance, they contribute to fantasies of national incompleteness, to rage, and ultimately to a desire to purify the land of the minority. Ethnic identity is the flash point of such struggles, and the intimate violence they produce, neighbour killing neighbour, amounts to a displacement into the cultural field of deeper global processes. The ethnic violence within modern India between Muslims and Hindus is part of an unstable mix of global and regional forces, which produces contradictions and insecurities about who belongs within the nation and who shares the entitlements of the state. These forces tend to be countered by national politics, such as those found in the BJP (the Hindu Nationalist Party), which relies on the construction of an ethnicised Muslim and calls for national purity (Appadurai 2006: 104-107).

The justification of fundamentalist religions

We may ask ourselves: what is the reason for the seeming propensity toward fundamentalism in all religions, not merely Islam? One possi-

ble explanation is that the present economic and political systems jointly generate a series of traumas that society, as a whole, must absorb and manage. José Maria Mardones (2005: 6-8), debating current religious and ideological tendencies in relation to violence, tries to explain the climate of religious fundamentalism in a wider context. He argues that religious fundamentalism is an answer to the 'traumas of modernity' because religious sentiments make these traumas more bearable. A reading of faith from the perspective of justice would provoke more tension, or what we might call an 'over-tension'. A more traditional and fundamentalist religion guides and balances; instead of generating more fear and anxiety, it offers help and solace. This kind of religion works because it distends the social fabric and produces a feeling of peacefulness and reassurance.

According to Mardones, a democratic political system and a fundamentally neo-liberal economic system supposedly generate a series of traumas and uprootings that bring instability to the equilibrium of the social system. To counteract these disturbing forces, fundamentalist religion acts as an agent to strengthen roots, produce interior peace and assuage the effects of the traumas. It is evident that in such a view, religion plays basically an ameliorating and equilibrating role (Mardones 2005: 6-7). It also offers an answer to the emerging number of 'new age movements' (so-called NRMs) in different social contexts. For instance, there is a growing attraction toward 'healing centres' and 'spiritual gurus', especially in major cities in India.

Socio-political circumstances of the growth of cultural nationalism

Historically, during the 1980s, many Muslims went to the oil-rich Arab countries as migrant workers and prospered economically.[9] Hindu nationalists, on the other hand, emerged on the political scene with a definite political purpose. The RSS maintained a low-key posture while spearheading the VHP (*Vishwa Hindu Parishad* or World Hindu Movement), a movement founded in 1964 to campaign for militant Hinduism. It selected various issues that aggravated communal cleavages and set in motion violent conflicts. A critical issue was the conversion of Dalits (outcaste people) to Islam in the district of Meenakshipuram in the southern Indian state of Tamilnadu (Engineer 2004).[10]

Linking this incident to the economic clout of the rich Gulf-region Muslims, and their close association with oil-rich Arab nations like Saudi Arabia, a number of Hindu organisations were alarmed by this incident.[11] Hindu organisations such as the VHP and RSS interpreted the Dalits' conversion to Islam at Meenakshipuram as happening be-

cause of the economic benefits flowing from the oil-rich Gulf region. And they began to mobilise people, triggering a debate on an anti-conversion law to be passed in parliament. The VHP became politically active and aggressive after this incident. Their sense of alarm was further intensified by the Western mass media, which described the Meenakshipuram incident in such terms as the 'rise of militant Islam' and the 'swelling tide of fundamentalism'. The VHP also created a controversy over the birthplace of the highly revered Hindu deity Ram in the city of Ayodhya, in the Faizabad district of the northern Indian state of Uttar Pradesh. They claimed that a mosque located there (referred to as the Babri Mosque) was situated on the very spot where Lord Ram was born. Hence a movement aimed at constructing a temple on the site of the mosque began. This culminated in the destruction of the Babri Mosque on 6 December 1992. It was a sad day for the proponents of democracy in the nation.

The contemporary advocates of cultural nationalism, and the movements they lead, aim at creating a nation in which the Hindu religious identity coincides with the cultural. This has been attempted through a deliberate intervention on their part to create a culture that defines a 'Hindu nation', rather than simply by a cultural intervention. The importance of such a distinction is well understood by the activists of Hindutva. As a result, they are constantly engaged in actively intervening in the cultural life of the people, with the purpose of reorienting it in a religious direction. Through a selective appropriation of cultural and intellectual traditions, and through the intervention by their innumerable organisations, they have lent credence to the Hindutva claim that it represents the interests of the Hindus. It is selective because it excludes those with non-Hindu affiliations.

The multicultural character of Indian society

India is a country of great cultural diversity. It is not only religious plurality that gives rise to divisions; there are various other social and cultural entities that add to the pluralistic character in terms of language, geography, ethnicity, religion and culture. Through S.K. Singh's *People of India* (1992), which is based on a survey of all Indian communities conducted by the Anthropological Survey of India, we have obtained an insight into the plurality of the caste-community structures and their cultural and socio-economic diversities. The basic category in this survey is 'community', which is marked by endogamy, occupation, and perception. The term 'community' as used in this survey resembles the concept of caste and tribe, although it is not inclusive of all their features.

Communities have been identified at various levels. First, there are the ones, usually large in number, that are caste-based and minority groups. Second, there are those that identify themselves utilising linguistic and cultural categories (for example as Assamese, Bengali, Gujarati, Rajasthani, Tamil, and so on). Third, there are those who identify themselves in terms of endogamy, occupation, and social perceptions. (Though communities have been identified through endogamy, occupation, and social perceptions, Singh concedes that there are about half a dozen communities that do not conform to these three criteria.) The fourth group of communities consists of those identified as *Adi Dharma*, *Adi Andhra*, *Adi Karnataka,* to name a few, that fall under the constitutional list of the Scheduled Castes (those outside the mainstream Hindu caste system). In all, there are 4,635 communities in India. Of these 2,209 have been categorised as main communities, and sources have estimated that there are 586 segments within these communities. In addition, there are also other, minor communities and their segments, which are spread across the states and union territories of India.

The findings of this survey affirm that the diversity of communities does not affect the sociological structure of the states and union territories. More than 71% of these communities are located within the boundaries of the states and union territories. This shows that the states and union territories may not only be categorised as linguistic and cultural, but also as sociological units. There are only 111 communities (3.97%) spread throughout India. Interestingly, this diversity in communities may be observed not only among Hindus but among the minority religious groups as well. The communities found within minority religious groups are: Muslims 584, Sikhs 130, Jains 100, Buddhists 93, Christians 339, Jews 7, Parsis 3 and Animists 411 (Singh 1992). This explains the diversity and complexity of social structures and cultural practices among various religious groups, as it also affirms the essential plurality of cultures and cultural practices in India.

The cultural tradition that Hindutva seeks to construct does not respect either the trajectory of its own historical evolution or the importance of external influences in its make-up (Lobo 2003). Thus, it takes a static view of cultural tradition, ignoring its inherent dynamism. One of the consequences of this attitude is the intolerance, reflected in the different interpretations and conflicting representations, toward the minority communities of Muslims, Sikhs and Christians in India recently. This intolerance, however, does not represent the whole Hindu society, but only the section that supports the idea of 'cultural nationalism'.

Cultural nationalism: a threat to secular democracy in India

A democratic setup with universal franchise in a comparatively less 'advanced' country like India presents its own dilemmas during the process of development. However, in the modern globalised world, one cannot constrain a society to be mono-religious, and a nation has no choice but to coexist with other multi-religious and multi-lingual nations. Thus, religion as a basis of nationhood will never serve to establish a peaceful society. On the contrary, it would lead to confrontations among different religious communities, and the pressing economic problems of the people will always be sidelined in favour of religious issues.

Hindutva, as understood by its advocates, involves conformity to the idea that India has primarily been a Hindu *rashtra* (nation). On this issue Ganesh Devy (2002: 262-263) writes: Hindutva 'is not a religious philosophy or a social reform movement. It is a political philosophy based on cultural chauvinism, which insists that the non-Hindus of India accept their place as "minorities", whose safety and security will depend on their ability to earn the "goodwill of the majority"'. Thus, at the heart of the Hindutva ideology is the notion that what is good for the majority should also be good for the minorities, and that any assertion of minority rights is essentially a threat and a challenge to the political authority of the majority. Devy (2002: 263) states:

> Such minorities therefore, are seen by the Hindutva advocates as anti-national and anti-social. Besides, any attempt by a minority group to swell their numbers is seen by the Hindutva votaries as aggression. Hence, conversion to Christianity or a Hindu's marriage to a Muslim or a Christian is seen as undesirable and provocative acts.

Thus, the Hindutva advocates create a threatening atmosphere, which discourages minority communities and faiths from asserting their identities. It is 'nationalistic Puritanism'. In other words, cultural nationalism in India means 'dictatorship of the majority', which is the very negation of democracy. A truly democratic country would ensure equal rights for all, irrespective of religion, caste and creed. Religion, ethnicity, or linguistic origin should not get in the way of fundamental rights. Not only does dictatorship of the majority have no place in a democracy, a true democracy should ensure additional rights to religious and linguistic minorities in order to protect their religious and cultural traditions. The Indian Constitution, for example, ensures these rights to minorities through Articles 25 to 30.

Cultural nationalists call the enactment of such provisions contained in the Constitution the 'appeasement' of minorities, and they try to incite the religious feelings of the majority community. The political success of the Hindutva-supported political parties in India in the last two decades shows that this incitement of the religious feelings of the majority community was also for the purpose of winning votes and acquiring political power. This is the kind of exploitation of sentiment that gave rise to the Gujarat riots, which were a blot on Indian democracy (Augustine 2003: 59-76). However, the people in India have proved that they are capable of confronting cultural nationalism by democratic means, as seen in the last general elections. The BJP, which was the ruling party, despite its efforts to promote its 'India shining' slogan, was ultimately defeated and forced to be the opposition. During the election campaign, the parties in opposition at that time, led by the Indian National Congress had promised to tackle communal violence by the enactment of a 'comprehensive law against communal riots', and these parties came into power in a coalition government called the United Progressive Alliance (UPA). Although the 'Communal Violence (Prevention, Control and Rehabilitation of Victims) Bill' was an encouraging sign, it also shows its limitations of implementation. The Bill was supposed to be a showpiece legislation of the UPA government, a law to check communal violence like the 2002 Gujarat riots, and to facilitate stricter punishment for communal violence, speedy investigation and trial of offences through special courts; it provided institutional arrangements for the first time for the relief, rehabilitation and compensation for victims of violence. But ever since the Bill was introduced in *Rajya Sabha* (Upper House of the Indian parliament) in 2005 there has been opposition to it.[12] Certain provisions of this Bill are short-sighted and may not be really effective to tackle communalism at the ground level. For instance, section 55 of the draft Bill empowers the federal government to declare within a state or province a 'communally disturbed area', thereby bringing the law and order situation of that area under its purview. However, we have repeatedly witnessed that officers abjectly await political directions before they exercise their powers, and the force itself becomes biased and sympathetic to its own community and even participates in violence rather than protecting the victims. Repeated commissions of enquiry on communal violence have also established a consistent pattern that where force is used by the state, it is used highly disproportionately against the vulnerable.

Confronting communalism in India

India is a country in which for hundreds of years different cultures have coexisted. But now the Hindu-Muslim relationship has been projected as a major divide. Communalism basically is not about religion so much as it is a political ideology, as we have seen with regard to cultural nationalism. It is about using history and grievances of the past, some of them imagined and some of them real. As Hindutva and its political mobilisers evolved a cultural politics in the course of the 19th and 20th century, the partition of the country in 1947 created a new constitutional concern about the rights of the minorities (such as Muslims). The emergence of coalition politics (of political parties and various affiliated social movements) created an atmosphere of identity politics (head count by religious identity) and politics of the 'vote bank'.[13] The contemporary political mobilisation in India is a 'vote-bank' politics that is responsible for using religion to divide people.

What should the response of the minorities be to the aggressive Hindutva groups? Should they submit and accept the concept of 'Hindu Rashtra (nation)' and the status of 'second-class citizens'? Or should they resist such demands and fight back with equal militancy? Neither course can be recommended, for such efforts will further divide the people by ethnic identity. Minority communalism against majority communalism is retaliation. Some have advocated boycotting the elections, which is not wise. That will only lead to the misuse of democracy. Rather, winning the confidence of the majority community is important.

The counter to the communalist forces is 'secularism', which was seen by Nehru as an essential component of the independent India. The term 'secularism' is used in India in a range of rather different ways. The obvious meaning is the separation of religion from State. This requires that the law is independent of religion, and that religious motifs are not incorporated in the symbolic construction of the State. However, this use of the term has been extended into a peculiarly Indian solution: that the State should be even-handed towards all religions. There is also the strange communalist appropriation of the idea of secularism, which claims that all (acceptable) belief can be incorporated within Hinduism that is uniquely tolerant of all. This notion results in accusations of 'pseudo-secularism' being levelled at the other two, more conventional concepts.

An aware secular democratic force within the Hindu majority community could stall the Hindutva forces better than an aggressive minority. Democracy in a multi-religious nation can work only if it is secular. Can a religious person be a secularist in a political democracy? This is possible when we explore the minds of the majority of the Hindus in

India. Sudhir Kakar points out that a flexible Indian can be a secularist. He (2006: 38) writes, 'Hindu Nationalism's greatest threat is from within, from the flexible Hindu, because he is as receptive to liberal western attitudes as he is to the spiritual byways of other traditions'. According to Kakar, there are three important actors on the contemporary Hindu religious scene: the traditionalist, the Hindu nationalist, and the flexible Hindu. The flexible Hindu is generally urban, educated, and belongs to the expanding middle class. He can be a traditionalist in the sense of giving significant space to rituals in his religious life. He can also be a nationalist in his sympathy with certain Hindutva stances such as disapproval of Islamic and Christian missionary activity and, at the upper end of the socio-economic scale, a globalist who enthusiastically embraces new religious and spiritual movements irrespective of their territorial origins. The flexible Hindu differs from the other two in that he is more eclectic in his religious attitudes and beliefs than the traditionalist and is less ideologically committed than the nationalist (Kakar and Kakar 2007).

Communal violence or other sectarian violence across the world today is no less crude or less reductionist. Underlying the coarse brutality, there is also a big conceptual confusion about people's identities, which turns multi-dimensional human beings into one-dimensional creatures, as Amartya Sen (2006: 172-73) points out. Looking into his own memory of the 1940s communal violence, Sen (ibid.) writes:

> The political instigators who urged the killing (on behalf of what they respectively called 'our people') managed to persuade many otherwise peaceable people of both communities to turn into dedicated thugs. They were made to think of themselves only as Hindus or only as Muslims (who must unleash vengeance on 'the other community') and as absolutely nothing else: not Indians, not subcontinentals, not Asians, not members of a shared human race. Even though the vast majority of both communities did not think in those narrowly frenzied terms, too many were suddenly trapped into that vicious mode of thinking, and the more savage among them – often at the troubled ends of each community – were induced to kill 'the enemies who kill us' (as they were respectively defined). Many-sided persons were seen, through the hazy lenses of sectarian singularity, as having exactly one identity each, linked with religion or, more exactly, religious ethnicity (since being a non-practitioner of one's inherited religion would not give a person any immunity whatever from being attacked).

It is therefore important to look into the aspect of identity in the emerging global interactions, because generating the illusion of unique identity exploitable for the purpose of confrontation would appeal to those who are in the business of fomenting violence, and there is no mystery in the fact that such reductionism is being practised. Identity as group membership cannot be ignored. But the diminution of human beings involved in assuming only one identity category for a person (neglecting other aspects), expunges at one stroke the far-reaching relevance of our manifold affinities and involvements. Amartya Sen (2006: 175-178) identifies such tendencies as a 'solitarist illusion' and cautions that 'the solitarist belittling of human identity has far-reaching consequences. An illusion that can be invoked for the purpose of dividing people into uniquely hardened categories can be exploited in support of fomenting inter-group strife'. Through the persistent efforts made by the communal organisations and leadership, religion-based politics developed in post-independence India. The search for cultural identity and distinctiveness in each community not only blocked chances of integration and assimilation between the two, but created divisions into communal categories. Sometimes religious differences have been over-stressed, leading to self-chosen isolation and alienation. Negatively, religious differences have been mobilised for furthering economic gaps, social cleavages, the political power struggle and religious identification, and cumulatively giving rise to communal outbursts.

Communal conflict associated with religion is a complex phenomenon. Therefore, the concept of identity and group membership in a plural society is to be reconsidered, especially in the context of global interactions. Human identities can take many distinct forms, and people have to use reason to decide on how to see themselves, and what significance they should attach to having been born a member of a particular community. The illusion of cultural destiny is not only misleading, it can also be significantly debilitating, since it can generate a sense of fatalism and resignation among people who are unfavourably placed. As Sen (2006: 117) points out, the alternative to cultural nationalist tendency is not something called 'plural monoculturalism'[14] because it reduces cultural interactions. Rather it is a realistic 'multi-culturalism', with cultural freedom that broadens the horizon of understanding other people and other groups. A 'plural monoculturalism' in a society can easily be divided and mobilised by extremist organisations or leaders for political purposes. In a competitive socio-economic atmosphere in the globalising world, the mobilisers can easily manage to persuade otherwise peaceable people to turn into enemies. Hence the multi-cultural character of India described above demands an urgent need to broaden the horizon of understanding other people and cul-

tures, a process in which educationists and educational institutions should play a critical role in India.

Notes

1   The Christian minority also has experienced an increasing number of attacks by members of the Hindu nationalist organisations in the last two decades.

2   For example, volunteers of Sivsena (Hindu political party in Maharashtra) and Bajrangdal (a Hindu youth organisation) attacked chocolate shops in Mumbai, Bhopal and other cities on Valentine's day.

3   Medical college students of Ahmedabad (Gujarat) launched an agitation in January 1981 over the issue of reservation of places (through affirmative action) for Scheduled Caste people; and in 1985, anti-reservation forces rose in Gujarat to oppose reservation quotas for socially and economically 'backward castes'.

4   The Janata Party government established a commission in 1979 with a mandate to 'identify the socially or educationally backward' people in India. It was called the Mandal Commission, headed by B.P. Mandal, its purpose being to consider the question of place reservations and quotas for people to redress caste discrimination; it used eleven social, economic, and educational indicators to determine 'backwardness'. In 1980, the commission's report affirmed the affirmative action practice under Indian law whereby members of lower castes (known as 'Other Backward Classes' and 'Scheduled Castes and Tribes') were given exclusive access to a certain portion of government jobs and study places in public universities. It also recommended changes to these quotas, increasing them by 27% to 49.5%.

5   K for *Kshatriya* (lower caste), H for *Harijan* (Dalit), A for *Adivasis* (Tribes) and M for Muslims. It was a social coalition in Gujarat in 1980, supported by the Congress party, which united the lower castes, Tribals and Muslims to counter the upper-caste political control in Gujarat and which won a record 140 Assembly seats.

6   'Semitize' here refers to the alleged argument that the Hindu nationalists represent a turn in Hinduism toward what has been called 'the semitic model' ('one book, one God, one sacred city'), instead of its intrinsic pluralism.

7   These were indiscriminate bomb blasts by unidentified sources, though the police investigation traced them to Muslim organisations such as the Students' Islamic Movement of India (SIMI), Pakistan-based Lashkar-e-Taiba (LeT) and Harkat-ul-Jehadi Islamia (HuJI).

8   'Bajrang Dal plans to spoil V-Day party', Rediff News, Bhopal, India; 12 February 2005.

9   The Muslim religious affinity apparently made it easy for Indian Muslims to find jobs in the Gulf countries, especially in the beginning of the flow of labour migration.

10 Dalits in Meenakshipuram village in Tamil Nadu's Tirunelveli district embraced Islam in February 1981. They apparently adopted Islam because of their social situation and because of maltreatment at the hands of Thevars, the landlords in this area. It set off a national debate on religious conversion and triggered communal riots in various parts of the country.

11 Organisations like VHP and RSS in the 1980s took a special interest in the flow of resources from the Muslim Middle East to religious and educational institutions in India, arguing that this sort of subsidy of Indian Muslims needed to be monitored and restricted.

12 The Bill is now under consideration by the Indian Cabinet with a view of making certain changes to it, suggested by NGOs, which are at the forefront of the Bill's fallout.

13 'Vote bank' relates to identity-based blocs of voters. In India, political parties/leaders encourage a caste or religious community to vote on the basis of narrow communal considerations and maintain them (often through divisive policies) as a loyal bloc of voters who consistently back a certain candidate or political formation in democratic elections. This practice is called vote-bank politics.

14 Having two styles or traditions coexisting side by side, without the two ever coinciding.

6   Is Identity Clash Inevitable?
Identity and Network Building amongst mainland Chinese Migrants in Hong Kong

Sam Wong

Introduction

Migration and identity, two closely linked concepts, have sparked much interest, especially in relation to diaspora studies (Benmayor and Skotnes 1994; Vertovec and Cohen 1999). Two interesting scenarios are displayed in the context of Hong Kong: first, research on identity has been predominantly focused upon local populations. This is obviously connected with an identity crisis and the massive wave of emigration resulting from the Handover Question and the worry about the future of Hong Kong. Second, studies on new arrivals from mainland China have been preoccupied with social adjustment. But the issue of identity change happening in the process of migration is under-researched (Wong 2007).

In recent years, attention has been drawn to mainland Chinese migrant identity. Research shows that migrants' identities are diverse and complex – whilst some groups uphold strong 'Chinese identity', the others develop 'Chinese-Hong Kong identity' or 'Hong Kong identity' (Christian Family Service Centre 2001). The significance of these findings is that they challenge the mainstream notion of adjustment. Highlighting the diversity of migrant identities helps to dispel the myth that migrants are a homogeneous group who share a common identity and have similar interests.

The majority of these studies, however, is quantitative in nature, relying on questionnaires to capture the complex concept of identity. The limitation of this approach is that the dynamic and complex process of identity building is not adequately analysed. How identity building affects the migrants' social networking with local people and their co-ethnics remains unclear.

This paper, therefore, is an attempt to address these issues. Drawing upon my 12 months of ethnographic research on mainland Chinese new arrivals in Hong Kong, I intend to explore the duality of agency and structure in identity building and to examine the dynamics of social networking. This paper re-examines two currently popular notions:

'identity clash' and 'investing in identity'. The former offers a pessimistic view that the clash of identity between migrants and the local population is inevitable. The latter argues for reinforcing migrant identity to engender empowerment and citizen rights.

Using mainland Chinese new arrivals in Hong Kong as an example, this paper demonstrates the dynamics, complexity and diversity of identity building in the process of migration. It also explores the links between identity, social networking and livelihoods. This paper argues that the emergence of the 'Chinese-Hong Kong identity' amongst new arrivals highlights that the dualistic view about the conflict of identity between migrants and the local population is oversimplistic. Migrants developing a strong 'Hong Kong identity' help to reproduce discrimination against other migrants. This paper also challenges the notion of 'investing in identity' to engender citizens' rights for reasons that identity building is not necessarily a conscious act, and that reinforcing migrant identity would create exclusion to those who no longer want to be identified as migrant. Finally, it discusses the identity clash between social workers and migrants and its impact on the effectiveness of service provision.

The structure of this paper is as follows: it starts by reviewing the major paradigm shifts of migrant research in Hong Kong. Then it explores the complex and dynamic changes of migrant identities over the process of migration. The third section focuses on the links between identity and social networking. In conclusion, I draw attention to the impact of the conflict of identity between social workers and new arrivals.

From adjustment, discrimination to identity

There has been a shift in emphasis on mainland Chinese new arrivals in Hong Kong. They can roughly be divided into three periods: social adjustment (1980-1990), discrimination and poverty (1990-2000) and identity and citizenship (early 2000s). This arbitrary division is not to suggest that the 'social adjustment' discourse is no longer influential at the policy level – quite the opposite in reality, but it highlights how new concepts enter the debate and challenge the old paradigm.

Migrant issues in the 1980s were merely 'adjustment problems', and the focus was to provide migrants with basic needs, such as housing, medical care, employment and education (Hong Kong Council of Social Service 1985). The main concern was the split family phenomenon caused by the discrepancy in the times of arrival in Hong Kong between mainland children and their parents.

Academics and NGOs in the 1990s had started to question the effectiveness of assimilation policies. They showed their concerns about the worsening poverty and the rising discrimination against new arrivals (Lee 1997). The rising discrimination against mainland migrants caught the attention of the media, which forced the government to launch an investigation (Home Affairs Branches 1997). The Hong Kong Psychological Society (1997) found that local residents tended to believe that Chinese migrants were 'bad' in nature. Some 54% of respondents thought migrants brought bad influences to Hong Kong, and 55% believed that migrants were themselves to be blamed for their poverty.

Issues of identity emerged in the debate in early 2000, along with the ideas of social exclusion, citizenship and public participation. One of the influential studies was conducted by the Christian Family Service Centre (2001). The Centre interviewed 103 women who were over 18 years old and who had been settled in Hong Kong for less than four years. Questionnaires were used to capture the migrants' perception about their differences with their local counterparts regarding social norms and values. The results show that 41.7% of respondents regards themselves as 'Chinese', 37.9% as 'Hongkongers from the mainland', and 20.4% as 'Hongkongers'. Regarding social networking, 46.5% admitted that they interact only or most often with new arrivals.

Significantly, the research shows that migrants are not a homogeneous group that shares an identical identity. It also exposes a big discrepancy of perception over the ethnic identity between migrants and the locals – a higher proportion of Hong Kong people believe they are 'Hongkongese' rather than 'Chinese'. For instance, Lam (1998) found that only 10.4% of local respondents regarded themselves as 'Chinese' and 33.9% as 'Hongkongese'.

While these findings highlight migrants' diverse identities, they are quantitative in nature and rely on questionnaires to capture the migrants' understanding of identity. They lack a deep and contextual exploration about what 'Chinese identity', 'Chinese-Hong Kong identity' and 'Hong Kong identity' actually mean. The temporal and spatial relationships between identity building and social networking remain unclear since how identity shapes the migrants' interactions with local people and their co-ethnics, both within Hong Kong and across the border, is not adequately examined.

Based on this background, I worked as a volunteer in three migrant groups and made contact with both male and female migrants, their families, social workers and community leaders to conduct my fieldwork. Research methods included informal interviews, participant observation and focus group discussion. Through snowball sampling, I met migrants who did not join any migrant groups. About 85 migrants

were involved in my research, and their duration of residence in Hong Kong ranged from one to ten years. This research is guided by Giddens's (1984) idea of 'duality of structure' – human individuals are 'knowledgeable agents' who are capable of negotiation, but they live within social structures which both facilitate and constrain the exercise of their agency.

Contextual analysis of identity building

Local studies are keen on examining how migrants develop identities in the host society, but they rarely discuss what identities have already been formed before their resettlement (Wong 2005). My research shows that the majority of migrants had developed a strong 'imaginary Hong Kong identity' before they left their homeland. This identity is characterised by a strong preference for moving to Hong Kong and a strong inclination towards Hong Kong values. This identity remains 'imaginary' because they have never been to Hong Kong, and their image of Hongkongers is 'second-hand', largely portrayed by their relations in Hong Kong and the media, so that their general perception of Hong Kong is positive. They consider adjustment as merely 'a matter of time'.

The 'imaginary Hong Kong identity' has a strong correlation to the development of 'Chinese identity' in Hong Kong. Migrants who have a strong Chinese identity tend to have negative images of Hongkongers because they claim that the local people discriminate against them. They have a clear-cut dichotomy of 'we-ness' and 'they-ness', and they try to avoid contact. For example, parents from Hong Kong and the mainland seldom interact outside the waiting areas of schools. The latter have fewer Hong Kong friends, and most often their friends are exclusively new arrivals. This group is largely composed of well-educated, middle-class migrants whose academic and technical qualifications are not recognised in Hong Kong. My study also shows that some poor migrants from interior provinces also develop this identity since they suffer from a higher degree of exclusiveness owing to their language barriers and cultural differences.

Migrants developing 'Chinese-Hong Kong identity' (or hyphenated identity) demonstrate high flexibility in using their identity resources. They usually do not regard 'Hongkongese' and 'Chinese' as two different identities; instead, they see them as compatible, and they welcome both Hong Kong and ethnic Chinese friends. This is demonstrated by their interpretation of discrimination as a mutual problem: while Hongkongers look down on migrants, migrants build walls to protect themselves. Quite contrary to my expectation, migrants with this mixed

identity are mainly from the lower class with very limited resources; for instance, single parents and the disabled. It is because they need to maximise their network resources to meet survival needs that they maintain flexibility in using their mixed identities to handle varied circumstances and to maximise social resources due to poverty. For example, a migrant revealed in interviews that when she applies for social security and public housing, she highlights her Chinese migrant identity. But when she needs to seek support from the locals, she will try her best to hide her migrant identity and stress her good knowledge of Hong Kong.

Another group of migrants embraces strong 'Hong Kong identity'. This group comprises migrants mainly aged 20 to 30 who come from provinces near Hong Kong, such as Guangdong, and from other urban areas. They face fewer difficulties in making an adjustment. They watched Hong Kong media before migration, so they are closer to Hong Kong values, and they have experienced multiple migrations before moving to Hong Kong. They feel more positive towards Hong Kong people and, conversely, negative towards migrants from rural and uneducated backgrounds. They believe that migrants from poor backgrounds themselves are responsible for arousing feelings of discontent among Hongkongers. They also claim that they share similar values with Hong Kong people. Migrants of rural backgrounds can also develop a strong 'Hong Kong identity'. They feel that migration to Hong Kong is an escape from oppression in their tiny villages in China. Disengaging from their co-ethnics in Hong Kong is a way to avoid gossip spreading back to the mainland.

Dynamics of identity building

The categories of identity serve to highlight the key features of identity perception and affiliation. However, identity is a fluid and transformational concept (Castells 2004). New arrivals experience changes in identity building in the process of migration. The life course approach is used here to demonstrate the dynamic and transformative nature of identity-building processes because it witnesses the 'shifts in their (people's) ethnic identities over time, or when they change or adjust their behaviours and practices in specific social situations, with different groups of people' (Song 2003: 74).

Case study A   Sandy, 25 years old, moved to Hong Kong in 1998

> Sandy was born in Guangzhou. She watched Hong Kong's television pro-
> grammes since her childhood. She fancied Hong Kong pop idols and read
> many Hong Kong magazines. After moving to Hong Kong, she does not
> want to be identified as migrant. She thinks up a new English name for
> herself because she believes it is easier to mix with the locals. She avoids
> making contact with other Chinese migrants because she thinks they are
> uneducated and 'rural'. She seldom goes back to her hometown since she
> moved to Hong Kong.
>
> The process of integration, however, is not easy for her. She finds it most
> embarrassing when she looks for jobs and her bosses can identify her mi-
> grant background by her identity card. She complains that her bosses low-
> er her wages and her colleagues make jokes about her accent. In order to
> demonstrate her capability, she tells herself to work harder. She thinks
> that Hong Kong is not as good as she expected. Without too many local
> Hong Kong friends, she attends an evening class where she met some
> migrants of her age. They become good friends and offer mutual support.

Sandy's account (in Case study A) illustrates a complex process search-
ing for identity. She has an 'imaginary Hong Kong identity' before
moving to Hong Kong. She develops a strong 'Hong Kong identity',
which she uses to try to differentiate herself from other migrants by
using an English name and to disengage her social life from other mi-
grants. However, her migrant identity is revealed by her identity card
and the cold reception by her colleagues forces her to re-think the
meaning of the 'Hong Kong identity'. Gaining support from migrants
in the evening class, she gradually develops a 'Chinese identity' to re-
sist discrimination in her everyday life.

Social networking and livelihoods

How identity relates to social networking and how this affects mi-
grants' livelihoods are the concerns in this section. I am interested in
exploring social interactions between migrants and local people and be-
tween migrants themselves, and both within Hong Kong and across
the border.

The primary networking feature of strong 'Chinese identity' is the
tendency to seek support from mainlanders. They pay regular visits to
their hometowns in China to get financial or emotional support.[1] They
feel comfortable in seeking local support from their migrant friends,
and they tend to participate in migrant-only groups since they feel safer

and they are free to speak their own languages. Positively, these network patterns strengthen mutual help between migrants in combating poverty through money lending. This also increases information flow about China and their hometowns. However, this may cause further exclusion and aggravate their poverty by maintaining strong bonding with their ethnic friends in China. A considerable financial burden is borne by lower and poorer classes since they are expected to bring expensive presents back to China to show off their success.

Migrants of 'Chinese-Hong Kong identity' exhibit a higher flexibility in networking than the 'Chinese identity' group. They join both Hongkongers' and migrants' groups, and make friends with both Hongkongers and mainland Chinese. They go on regular visits to China for big events and festivals because they need to maintain good relationships with their family and friends, though they stay most of the time in Hong Kong. Their identity-switching ability is also manifest in language: they speak dialects in front of their ethnic friends, but avoid it in front of local Hong Kong friends. Dealing with both old networks in China and new networks with migrant friends and Hongkongers in Hong Kong is not without costs, however, in particular for those who have heavy family obligations and full-time jobs. Access to multiple networks puts considerable pressure on their time, money and energy.

The group embracing 'Hong Kong identity' is expected to reduce the number of visits to China, but my research shows the opposite. Migrants use their visits to China to reinforce their own Hong Kong status. In other words, their 'Hong Kong identity' is reinforced by mainlanders in China. For example, a young migrant is called 'Hong Kong boy' when he returns to his village. In group participation, they are more willing to try mixed groups because they have more chance to meet Hongkongers there. My study also shows that parents use their children's networks to engage with local people: for instance, migrants attend parental committees in their children's schools. This group of migrants exhibits denser networks to solve their everyday problems, but they feel they need to work hard to demonstrate their capabilities in front of Hongkongers (shown in case study A). This also worsens their poverty since migrants keep comparing themselves with Hongkongers, but their general income is lower than theirs. They try to behave like Hongkongers, but they feel frustrated that they are not treated as equals.

Structural constraints

Identity building and switching are not simply an exercise of migrants' own agency, as the institutional and structural arrangements shape

their capabilities to do so (Kershen 1998). Migrants of strong 'Chinese identity' use their networks on the mainland to resist local discrimination; however, its effectiveness depends on the reception of their family, relations and friends on the mainland. Migrants maintain their old networks by regular visits to China, but a cold reception by their family members and villagers undermines their efforts. In addition, villagers project their imaginary identity on migrants. For example, a migrant complained that his friends always assume that he should pay the bills after meals since he is now a 'well-off Hong Kong citizen'. This discrepancy of identity definition causes disorientation amongst migrants.

Migrants of different social classes and gender have varied responses to identity construction. Middle-class migrants are more able to make regular phone calls to the mainland, to afford several trips back to China annually, and to take gifts with them. Female migrants are more constrained by gender stereotypes, traditional values and norms in their home towns than their male counterparts. Divorced migrants, for example, are not always welcome in their villages because marriage failure is regarded as personal failure.

The government policy hinders migrants from seeking support from mainlanders. Migrants who receive social security can stay on the mainland for a certain length of time within a year – currently 60 days, but an extension has recently been proposed. They risk losing their entitlement if they breach this regulation. This policy restricts especially the elderly migrants' mobility and choice of place to stay. It also has negative implications on their network building and anti-poverty strategies. My study shows that some poor migrants refuse to apply for social security since they fear breaching the law.

Local people are also responsible for shaping migrants' identities. They prevent migrants from shifting their identity to Hongkongese as they can exploit migrants by using their disadvantageous Chinese identity. Some employers, for example, deliberately exaggerate migrants' inaccurate accents and insufficient knowledge about local culture to undermine migrants' bargaining power and thus pay lower wages.

Discussion and policy implications

In this paper, I have offered a contextual analysis of identity building amongst mainland Chinese new arrivals in Hong Kong. I have also demonstrated the dynamic and complex process of identity construction, and how it relates to social networking and public participation. Putting migrants' agency and livelihoods back into social structures, I have highlighted the constraints on identity switching. What lessons can

NGOs and social workers draw from these complex identity characteristics and transformations?

The 'identity clash' discourse is often cited, especially in the media, in explaining racial, ethnic, cultural and religious tensions (Oommen 1997). It conceptualises the local population and migrants as two oppositional groups, and claims that the clash of identity between them is inevitable. On the one hand, local people consider migrants as free-riders who place burdens on the existing social services and cause unemployment and crime. Migrants, on the other, feel socially stigmatised, marginalised and distrusted. They feel discriminated against in the labour market and treated as second-class citizens. The clash of identity results in hatred, self-exclusion, confrontation and violence. For instance, Huntington (2004) asks whether national identity can co-exist with a distinctive immigrant subculture. In explaining the rising tension between Muslims and local people in Holland, Moynahan (2005: 38) suggests that: 'Muslims now have a big need to show their identity. So there is the risk of a clash. The clash is already in the mind.' The riots in Bradford, UK, in 2001 were arguably caused by the second generation of South Asians who feel 'socially excluded' from the mainstream English society (Bagguley and Hussain 2003).

The notion of identity clash may contain some truth, but it mistakenly reinforces a dualism that local people and migrants are two distinct and internally homogenous groups. As shown before, migrants developing 'Chinese-Hong Kong identity' adopt flexible strategies in interacting with the locals and other new arrivals. These attempts prove effective in avoiding embarrassment and conflict. The generalised category 'new arrivals' or 'migrants' presumes that people sharing similar cultural backgrounds and historical experiences necessarily develop an identical identity and naturally work together. My study, however, suggests that new arrivals are diverse in interests and placed at different social positions. Migrants with a strong 'Hong Kong identity', for example, discriminate against their co-ethnics and help to produce and reproduce inequalities and exclusion.

Investing in identity?

Disillusioned by the failure of assimilation policies, some social service agencies have placed empowerment and migrants' citizen rights high on their agenda. While acknowledging the significance of co-learning between new arrivals and local people, many NGOs remain active in forming migrant-only groups, intended to draw migrants together to achieve collective goals. Migrant identities are reinforced in social campaigns in order to enhance internal solidarity. This development runs

parallel to the World Bank's advocacy of building social capital by 'investing in identity' (World Bank social capital website). The community management policy, for example, places emphasis on the importance of improved migrants' networks in generating 'ethnic capital' (Wintrobe 1995: 44).

Nevertheless, the notion of 'investing in identity' offers an inadequate understanding of identity building. My research suggests that the process of identity building is fluid and unpredictable. How to shape and transform migrants' different identities into one fixed, programmed and desirable form to achieve the anticipated outcomes is problematic. Not only does it constrain new arrivals from accessing multiple social networks, but it also excludes those who fail to conform to that particular identity. In addition, the notion places emphasis on the migrants' consciousness to draw upon their identity to attain private goods. This may well be supported by migrants who switch their hyphenated identities in different contexts. My study, however, also shows that building identity is not always a rational or conscious choice. Instead, normative principles and 'the right way of doing things' play a role in guiding the migrants' decision-making in identity affiliation and social networking.

Questioning social workers' identity

An increasing number of well-educated, second-generation migrants have joined social service agencies to serve their less well-off counterparts. These social workers generally arrived in Hong Kong in their early teens with their parents for reasons of family re-union. Owing to their low level of English proficiency and with educational qualifications generally unrecognised in Hong Kong, they had to start in the lower grades in secondary schools. Those doing better in school caught up very quickly and finally entered universities to receive tertiary-level education. Because they already have an understanding of the similar cultural backgrounds and dialects spoken by the migrant communities, the general belief is that they are more effective in mobilising migrants.

Owing to the hardship and discrimination in their early years, some of these social workers develop a strong 'Chinese identity'. They believe that new arrivals, like themselves, can challenge social inequalities. They tend to consider migrants as transformative agents who desire social change, and see raising consciousness and empowerment as essential strategies in tackling power inequalities between new arrivals and local people.

The problem of this approach is that they risk imposing their own identity and values on migrants. Challenging domination is not cost-free. While the livelihoods of migrants are deeply embedded in 'harmonious' social relations in their communities, reinforcing migrant identity may generate confrontational relationships between new arrivals and the locals. Some migrants do not consider this as the 'desirable' way of living, so they withdraw from public participation. In other words, new arrivals are not necessarily transformative agents since they wish to be apolitical after the painful experience of resettlement. How to empower migrants without undermining their livelihoods needs critical exploration.

These social workers are more likely to have an identity clash with migrants of strong 'Hong Kong identity'. In my experience, social workers tend to consider this group of migrants 'undeserving' of help since these people tend to discriminate against other new arrivals. As a result, these migrants feel isolated and withdraw. This exclusionary practice shows that social workers fail to recognise that this group of migrants can be an asset to resource-poor members in accessing multiple networks. This undermines, rather than builds, the livelihoods of poor migrants.

Note

1   It is often mistakenly assumed that monetary flow is necessarily unidirectional from migrants to their families. Migrants in interviews reveal that their families and friends on the mainland became wealthy in the reform era in the 1980s.

7   Socio-Economic Crisis and Its Consequences on a Little Known Tribal Community in West Bengal, India

Samar Kumar Biswas[1]

Introduction

Advanced communities have the privilege of enjoying a high living standard through their easy access to sophisticated technology, health facilities, educational infrastructure, communication facilities and other modern amenities. The Totos, a lesser-known tribal group from the northern part of West Bengal close to the Indo-Bhutan border, find themselves in very different circumstances. They practise mainly settled cultivation, growing maize and other grains, engage in animal husbandry, and collect fruit, roots, tubers, medicinal plants and other items of daily need from the forest. They often have to cross the border into Bhutan to earn a livelihood. At present, factors such as deforestation, land alienation, population pressure, lack of proper educational infrastructure and health facilities, poor sanitation and water supply system, the practice of an outdated technology, and poor communication impact on their socio-cultural, economic and political existence and act as the main obstacles to a better standard of living. In portraying the life of this Indian tribal community, the focus is on the question: what are the impediments for development of some of India's tribal communities? Maintaining a strongly separate identity has not brought the Totos a better way of life.

Today, India has a population of over one billion and represents the second most populous nation in the world. Almost 15% of the world's population live in India in extremely diverse social, economic, geographical and ecological conditions (Ahuja 1993: 16). India's people belong to a wide variety of races, religions, castes, tribes, languages, social customs, beliefs, political philosophies and ideologies. Levels of educational status, formal knowledge, technology and skills are as varied as the levels of socio-economic conditions. All of these factors have contributed towards prominent class distinctions in Indian society, in which some people have incomparably greater access to the opportunities of modern times, while others are far less fortunate, enjoying none of these privileges.

The criteria of poverty are varied. In 2002, the government of India mentioned in its BPL (Below Poverty Line) Census Report for the Tenth Five-Year Plan (2002) that the criterion for identifying people living 'in crisis or distressing conditions' was a monthly income below 540 rupees per head. In this context the term 'crisis' is based on the calculation that the average daily calorie requirement of an adult person is 2400 (rural) and 2100 (urban). Those unable to consume that amount of calories per day may face some nutritional deficit. Every society has its particular socio-cultural set-up to meet this requirement, which in turn has to be closely correlated with a particular environment. Change of any kind may unsettle this fine balance. The dangers are even more acute with societies that traditionally strongly depend on nature and are equipped only with very limited technological skills.

In India, while a section of society has access to basic amenities, some have not. Of the total population, 16.2% are Scheduled Castes and 8.2% are Scheduled Tribes[2] (Census 2001). Most of these people are educationally and economically underprivileged in comparison with the general population and hence remain very poor and underdeveloped. They are far removed from the level of modern and general aptitudes. Indeed, they have a pressing need to hold their own vis-à-vis the general population by acquiring the desired knowledge and expertise. But unfortunately for them, the speed of environmental and socio-economic changes makes it difficult for them to keep up with the demands of the times, and hence their crisis continues unabated. Even today, the economy of many of these underdeveloped people and particularly for the tribal people is forest-based. Their cultural and religious life is also closely related to this form of economy and social existence. Overpopulation, deforestation and continuous exploitation of forest resources by others have serious effects on their livelihood. Various environmental strategies to limit the exploitation of the forest and its resources have also had a serious impact on their economic activities as the forest becomes out of bounds, and anyone found violating this ban is liable to punishment. Thus, the very survival of these forest-dependent people is under threat today because they do not have the means to acquire new skills or improve their existing skills. Moreover, most of the underdeveloped tribes do not have sufficient numerical strength and political capacity to protect their resources from the grasp of others. They are facing social as well as economic crisis. The Totos[3] are such an underdeveloped tribal group facing all these problems, which are highlighted in this study.

The Toto tribe

The Toto tribe is designated as one of the three underdeveloped tribes of West Bengal. At present, they live in the village Totopara in the Madarihat block of Jalpaiguri district, which is about 250 m to 500 m above sea level (Das 1967: 7). This village lies at the foothills of the Himalayas in the border area between Bhutan and West Bengal. The Titi forest – a tropical rain forest – runs along the village's boundaries on the west and south, and the river Torsha flows on its east boundary (Sarkar 1993: 4). The Totos have lived there since the middle of the 18th century, leading their own way of life far removed from the influences of the culture of the Indian majority. This area came under British rule in 1868, and since the very beginning, the British policy was to keep Totopara as a reserve for the Totos, allowing no other people to settle there. The whole area within the *mouza*[4], comprising about 3.12 square miles, was recorded by D. Sunder, the Settlement Officer of Western Dooars during 1889-94, in the name of the Toto *mondal* (chief)[5] on behalf of the entire community (Sunder 1895: 86-88; Roy Burman 1964: 16; Das 1967: 8-9; Sanyal 1973: 10). Due to the inaccessibility of the deep forest, the village remained completely isolated until 1982 (Majumdar 1991: 6).

In 2006 (during my field study), there were 270 Toto families with about 1300 individuals (at my count 671 males and 615 females). The Totos form a largely endogamous society consisting of fifteen exogamous clans (*sarkhae*) and are settled in six hamlets in Totopara.

Concerning their physical features, the Totos are of Mongoloid stock. Their complexion, however, is rather on the darker side (Sanyal 1973: 1). The language of the Totos has been classified by Hodgson, Grierson and Chatterjee as belonging to the Tibeto-Burman family of the sub-Himalayan group and as 'non-pronominalized' [*sic*][6] (Grierson 1909: 250-251; Chatterjee 1951: 15; Sanyal 1973: 45). The Toto language shows certain similarities in its structure to other languages of this group, such as Limbu, Rong or Lepcha, Rai, Dhimal and Bhutia, etc. The census of 1961 classifies the Toto under the Bhutia languages (Majumdar 1991: 50).

Upon marriage, the Toto youths generally tend to set up a separate house. A Toto couple is treated as a separate family unit by the Toto Social Council. A Toto family is usually small and patrilocal, and descent is traced through the male line. Ideally, a Toto family consists of the husband and wife and their unmarried children. My study reveals that 88.89% of the families are of the nuclear type, and the average family size is around five (my field study 2004-2006). The main function of the Toto family is four-dimensional, viz. (i) co-habitation, (ii) procreation, (iii) provision of food and (iv) shelter (Sarkar 1993: 20).

The Totos recognise two types of relatives (*neoscha*); viz. consangui-
neal relatives (*miphu papaya*) and affinal relatives *(samdi or pami-bei)*.
According to Murdock's classification, the kinship terminology of the
Totos falls under the *Hawaiian* type (Sarkar 1993: 25). The foremost
rule of marriage is clan exogamy. The Totos generally observe monoga-
my, but polygyny is permissible though not common. They practise
both negotiated marriages and love marriages. Widow marriage is al-
lowed (Sanyal 1973: 37). Marriage between close as well as distant cou-
sins on both the father's and mother's sides (Mother's Brother's
Daughter (MBD) and Father's Sister's Daughter (FSD) type of cross
cousin marriages) is permissible (Sarkar 1993: 24). Both junior soro-
rate and levirate is allowed. While in the past boys and girls used to be
betrothed at the age of five to seven (Majumdar 1991: 9), at present the
usual age is ten for girls and 15 for boys. Sometimes a bride may be
older than the bridegroom. Extra-marital relations are forbidden. Pre-
marital relationships are allowed only among unmarried persons and
only if they plan to get married. Divorce (*peismi*) is allowed, although
the Totos try to avoid it; and if there is marital discord, the wife can
leave her husband and engage in a relation with some other suitable
man.

The birth of a baby is considered a happy occasion. For this purpose
a part of the bedroom in the house is screened off temporarily. Other
women assist during the delivery (Sanyal 1955: 92). On the fifth, se-
venth, ninth, eleventh, or thirteenth day after the birth, there is the
name-giving ceremony (*madipawaya*) with the assistance of a *pow*
(priest)[7]. In case a couple remains childless, they adopt the son of a
close relative. The rice-giving ceremony (*bathelangpua*) takes place
when the child reaches the age of five. On this occasion, the child is
dressed up in new garments, again with the assistance of the *pow*.

Death is believed to be caused by malevolent spirits. The dead are
buried in their respective clan ossuary located towards the east of the
village, i.e. towards the banks of the river Torsha. The mourning rituals
are observed on the sixth day after death for males and on the fifth day
for females (Chakrabarti and Chattopadhyay 1964: 62). The attendants
to the burial are fed on that day. Although previously the mourning
period extended over twelve months, nowadays it is observed for only
twelve days. Once the mourning period is over, the widower or widow
is allowed to continue his or her normal life, and remarriage is per-
mitted after one year.

The Totos' daily routine is as follows: rising early in the morning,
they consume *chia* (tea) and some food before they leave for the fields.
Children aged between ten and 15 go to the forest in the morning to
collect firewood. Adult females do this work in the evening. At midday
the adults have the meal that they prepare in the morning and carry to

the field. In mid-afternoon the children return with the cattle, while the women return with loads of green vegetables on their back and with some tubers for the pigs. The men return home last. After their return from the fields, the women tend to the children, arrange fodder for the pigs and then go to the *merrang* (cooking place) to prepare the evening meal: usually boiled cereal and some curry cooked with salt and chillies. More recently, mustard oil is used for cooking. The main meals, when all family members sit together, are taken twice daily – early in the morning and at dusk. Soon after the evening meal, the Totos go to sleep.

The Totos' diet is as simple as their lifestyle. Among the meats, sometimes fresh and sometimes dried, is beef, pork, fowl and pigeons. Fish is a very rare delicacy. Dried fish is sometimes purchased from the market. During the rainy season the Totos use a hand-net to catch fish in the Torsha river. They also collect snails, caterpillars, wasps and spiders for consumption. *Eu*[8] (home-brewed liquor), fermented from maize, *marua (Setaria italica Beauv.)* and *kaoni (Eleusine coracana Gaertn.)*,[9] is a favourite drink. Betel-leaf and betel-nut are also very popular. *Bidi* (a thin cheroot) and cigarette smoking is also common among both sexes. Bodily hygiene is poor: they rarely take a bath. Roy Burman (1964: 18) states that 'the Totos are very dirty. Rarely do they wash their body. After eating they do not wash their mouth. Even at that time they clean their hand [sic] by rubbing on the ground'. However, these habits are gradually changing in recent times.

The Totos are animists, their worship involving the road, sky, hills, forest, river, sun, moon, stars and in fact all the 'terrene elements' and 'starry hosts' (Sanyal 1955: 95). Almost all clans have their own ancestral deities, but it appears that most of the Totos in recent years have forgotten the deities' names. They also have house deities. The chief deity is *Ispha* or *Mahakal,* and *Pidua* is the second most important. Two major religious festivals, *Mayu* and *Ongchu,* are observed by the whole community in the *demsha* (temple). They also observe the celebrations of *Fagua* and *Gorom puja* or *Gram puja* for the welfare of the village. The *pow* and *deba-pow* or *kaiji* (head priest) performs the rituals, usually by offering *eu* and meat.[10]

Personal property is very simple and consists of clothes and ornaments. Previously, personal belongings, including cash, used to be buried with the owners. Now this custom has fallen into disuse. Domestic animals are individually owned by family members, including children in their early teens. Owners have absolute right over the disposal of animals. Sanyal (1955: 93) states: 'property is inherited from father to son. Females get nothing. All sons get equal share. But the adult son must maintain the old mother and minor brothers and sisters'. This was validated by my field study (2004-2006). However, despite un-

equal inheritance rights, I observed that the women are treated with much respect and enjoy considerable freedom.

Crisis and consequences

There are many changes occurring in the Totos' socio-cultural life as they are increasingly coming into contact with the outside world, and this forces them to adopt many new ideas. Owing to these changes, the economic, political, social, religious, environmental and other aspects of their life are being transformed profoundly. But this transformation is not necessarily working for the better and in fact is creating an acute crisis.

The influx of non-Totos is one aspect of change. Earlier, when the Totos were totally dependent on a forest-based economy, they were the only inhabitants of the area. But later on, the influx of people from elsewhere in search of meeting their own basic needs resulted in land and population pressure. According to the official estimate in 2003, 73.92% of the families in Totopara were non-Totos, with 700 Nepali families, 25 Bihari families, 4 Bengali and Muslim families and 2 families of Garo and Mech origin. This influx has caused many problems for the Totos, especially having to share the natural resources. Their authority over their traditional resources started to decline. In 1969, a greater portion of the land previously owned by the Totos was recorded as vested in non-Totos (Sarkar 1993: 22). The Totos now have only 343 acres[11] of land (17.18%) (Biswas and Bhattacharjee 2006: 106). Thus, the Totos have become almost landless and resourceless in their own territory.

Their contact and interaction with the outside world have also transformed their social and cultural life. Toto youths are greatly attracted to the living patterns and styles of the outside world, and imitate them. The traditional dress, household implements, ornaments and architecture are rapidly being replaced by modern things. The modern pop culture has also invaded traditional forms of dance and music. The social institutions of the Totos are also being affected and are changing rapidly. But by far the most important effect is the loss of scope for traditional economic pursuits, combined with environmental degradation and loss of space through the physical presence of non-Totos. All this has seriously affected the Totos' life. Even the language is changing owing to the influx of terms and expressions from the Nepali, Bengali, Hindi, Bhutia and Bodo languages, which have been absorbed into the Toto language. Thus, while on the one hand the Toto language is losing its purity and importance, on the other, none of the other languages is spoken properly. This is a matter of grave concern, especially

in the context of school education and, of course, in terms of preserving the tribe's cultural heritage.

Until 1960, the Totos were totally untouched by formal education. At present, 45.37% of the people are literate (56.16% for males and 33.13% for females). Unfortunately, the level of education among them is very poor and remains confined to the primary level (56.70%) and Class V-III level (31.34%). Only 10.10% of them have reached the Class IX-X level, and a meagre 1.86% are above Class X level of education (my field study 2004-2006).

A major problem with the formal education of the Totos is that they are taught in languages they are not familiar with, as a result of which the children have difficulty in understanding the lessons. In addition, most of the teachers, being outsiders, fail to understand the students' mentality. Also, the schools lack the most basic infrastructural facilities. The children often do not get adequate help and reassurance from their own families or from the community as a whole. Added to this, the poor economy poses a major constraint and adversely affects the educational progress. The need for updated educational skills is essential to help Toto students become acquainted with the ways of modern society, but here too there is an acute lack. As a result, even the younger generations are not equipped to cope with the demands of living in the wider Indian society.

A very common phenomenon among the Totos is to get their children married at an early age. It has been noticed that 44.36% of females and 32.45% of males got married before they reached the age of 18 and 21, respectively, thus violating the government's marriage laws. Furthermore, dowry payment has been reported in 5.9% of marriages. While previously there was no prevalence of dowry or bride price payment, it is now slowly gaining ground. In the traditional Toto society, community-exogamous marriage was strictly prohibited, but it is happening today, with nine females and five males having married into other communities (field study 2004-2006). That is to say, inter-tribal and tribe-caste marriages are occurring today with increasing frequency.

In Toto society, traditionally, most women bear children at an early age. My study reveals that 41.06% of women gave birth to their first child when they were between 14 and 18 years old. Some 64.09% have more than two children, varying from three to nine. This large number of childbirths is probably due to the fact that Totos rarely use methods of family planning. Their young age at the time of marriage and first childbirth may also be the cause of ill health among mothers and children. Only 112 deliveries (8.62%) were performed in a health centre, while 1,188 births (91.38%) took place at home. One major problem is that there are no professional midwives available. Furthermore, it has

been noticed that early menopause is a common phenomenon among
Toto women, commonly starting before the age of 40 (field study
2004-2006). Reproductive and child health issues can be considered
serious problems among the Totos.

Previously, the Totos depended mostly on *jhum* cultivation,[12] animal
domestication, and food and wood gathering in the forest for a liveli-
hood. The crops cultivated by them in and around Totopara were
maize, *marua*, *kaoni*, pulse, wet rice, potato, tapioca, green vegetables,
ginger and areca nut. Generally, they did not sell their crops, but used
them for their own consumption. They carried out their agricultural ac-
tivities and other work by way of a labour exchange system. However,
my field study revealed that the Totos are now primarily engaged in
agricultural work, services, household work, animal husbandry and
grazing, firewood collection for others, and were also involved in the
businesses of other people, serving as porters and wage labourers (for
instance, in mining in Bhutan). In their agricultural activity the Totos
primarily depend on the plough for cultivation and have no knowledge
of modern scientific means of agricultural production involving the
use of better technology, fertilizer, pesticides, etc. For irrigation they de-
pend entirely on the monsoon rains.

Whereas earlier on as much as 1996.96 acres of land was recorded
in the name of the Toto *mondal*, the chief, on behalf of the whole com-
munity (Mitra 1953: CCXV), in 1969 individual ownership of land was
introduced, and as per the records, it was noted that 89 Toto families
had 300 acres of land in their possession. The residual land, which is
more than 1600 acres, was labelled as 'vested land'.[13] This 'vested land'
seems to have been marked as 'ownerless', allowing anybody to settle
there without special permission being required. A decade later, in
1979, it was found that 33 Toto families were landless. During the re-
cent government survey (Chowdhuri 2005: 151-152), conducted during
2000-01, it was noticed that due to the increase in the number of fa-
milies, the amount of land available for one family had decreased sub-
stantially. However, due to the distribution of the 'vested land', the
number of landless families has gone down simultaneously (Chowd-
huri 2005: 151-152). But the land available for cultivation is inadequate,
and a number of Totos have no cultivable area on their own property,
which is also another serious problem. In the course of the field study,
it emerged that only 343 acres (17.18%) of land remain in the posses-
sion of the Totos, while the rest (82.82%) has passed into the hands of
non-Totos. Consequently, the size of the average land holding is only
1.27 *bighas*[14] per family. The study further reveals that 11 families
(4.07%) are without any agricultural land. Four families (1.48%) are
landed sharecroppers, three (1.11%) are landless sharecroppers, and 14
(5.19%) are day labourers. This is alarming as previously Toto society

did not have sharecroppers or agricultural day labourers. Obviously, it is due to land alienation, population pressure as well as economic scarcity that sharecropping on anothers land has been introduced. As there is not enough land for cultivation in this village, the villagers go to the neighbouring Ballalguri village, about five km away, to pursue cultivation work. Today, as they are outnumbered in their own territory, and most of their land (82.82%) and resources are under the control of non-Totos, the Totos are even forced to go beyond India's borders in search of jobs for their survival. The study (2004-2006) revealed that 26 Toto families (9.63%) depend entirely on Bhutan for their livelihood, and 130 families (48.15%) depend on work both in India and Bhutan. The remaining 114 families (42.22%) depend entirely on work in India for their livelihood. Interestingly, the Totos are known to have traditionally undertaken *angdaita*, trade tours to Bhutan. Under the Bhutia rule, the Totos were engaged in carrying rice, salt and the like from the markets in the plains to Bhutan, and on their return journey they would bring oranges and various jungle products from Bhutan for sale in the plains (Sarkar 1993: 11). But at present, for several reasons, this possibility has been restricted to a limited few. Furthermore, most of the Totos are not getting paid well for the areca nut, one of the most important cash crops they produce. The *mahajans* (moneylenders) on whom the Totos depend for loans or advance money refuse to pay them a proper price even as they force them to hand over their produce to them.

The first and foremost characteristic of the Totos' economic circumstances is the close association between their economic life and the natural environment, i.e. the forest. The forest is an important source for generating livelihoods and income. The Totos forest-based economy mainly consists of hunting, food gathering, and collection of 'Minor Forest Produce' (MFP) such as fuel, life-stock fodder and construction materials for their houses. However, with the gradual influx of non-Totos, the Totos lost their previous control over much of the territory and its resources. The forest started to degenerate at a rapid pace through logging, clearing and over-exploitation of the natural resources for the purposes of the non-Totos. The Jalpaiguri district, where the Totos reside, was previously covered by dense forests, but now only 28.75% remains as forestland (according to the 'West Bengal State Forest Report 2000'; see De 2005: 110).

Under the changed circumstances, the Totos are unable to adequately produce their seasonal food crops to meet their own needs. Hence they tend to depend more on the forest for gathering and collection of jungle fruits, roots and tubers, leaves, mushrooms, etc., to balance their seasonal agricultural shortage of foodstuff to some extent. But with dwindling forest area and alienation of resources, this is be-

coming very difficult. They construct their huts and houses with bamboo, bushes, wood, grass, leaves, etc. available from the forest. In other words, their whole material culture and their food requirements are to a large extent forest-based. So there can be no doubt that with the decrease in control over the forest area, it has become extremely difficult for the Totos to meet their daily necessities.

Today, it is a matter of grave concern that problems like soil erosion due to environmental changes in the region remain unaddressed, and a rise in global temperature gets noticed here too as elsewhere in the world. The lack of knowledge among the Totos and their poor numerical strength (26.08%) have also prevented them from protecting themselves against the continued exploitation in respect of land ownership and rights over the forest.

In the past, a large portion of this low-altitude region of the hillocks with laterite soil was under orange plantation, oranges being the chief economic crop of this area. In fact, the orange orchards were in very good condition until the 1930s, when the forest began to be cleared increasingly for settled agriculture. Orange growing suffered as the fruit is unable to tolerate direct sunlight, and the orchards were exposed when the forest was cleared. In addition, humus formation, which was good for the growth of orange orchards, was adversely affected by the deforestation, leading to humus disappearance. The Totos also used to collect ripe berries of pipul plants (Piper longum)[15] from these groves and sold them to the traders. They bred lac-worms[16] too in the shirish trees (Albizzia stipulata) in the forest. But due to rapid deforestation, the pipul plants and shirish trees are hardly found any more, the lac industry is now virtually non-existent, and all the related activities have also disappeared.

Bamboo has always played a crucial role in the socio-economic life of the Totos. Previously, Totopara and its adjacent forest areas grew a good quality of bamboo bushes. Selling bamboo helped to meet family expenses (Das 1967: 67; Sanyal 1973: 28). But due to rapid commercialisation, the non-Toto bamboo traders started cutting down the bamboo bushes for monetary gain. At the present time there is not a single bamboo bush in this village, forcing the Totos to go to the deep forest, despite many hazards, to collect the bamboo needed for making many things.

The Totos are known to have had a keen interest in animal husbandry. They used to rear pigs, fowls, goats and oxen. Animal husbandry supplied them with good nutrition in the form of animal protein. With massive deforestation, soil erosion and land alienation, there has been a sharp decline in grazing land, which poses a serious challenge to animal husbandry. It is true to say that even today many families continue to keep some livestock, but the number is much lower, mainly due to

lack of fodder and grazing land. This adversely affects the Totos' nutrient supply. The generally poor level of income also prevents them from purchasing their nutritional requirements from the market.

With the rapid increase of the migrant population together with the population increase of the Totos themselves, today there is an increased pressure on the available land. Exacerbated by the Totos' unscientific exploitation of the existing natural resources, this is causing an adverse effect on the ecological balance and affecting both farming activities and the availability of natural resources. Due to their lack of awareness and poverty, most of the arable land (82.82%) has passed from their control to outsiders. Many of them have been forced to mortgage their land, mostly to Nepali moneylenders, and some are being forced to sell their land, and in this way a large portion of the Totos' traditional land is lost to them. Owing to the influences of the more affluent sections of outside society, most of the Totos have lost the economic security they had previously enjoyed.

The degradation of the forest along with the increasing pressure on their traditional but limited natural resources forced the Totos into poverty. Despite all their efforts, 85.92% of Toto families cannot earn more than 2000 rupees in total per month. With this meagre income they have to support an average of five family members (field study 2004-2006). The extreme misery can be seen in cases where 1.11% of families are fully dependent on others. The crops produced by the Totos may take care of their basic needs for about seven to eight months in the year. But in most cases for the rest of the year they have to depend on other work and also collecting forest resources. Often, in order to afford basic necessities, they become entrapped in indebtedness. The *mahajans* (money-lenders) lend money under unrealistic terms and conditions, known as the *thika* (agreement) system. The Totos, unable to understand the underlying trickery, accept these conditions and end up losing their property (Biswas and Bhattacharjee 2006: 109). It may be noted in this context that of the 93 Toto families (34.44%) who have taken loans from various sources, 65.60% have availed themselves of loans from non-government lenders. Some 83 families (89.25%) have taken a loan of up to 5000 rupees each, and 10 families (10.75%) have borrowed even higher amounts (field study 2004-2006). Here also, the lack of knowledge about the terms and conditions of money-lending creates an acute crisis in terms of exploitation and chronic indebtedness. As indebtedness keeps growing along with poverty, reduction of available natural resources, shortfall in both grazing and agricultural land, Toto society is under threat.

The food requirements of the Totos are very simple, but the economic crisis leaves them unable to meet even their basic nutritional needs. The Totos traditionally depend on different cereals at different times of

the year. Their simple techniques of agricultural production and scant knowledge are responsible for low crop yield. The crops produced last only up to seven or eight months in a year. During these months they have to supplement their diet by consuming roots and tubers collected from the jungle. For the rest of the year they must purchase grains, mainly rice and maize, from the market – which they find very difficult due to poverty. Only a few Toto families can make up the shortage through trade and services. Not surprisingly, they are faced today with an acute food shortage due to population pressure and decreasing availability of home-grown produce. In addition, previously, the Totos were able to catch fish and snails for their diet from the small streams that pass by their village, but when the outsiders gradually settled down in various parts of Totopara, the natural flow of the streams became blocked, and the availability of fish and snails has been badly affected (Biswas and Bhattacharjee 2006: 111).

Health issues are very much connected with the environment, particularly the forest ecology (Chaudhuri 2003: 23). Through their intimate knowledge of the local environment, the Totos know much about the medicinal value of the flora. This enabled them to rely on 'folk medicine' for the treatment of various ailments, the needed medicinal plants being collected from the forest. They also worshipped ancestral deities in the forest to secure good health. They often consulted the *pow* and the *jhankiri* (Nepali medicine man) for herbal medicine. Even today about 41.40% of the people depend on traditional treatment, for which they use more than 20 varieties of plants. Once again, due to massive deforestation and environmental degradation, most of the roots and tubers, herbal plants and other medicinal resources are no longer available in this area. My study revealed that 814 persons (62.62%) are suffering from various diseases like fever (25.18%), malaria (23.83%), cough and cold (9.21%), gastric problems (5.77%), skin disease (3.44%), arthritis (2.70%), pneumonia (0.98%), dysentery (7.99%), tuberculosis (3.44%), anaemia (5.65%), cancer (0.25%), chest pain (6.39%), jaundice (2.46%) and eye problems (2.70%). Besides sickness, premature ageing and a short life span are very common. It is a fact that only 2.15% of the living Toto population are aged 55 and above. Meanwhile, for the treatment of diseases, 10.69% depend on traditional forms of treatment, 49.75% on modern forms and 30.71% on a mix (field study 2004-2006). There is a government hospital, but the health services are sorely lacking.

The Toto dwelling houses (*nakosa*) are built on wooden or bamboo poles about 1.5 to 2 m above ground. The roof is generally sloped from the middle and thatched with grass. The floor and the walls are made of planks or bamboo splits. In front there is an open projected space, a bamboo platform known as *dui*. A staircase made of a single log, *kai-*

bei, is placed from the *dui* for climbing up to the *dui* and the house. The area below the bamboo platform of the house is enclosed with bamboo and wooden bars where pigs, fowl and other livestock are kept. Previously, they depended on the forest entirely for the construction materials for their houses. Now the unavailability of these materials due to deforestation is causing problems. At times they are unable to thatch the roof properly. During the rainy season, rainwater seeps into their houses and, making them damp, often causes health problems such as coughs and colds, fever, etc. Although the government has provided the Totos with 100 houses, they are not properly built and not at all suited to the people's socio-economic condition. Furthermore, 140 latrines have also been provided, but they are devoid of appropriate sanitation and adequate water supply.

The Totos are known to have depended totally on the forest for raw materials for their handicrafts and household utensils such as the wooden bowls, *tahati* (pumpkin spoon), bamboo-made vessels and calabash. At present, they are still using brooms, baskets, winnowing trays, mats, ropes, *jitan* (bamboo stirrer), wooden liquor buckets or clay-made pitchers, *jitting* (filters made of bamboo basketry work), etc. For bedding the Totos rely on straw mattresses and gunny bags. Here too, due to deforestation, the production of bamboo and wooden items has been seriously affected.

The dress code of the Totos is very simple. Previously, the art of weaving and spinning was a local tradition to produce traditional clothing; but recently, due to the advent of the modern mill-made clothes, the traditional fabrics made by handloom have totally disappeared. The women now wear clothes in the Nepalese fashion. Very few wear ornaments. The traditional coin-made necklace has disappeared, and now various types of cheap ornaments are sold in the market of Totopara. It should be noted that sometimes poverty prevents them from purchasing even their minimum clothing requirements. As many of them do not even have sufficient woollen garments, they struggle through the cold winter months. For umbrellas they use big leaves rather than parasols.

The tribal socio-cultural life is also intimately connected with the forest ecology. The forest was an inseparable part of tribal life (Chaudhuri 2003: 89). The Totos' socio-cultural and religious life was closely correlated with the forest ecology, and it was in the very lap of nature that their culture found its rhythm of survival. But factors such as deforestation, environmental degradation and loss of traditional economic pursuits are now alienating them from their cultural roots. Traditionally, Totos are animists. Nonetheless, with time and owing to the influences identified before, the religious life of the Totos has changed very much. Deforestation has severely affected their forest- and nature-based reli-

gious rites and rituals that relate to totemic objects. Just as the forest can no longer provide the Totos with the necessary ritual requirements, their poverty prevents them from buying the relevant items on the local market. Moreover, many of them are absent from their homes due to job demands, and as a result their participation in the various religious festivals is gradually declining. It is also noticeable that under the changing situation, the familial ties, including their interaction with kin, have weakened considerably. Religious conversion also introduces new difficulties. The conversion of three Toto families to Christianity, in 1997, created social disharmony. The converted families were barred from the socio-religious life and traditional ceremonial occasions. As a result, social solidarity and cohesion are under serious threat (Biswas and Bhattacharjee 2006: 110-111).

The traditional dance, music, and secular and sacred songs of the Totos have also undergone change. The traditional secular songs are considered unfashionable and are being replaced among the younger generation by the modern-day Nepali, Hindi and Western songs, which lack devotion. The significance of religious culture is gradually lost as the younger generation in particular is showing less interest in their traditional religious beliefs.

The traditional Toto society has two separate village organisations, their main concern being to run the socio-religious and secular functions of the village, respectively. The head of the religious organisation is the head priest or *kaiji*, while the headman *mondal* presides over the secular administration. Both positions are hereditary. There is also a group of people called *karbari* (messengers), who carry information from the *kaiji* and the *mondal* to the members of the society. The *kaiji*, with the help of the village elders, is expected to settle disputes arising from infringements against socio-religious customs. He is empowered to expel the taboo-breakers from the society, while the *mondal* settles disputes regarding land, crops, cattle, resource exploitation and domestic problems.

Since the time of introducing the statutory *panchayat* system[17] in Totopara, the traditional village organisation is rapidly and noticeably losing its importance, and the role and importance of the *mondal* is disappearing in present-day Toto society. Currently, the village *panchayat* is under the control of political parties, of which the Totos have very little knowledge. The Totos have only a nominal representation in the statutory *panchayat* system compared with the stronger representation of the non-Totos. The Totopara statutory *panchayat* consists of five elected members, only two of whom are Totos, the remaining three being non-Totos. Consequently, the Totos have very little scope for making themselves heard regarding their own community development or influencing any decision-making. While previously familial, inter-familial and

other conflicts were resolved by the selected members of their own community, now these are mostly dealt with in the administrative and judicial forums. Here, too, as they have very little knowledge regarding law and administration, the Totots and their genuine problems are overlooked.

Among these problems is an adequate water supply. Earlier on, the Totos had two hill springs for their sources of drinking water. Although the government took some initiatives regarding water supply in Totopara, the supply scheme does not cover every hamlet. Two underground reservoirs that were made by NGOs are not in proper working order. On the whole, the availability of good drinking water remains a problem.

Totopara is about 32 km away from the nearest urban area, Madarihat. The road connecting Totopara and Madarihat, partly metalled and partly unmetalled, runs in a zigzag route through tea gardens and deep forests and crosses three rivers on the way. Motor vehicles are not often available. Also, the road is poorly constructed, wearing out in places. Worst still, during the rainy season in particular, due to landslides and water logging, Totopara remains cut off. It thus becomes clear that due to poor road conditions, infrequent motor services and a poor communication network, Totopara remains secluded from neighbouring areas for most of the year, which adds to the difficulties the Totos face in their daily life.

The Totopara region became an Indian province in 1865. It is situated in the Indo-Bhutan border area. The Totos are seen to have more in common in cultural terms with some Bhutanese tribes, such as the Daya tribe. Many Totos earn a livelihood in Bhutan. If there is an administrative crisis in this border region, the Toto economy is ignored and is bound to suffer. In fact, controversies that have arisen in the recent past have already had a significant impact on the socio-economic condition in this region.

Conclusion

Every society is changing in its socio-economic and religio-cultural ways to keep up with change and development, both local and global. In this process gross economic differences between sections of a society or nation emerge. Tribal societies such as the Totos often suffer as they are slow or unable to react: newcomers utilise more of the natural wealth, leaving the original owners deprived; through over-exploitation nature is losing its ecological balance, resulting in natural hazards such as landslides, soil erosion, floods, etc. Quite obviously, these problems touch tribal societies that are so very dependent on nature, like the To-

tos, more deeply. As a result, their social organisation is weakening, and they are faced with an acute social and cultural crisis. If culture is the outcome of our need for survival, the Totos are in confusion today as their traditions are unable to prepare them for modern demands. The problem is exacerbated as the Totos do not share the customs of majority Indian society and instead fit in more with the neighbouring cultural patterns. We may conclude that in the context of development, the difference between the Totos and majority Indian society is growing at a rapid pace. In relation to Indian society, the Totos still remain underdeveloped and ill-equipped with power and economic strength. The immediate need is to devise proper developmental strategies and ensure their implementation. Only then can we be certain that the Totos will emerge from their crisis, leave behind their distressing life situation, develop and assume their place in mainstream Indian society.

Notes

1   My thanks to the Department of Anthropology, North Bengal University, India, for enabling me to carry out the research for this essay (field study 2004-2006).
2   Scheduled Castes (SCs) and Scheduled Tribes (STs) are Indian communities that are explicitly recognised by the Constitution of India as requiring special support to overcome centuries of discrimination by the mainstream Hindu society. The SCs/STs together comprise over 24% of India's population, with the SCs at over 16% and the STs at over 8%, as per the 2001 Census. The proportion of the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes in the population of India has risen steadily since independence in 1947. The Scheduled Caste people are generally known as Dalits while the Scheduled Tribe people are usually referred to as Adivasis.
    After independence, the Constituent Assembly accepted the existing definition of Scheduled Castes and Tribes and (via articles 341, 342) gave the President of India and the respective governors of the states the responsibility to compile a full list of castes and tribes, with the authority to edit it later, as required. The actual complete listing of castes and tribes was made via two orders: The Constitution (Scheduled Castes) Order, 1950 and The Constitution (Scheduled Tribes) Order, 1950, respectively.
3   The Standing Committee on Labour and Welfare (18 December 2002) advised that certain tribal communities are listed as Scheduled Tribes (STs), in exercise of powers conferred by clause (1) of Article 342 of the Constitution of India. However, it was observed that not all these STs were at the same level of development. In fact, there are certain STs that are at a much lower level of development even as compared to the other Scheduled Tribe communities. It was also observed that in the matter of devolution of funds for the development of STs, the major share was taken by those communities who are more assertive and in a better position to demand such benefits. As a consequence, the marginalised STs were left out of the process of development. In order to ensure the development of these communities, certain groups were identified for the first time in 1975-76 and thereafter in 1993. They are regarded as the poorest of the poor amongst the STs and were called 'Primitive Tribal Groups' (PTGs). The criteria for identification of such PTGs are: (i) pre-agricultural level of technology; (ii) very low level of literacy; and (iii) declining or stagnant population.

Based on the above-mentioned criteria, 75 tribal communities were identified as PTGs spread over what are now 17 states and one union territory (UT) in India. In West Bengal the (i) Birhor, (ii) Lodhas and (iii) Totos are designated as PTGs.

4   A *mouza* is the geographical expression for a unit of landmass for revenue settlement and revenue collection. Village is defined as a human settlement within a *mouza* with strong social bonding. Within a *mouza* there may be more than one village. And, at the same time, one village may belong to two contiguous *mouzas*.

5   A secular chief of the Totos is known as *mondal* (head man). He is empowered to arbitrate, in consultation with a committee consisting of elder members of different clans, in any dispute among the villagers regarding distribution of land, encroachment, exploitation and their own domestic problems. The position of *mondal* is hereditary.

6   In this language the sentences are not formed by suffixing the personal pronouns to the verbs to denote only the subject, but also to mean the direct and indirect objects. The language of the Totos is just a spoken patois without script. It has been exposed to influences from other languages spoken in the immediate vicinity. The Toto language has incorporated many words and idioms from the Tibetan, Bhutias, Bodo, Lepcha, Bengali, Hindi and Nepali languages. Grierson (1909) in his *Linguistic Survey of India* states: 'the Toto dialect will be dealt with after Rong, because it does not make any use of pronominal suffixes. Our materials are, however, so imperfect that it is impossible to say anything for certain about its affiliation. Higher numbers are counted in twenties'.

7   In Toto society there are priests called *pow* from different clans, who assist the chief priest (*deba-pow* or *kaiji*) and also officiate on behalf of the *kaiji* (chief priest) in a definite order of priority.

8   *Eu* is a home-brewed liquor, the Totos' favourite drink. It is fermented chiefly from rice, maize, *kaoni* and *marua*, two varieties of millet. The brewing is done in every household. The *kaoni* or maize or *marua* or rice or a mixture of them is put in an earthen pot and covered with water to about three inches above the level of the grain. A piece of a root from a particular tree is put in and left for some days. Gradually, the fermentation sets in, and when the froth comes up to the neck the drink is ready. It is taken undistilled. For the village festivals it is compulsory for every family to contribute a certain amount of *eu*.

9   Mainly three cereals, viz. maize, *marua* (*Setaria italica Beauv.*) and *kaoni* (*Eleusine coracana Gaertn.*) are produced by the Totos. *Marua* and *kaoni* are species of millet. Maize is their staple food.

10 A chief priest is known as *deba-pow* or *kaiji*. The *kaiji* forms a religious council consisting of elders of different clans for consultation in connection with violations of social custom and norms. *Kaiji* is empowered to place and remove a taboo.

11 The unit of land measure is an acre. One acre comprises 4,840 square yards or 43,560 square feet (which can be easily remembered as 44,000 square feet, less 1%). Because of alternative definitions of a yard or a foot, the exact size of an acre also varies slightly.

12 *Jhum* or *Jhuming* or shifting cultivation (swidden cultivation or slash and burn) is the most prevalent form of cultivation in the hill areas of Bangladesh and other region of northeast India. Most tribal people practise this type of farming on hillsides outside reserve forests. The main crops generally grown in *jhum* are rice, maize, millet, sesame, cucumber, pumpkin, melon, string bean, cotton, banana, ginger, turmeric, etc. The traditional 7-8 years minimum rotation cycle has now been reduced to just 3-4 years.

13   In the context of land reform, land owned by an individual beyond a particular amount is taken by the government and considered 'vested land' which is generally distributed among landless families.

14   ¹The unit of land measure is the *bigha*, which varies from one-third of an acre to almost one acre. The government-standardised *bigha* in West Bengal is 14,400 square feet, which equals 1,333.33 square meters or roughly one-third of an acre.

15   Dried berries of *pipul* plants (*Piper longun*) have a high market value and are used to make cough syrup.

16   *Lac* worms or insects belong to any of the species of *Metatachardia, Laccifer, Tachordiella, Austrotacharidia, Afrotachardina,* and *Tachardina* of the superfamily *Coccoidea,* order *Homoptera,* which are noted for resinous exudation from the bodies of females. These insects have a global distribution except in Europe. The insect starts its life as a larva or nymph, which is about 0.6 mm long and 0.25 mm wide across the thorax. It secretes *lac* all around the body excepting the rostrum, the brachial plates and tip of the abdomen. Thus, it becomes encased in a cell of *lac*, which gradually increases in size as the insect grows. India is still being regarded as the principal *lac*-producing country of the world. Besides *lac's* use as sealing wax, it is widely used for varnishing leather goods and dying silk.

17   Statutory *Panchayat*: the philosophy of *panchayati raj* is deeply steeped in tradition of rural India and is by no means a new concept. *Panchayati raj* provided a system of self-governance at the village level; however, it did not have a constitutional status. In India the *panchayati raj* system was first adopted on 2 October 1959 in the Nagpur district of Rajasthan. April 23, 1993, is a landmark day in the history of *panchayati raj* in India as on this day, the institution of *panchayati raj* was accorded constitutional status through the Constitution (Seventy-third Amendment) Act 1992, which provides for: Establishment of a three-tier structure; (1) village *panchayat*, (2) *panchayat samiti* at block level, i.e. intermediate level *panchayat* and (3) *zilla parishad* or district level *panchayat*. The village *panchayat* is termed modern or statutory village *panchayat*.

8 Post-Colonialism, Globalism, Nativism: Reinventing English in a Post-Colonial Space

Krishna Sen

Introduction

The English language and English Studies in India have a complicated history, and their present status is extremely contested. Having originated in the need to produce an English-speaking administrative cadre to run the business of the Empire, the discipline was instrumental in the formation of a new social group, the Indian middle class, whose very identity is intertwined with the worldview implicated in its knowledge of English. As in colonial times, so too in the contemporary postcolonial and globalised era, the affluence and social standing of the Indian middle class flow from its access to English. Hence, independent postcolonial India does not offer a simple binary of 'nativism' versus cosmopolitanism or 'globalism', it has attempted to appropriate and transmute its colonial 'English' heritage – though that, too, is not without its problematic social, economic and political consequences.

Mother tongues and the master tongue – the case of India

What happens when postcolonial identity politics intersect and complicate the neat binary of globalism and nativism? And how do certain key markers of identity such as language, class, and culture inflect the doubly transcultured terrain of postcolonial societies in the era of globalisation? A close look at the ground realities in India, for instance, reveals a more striated topography than is accounted for in discourses prioritising oppositional categories such as West and East, global and local, hegemony and subservience, or the clash of cultures. For while these stark contradictions undoubtedly exist and need to be addressed and resolved, they coexist alongside the internal hybridity, the domestication of technology, and the creative glocalisation of global idioms that characterise postcolonial cultural formations. The turbaned Indian farmer in the more prosperous regions of the country who keeps abreast of market prices and national politics sitting cross-legged on his adobe floor in front of a black-and-white television set, and communicates with his peers on his mobile phone while driving his bullock

cart, is hard to slot within clear-cut binaries. Like globalisation, some legacies of colonialism, too, have undergone equally problematic kinds of indigenisation, and can no longer be viewed simplistically as blemishes on the postcolonial space. Language is one of the most sensitive of these phenomena – the many critiques of the marginalising of the mother tongue by the master tongue, and the consequent jeopardising of national identity, are too well known to need repetition. India has had a particularly fraught relationship with English as a result of motivated imperial policies. And yet, in the state of West Bengal in eastern India, where the teaching of English was abolished at the primary level in state-sponsored schools in the early 1980s in favour of mother-tongue instruction, English was re-introduced at that level from the beginning of the 2000 school year. How do we read this sublation of a nativist construction of the nation by a linguistic inheritance that used to be branded as anti-national with unfailing regularity from the colonial period onwards?

India is the second largest English-speaking country[1] and one of the largest English book-producing countries in the world, yet English occupies a contested space within the Indian polity. The debate over the status of English and its relationship with India's major indigenous languages and their rich vernacular literatures (some of them dating back in their written forms to the early centuries of the Christian era) was part of a nation-building discourse dating back to pre-independence days that sought to integrate all of India's 'pasts' in a new narrative of a potentially resurgent nation – the long and culturally prolific pre-colonial epochs with their Sanskrit, Buddhist, and Islamic (Mughal) heritages, the synchronous evolution of the regional languages and cultures, and the more recent colonial and Eurocentric inheritance. This is the vision that informs Jawaharlal Nehru's *The Discovery of India* (1946). The practical problem in implementing this grand Nehruvian design lies (as in all former colonies) in the hegemonic impact of Western culture, most powerfully symbolised by the English language. As Arvind Krishna Mehrotra (2003: 1) puts it in his Introduction to *A History of Indian Literature in English:* '[...] by 1800 [...] British domination eventually covered all aspects of Indian life - political, economic, social, cultural. The introduction of English into the complex hierarchical language system of India has proved the most enduring aspect of this dominion'. A case in point would be the contentious issue of an official language for a multi-lingual state. The framers of the Indian Constitution had in 1951 designated English as the associate official language of India along with Hindi until 1965, after which it was to be withdrawn from official use. That has not happened as yet, primarily because the individual states within the Union prefer to use their own languages for official purposes rather than Hindi, which many of their

inhabitants do not speak at all – thereby leaving English even today as the sole link language within the country. Incidentally, English is the 'official' language of at least two Indian states, Meghalaya and Nagaland, whose various tribes speak vastly different sub-languages, with no common medium of communication other than English. English is also the native tongue of the small Eurasian or Anglo-Indian (the more usual term) community, the offspring of mixed marriages during the colonial period, whose numbers are fast dwindling due to emigration to Britain, Australia and Canada. So English does have a status other than being solely a colonial legacy. There is, nevertheless, a strained relationship between the mother tongues and the 'other tongue' (Kachru 1982), which Probal Dasgupta (1993) has dubbed 'India's Auntie Tongue' – not least because, as Aijaz Ahmad (1992: 75) has pointed out, non-metropolitan India identifies English as the language of elite privilege.

The English language and Indian English literature (also known as Indian writing in English), both of which are legacies of British colonialism, stand in the eye of the storm. The sharply opposed reactions that they still arouse may be inferred from the antithetical titles of the two opening essays in *English Studies in India: Past, Present and Future,* a 2005 collection edited by Balvinder Ghotra: Vinod Sena's 'Brand of Shame or Mark of Destiny?: The Legacy of English in India' and Grace Vaseekar's 'The Great Tradition of English Studies in India'. Salman Rushdie stirred up a hornet's nest by declaring in the Preface to *Mirrorwork: Fifty Years of Indian Writing, 1947-1997* (which curiously represented 'Indian writing' only by original work in English from Nehru to Kiran Desai, with just one piece in translation from one of the vernaculars):

> ... this large and varied survey turns out to be making, fundamentally, just one – perhaps rather surprising – point.
> This is it: the prose writing – both fiction and non-fiction – created in this period [i.e. 1947-1997] by Indian writers *working in English,* is proving to be a stronger and more important body of work than most of what has been produced in the sixteen 'official languages' of India,[2] the so-called 'vernacular languages', during the same time; and indeed, this new, and still burgeoning, 'Indo-Anglian' literature represents perhaps the most valuable contribution India has yet made to the world of books. (Rushdie and West 1997: viii; emphasis in the original)

One wonders how the editors assessed the *Ramayana* and the *Mahabharata*, or Tagore and Premchand, or any of the leading contemporary writers in India's major vernaculars, also known as 'official' languages

on the Eighth Schedule of the Indian Constitution. Rushdie has of course not gone unchallenged. Amit Chaudhuri's (2001: xvii-xxxi) two introductory essays in *The Picador Book of Modern Indian Literature* categorically refute Rushdie.

The challenge of nativism

Indeed, Anglophile predilections have always been attacked by Indian intellectuals, even by those who write in English. Aijaz Ahmad (1992: 75) derided '(t)hese post-colonial consolidations and expansions' of English over the regional languages. In *After Amnesia,* G.N. Devy (1992: 111) recalls Ngugi wa Thiong'o's *Decolonising the Mind* (1987) in decrying the 'cultural amnesia' of 'an irrationally adulatory sect, living with a self-induced hypnosis and thriving on the import of alien totems'. Devy is an adherent of his mentor, the Maharashtrian litterateur and critic Bhalchandra Nemade's uncompromising 'nativism' (*deshiyata*):

> It is expected that native perceptions naturally express themselves in any literature. However, as a result of years of slavery under crafty European rulers, a peculiar kind of colonialist internationalism was born in various parts of the colonial world in the mid-twentieth century. ... It is time to tell people who are used to such elitism that any human being or literature can stand tall only in its own native land and linguistic group. ... being native means being attached to a particular place. ... But when non-native, alien, imported values, languages, and cultures coming in from outside threaten native values, languages and cultures, communities have to become nativistic in order to survive. (Nemade 1997: 233-236 *passim*)

Nativists like Devy and Nemade reject what they describe as the neo-colonial hegemony of metropolitan post-colonial theory which unduly foregrounds the colonial inheritance at the expense of earlier and richer heritages, and virtually locks the ex-colonised nation into its imperial past under the misleading rubric of a globalised cosmopolitanism.

However, as the contributions in Makarand Paranjape's edited volume *Nativism* (1997) demonstrate, there is no consensus regarding such stringent cultural purism, even among those who denounce the exorbitation of English. Indeed, one does not find in India any simple binary opposition between Eurocentrism and nationalism in the sphere of language. English is both loved and hated since, as Amit Chaudhuri

(2001: xiii) observes, the English language and the new kinds of knowledge that it carried into India are too deeply imbricated in the formation of Indian modernity and the Indian middle class to be easily teased out from the variegated skein of Indian life and then discarded. This explains the ambivalent position of English in the India of today – culturally alien in being the tangible symbol of an unfortunate history, and yet a marker of a certain kind of identity over and above its educational and economic importance in a globalised world.

English in independent India – a globalising motif

Independent India incorporated English into its 'Three Language Formula' of the 1960s, but because of inadequate resources and poor teaching, English remains an insuperable hurdle for students in rural and poor urban areas. Yet the intense ambition of India's urban youth to access the world through fluency in English is reflected in the popularity of both the English language and English literature in the academy. The study of canonical British literature (and to a lesser extent, other literatures in English) remains a vibrant academic pursuit at the tertiary level. In certain parts of India, English Departments are among the healthiest in the Humanities stream – every seat is filled (though with a majority of women), and students are often turned away. This may not be the case in many Asian countries. But as in these other countries, with the burgeoning of elite technical and management schools from the 1960s onwards, English Language Teaching (ELT) enrolment, too, has increased exponentially. These developments continue despite the fact that, as Rukmini Bhaya Nair (2002: 108) has pointed out, this leads to a devaluation of competence in the regional languages.

There is yet another piquant dimension to English Studies in contemporary India. The University Grants Commission of India (UGC), the sole arbiter and funding authority for higher education, stated in the preamble to its guidelines for a model curriculum in English (dated 2001, and initially valid for a period of five years but not substantially revised yet): 'Virtually all students within the Indian university system study a certain amount of English. This is not the case with any other subject. Planning the curriculum thereby becomes a complex task with broader social implications beyond the academic ones.' The document goes on to reiterate an earlier policy that, because of the spread of the English language and literature over the entire range of the Indian curriculum (science, business and engineering students, too, take one compulsory unit each in English literature and English language), this curricular component should aim to nurture a multicul-

tural and global perspective within the student body by familiarising it with 'world englishes' and translated texts: 'It was felt that the Honours course in English [i.e. the English major] could be a gateway to all literatures instead of being confined to Britain alone,' and that even the General [i.e. English minor] level should include 'literature in English written outside the British Isles' as well as 'non-English literature in English translation' (meaning literature in the Indian vernaculars).

The repeated reference in this premier national educational policy document to the need to introspect on the meaning and significance of English studies within the Indian curriculum not only goes well beyond the uses of English literature as conceptualised by the colonial masters who set up the first modern universities in India, but also signals an important change of direction. What it implies is that the study of English, which had been part of a notorious colonial ploy to churn out an English-educated and hence psychologically complicit administrative cadre to carry out the business of empire, would now be coopted by a post-colonial (or, as we prefer to say, independent) India to serve its own purposes – i.e. to mobilise its large English-speaking middle class to negotiate with global trends and issues.

Contemporary India's aggressive entry into certain sectors of the global economy is as much due to widespread English skills as to high standards in information technology – and it has to do not just with knowledge of the language, but also with the cultural competence that comes from familiarity with the literature. This strategic appropriation of the coloniser's tongue to serve nationalist purposes problematises the Fanonesque allegation that imperialism enforced the total acculturation of the colonised subject. It is, rather, close to Bill Ashcroft's (2001: 1) redefinition of the 'post-colonial' as no longer only subversive and resistant, but transformative and liberatory: 'It is transformation that gives these societies control over their future. Transformation describes the way in which colonised societies have taken dominant discourses, transformed them and used them in the service of their own self-empowerment.' This creative transformation of imperial discourses might well be termed 'postcolonial' (minus the hyphen), since it involves a productive osmosis rather than mere continuation.

Nevertheless, problems remain. How are we to confer on this obviously 'foreign' entity with its manifest links to a rejected colonial past a measure of national identity and cultural relevance? How do we cope with the strange paradox that English enjoys an almost fetishistic cachet with the Indian upper middle, middle, and aspiring middle classes, while remaining an equally fetishistic object of populist aversion among conservatives and fundamentalists of all hues? How are the often first-generation learners of rural India to be brought within the orbit of opportunities afforded by English? And finally, can English

ever become Indian? These issues form part of a larger socio-cultural discussion on the nature of 'Indianness' and are reflected in a number of authored or edited studies, notably by Gauri Viswanathan (1989), Rajeswari Sunder Rajan (1992), Svati Joshi (1994) and C.D. Narasim-haiah (2002). Of these, Gauri Viswanathan is Saidian in her excavation of sinister designs in the colonial project of English education in India; the collections edited by Rajeswari Sunder Rajan and Svati Joshi explore the incongruity of pursuing an elite discourse in a largely rustic country; but C.D. Narasimhaiah claims that the ideological dilemma of colonial cringe no longer exists in a country that has not only thoroughly ingested the English language at certain levels of its society, but also added substantially to its vocabulary in what might be called an instance of reverse colonisation. Moreover, the increasing popularity of American literature, Indian writing in English, and what used to be called Commonwealth literature (a politically incorrect term in present-day India, now replaced on syllabi by the clumsy phrase, 'New Literatures in English') ensures that British literature remains just one component among many in the literature syllabus, though in several universities it is still the major one. But none of this explains the peculiarly ambivalent status of English in India.

English in colonial India – a motivated imperial legacy

English education in India was the fruit of an ideological struggle between the British Orientalists who held sway until about the 1830s, and their adversaries, the Anglicists, who soon gained ascendancy due to reasons of political expediency. The Orientalists, led by Sir William Jones who founded The Asiatic Society at Calcutta in 1784, glorified India's classical Vedic and Sanskritic past (though with some reservations relating especially to polytheistic Hinduism), celebrating it as a higher level of literary and cultural attainment than even the European Renaissance. The Anglicists, on the contrary, considered the form, content and worldview of the ancient Indian texts to be decadent, and even barbaric. The Orientalists wished to prioritise the traditional educational system based on the study of Sanskrit, along with Arabic and Persian (a Mughal legacy), the vernaculars, and the sacred texts of India's many religions. With the increasing territorial gains of the British East India Company, however, knowledge of English among the local populace became a necessity for effective communication.

The beginnings of English Studies in India are anticipated in Mounstuart Elphinstone's 1823 'Minute' on the need to teach English and the European sciences in native schools and can be formally traced to the intervention of Thomas Babington Lord Macaulay, who became the

Law Member of the Governor General's Council after the passing of the Government of India Act of 1833. Macaulay's 'Minute on Indian Education' (1835) was responsible for establishing English as the medium of higher education in India in order to create 'a class of persons Indian in blood and colour but English in taste, in opinion, in morals, and in intellect' who 'may be interpreters between us and the millions whom we govern' (Macaulay 1965: Section 34). Macaulay's politically motivated contention was that while Sanskrit was already a dead language, and Arabic and Persian alien and non-Indian tongues, the living vernaculars were so wretchedly meagre in their resources that no serious education could be imparted through them. Worthwhile knowledge could only be disseminated through English, and through a study of the English literary masters such as Shakespeare, Milton, Pope and Wordsworth. It may be noted that Macaulay was advocating the serious study of British writers in India at a time when the major universities in England still taught only the Greek and Latin classics, considering English literature to be a minor phenomenon – Oxford and Cambridge, for instance, introduced English as an Honours subject only in 1894 and 1926, respectively (McArthur 1998: 367-368). So we have a colonial Calcutta newspaper commenting on an 1848 staging of *Othello* in Calcutta's Sans Souci theatre with the Bengali actor Baishnabchurn Addy in the lead role: 'Shakespeare, exiled from the country he honours so much, seeks an asylum on the Calcutta boards' (*The Bengal Hurkaru*, 19 August 1848).

Macaulay's educational strategy, supported by the then Governor General Lord Bentinck, was instrumental in creating a language-based class system that remains the cusp of the post-independence controversy. This was foreshadowed when Macaulay observed: 'In India, English is the language spoken by the ruling class [and] by the higher class of natives ...' (Macaulay 1965: Section 12). Macaulay's 'Minute' was quickly followed by the 1835 English Education Act under Lord Bentinck, in terms of which the teaching of English was taken out of the purview of the Sanskrit College and the Muslim Madrassa, the two leading educational institutions at Calcutta that had already pioneered the teaching of English and the English classics – there are records of extracts from Shakespeare being acted by the students of Bhowanipore English School and Hindu College in 1828, and *Julius Caesar* being performed by local actors at Prosonnokumar Tagore's Hindu Theatre in 1831 (Bose 2007: 139). But after Macaulay the language and its literature were actively co-opted to the process of empire-building. The institutionalisation of English Studies was further codified through Sir Charles Woods's Dispatch of 1854, often referred to as the 'Magna Carta of Indian higher education', that paved the way for the modern university system with instruction in English for all subjects except the

vernaculars. The study of English Literature was first entrusted to the newly established Presidency Colleges at Calcutta and Madras, and then to the postgraduate departments of the three universities set up in 1857 in Calcutta, Madras and Bombay.

With a direct connection now set up between an English-based education and coveted administrative positions for Indians in the colonial government, there naturally occurred a refiguring of the hierarchy of 'useful' languages within the subcontinent. This was the first step in the systematic devaluation of the indigenous classical and regional languages. But there were further ramifications to Macaulay's postulate that the Indian educational system 'ought to enable a Hindoo to read Hume and Milton' (Macaulay 1965: Section 32). If we assume that familiarity with a literature is tantamount to being exposed to its ideology and values, Macaulay's 'Minute' clearly goes beyond the inculcation of language competence and gestures towards acculturation. Macaulay's imperialist vision of the future of English is clearly adumbrated in his 'Speech on the Government of India' (1833): 'The scepter may pass away from us. ... But ... there is an empire exempt from all natural causes of decay. ... that empire is the imperishable empire of our arts and our morals, our literature and our laws' (Macaulay 1967). As G.N. Devy (1992: 9) has observed: 'A new education system based on and spread through the English language was introduced, and with it was introduced English literature as a civilizing influence.'

There was a consequent blurring of the distinction between English Language and 'English Literature' in the English Studies courses designed with the express intention of imparting Western culture and values for the purposes of empire-building. British Literature functioned as a motivated *paideia*, or as part of what Althusser called 'the Ideological State Apparatus', answering exactly to Terry Eagleton's charge against literary studies in general: literary studies became 'a vital instrument for the insertion of individuals into the perceptual and symbolic forms of the dominant ideological tradition. ... What is finally at stake is not literary texts but Literature – the ideological significance of the process ... whereby a series of "literary traditions" are interrogated to yield a set of ideologically presupposed responses' (Eagleton 1978: 57). In those early days no science or technology was taught at all, but only the character-forming humanities and social sciences (especially history and politics with a decidedly Eurocentric slant). Raja Rammohan Roy, the liberal reformer and founder of the Brahmo Samaj, pleaded in vain in his December 1823 letter to William Pitt, Lord Amherst, the Governor-General of India from 1823-1828, for the introduction of science education in native schools and colleges to inculcate the true spirit of Western rationality and modernity in Indian society (Roy 1977: 300-303). Gauri Viswanathan (1989: 1-4 *passim*) concludes:

> ... the discipline of English [in India] came into its own in an
> age of colonialism ... and in the long run served to strengthen
> Western cultural hegemony in enormously complex ways ... The
> history of education in British India shows that certain huma-
> nistic functions traditionally associated with literature – for ex-
> ample, the shaping of character or the development of the aes-
> thetic sense or the disciplines of ethical thinking – were consid-
> ered essential to the processes of socio-political control by the
> guardians of the same tradition. ... A vital if subtle connection
> exists between a discourse in which those who are to be edu-
> cated are represented as morally and intellectually deficient and
> the attribution of moral and intellectual values to the literary
> works they are assigned to read.

This was surely one of the intended corollaries of the Macaulayite edu-
cational reforms.

English as a matrix of the Indian middle class

However, the actual situation was more complicated, and Viswa-
nathan's neat schematisation of British versus Indian culture can be
problematised through a more nuanced response to colonial education.
One must remember that English was the engine that activated the for-
mation of the urban Indian middle class. This middle class, created by
the English education that legitimised its access to lucrative colonial
employment and gave it the prestige of a delegated authority, was pro-
foundly subversive of the hierarchical structures of orthodox Indian so-
ciety based on the Hindu caste system and Muslim feudalism. The
new social phenomenon of an Indian middle class owed its provenance
not to the traditional categories of birth and wealth, but to academic
merit, professional competence, and capitalist enterprise, all of which
were facilitated by knowledge of English. It occupied and indeed owed
its very existence and socialisation to a space cleared out by Western
ideas with their vision of the self-directed and purposeful individual as
the origin and ground of meaning and event. In allying the acquisition
of wealth and social standing with individual rather than group iden-
tity, this new class not only questioned orthodoxy, but developed its
own vested interest in promoting congenial Western ideologies. In the
chapter entitled 'Domestic Cruelty and the Birth of the Subject' in his
Provincializing Europe, Dipesh Chakrabarty traces the moral crisis in
19th-century Indian society to the struggle between Occidental norms
of the autonomy of the subject on the one hand, and prescriptive famil-
ial and community obligations on the other (Chakrabarty 2000: 117-

148). Since English Studies represented the path of social circulation and success, the culture that it purveyed was viewed as curiously 'neutral'. So we arrive at the paradoxical situation where British imperialism is reviled, but Shakespeare and Milton are celebrated: indeed, the leading 19th-century Bengali authors, Michael Madhusudan Dutt (who had converted to Christianity, hence the English first name) and Bankimchandra Chattopadhyay, were regularly hailed as the Milton and the Walter Scott of Bengal, respectively, with no sense of the ambiguity inherent in these encomia. Said (1995: 3) has explained this paradox as follows: 'European culture gained in strength and identity by setting itself off against the Orient as a sort of surrogate and even underground self.' Ashis Nandy (1983: 2) characterised this subterranean admiration for Western ideological and intellectual paradigms as 'the intimate enemy' that gnaws away at the fragmented colonised (and later, neo-colonised) self. The British Orientalist scholar Horace Hayman Wilson had as early as the 1830s accused the British administration of creating a culturally deracinated monster in this new middle class.

> By annihilating native literature, by sweeping away all sources of pride and pleasure in their own mental efforts, by rendering a whole people dependent upon a remote and unknown country for all their ideas and for the very words in which to clothe them, we should degrade their character ... (quoted in Viswanathan 1989: 41-42)

Certainly, it was (and still is) marked by a curious hybridity. Sister Nivedita (born Margaret Noble), the follower of Swami Vivekananda, remarked in *The Web of Indian Life* (first published in 1904) (1950: xii): 'Hindu life in the city of Calcutta ... was a world in which men in loin cloths, seated on door-sills in industry lanes, said things about Shakespeare and Shelley that some of us would go far to hear'.

English as a problematic identity paradigm

Why was there no sense of contradiction between opposition to imperial politics and acceptance of the imperialist's culture in the form of English Studies? It is possibly because that culture appeared to be liberatory in a hierarchical society. Indian nationalism, for instance, drew most of its inspiration from 19th-century British liberalism rather than from indigenous sources, leading Partha Chatterjee (1986) to label it a comprador or 'derivative' discourse. Most 19th-century Indian intellectuals seemed to have accepted a carefully constructed revisionary colonial historiography that not only legitimised the colonial intervention

but also perpetrated the 'divide and rule' policy. Following the paradigm of European history, Indian history was reconstrued in a tripartite narrative of a classical age, a decadent or Dark Age, and a renaissance. India's glorious classical age was the Aryan and Hindu past – the Brahminical heritage of the Vedas, the Upanishads and the epics *Ramayana* and *Mahabharata*. The period of decadence was identified with the centuries of Muslim invasion and Mughal rule, under the supposedly baneful influence of which the pure stream of Hinduism dwindled into dead ritual. The renaissance, proclaiming a potential resurgence of the Hindu polity, was catalysed by the cleansing fount of Western rationalism and liberalism learnt from the colonial master. This motivated parabola of ultimate redemption through exposure to English culture was the burden of the prescribed history text books in the Presidency colleges and universities – Marshman's *History of Bengal* and *History of India*, Murray's *History of India, with readings from Mill and Other Authors*, and Henry Morris's *History of India* (Viswanathan 1989: 125) – and it had important cultural consequences. By focalising Brahminical Hinduism, it totally occluded India's animistic tribal legacy as well as the very different culture of the Hindu lower castes: and by demonising the Islamic heritage – a ploy accepted even by Bankimchandra Chattopadhyay in his influential Bengali novel *Anandamath* – it created rifts which had not previously existed in their later extreme forms. But by representing the colonial intervention as a deliverance, it vindicated English Studies as one of the key vehicles of that renaissance. That this same vehicle acted as the mediator of the colonial Indian's access to Western liberalism and triggered the nationalist dream of a resurgent India was surely unintended.

It would, therefore, be an oversimplification to claim that English Studies in India in the 19th century represented a simple binary opposition between coloniser and colonised or even, among the colonised, between the Anglicists and the Sanskritists. Both the 'modernisers' like Raja Rammohan Roy and the traditionalists like his bitter opponent Raja Radhakanta Deb were in favour of English education. They advocated its usefulness specifically for land-owning upper caste Hindu boys (the *zamindars*) and the children of the new professional petty bourgeoisie, thus cementing the formation of radically new social ties cutting across caste and inherited wealth. This rising class or new elite welcomed English Studies as the point of entry into what is known in the West as the 'civil society'.

Indigenising English – conflicts and contradictions

Nonetheless, Indian modernity and its ancillary middle class ethos are not carbon copies of Western modernity, precisely because they evolved out of a complex dialectic of colonialism, nationalism, and the hermeneutics of a powerful nostalgia for the vanished glories of an ancient past. English Studies constituted a privileged locus in the Indian middle-class imaginary for both its potential and its (non-diasporic) hybridity, a multifaceted site of creativity as well as collaboration, of adaptation no less than adoption. The problem is that this holds true even today, well after independence, with its attendant discursive dilemmas. On the literary level one can cite the many rebuttals of Rushdie, or the heated exchange between Indian English author Vikram Chandra and the reputed scholar of Indian English writing Meenakshi Mukherjee following Mukherjee's contention that Indian English writing packages an exotic India for Western consumption (Chandra 2000). It also has the makings of an explosive political issue. To populist orators English is the clearest marker of the 'creamy layer' whose fluency is buttressed by a non-native fusion culture. One thinks of rebukes to these hybrid ontologies within the country as in Aijaz Ahmed's 'Disciplinary English: Third-Worldism and Literature' (Ahmed 1994) or Badri Raina's 'A Note on Language and the Politics of English in India' (Raina 1994).

It is, however, this same middle class that created the great literary works of 19th-century India, in the vernaculars no less than in English. Calcutta, the seat of British imperial power till the shifting of the capital to Delhi in 1913 and the city which demonstrated the earliest receptivity to Western cultural and intellectual influences, produced both the first long narrative poem in English (Michael Madhusudan Dutt's 'The Captive Ladie' in 1849) and the first Indian novel written in English (Bankimchandra Chattopadhyaya's *Rajmohan's Wife* in 1864). But Dutt and Chattopadhaya also established the traditions of the vernacular (as opposed to the classical Sanskrit) epic and the vernacular novel, the latter articulating (in Meenakshi Mukherjee's words), 'the tension suffered by the early generation of English-educated men in India regarding negotiation of different world-views, later glibly and simplistically labelled the east-west encounter' (Mukherjee 2000: 62). What is interesting is that through the interface with English, the vernaculars themselves came to be enriched with genres hitherto unrepresented in Sanskrit or any of the native literatures – verse forms such as the sonnet and the ode, subjective narratives like the essay and the autobiography (signaling 'the birth of the subject'), and most significantly (in view of the major changes agitating traditional social formations), the novel.

Of these genres the most vibrant is Indian fiction in English, though major poetry and drama are also written. One is thinking here, not of

diasporic writers of Indian origin located in Britain and America, but those extremely successful writers in English who lived and worked (and still do) *within* India, from R.K. Narayan to Arundhati Roy, who won the Booker Prize for *The God of Small Things*. Theirs is a very different post-colonial space to that suggested in Rushdie's *Imaginary Homelands* or Homi Bhabha's *The Location of Culture* – it is situated at home and explores not the psychological disruptions of the interstitial diasporic space, but (in the words of Indian English novelist Pankaj Mishra 2001: 42) 'an ancient civilization's tortuous initiation into modern life'. Predictably, these novelists have been excoriated for their ease of access to the global market that is denied even the greatest of contemporary vernacular novelists, except through the occasional translation. G.N. Devy (1995: 162) feels that such writers are 'linguistically and culturally uprooted'. In their defence K. Satchidanandan (1997: 21) avers in 'Defining the Premises: Nativism and its Ambivalences': 'It also seems essential here to address the question regarding the existence of an "Indian literature" ... While literature definitely has language-specific qualities, language is not the sole identity of literature. It has ethical, aesthetic, civilisational, historical and ideological dimensions too ...' Similarly Vasant Palshikar (1984: 44) maintains that all literatures written within a nation are 'native' since a writer is 'native' not by virtue of the language s/he uses, but by virtue of belonging to the milieu. Amit Chaudhuri (2001: x), a resident of Calcutta and the winner of several national and international awards for his English fiction, goes so far as to declare that English is the only viable medium for analysing the internal hybridity of a society in transition since, unlike the vernaculars, it is an emblem of this hybridity.

Yet Indian English writers have been divided on this issue. The most famous caveat (and problematisation of the issue) is in Raja Rao's Foreword to *Kanthapura*:

> The telling has not been easy. One has to convey in a language that is not one's own the spirit that is one's own. One has to convey the various shades and omissions of a certain thought-movement that looks maltreated in an alien language. I use the word 'alien', yet English is not really an alien language to us. It is the language of our intellectual make-up - like Sanskrit or Persian - but not of our emotional make-up. (Rao 1999: v)

R.K. Narayan's riposte in his essay 'Toasted [i.e. 'brown'] English' is well known:

> The time has come for us to consider seriously the question of a Bharat [i.e. Indian,' 'Bharat' being the indigenous name for In-

dia] brand of English ... Now the time is ripe for it to come to
the dusty street, the market place, and under the banyan tree ...
I am not suggesting here a mongrelisation of language. ... Bhar-
at English will respect the rule of law and maintain the dignity
of grammar, but still have a *swadeshi* [native] stamp about it, like
the Madras handloom check [sic] shirt or the Tirupati doll.
(Narayan quoted in Harrex 1996: 26)

Narayan found 'Bharat English' the most appropriate vehicle for pro-
jecting the cultural osmosis effected by the colonial encounter. A brief
extract from his first novel, *Swami and Friends* (1935), will illustrate the
kind of English he had in mind:

The Tamil Pundit ... was guiding the class through the intrica-
cies of Tamil grammar. ... Swaminathan and the Pea sat on the
last bench.
"I say, Pea," said Swaminathan, "I got a new brother this morn-
ing."
The Pea was interested. "How do you like him?"
"Oh, like him! He is hardly anything. Such a funny looking crea-
ture! ... But I tell you, his face is awful, red, red like a chili."
They listened to the teacher's lecture for a few minutes. "I say,
Swami," said the Pea, "these things grow up soon. I have seen a
baby that was just what your brother is. But you know, when I
saw it again during Michaelmas I could hardly recognise it."
(Narayan 1998: 49-50)

The casual juxtaposition of 'Tamil pundit', 'red chili,' the collo-
quial 'I say' and the formal 'Michaelmas' could, and indeed
does, happen only in India, as G.V. Desani's *All About H. Hatterr*
demonstrates with flair. Narayan was equally confident in his ap-
propriation of Western narrative modes. His own fiction, he
claimed in his 'English in India', was structured along the lines
of the ancient Indian epics and *puranas* and concerned itself
with purely Indian issues of caste and kinship and the many
contradictions of a fast-changing society, while still maintaining
the Western formal requirements of plot and characterisation
(Harrex 1996: 22).

Narayan's was perhaps one of the most complete reinventions of Eng-
lish in the postcolonial space that is the India of today – indeed, he
fairly claimed the language as his own. In his essay entitled 'A Literary
Alchemy', he observed:

> Passing from literature to language, 'Indian English' is often mentioned with some amount of contempt and patronage, but is a legitimate development and needs no apology. We have fostered the language for over a century and we are entitled to bring it in line with our own habits of thought and idiom. Americans have adapted the English language to suit their native mood and speech without feeling apologetic, and have achieved directness and unambiguity in expression. (Narayan 1988: 197-198)

Yet for all that, the dilemmas have not been resolved. G.J.V. Prasad (2005: 46; emphasis in the original) laments:

> And what is Indian English, whose language is *that*? ... it is not hostility to English that I want to point attention to here, it is not the lack of appreciative audience ..., or the lack of a sense of community among writers, but simply to the uncertain ownership over the language – an uncertainty that still persists after nearly two centuries of Indian English poetry.

It is this continuing insecurity over the ownership of the language that Meenakshi Mukherjee (2000: 166) has described as 'the anxiety of Indianness'. Yet surely, in this era of globalisation, one needs to accept that all national traditions are polyvocal and plural, and can only be fully accessed through multiple points of entry. In 'Traveling Cultures', for instance, James Clifford (1992: 101; emphasis in the original) questions the conventional anthropological model of cultures as fixed and local: 'The goal is not to *replace* the cultural figure "native" with the intercultural figure "traveler". Rather the task is to focus on concrete mediations of the two in specific cases of historical tension and relationship.' But in India today, it is ultimately a social, and not a cultural, confrontation – as in the 19th century, access to English spells privilege, and the present tensions are economic rather than academic.

English – a contested marker of privilege

From being the signifier of a hegemonic colonialism, the English language in India can all too easily, within the politically charged field of nationalist exigency, be transformed into the signifier of a hegemonic globalisation, rousing economic as well as political hackles. Business columnist Sucheta Dalal wrote in the *Indian Express* in 2005 of '... an important differentiator that has already emerged in the job market today. It is the earning difference between those who are conversant with

the English language and those who aren't. Salary differences between equally qualified (non-professional/technical) candidates can be as high as 400 to 500 percent'. Predictably, it is the rare fire-breathing nationalist politician who does not send his children to prestigious 'English-medium schools' (as they are called), since being 'at home' in English is India's signifier of upward mobility, opening many doors even within the country. One recalls Mrinal Sen's pointed critique of professional Anglophilia in his award-winning 1970 Bengali film *Interview*. The uncomfortable reality remains that English is a 'glocal' phenomenon in urban India, and still an alien in rural India. But the irony lies in the fact that to eliminate English and what it stands for today would be to eliminate the strongest elements in the Indian middle class. It would also foreclose an emergent 'India Inc's' claims to a global identity – a kind of 'counter-globalisation' or 'globalism,' so to speak, to offset Hardt and Negri's (2000) globalised 'Empire' of (mainly American) multinational capital. Indeed, it is perhaps time to think of a heteroglossial 'globalism' rather than a Eurocentric globalisation, where English may be viewed as a postcolonial tool rather than a neo-colonial tyrant. India has shown that English can be appropriated and used, though not without difficulty.

English and the nation

The English language, one of the most controversial elements in the polycultural space of Indian nationhood, occupies the slippery site where personal, social, national and global identities and imperatives converge and collide. If it assists India towards a 'tiger economy' in the global sphere, it frequently cannibalises vernacular cultures in the local sphere – while paradoxically creating wealth within the country through the knowledge industries. Perhaps, then, it is also time to rethink the postcolonial nation-space, not in monolithic Westphalian terms, but as a multivalent entity that transits flexibly between the global and the local.

Notes

1   This is the case even on the basis of the 1991 Census of India (all the raw data from the 2001 Census has yet to be collated). According to the section entitled 'Bilingualism and Trilingualism' in the Publications of the Census of India 1991, India had 90,000,000 English speakers, of whom 65,000,000 used it as a second language and 25,000,000 used it as a third language (Issue 10, 2003, 8-10). That figure will only have increased by 2001. The corresponding figure for the USA is 262,375,152 according to the section entitled 'Language Use and English-Speaking Ability' in Publi-

cations of the US Census 2000 (published 2006). In the second edition of *The Cambridge Encyclopaedia of the English Language,* David Crystal gives the number of English speakers in Britain as 596,000 (Crystal 2003:109). However, in a 2005 interview Crystal is quoted as saying (without supporting statistics) – 'India [is] currently [...] the country with the largest English-speaking population in the world. Ten years ago that record was held by the United States, but not any more.'

2   The 2001 Census of India lists 22 official languages in the Eighth Schedule of the Indian Constitution (Statement – 4: Scheduled Languages in Descending Order of Speakers' Strength – 2001). See http://www.censusindia.gov.in/

9   Occidentalism and Asian Middle-Class Identities: Notes on Birthday Cakes in an Indian Context

Minna Säävälä[1]

The birthday cake is a relatively recent import in Indian cultural life. The adoption of practices conceptualised as 'Western', such as eating cake, strengthens the new middle-class Indian's national-cultural identity by making the difference palpable and discursive. New Indian middle-class identities are flexible, as they are able to incorporate seemingly contradictory cultural materials. For instance, Occidentalist ideas – stylised images of the West – are appropriated by the new Asian middle classes in their processes of national and class identification. The emergence of Occidentalism in India and in a number of other Asian countries derives from the historical realities of colonialism, which led to the creation of the local colonial administrative elite that then developed into a politically and socially leading class prominently involved in nation-building.

In European intellectual and colonial history, the contrast between East and West, Orient and Occident, is ideologically loaded with significance. Through imagination and identification, this amorphous categorisation has been exhibited for centuries – if not millennia – and has had tangible consequences for people's realities and relationships around the world. Andre Gunder Frank (1998: 357) sees a parallel in the importance of the line between East and West in the 19th and 21st centuries, stating that 'real-world history continuously – and cyclically? – jumps and alternates across this imaginary Western/"Orientalist" division. That is what happened in the 19th century and promises to happen also in the 21st.'

This recurrent and momentous imaginary line between East and West that Frank speaks about is repeatedly drawn, in a sense, in contemporary new middle-class Asian lives. The middle classes are characterised as being in between both socially and culturally. They form a mediating class that is defined by a negation: not being dependent on the continuous sale of their labour power, nor having the independence of the elite. In addition to this socially intermediate position, universally shared by the middle classes (Burris 1995), the middle classes of developing societies also tend to locate themselves culturally and politically in between: separating themselves from the national popular classes, while being in the vanguard of the mass-based nationalistic

movements; sharing at least partly the consumerist attitude with the middle classes of the post-industrialised societies, but still identifying themselves as distinct from them (e.g. Liechty 2003; van Wessel 2001). Given this intermediate and shifting positioning both in their own society and in the global arena, how do new middle-class Asians create images of the West to assimilate to themselves and with which to adorn themselves; and what is the cultural and political significance of those images?

The politico-economic configuration within which new middle-class Asians live has changed drastically during the last decades: many Asian societies, not only Japan and China, have come to challenge the Euro-American economic and political hegemony, thus reducing direct dependency that could be a breeding ground for emulation – or its opposite. The colonial history of domination that exposed Asian elites to Western influences for centuries is turning on its head: the economic and/or political potency of India, Pakistan, China, Indonesia, Japan, Korea, Malaysia and others is seriously challenging the taken-for-granted Euro-American world hegemony. Although the colonial subjugation has had deep cultural and psychological effects (see e.g. Nandy 1983 on India), the social logic of the East-West dichotomy in new middle-class Asians' lives cannot be understood solely as an extension of past colonial asymmetry. In order to understand the ongoing processes of identification and cultural interaction in the present world of 'Westernised' suicide bombers or expatriate Indian IT professionals who enter into arranged marriages, we need a better understanding of the dialectics of belonging and difference in the lives of new middle-class Asians.

The discussion concerning cultural influences in the context of globalisation has examined whether and how the world is becoming homogenised (e.g. Robertson 1995), whether there is cultural resistance or accommodation (Marcus 1992), and whether we can see cultural 'closure' (Meyer and Geschiere 1998) taking place in subordinate cultural settings. Cultural responses to hegemony may be varied and inventive, and the imitation that strikes the eye may conceal a different indigenous signification (see e.g. Friedman 1994: 105-109; Nandy 1983). Despite this relativising approach that has largely become the canon in socio-cultural anthropology, it is unrealistic to deny the fact that economic globalisation brings with it a growing awareness of cultural Otherness that demands a reaction. Although these reactions may not be predetermined, the *need* for a reaction is inescapable.

As its essential counterpart, modernisation of the economy and the apparent uniformalisation that global influences may bring about lead simultaneously to new forms of particularism and cultural difference: revivalism of ethnic and nationalistic movements is its most common

manifestation. When under pressure from dominant outside influ-
ences, people tend to create a new sense of conscious culturalism: a
conscious mobilisation of cultural differences in the service of larger
national and transnational politics (Appadurai 1996: 15). For the new
middle-class Asians, the idea of the West has appeared as one of the
most readily available sources of difference and denunciation: it helps
them to imagine themselves in relation to others in their own society,
as well as to people elsewhere.

My question here is not whether the new Asian middle classes are
culturally beginning to resemble their Euro-American counterparts,
which I would find a barren inquiry; instead, I have chosen to look into
whether and how the idea of the West is important for processes of
identification and social value particularly in India, where outside in-
fluences have been perennial for millennia. Recent decades have wit-
nessed a growing political tendency to create a nationalist ethos that
claims only a particular form of 'Hinduness' to be culturally authentic
'Indianness' (van der Veer 1993, 1996). In this task, Hindu nationalists
have shared their view with much of post-colonial social and cultural
research on India (ibid.). The understanding of the cultural difference
of India vis-à-vis the West has its roots in Indological research and car-
ries its political and civilisational effects along to the present day (e.g.
Breckenridge and van der Veer 1993).

In the following, I will first briefly present the concept of Occidental-
ism, examine the social phenomenon of the new middle classes in In-
dia and beyond, and then present ethnographic examples related to
birthdays and cakes that help to clarify what the West could mean in
the political agenda of identity formation and in the mundane social
reality of new middle-class Indians. I will conclude with a few specula-
tive and comparative propositions concerning the new Asian middle
classes and the importance of the stylised images of the West in their
social life.

Occidentalism

The dichotomy of East and West made a polemic appearance in Sa-
muel Huntington's (1996) influential, post-communist, 'clash-of-civili-
sations' thesis, according to which the lines of a civilisational, rather
than ideological or economic, battle are to be drawn between a Western
society defined by the importance of individual liberties, and non-Wes-
tern others whether they practise Islamic fundamentalism or Confu-
cianism. Huntington's widely criticised model (e.g. Ong 1999: 185-213)
tends to see the Orient 'as a symbolic obverse of the West' (ibid.: 213),
reproducing the 19th-century imagery of civilisational difference. In his

schema, Indian civilisation, like that of Russia and Japan, hovers inde-
terminately between Western civilisation and its counterforce.

   In Buruma and Margalit's (2004) less provocative and more
nuanced – though polemical – historically based analysis *Occidentalism*,
the world is divided into the intellectual spheres of the West and the
Other. For Buruma and Margalit (2004), Occidentalism refers to a
moral prejudice and condemnation, a dehumanising picture of the
West painted by its enemies. In Venn's (2001: 19) usage, Occidentalism
refers to a European self-understanding and a process of universalising
modernity, being a descriptive more than a contentious term. Here I
use the term Occidentalism more in a descriptive than a political
sense: following Carrier (1995), by Occidentalism I refer here to the
use of stylised images of the West. More specifically, Occidentalism is
here understood as a discourse that constructs the Western Other and
allows the Orient to participate actively in the process of self-appropria-
tion (Chen 1992: 688).

   Occidentalism is not merely a reverse image of Orientalism – a style
of thought based upon an ontological and epistemological distinction
between the Orient and the Occident and a discourse for 'dominating,
restructuring and having authority over the Orient' (Said 1978: 3). Or-
ientalism and Occidentalism are not mirror images but have differing
ideological roles. While Orientalism can be seen as a strategy for Wes-
tern colonialist and post-colonialist world domination, Occidentalism's
uses are most visible *within* Asian domestic and regional politics (e.g.
in China: see Chen 1992). Orientalism is thus directed towards domi-
nating the one whose image is purported, while Occidentalism is
mainly made use of within the creators of the image themselves. Or-
ientalism went hand in glove with economic and political domination
of its Other, while Occidentalism has little direct influence on its Other,
the West (though this influence may gain ground in the new global si-
tuation). Although Occidentalism and Orientalism have a differing po-
litical and ideological role, the images ingrained in them are inter-
twined and mutually reinforcing, so that they can only be considered
in dialectical relation to each other (Carrier 1995).[2]

   According to Carrier (1995: 8), both Occidentalism and Orientalism
are forms of essentialisation – a process in which 'political relations
within and between societies shape the construction and interpretation
of the essential attributes of those societies'. The ways in which new
middle-class Asians see the West are created in relation to their image
of themselves as non-Western, which in turn is highly influenced by
Orientalistic images of their own national cultures. While creating an
image of the West, and appropriating it, they are externalising an im-
age of their own past or authentic 'tradition' in Europe, commonly re-
ferring to the peasant way of life (see e.g. in Sweden: Frykman and

Löfgren 1987) or to the later-adulterated Golden Period of high civilisation. When discursively creating the West, the new middle classes simultaneously create nationalistic belongings and identifications.

Chen (1992) separates 'official Occidentalism' from 'anti-official Occidentalism' in her analysis of the discursive uses of the West in China. She shows how official discourse in Mao's China used the essentialised image of the West to support nationalism and suppress the population (ibid.: 688). The anti-official Occidentalism of the intelligentsia in turn uses the constructed image of the West to fight political oppression. Chen's analysis of the essentialised images of the West in China shows how multifaceted the uses of ideological images can be. The political situation *within* a country, rather than between societies, or civilisations in Huntington's terms, may explain the form of Occidentalism.

For Hindu nationalists the West is a moral threat and is to be kept at bay. This was evident, for example, in the protests in India in 2001, brought on by the revelation that a trace of beef extract was used in McDonald's French fries in the United States. Although the French fries in India's McDonalds were still guaranteed to be and to have always been pure vegetarian, the incident was enough to bring demonstrators onto the streets and a militant Hindu youth group to vandalise a McDonald's outlet in a Mumbai suburb. This is a graphic example of the ways McDonald's can be experienced as a threat to the Hindu Indian way of life. However, the supporters of the Bharatiya Janata Party, the Hindu nationalist party, do not necessarily share the straightforwardly anti-Western ideology of the party or its close ideological allies. Some Hindu nationalist sloganeers could be included in Buruma and Margalit's (2004) category of the ideological enemies of the West, while the majority of BJP supporters have a more accommodating attitude towards commodities and ideas defined as Western.

Although the viewpoints publicly presented by the Indian *sangh parivar*[3] may be analysed as a form of 'hatred towards the West' à la Buruma and Margalit, for analysing Indian new middle-class lived realities, Carrier's (1995) and Chen's (1992) uses of Occidentalism appear to allow a much more nuanced analysis. Carrier and Chen are both interested in how people who consider themselves non-Western appropriate the idea of the West for their own purposes.

As a counterpoint to the condemnation of the West that the Hindu nationalist ethos often entails, Indian intellectuals have quite opposing, even worried, images of the middle-class attitude towards the West: Dipankar Gupta (2000) considers the new Indian middle classes' Westernisation to be skin deep, a kind of 'Westoxication'[4] without adherence to the core values of democracy and individual liberty; Pavan K. Varma (1998) sees the middle classes plagued by a feeling of inferiority that 'spawned a vast imitativeness ..., and made most educated Indians – in

their lifestyles and aspirations and cultural idiom – persistent and un-
thinking apes of everything Western' (ibid.: 154). Ashish Nandy (1983),
in his tour de force *The Intimate Enemy*, considered this aping part of
the civilisational strategy of the subordinate to manage the colonial si-
tuation, by remaining aloof and indefinite and thus securing a flexible
and adaptable position towards hegemony. Gurcharan Das in turn de-
scribes the lingering ambivalent legacy that English education in the
colonial period has left in the middle-class psyche:

> Our inner lives are a parody. We have one foot in India, the
> other in the West, and we belong to neither. [...] We mouth plati-
> tudes about Indian culture without having read the classics in
> Sanskrit. Instead, we read *Time* magazine to "keep up." We are
> touchy about India and look to the West for inspiration and re-
> cognition. (Das 2002: 283)

All in all, the new middle-class attitude towards the West – and the in-
telligentsia's attitude towards the new middle classes – could best be
described as ambivalent. The dynamics of this ambivalence, in turn, re-
quire further probing.

The study of the new middle classes

In the last decade, there has been growing scholarly interest towards
the current socio-cultural and political role of the middle classes in In-
dia (e.g. Favero 2003, 2005; Fernandes 2006; Säävälä 2001, 2003,
2006, forthcoming; van Wessel 2001, 2004) and beyond, in Asia (e.g.
Chua 2000; Sen and Stivens 1998; Pinches 1999). The concept of the
middle class, or classes, in the Asian context appears problematic, fuz-
zy and difficult to define. Middle classes in India have been often de-
fined by economic criteria alone (based on annual household income,
such as in the surveys of the National Council of Applied Economic Re-
search) or a combination of various educational and consumption cri-
teria (e.g. Sheth 1999; see Fernandes 2006 for an apt analysis and cri-
tique). The notion of the middle class in economic terms is quite differ-
ent in India and in post-industrialist countries. For example, the
majority of Indian households defined as middle class cannot afford a
car or a holiday abroad, unlike in the West, while in India it is possible
for them to hire servants, which in turn is hardly the case among most
middle-class Europeans.

The growth of the new middle classes in post-industrial countries re-
flects socio-economic change that societies are experiencing in varying
degrees: growing bureaucratisation that follows the enlargement of the

field of the modern state; transformation to a post-industrial society in which the service sector gains growing importance, and the onslaught of the information society. These macro-level processes create jobs that demand educated, skilled and salaried employees. Despite the apparent socio-cultural differences, say, between a middle-class Korean and a middle-class Indian, there are certain structural similarities, deriving from a legacy of hierarchically ordered social structures, a largely shared colonial past characterised by dependency, and current economic globalisation (Chua 2000; Pinches 1999).[5]

Here I use the term 'new middle classes' to refer to people who work in organisations, draw regular salaries, consider themselves middle class, are educated, do not work manually and do not hold decision-making positions (apart from the operational level) (Burris 1995). I thus see an important analytical difference between the elite (those who have decision-making power and financial, cultural and/or intellectual independence) and the middle classes, although the difference between the elite and middle classes is not always made clear in social research. Even when the elite are left out, the group characterised as the new middle classes remains highly diverse (Fernandes 2006). Because class is best not considered as a social group but rather as a process or positioning (Liechty 2003), it is evident that drawing dividing lines and giving exact definitions is impossible, even useless. In order to acknowledge the multiple and shifting positions among people who could be characterised as middle class, I use the concept in the plural (see also Kahn 1994).

Most Asian societies were colonised by Europeans or Americans, and the colonies were partly administered with the help of an educated, indigenous group of bureaucrats. In India, the emergence of the new middle classes has been closely tied with the needs of colonialism and, after independence, of public administration. The middle classes in post-colonial societies were, so to speak, born and bred with ideas of the West (e.g. Joshi 2001 on India). The capitalism and globalisation of the last decade, in turn, explain the latest changes in the character of the new middle classes. The state has been and still is pivotal in creating and securing middle classes in many post-colonial societies (see e. g. Kahn 1994: 38 on Malay middle classes).

In a frame of reference deriving from Weber (1978) and Bourdieu (1984), new middle-class life could be seen as centring on social value. People position themselves as middle class on the basis of their ability to follow certain morally valued practices, thus creating a distinction between themselves and those below. In the Asian context, could practices and consumption with a reference point in the West be a source of social value and distinction? The issue is far from straightforward, as middle-class people have an ambivalent relationship to the West,

which they partly see as their Other (Favero 2003, 2005; Liechty 2003; Säävälä forthcoming; van Wessel 2001). The idea of the West plays a particular role in the struggle over distinction in India, having simultaneously negative connotations (eating polluting substances such as beef and pork, women behaving in morally questionable ways, individualism and selfishness) and positive connotations (superior wealth, technological advances, freedom and democracy; Säävälä forthcoming). These ambivalent interpretations of the West in India are partly shared with other Asian societies (see e.g. Tobin 1992; Watson 1997).

Birthdays and cakes in India

To clarify how the idea of the West is manifested in Indian social realities and categorisations, we will examine the presentation of a cake in India, through both a public drama related to a cake in a temple and a domestic cake-cutting ritual at a birthday party. Despite its utter banality, the cake in the Indian context can be instructive of the middle-class predicament between Occidentalism and national identification. As we will see, even such an innocuous thing as a cake may turn out to be a politically and ideologically sensitive issue that highlights civilisational anxieties.

The phenomenon of the cake in India lives primarily in the context of birthday celebrations, which are important domestic set-ups of middle-class sociality. In Europe, birthdays emerged as manifestations of a middle-class attitude toward time and the life cycle of the individual (e.g. in Sweden: Frykman and Löfgren 1987: 31-33), when the middle class endeavoured to differentiate itself from the peasantry, which had a more cyclical, agriculturally oriented understanding of time. Mechanical time-keeping, an emphasis on formal education, and a career mentality make birthday celebrations meaningful in the middle-class environment. Birthdays of 'ordinary people', not only of rulers, deities and saints, are a typically modern phenomenon, requiring awareness of time other than that based on the agricultural or religious seasons and calendar. It presupposes a conception of time as rigid, measurable and linear. For my Hyderabadi middle-class informants in 2000, children's birthdays were highly important, while married adults rarely celebrated theirs (see Baumann 1992 on Punjabis in London).

What makes an Indian birthday party interesting from the point of view of Occidentalism is its central symbol, the cake, an utterly Western icon in India, where baking is not part of the indigenous kitchen. Cakes were introduced to India through Portuguese and British colonialists and have been mainly identified with the Anglo-Indian and Christian populations; but over more recent decades, Christmas and

birthday cakes have also become a common fare in Hindu and Muslim middle-class homes, and have lost much of their colonial connotation. The popularity of cakes is growing fast among affluent Indians, who have more money than before to spend on these expensive items. Baking at home is less popular than buying cakes from bakeries because most kitchens do not include an oven, and even if one exists, special utensils and ingredients must be purchased. Moreover, not all middle-class women or their servants possess baking skills. Bakeries offering cakes for every possible celebration are mushrooming in Indian cities, testifying to their growing popularity. When a cake or some other baked item is offered, Indians are substituting this for Indian sweets that are the standard offering for honoured guests as well as in feasts and rituals.

The presence of eggs in cakes makes them the epitome of foreignness in India: Indian sweets and desserts contain only vegetarian items, and usually *ghee*, which makes them highly auspicious and pure. Thus, a cake made with eggs creates a novel food category. Bakeries offer eggless cakes as well, but there is nevertheless the risk of any cake containing hidden egg, and strict vegetarians consider this to be polluting. Some vegetarians make an exception and eat cakes even if they contain eggs, while others decline altogether. According to my experience, the first option is the most common. Whenever a cake is offered in a social situation, the question of diet surfaces, because a considerable number of middle-class people have a vegetarian caste background. A middle-class person from a vegetarian family has to decide what her/his relationship is to the tradition of vegetarianism on the one hand, and to the West and modern life that a cake epitomises, on the other hand. This is why a cake can turn out to be an important issue in the politics of identity.

The 'political cake'

Apart from the role of the cake in domestic socialising, it may also reflect wider political issues, as shown by a controversy that emerged in 2003. A Bharatiya Janata (Hindu nationalist) Party leader from the state of Madhya Pradesh, Uma Bharati, offered a heart-shaped cake with candles to the divinity Hanuman to celebrate Hanuman Jayanti (the deity's birthday) in a temple and sang 'Happy birthday' in English to the deity. Her visit to the temple was designed to launch a campaign against the presiding chief minister of the state, using the temple for political purposes. This is how the incident was reported in an English-language Indian magazine:

> Uma placed candles on the cake, just as is the fashion in mod-
> ern society for celebrating birthdays or achievements, lighted
> them and sang 'Happy birthday to You Hanumanji.' Of course,
> she did aarti [offering of light] with the cake and later cut it and
> distributed among BJP workers and a group of Dalits and tri-
> bals. (*The DayAfter* 11 May 2003)

She had used a cake instead of the usual sweets or fruit offering, and
instead of camphor flame or *ghee* lamps, had used the cake candles for
aarti, the service of lights that is a vessel of disembodiment between
the divinity and the worshipper. The 'Happy Birthday' song replaced
any mantra that could have been used for addressing Hanuman. Ques-
tions were instantly raised in the media concerning the potential pre-
sence of polluting egg in the cake – and political opponents in both
her own BJP and other parties were quick to make use of the occasion
to portray Uma Bharati in an unfavourable light (see *The Hindu*, 18
May 2003; Narrain and Tripathi 2003). Had she disregarded the rigid
requirements for offerings to Sanskritic deities, for example to include
only pure and vegetarian items? Moreover, she had entered the *sanctum
sanctorum* of a temple that allegedly denied women entry. If she offered
egg to Hanuman, it would have been a sacrilege in the eyes of strict
Hindus, which many BJP supporters are. After the incident, the state
minister of public health ordered the temple to be purified with water
from the Ganges in order to remove the pollution that bringing a cake
to the temple had potentially caused (*The Telegraph*, 29 April 2003). Ac-
cording to a newspaper article, the minister claimed that Uma Bharati

> has "polluted" the temple by offering a "cake" on Hanuman
> Jayanti. He is unmoved by Bharati's claim that the cake con-
> tained no egg. For the minister, the "pollution" and the "cultural
> invasion" of western civilisation is too grave to be ignored. (*The
> Telegraph*, 29 April 2003)

The question of whether the cake was baked without egg, to be suitable
as an offering, is secondary to understanding the incident: offering a
cake, a foreign and thus suspicious substance by definition, to a deity
was considered objectionable. Doubt over the contents was a manifesta-
tion of xenophobia and a felt need to 'protect' Hindu practice from an
invading, polluting foreign influence. It was curious that a politician
from the BJP, a party that celebrates Hindu pride, would opt for such
an offering and, moreover, sing 'Happy Birthday' in English to a deity.
   Uma Bharati is a relatively less well educated, unmarried, lower-caste
politician who has taken an oath of celibacy and become a *sadhvi*, a
nun. She has taken an extremely militant approach towards religious

matters in India, having been one of the main agitators in the demolition of the Babri mosque in Ayodhya in 1992 that led to widespread communal violence. Without a long formal education, this daughter of a lower-caste farming family could hardly be accepted as a middle-class person by other people who consider themselves as such. Her hapless act in the Hanuman temple shows that she lacks cultural capital – she mixed practices that should not have been mixed, including features interpreted as manifestations of the cultural Other in a religious field that is central for Hindu nationalists, many of whom come from a middle-class background (Yadav, Kumar and Heath 1999). Even those middle-class people who do not share the religious fervour of the Hindutva type considered Uma Bharati's worship to be in bad taste, even ridiculous, revealing her lack of cultural capital.

The birthday cake

Let us now turn from this public drama transmitted by the media towards the domestic scene where birthdays and cakes take on a more benign role. As mentioned above, birthdays are mainly arranged for children, manifesting their trajectory through their education and towards adulthood. On one particular occasion, I witnessed the 18th birthday of a middle-class girl in Hyderabad. The dining table had been moved into the middle of the room and a sizable iced birthday cake from a bakery had been placed in the middle. The cake was covered with cocoa dust and decorated with stripes of whipped cream, a marzipan rose, cherries and 'Happy Birthday' in blue letters. The cake looked stunning and vastly exceeded the ordinary.

Before the party started, I, together with the girl's mother, had put 18 candles on the cake. In addition to her mother, father, brother, grandmother and me, some neighbours from the same apartment block had been invited. (The birthday girl had thrown a separate party for her best friends at a private club earlier the same day.) When everyone was present, the birthday girl lighted the candles herself, while I was given a camera to take a snapshot. We sang 'Happy Birthday' and the party reached its apex when she blew out the candles. It was time to cut the cake. She cut small pieces, and each of the participants was expected to come forward, in order of hierarchical importance, to feed the birthday girl some cake. Her maternal grandmother was the first to feed her by hand, in a way similar to feeding someone Indian sweets in rituals such as marriage. The girl ended up stuffed with cake as everyone made her eat a bite, one after the other. Later she delivered pieces to everyone on disposable plates. We ate them by hand. There was some discussion about whether the young Brahman girl and her

brother from upstairs would eat a cake that contained egg, but they contended that they did not mind eating cakes outside the home. Another Brahman couple from the housing complex came over for a visit but declined to eat anything but Indian snacks fried in oil, which are symbolically pure items to accept from hierarchically lower persons.

The birthday party shows how a cake – which refers to the foreign through its mixture of ingredients such as eggs and whipped cream, its English script, and the necessity of purchasing it from a specialised bakery – is domesticated. The cake's apparent potential for exotic reference is put into a frame in which its foreignness adds to the value but takes a 'tamed' and locally significant form. The sheer fact that the beautifully iced cake was bought from a bakery by the mother and not prepared by the women of the family made the consumption of the item different from the usual festivities. Basically, cooked food items coming from outside the familial sphere (apart from those deep-fried in oil or containing *ghee*) are considered a risk, as they may transmit harmful substances from the cook. Granting high value to a bakery product and sharing it in a ritualised manner manifested the family's association with the outer world of business and success. The presence of guests who would have to decide whether to eat the cake or not due to religious dietary restrictions underlined the cake's external, even exotic, character.

If we look in ethnographic detail at how birthdays are celebrated among new middle-class Indians, we come to see a curious combination of Occidental imagery and 'indigenising' practices. The process of 'recontextualisation' (Brannen 1992), 'indigenisation' (Ivy 1995), or 'domestication' (Tobin 1992; Raz 1999) is a well-known phenomenon in studies on consumption and Western cultural influence in Japan and elsewhere. Anthropologically, every adoption of a technique, product, or idea entails a process of interpretation and contextualisation, meaning that the direct, hegemonic influence of a powerful cultural centre can never be totalising. The attraction of the cake, which has an 'exotic' air about it, is partly explained by conspicuous consumption and status competition, but even that is not an exhaustive explanation. It gives far too rationalistic and economistic an image of the practice (see Friedman 1994: 149-150). Middle-class Indians do not do their utmost to emulate the elite; on the contrary, they consider the elite immoral and even offensive, while simultaneously prestigious and mesmerising. The need to belong may be at least as important as the need to distinguish oneself (Liechty 2003).

People who identify themselves as middle class differentiate between themselves and the elite by making use of the concept of Westernisation. The elite is considered immoral due to its excessive Westernisation, manifested in women's alleged improper dress, in sexual license,

the consumption of alcohol, the loosening of family authority, disre-spect towards religious sensibilities, and avarice (see also van Wessel 2001: 88; Liechty 2003: 69ff).

The cake can be consumed in a form that emphasises the hierarchi-cal relationships between age groups (cutting the cake, feeding the cake as a blessing) and as a derivative of taken-for-granted gender roles, since it is the women of the family who are responsible for the pur-chase, choice and presentation of the cake at a party. Using fingers to eat the cake further 'indigenises' the act. This could even be seen as multiplying the blessing's potency, as it is introduced into the context of a seemingly 'Western' birthday party (Baumann 1992: 108). In Uma Bharati's case the cake symbolised a threat to nationalistic differences, while in a common middle-class birthday party features connoting the West have a benign instrumental role. In both cases the presence of a 'Western' item strengthens the nationalistic or Orientalist discourse on Hindu India.

A speculative, comparative conclusion

In a developing society like India, where the middle class, though in some ways characterising a sizable portion of the population, is still a minority, certain consumer practices retain a Western image (McDo-nald's, birthday cakes, jeans) as long as they connote an elitist way of life. When the society grows more affluent and large numbers of peo-ple can afford to engage in these 'exotic' consumer practices, their 'Western-ness' tends to diminish and be replaced by 'indigenisation'. In that situation their importance in the nationalistic discourse as coun-terpoints decreases. When and if birthday celebrations and cakes be-come common fare in India, the cake most probably will no longer be identified with the West, but will be accommodated as a perfectly In-dian way of celebrating a birthday. Maybe offering a cake to a deity in a temple will become ordinary, and after ten years we will wonder why Uma Bharati's cake controversy created such uproar. A comparable pro-cess is going on in Asia with regard to McDonald's: In Japan and Sin-gapore, where the restaurant is frequented by the common man, McDonald's has come to be considered an indigenous company (Wat-son 1997; Chua 2000; Traphagan and Brown 2002).

The Asian new middle-class phenomenon differs significantly from the 'older' process of middle-class formation experienced by the Euro-American world since industrialisation and the emergence of the mod-ern state. In the present situation, new middle-class Asians create highly fluid identities and are quick to realign their points of reference according to the situation. They are both having their cake and eating

it too – giving a high value to certain practices that manifest their In-dianness, such as concern for vegetarian versus non-vegetarian distinc-tions, while playing with features that refer to their competence in Western cultural imagery, such as cutting a birthday cake, without the need to claim an uncontradictory identity. In this respect, they could be called a 'postmodern' new middle class compared to the 'modern', new Euro-American middle class. This postmodernity nevertheless does not mean that they are 'floating freely'. Their identities must necessarily be based on a palette of various materials that they are constantly strengthening and recreating. Their own cultural tradition is among those materials, and so are 'modernity', Westernisation, and material-ism. New middle-class Indians (and possibly those in other tradition-ally hierarchical Asian societies) do not engage in similar classification struggles to the new European middle classes. They capitalise on tradi-tional status markers if possible, but easily shift emphasis elsewhere temporarily and can compete equally well on other terrains. This is manifested in the popularity of many religious reform movements and traditionalised practices such as *Feng shui* and its Indian equivalent, *vaastu*. The adoption of practices defined as 'Western', such as eating cake, does not make a new middle-class Indian any less 'Indian'; on the contrary, it strengthens her/his national-cultural identity by making the difference palpable and discursive. New Indian middle-class identi-ties are flexible and able to incorporate seemingly contradictory cultural ingredients.

Notes

1 This essay derives from fieldwork in India in 1999-2000 and 2004. The study was financed by a post-doctoral grant from the Research Council of Culture and Society, the Academy of Finland. I would like to thank Professor Krishna Sen (University of Calcutta) for her most helpful comments on an earlier draft of this paper and Maija Mäkinen for helping with the language revision. Earlier versions of some parts of this essay are published in Säävälä (forthcoming).
2 The emergence of a sizeable minority of Muslims, Asians and Africans in Europe which is assessed in terms of Orientalism is poised to steadily change the concept of Occidentalism.
3 *Sangh parivar* refers to a number of organisations with Hindu nationalistic affilia-tions around Rashtrya Swayamsevak Sangh (National Volunteer Association), such as the Bharatiya Janata Party (Indian People's Party), the youth organisation Bajrang Dal (Army of Hanuman), Vishwa Hindu Parishad (World Hindu Council), and others.
4 'Westoxication' is a term coined by Jalal-al-e-Ahmad, an Iranian writer and political activist in the 1960s, to describe the cultural situation in the Shah's Iran.
5 Here we should not forget the potentially important civilisational influence of Hindu-ism/Buddhism over several millennia in a vast geographical area in Asia (Sen 2004).

10 Ode to 'Personal Challenge': Reconsidering Japanese Groupism and the Role of Beethoven's *Ninth* in Catering to Socio-Cultural Needs

Eddy Y.L. Chang

Introduction

Music is a means by which people can achieve self-understanding, express their individuality and even defy social restraints and prejudice, while facilitating the shaping of individual and collective identities. In Japan, this emerged in the form of personal challenge through what is known as *daiku genshō* (第九現象) – a modern socio-cultural phenomenon with individuals coming together to sing the *Ode to Joy* of Beethoven's *Ninth Symphony* en masse and mostly in the form of annual year-end concerts throughout Japan.

Although *daiku* has been featured in various media, most works on the subject present different origins of the phenomenon pay little heed to unravelling the individual motives for partaking in a *daiku* event, or simply dismiss the phenomenon as a mere manifestation of stereotypical Japanese groupism. This paper challenges the simplistic view of the *daiku* experience by presenting the process in which Beethoven's *Ninth* has catered to 'personal challenge' in Japan. A brief history and background of *daiku* will illustrate the establishment of the phenomenon and reveal the significance of Beethoven's masterpiece in modern Japan. This will illuminate the complexity of modern Japanese identity building.

Beethoven's *Ninth Symphony*[1] – particularly the *Ode to Joy* – has been universally instrumental in advocating peace, harmony, love, friendship and unity, as well as facilitating celebrations and commemorations of special events. In Japan, the *Ninth* has an additional role to play: it is the subject of an annual ritual that at first glance would tempt one to dismiss it as a typical manifestation of Japanese *groupism*.[2] Indeed, the incessant tendency and desire to belong as exemplified through *daiku* would make the Japanese look as if they 'do not think' and merely want to 'belong to something' because everyone else does. On the other hand, some might say that Japanese culture is not unique but simply borrowed, which questions the uniqueness of *daiku*. These ideas would

discourage any attempt to reconsider the Japanese behaviour and their identity building through looking at the *daiku* phenomenon. It would seem that *daiku* is no more than a phase of foreign culture admiration or idolisation, and it would have little substantial impact on the Japanese culture.

However, one should not dismiss *daiku* so readily. The phenomenon is both unique and non-unique at the same time. Further study into the *daiku* phenomenon has revealed that there is more to the phenomenon than just mere groupism on display. That and the fact that the Japanese are well known for their ability to adopt foreign elements into their own culture and further develop these to create variations of the originals say there is something unique about such a Japanese rendition of foreign culture. It has been claimed that *daiku* was inspired by a German tradition, and thus in this sense it is not uniquely Japanese. Yet, we do not see in Germany the same level of passion, scale, not to mention the many different types of *daiku* events seen in Japan. *Daiku* is not unlike events such as New Year concerts or carols by candlelight celebrated en mass around the world – it is all about belonging and sharing; and yet saying this would mean that *daiku* is not unique, nor that it is a manifestation of typical Japanese groupism, since the same groupism can be discerned elsewhere around the world.

So then, what is special and unique about this phenomenon in Japan? The *daiku* experience hints at, and indeed demonstrates, a new rendering of a Japanese socio-cultural trait that combines the traditional virtue of enduring hardship and a modern attitude in taking up personal challenges, while maintaining the Japanese nature to strive (*gambaru*)[3] and sharing the experience. It would appear that the days when the Japanese would resign to this nature of striving with tacit acceptance have made way to accommodate more personal challenges that have more specifically intended goals. As in other cultures, many Japanese today – particularly young people – are no longer satisfied with the idea of simply keeping to or being bound or limited by traditions that encourage endurance without being permitted to question them or to demonstrate individuality (Matsumoto and De Mente 2003: 121). That is not to say, however, that the Japanese have opted for an absolute abandonment of their inherent nature to endure (*gaman*)[4] and strive (*gambaru*). Rather, one might consider that the Japanese now continue to remain so with slight moderations. We see more people in Japan actively participating in activities that come in diversified forms, such as represented by the *daiku* experience, to challenge something otherwise normally left to professionals. Many opt to do so because it offers a way to overcome personal hurdles or achieve individual goals by keeping to the nature of *gambaru*. As we will see, *daiku* facilitates this need to achieve and provides the venue for realising the challenge,

with many taking it one step further: to take their passion for singing the *Ninth* overseas, joining voices as a way of promoting love and peace on an international level.[5]

The popularity of Beethoven's *Ninth*, which transformed into *daiku* and soared to embrace an astonishing number of concerts each year, can be understood by the following episode that opens the introductions to Wasserman's book on the subject:

> In December 1983, the German conductor Peter Gülke, invited to direct the NHK Orchestra's performance of Beethoven's *Ninth Symphony*, met his fellow conductor Gunther Herbig in the foyer of a hotel in Tokyo. "What brings you here?" asked the latter. "For the *Ninth*," Gülke replied. "Me, too," responded Herbig, "let's just hope that we are not in the same orchestra!"[6] (Wasserman 2006: 7)

There is no exaggeration in their verbal exchange, and even today the number of *daiku* concerts still counts over at least 100 per year. To better understand the nature of *daiku* and its socio-cultural implication and significance, close examination of strata of cultural traits and historical development of the modern Japanese society would be required; yet that would amount to tomes of writing. In order to focus on the discussion on the *Ninth's* infliction on or accommodation to Japanese identity building, this paper will simply provide a concise, introductory look into the background and impact of this fascinating social phenomenon, concentrating on the aspect of 'personal challenge' and question of 'groupism' by encompassing vital socio-cultural elements. An attempt will also be made to demonstrate how Beethoven's music and ideology have saturated modern Japan. Before delving into this, however, it is necessary to define *daiku*.

A word on *daiku*

Clarifying the significance of Japan's unusual and uncontested passion for the *Ninth* is no easy task as it involves a profound understanding of not only the country's history, character of its people, and social issues, but also traditional customs. In any case, it is vital to first define what *daiku* really is and how it came to be established, before attempting to examine its socio-cultural significance in Japan in recent decades.

The term *daiku* simply means 'the ninth' or 'number nine'[7] and has been used by the Japanese as a familiar term to refer to the *Ninth* and all concerts performing the *Ninth*. Before presenting the background of the *daiku* phenomenon, the reader should be aware that *daiku* has been

primarily used to denote the singing or performing of Beethoven's *Ninth* at the end of the year, and every year on a large scale and with an overwhelming number of performances.[8] However, today it may also be used to refer to performances of the *Ninth* in other contexts and any month of the year. *Daiku* has now become the name brand for nearly any performance of the *Ninth* regardless of whether it is connected to the year-end ritual.

As for other concerts that fall outside of the typical *daiku* 'season' and scale, it would be appropriate to refer to them simply as 'the *Ninth*'. In other words, 'the *Ninth*' would indicate Beethoven's *Ninth* as it is generally performed like any other musical pieces, while '*daiku*' would indicate the phenomenon where the piece enjoys unrivalled popularity or is performed in various forms and ways not conventionally conceived, while fundamentally being a year-end or New Year's event. Nevertheless, as we will see later on, this clarification often tends to become clouded by the overwhelming number of *daiku* concerts that are *not* performed at the end of the year.

Having defined *daiku*, we can now continue on to a brief look at the history of the *Ninth* in Japan and its development into *daiku*. This is necessary before we consider whether *daiku* is simply a manifestation of non-individualist groupism or the result of an emerging new trait – one that incorporates more personal needs. An examination of the background of the *Ninth* and *daiku* in Japan will help better demonstrate the dualism or parallel of Japanese cultural character and Western cultural elements, which work perfectly in harmony to create new socio-cultural products such as *daiku*.

In Japan, annual events are popular and vital pastimes, whether traditional or novelties. These events generally have a strong link with seasonal changes. Life in Japan is still much governed by its distinct four seasons, as exemplified by the many *matsuri*,[9] celebrations, and events all year round like *hanami*,[10] *hanabi-taikai*[11] or *momijigari*.[12] It is evident that Japan, with its love for seasonal merriment, has always had the perfect environment ready to cater for events like *daiku*.[13] We can see some of the characteristics of *daiku* shared by such events as *hanami* and *hanabi-taikai*: all are held annually in great numbers with large crowds nationwide. These events are now almost indispensable at Japanese festivals held overseas also, indicating the establishment of Japan's festival culture celebrated en masse.

In the same way that seasonal changes call for the performance of ceremonies and celebrations, concerts of the *Ninth* – with particular spotlight on the *Ode to Joy* – have become a 'ritual' in Japan, almost always around the end of the year or, in some cases, the beginning of the new one. Regardless of whether the majority of the Japanese would go to a concert performing the *Ninth* or consider participating in one,

the term *daiku* is nevertheless synonymous with traditional events that are celebrated each year with much enthusiasm. In his article on the *Ninth*, Schlecht (1996) asserts that 'to a Japanese December has become what Handel's *Messiah* is in the West'. The *Ninth* is not just some Western musical piece having won a large audience in Japan by sheer chance; it possesses elements that are convenient to the modern Japanese society and has consequently ascended to becoming a socio-cultural event firmly established in modern Japan. It is a socio-cultural phenomenon that sets the scene of the wintry season, much similar to Handel's *Messiah* in the West during the Christmas and year-end season.

   Besides this factor, the grand scale of performers being recruited also makes *daiku* an interesting subject of study. Many performances boasting a choir of some hundred or so singers today will even look ridiculously dwarfed by some of the major long-running annual concerts that have some 5,000 to 10,000 singers. What is also significant is that the choir is usually made up of amateur singers of all ages and from all walks of life. The fact that the passion for singing the *Ninth* was not ephemeral and has instead become established as *daiku* serves as an indication that the *Ninth* offers the answer to certain needs of the Japanese who participate. It is thus of great interest to see how the *Ninth*, a western product, has become instrumental in the accomplishment of diversified personal achievements by so many amateurs, strangers to one another, and how the Japanese society has required and utilised it to achieve goals in personal, local, national and international contexts.

Background of the *Ninth* in Japan and its development into *daiku*[14]

The history of the first known *Ninth* ever performed in Japan is less than a century old. It was in 1824 that the piece debuted in Vienna. A century later, it was performed in Japan by the then Tokyo Music School.[15] However, records show that the piece was actually first performed by German POWs kept captive at Kurume[16] (Chiba Prefecture[17]) and Naruto[18] (Tokushima Prefecture,[19] this being the very first recorded performance in Japan), prior to the first full-scale public performance by Japanese musicians (Yokoda 2002: Appendix iv-v). The Naruto performances became the most well-known, serving as a reminder of not only the friendship between the German prisoners and the local Japanese living in the surroundings of the camp, but also the kindness shown to the prisoners by the commandant of the camp, Toyohisa Matsue.[20] One could consider this as the beginning of Japan's fixation on Beethoven's final and most grandiose opus.

During the Second World War, the *Ninth* gradually became the object of exploitation for a variety of wartime purposes. It served as music for boosting the morale of young men ready to depart for the war front, as requiem music for those who never returned, and as music to show Japan's wartime defiance against American and British cultures, which the Japanese military regime regarded as evil and inferior. This *Ninth* was of a different nature to that performed by the German POWs, having been smeared with a strong military overtone. Given Japan's fascination with German ideology, there is a clear indication that Japan was eager to become a nation like Germany, rekindling the Meiji government's keen interest in the ideology of the Prussians whose victory over the French in 1871 had left a deep impression on the Japanese. Subsequently, this paved the way for the ultimate masterpiece of the great German composer (known also as the Saint of Music)[21] to serve, as an extension to what Watanabe (Sakurai 2007: 188-189) calls 'communal music' such as anthems, the perfect musical piece the Japanese military would adopt to boost the morale of its troops and to glorify its cause in the Second World War.

The *Ninth* as a replacement of the '*Messiah*'

After the war, for those who survived and began to rebuild the nation, the *Ninth* took on yet another role. It began replacing the role of Handel's *Messiah* as a post-war charity event that was performed at the end of the year. This was not simply due to the need for music that could offer consolation to people in despair; it also acted as a means of acquiring income for the orchestra (Suzuki 1989: 163). While the *Messiah* catered to post-war Japan as a charity event, its purpose was to donate concert proceedings to the needy. Gradually, the *Ninth* took over as a way of acquiring income for the orchestra and choir, while the *Ode to Joy* responded to the hope for a better life. It was a guarantee that the families and friends of orchestra musicians and choir singers would also likely be in the audience, promising profit for the orchestra, while achieving the 'salvation of the spirit' through a grand 'get-together' of people in the cold year-end period. However, at this stage the *Ninth* had not yet reached its peak popularity to become *daiku*, for it was not always performed at the end of the year, and not every year.[22]

NHK and the end-of-year tradition

The trigger of the year-end tradition that later became *daiku* has been attributed to the performances of the *Ninth* by the NHK Symphony Or-

chestra under the direction of Joseph Rosenstock.[23] The conductor was at one time quoted as hinting at a connection of his NHK Symphony Orchestra *Ninth* with a year-end tradition in Germany (Suzuki 1989: 106). His successor, Leonid Kreutzer,[24] who temporarily took over the baton and conducted the *Ninth* at the end of the year – at the time still a rare practice – is also considered to have contributed to this tradition (Suzuki 1989: 163, 165). While in Germany there has never been any socio-cultural phenomenon comparable to *daiku*, orchestras favoured Beethoven's last symphony as a piece that signified 'new beginnings' and thus generally performed it on New Year's Eve or in the New Year[25] (Kanzaki 2005). Although there is no direct link between the German tradition and *daiku*, a possible link between the two may have been suggested by the conductors who directed *Ninth* performances in Tokyo. It may not have set *daiku* in full motion, but it certainly has helped to reinforce the foundation of the phenomenon.

Post-war emancipation

The *Ninth* was also instrumental in the emancipation of the soul during the decades that followed after the Second World War, which can be seen in the numerous cases of *Ninth* concerts organised by a movement known as *utagoe-undō*[26] ('singing voice movement'), which peaked in the 1960s. Meanwhile, *Rō-on*[27] (Japan Worker's Music Associations) also held many *Ninth* concerts, which, in the words of Yamane Ginji,[28] gave the working class the inner strength to fight against oppression[29] from those with power (Suzuki 1989). The number of *Ninth* concerts held by *Tokyo Rō-on* was exceptionally high between 1954 (eight in that year) and 1966 (six in that year), with nine performances in 1965 alone (*Tokyo Rō-on* 2004); thereafter the frequency per year fell to one to three concerts, with the 2008 concert being the 114th in its history (see Table 1 for listed numbers of performances between 1953 and 2000[30]). *Rō-on*'s singing movement has contributed to the permeation of the 'sing together' culture in the Japanese society, paving the way for a nationwide adoration of the *Ninth*.

Table 10.1   *Number of performances of the Ninth by Tokyo Rō-on (1953-2000)*
* Performances of the Ode to Joy in the Japanese language

Year	No.	Year	No.	Year	No.	Year	No.	Year	No.
		1960	0	1970	2	1980	1	1990	2
		1961	0	1971	0	1981	3	1991	2
		1962	8	1972	1	1982	3	1992	1
1953	0	1963	5	1973	2	1983	3	1993	2
1954	8	1964	0	1974	2	1984	3	1994	2
1955	0	1965	9*	1975	1	1985	2	1995	0
1956	0	1966	6	1976	3	1986	2	1996	2
1957	0	1967	0	1977	5	1987	2	1997	1
1958	3	1968	3	1978	1	1988	2	1998	1
1959	6	1969	0	1979	3	1989	2	1999	1
								2000	1

This clearly indicates that post-war Tokyo, and presumably all of Japan, had seen in the *Ninth* the possibility to encourage people not to give up hope and to look ahead toward a better future, where there would be no oppression but freedom and peace for all. On the other hand, the records also showed a definite decrease in the number of performances, but this does not indicate the waning of the *Ninth*'s popularity. Here, it must be noted that *Tokyo Rō-on*'s performances did not start out to become the *daiku* we see today, nor were they intended to be. While *Rō-on*'s *Ninth* has contributed the essential element of 'challenge' seen in many of the *daiku* concerts, it does not lend itself to be labelled as *daiku*, which would require at least the 'annual event' criteria and/or the year-end factor. However, as can be seen from the records, these performances clearly did not have a definite tradition of playing the *Ninth* every year. Instead, *Rō-on*'s *Ninth* should be regarded more as having initially acted as a bridging agent linking the universal *Ninth* and the phenomenon of *daiku*, before later absorbing the *daiku* elements.[31] This development, where a movement using the *Ninth* first contributed to the *daiku* but later embraced the *daiku* elements can be seen in other examples shown below.

Becoming *daiku*

The development of *daiku* from the *Ninth* is in actual fact more complex than it appears, but may be concisely given as follows:

Beethoven's *Ninth*   →   *Ninth* to *daiku*   →   *daiku*   →
   (Universal)   (Transitional)   (Unique Phenomenon)
                        [post-war ... rapid growth ... bubble economy ...]

The becoming of *daiku* has been influenced by such movements as *Rō-on* that spread throughout Japan, with additional input from the NHK year-end tradition and post-war social needs and demands. Consequently, Japan gradually witnessed the shaping of *daiku*, but it was not until the 1970s and later that we really begin to see a steady tendency toward the annual tradition[32] (Chang 2000: 92). The remaining factor in the making of the complete *daiku* would arguably be the rapid economic growth, which was followed by the bubble economy. Japan experienced a surge of wealth that peaked in the late 1980s and declined when the bubble economy burst. The bubble economy provided the Japanese not only with the means to spend more money, but also with more time for the leisure appreciation of culture and the arts.[33] Although the *daiku* phenomenon has declined relatively, in comparison with its heydays in the 1980s and 1990s, it has not faded away. It has emerged and upgraded itself as a new socio-cultural element that has found its way into the lexicon of modern Japanese culture. The following sections will present various references to and performances of *daiku*, in the attempt to define its significance and function in modern Japanese society, and to consider the question of cultural identity, groupism and parallel cultural elements.

The significance of *daiku* in today's Japanese society

To explain *daiku* it will require the extraction of four fundamental elements that feed this phenomenon: *akogare*,[34] *moriagaru*,[35] *kandō*[36] and *gambaru*. The first, *akogare*, points at two aspects: the admiration for Beethoven and his world[37] and the wish to be able to perform in a *daiku* concert. This sense of admiration and/or longing is evident in the 'personal challenge' aspect mentioned before, wherein the Japanese hope to demonstrate their individuality or prove their worth by participating in a much-talked-about special event. It connects with the wish to be part of something grand, famous, or fashionable. The Japanese use this word in a variety of aspects in life,[38] and it is with this desire to be something they admire but are generally not cut out to be that draws them to be part of something like the *daiku* experience.

The second element, *moriagaru*, is the element one witnesses in the huge attendance at concerts around the end of the year, testifying to the need for grand, seasonal, festive celebrations. The Japanese enjoy their *matsuri*, and there are absolutely no limitations on what a *matsuri* event should and must be; in fact, anything could very easily be turned into a *matsuri* for the sheer reason of enjoying a celebration with others.[39] But any *matsuri* or gatherings of people will be lifeless without the *moriagaru* element. This word is a socio-cultural term vital in

the everyday life of the Japanese. The Japanese use this word when they want to make an event more exciting – to live it up, or become exhilarated and enjoy the moment shared with others. It is in this sense therefore, that *daiku* is socially and culturally significant in Japan, as it provides the liveliness and grandeur of musical sounds required to pass the end of one year with a grand finale.

While these two elements make *daiku* a manifestation of groupism, it does not spring from a simple 'sheep mentality'. It pertains more to the sense of belonging and sharing, where individual people with different goals can feel confident and enlightened through collective experience. The *daiku* phenomenon is initiated by the *akogare* element, before being lifted to a greater height by the *moriagaru* element. Then it is enhanced by the *kandō* element, which also plays an important part in Japanese culture. This third element lurks in many aspects of Japanese life and is very much evident in movies, dramas, personal experiences and literary works. The Japanese experience this *kandō* sentiment from nature and the changing of the seasons, a hapless love story, or a fantastic concert. Likewise, the *daiku* experience feeds that hungry need to be *moved, touched* and *impressed* by the sound of the music of hundreds or thousands of voices singing for freedom and peace.

The last element, and one of great relevance to our discussion, is the *gambaru* element.[40] It plays a central role to the *daiku* experience. The Japanese are well known for their *gaman* and *gambaru* nature, determined to achieve a common goal that would benefit the group as a whole. Questions are rarely raised. What is expected are simple perseverance and diligent work toward that common goal. While that is still evident today, the modern Japanese people have taken on a new way to *gambaru,* with more individual intentions, even though they may still be influenced by traditional groupism.

Daiku on a grand scale

How can a foreign cultural element have such a profound effect and be so readily absorbed? Such cultural products are nothing new to Japan, whose culture builds heavily upon foreign elements and ideas. While Japan has been criticised for performing poorly in its integration with the rest of the world – and indeed even among its own businesses, services and people thanks to the *uchi-soto*[41] social code – the nation produces astonishing results when it comes to integrating foreign ideology and cultural elements into its own. For this reason, *daiku* would seem to be another example of Japan's capacity to integrate foreign elements within its own socio-cultural realm. But the Japanese do

not just borrow or copy, they develop it further and make it an integral part of their own culture and traditions.

In this sense, what makes *daiku* particularly interesting, if not bewildering, is the sheer scale. Many performances boast an amazingly large cast of choir members, sometimes between five thousand and even ten thousand singers. Among the grandest and most impressive is the annual concert organised by Suntory. Dubbed as 'Suntory's ten-thousand-singer *Daiku*',[42] this tradition began in 1983 as part of the celebration for the inauguration of the construction of the Osaka Castle Hall, whose purpose was to commemorate the 400-year history of the castle (see Plate 10.1). Since then, it has continued to host annually the largest *daiku* known to date at Osaka Castle Hall.[43]

Almost all members of this ten-thousand-singer choir are amateurs from all around Japan, although some may have experience in singing or performing at a concert, or have some German language training. Applications are open from early June and selected by draw around mid-July. Successful applicants are then given localised schedules for lessons and training sessions starting from mid-August in preparation for the grand event. After that, joint rehearsals are held with one thousand to fifteen hundred people per group in the second half of November, with the final rehearsal at Osaka Castle Hall in early December before the grand concert scheduled on the following day (MBS 2007b).

Apart from Suntory, two other major *daiku* events also boast a large number of singers. They are the *Kokugikan Sumida Daiku wo Utau-kai* (The Kokugikan Sumida Sing the *Ninth* Society)[44] (see Plate 10.2) and *Daiku Hiroshima*.[45] The former boasts five thousand singers, while the latter usually has over one thousand. All three major *daiku* events began as commemoration for the inauguration of an edifice: the Osaka Castle Hall in 1983, the Kokugikan (where *sumo* tournaments take place) in 1985 and the Hiroshima Plaza in 1985, respectively. It must also be noted that the Sumida *daiku* is held in February every year. This is evidence of the fact that *daiku* has eventually branched out from its year-end ritual. In addition to the number of singers, the number of *daiku* performances is equally impressive, with about fifty professional orchestras performing the *Ninth* in Tokyo in 1999 alone (Trends in Japan 2000); and according to an internet ranking of *daiku*, there were 166 in 2006 and 155 scheduled nationwide in 2007 (Web Bravo 2007).

Plate 10.1   *Pamphlet for Suntory's daiku in 2006[46] (Image: Suntory Ichiman-nin no Daiku Jimukyoku (サントリー1万人の第九事務局 Suntory 10,000-singer Ninth Symphony Office)*

Plate 10.2   *Five-thousand-singer daiku in 2008 (KSDUK 2008)*
         [figures in white and those in between are choir singers]
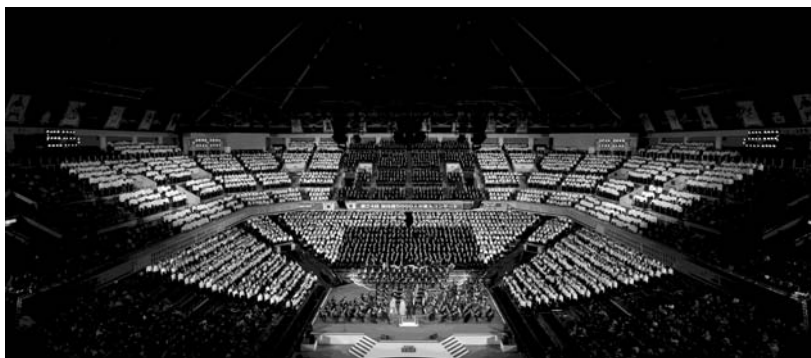
Daiku as an established cultural event

Daiku is not simply an event on the annual calendar; it has made its way into cultural references. For example, *Let's Learn Japanese Basic II*, a Japanese language lesson devised by the Japan Foundation (Nagasaki 2006), has one of its units titled *We're thinking of singing Beethoven's Ninth*.[47] Another example that can help illustrate the extent of the po-

pularity and importance of *daiku* is NHK's comprehensive guide *Dai-ku-wo Utao̅*[48] (*Let's Sing the Ninth* [*Daiku*]) (Inoue[49] 1991). From understanding the philosophy behind the *Ode to Joy* and Beethoven's music to what to take care of on the day of the performance, the booklet literally served as the passport to singing the *Ninth* (see Plate 10.3).

The term *daiku* also features on websites that introduce Japanese seasonal events, such as in *Web Japan's NIPPONIA*. The no. 34 edition of the web magazine introduced December events in Japan, featuring *daiku* as a major annual event (Web Japan 2005).[50] Another example is the site *Japan Market Intelligence*, which provides a report on Christmas time in Japan, describing the *Ninth* as the 'unofficial seasonal anthem' of Japan.[51] Meanwhile, *Trends In Japan*, part of *Web Japan*, goes further to give more details about the amplitude of the phenomenon with its *Roll Over Beethoven: Japan Can't Get Enough of the Ode to Joy* article in 2000. It is a comprehensive summary for anyone who wishes to get a quick glimpse of the phenomenon (Trends in Japan 2000). Such references to *daiku* or the *Ninth* are a clear indication that the phenomenon has become an indispensable socio-cultural element in modern Japan.

Plate 10.3 *NHK's guide to the Ninth: Let's Sing Daiku (Image: Japan Broadcast Publishing)*

Daiku as a reminder of benevolent Japan-German relations

As mentioned before, the term *daiku* is often used to denote all perfor-
mances of the *Ninth*, including the one by the German POWs in Naru-
to during the First World War. However, it is important not to regard
the performance by the German captives as part of the modern *daiku*
phenomenon. That being said, in the midst of the passion for the
Ninth heated up by *daiku*, the difference between a simple *Ninth* and a
daiku event falls into a grey zone. Almost all concerts of the *Ninth* now
take on a strong *daiku* flavour, they may not be events celebrated at the
end of the year, but they all come with the four elements of *daiku* men-
tioned above. A recent movie about the friendship between German
POWs and their local Japanese neighbours titled *Bart No Gakuen* (Mu-
sic Paradise of the Bearded),[52] premiered in June 2006. The film uses
the *Ninth* by borrowing the success of *daiku* as a means to convey the
friendship, love and peace between the two peoples, showcasing also
the performance of the last movement of the *Ninth* by the German
POWs. The significance of this movie is that the camp has been faith-
fully restored for the filming and has been maintained since then as a
sort of theme park[53] to remind visitors of the friendship shared by the
German captives and Japanese locals during the First World War
(BGPC 2006).[54] It would not be an exaggeration to say Beethoven's im-
mortal symphony, particularly the last movement, would be the park's
theme song, or anthem even. Here, the message relevant to our discus-
sion is the perseverance and striving to overcome hardship, as well as
the tolerance which gave way to love and freedom of the soul on both
sides. This is in essence a combination of the four socio-cultural ele-
ments,[55] and it demonstrates the *Ninth* through these elements of *dai-
ku* as a symbol for expressing the joy of freedom and the great friend-
ship of two different peoples.

Commemorations and celebrations

The intertwining of various elements pertaining to the *Ninth* (conveys
Western ideology) and *daiku* (caters to Japanese inherent needs to be-
long and share) has not only facilitated 'personal challenge' but also
the quest of many to advocate and disseminate peace and love. Apart
from annual year-end performances and the special memory of the
Naruto *Ninth*, most other performances of the *Ninth* have the same
nature as those performed around the world, namely celebrations and
commemorations of peace and unity, or celebrating the establishment
or completion of a great work or edifice.[56] The Japanese can be ex-
pected to be equally inclined to perform such types of *Ninth* concert to

promote peace and love of humankind simply because of what the nation had experienced during the Second World War, both in terms of aggression and suffering.[57] In this sense the *Ninth* is almost always featured in celebrations of something worth commemorating, being regarded as an event of grandeur in nature, style and scale, as an expression of spiritual joy shared by a large group of people who otherwise would find it difficult to do so in a society that discourages overt expressions of emotions.

Summing up *daiku*[58]

It is not difficult to see that *daiku* did not simply derive from one origin, nor does it exist for only one reason. A complexity of factors must be considered. The different stages and types of the *Ninth/daiku* and the transition from one to the other can be summed up in the following way:

1. The beginning – friendship and cultural exchange;
2. World war era – military propaganda and admiration of German culture;
3. Post-war era – hopes for peace, better future and establishment of the year-end ritual;
4. Economic growth era – sense of emancipation for the working population;
5. Rapid economic growth to post-bubble era – leisure and individual personal challenges.

The vital ingredients in the making of *daiku* come from the needs and sensitivity toward natural changes possessed by the Japanese:

1. Comfort in relating to something cosmic, surreal, universal (the *Ninth* is very often analysed from such perspectives): emancipation of the soul;
2. Innate sensitivity to seasonal/temporal changes: in the form of an annual ritual;
3. Wish to be part of something larger and adoration of Beethoven[59] (*akogare*);
4. Appreciation of the festive nature (*moriagaru*);
5. Love for peace, harmony and joy (*kandō*);
6. Nature to persevere and strive (*gambaru*).

Daiku as a new way to *gambaru* – parallel of Beethoven's music and Japanese socio-cultural needs

Daiku, described by Wasserman (2006) as 'a legend of Japanese modernity',[60] is a manifestation of a new way to *gambaru*, which in turn is linked to economic and social changes. The various types of *daiku* thus far examined can be further organised into two major types: one where Beethoven's final masterpiece is used to advocate peace and freedom, or where it acts as a hymn, ode or requiem; and the other in which the music is symbolic of self-achievement and personal challenge, which was rather conspicuous and popular after the Second World War. And it is this latter category that takes hold of the curious mind. Perhaps it is due to the fact that many people began having more free time and means to explore their personal interests. For the first time, the Japanese could fully embrace Western culture, with a surge of new hobbies and interests to pursue. And as records and reports of *daiku* performances show us, *daiku*'s development coincided with the growing economy.

Then came the economic downturn and crisis in the 1990s. At that time *daiku* performances increased, as articles published by Asahi Shimbun showed (Chang 2000). This may be due to the fact that more than ever many Japanese sought release from troubles in life through such social experiences as *daiku*. In such situations music often becomes an instrument of escapism. As Barenboim says, 'If you want to forget everything and run away from your problems and difficulties – from sheer existence – music is the perfect means, because it's highly emotional' (Barenboim and Said 2004: 24), and that 'music provides the possibility, on the one hand, to escape from life and, on the other hand, to understand it much better than in many other disciplines' (ibid.: 25-26). In this way, people sought reassurance, confidence and encouragement by achieving it through *daiku*.

Let us turn to the reasons for *daiku* participation.[61] Participants of *daiku* performances come from a variety of backgrounds and are motivated by various purposes. Newspaper reports on *daiku* performances involving such amateur groups reveal something of the personal challenges for people. Ranging from preschoolers to disabled people, they are taking up the difficult task of singing the *Ninth*, thus gaining a sense of accomplishment and personal satisfaction.[62] The following gives some idea of why people participate in *daiku*: people speaking about the 2006 *Suntory 10,000-Singer Daiku* and their personal *daiku* experience (MBS 2007a):[63]

– Suntory's *Daiku* turns 25, and so do we. So we feel special to be part of this event. (25-year-old women)

– I met my husband through *daiku* and now I am carrying our first baby. We sang together, the three of us! (housewife)
– We saw Suntory's *Daiku* on television and thought it was awesome and wanted to be part of it. (high school boys)
– We are twin brother and sister. Our mum loves singing, and she wanted us to join her singing *daiku*. The German text was hard, but we trained hard and were able to sing all the way. (twin children)
– I was in rehabilitation after some health issues, and my wife suggested challenging the *daiku* as a way to uplift my spirit. It was great, and I made many new friends. (office worker)
– I turn ninety this year, and I've been singing *daiku* for twenty years. I started it as a way of cheering myself up after my husband had passed away. (widow)
– I participated in the first *daiku* twenty-five years ago, and this year I returned with my juniors at the company. (office worker)
– My three-year old daughter who is visually impaired said she could see the conductor!
– My husband who was moody throughout the training showed a great smile at the last lesson!
– I sang as a present for my sixty-year old mother who just had her breast cancer treatment.

These examples, though only a very limited selection, show that Japanese people have a great variety of personal reasons for participating.[64] The poster for the 2007 *Ninth* concert of the Japan Philharmonic Orchestra (Plate 10.4) is a perfect example that shows different types of people from all ages and walks of life coming together to celebrate or challenge the *Ninth*. Doing so seems to provide them with a chance to gain an identity of self and to set aside personal troubles and their insignificance in society. It also provides people with a chance to do something that requires professionalism. *Daiku* concerts take advantage of the grandeur of the *Ninth* to satisfy such personal needs as encouragement for ordinary people in a society that may be blessed with wealth, but lacks opportunities to express intimate emotions. It also caters to the Japanese passion for advocating peace and love, as can be seen in the *Borderless Choir* event, where Japanese participants were recruited to join Austrian singers in a grand performance of the *Ninth* in Austria (Plate 10.5). The concert in Austria is interesting if we consider that Beethoven's *Ninth* is rarely so passionately celebrated in the West, except for very special and grand events. The Japanese have added a new meaning to *daiku* by bringing their version of appreciation of the Beethoven's *Ninth* to other parts of the world. In this case, it was an enhanced re-import of the piece back to Vienna, where it was first performed. One might say this acted as a pilgrimage by the Japanese to

the birthplace of the grand opus, paying homage to the composer whose creations have given them hope and a new way to discover their individual inner strengths and abilities.

Plate 10.4   *Japan Philharmonic Orchestra's daiku 2007 poster (Image: Japan Philharmonic Orchestra)*

Today's *daiku* is a manifestation of an emerging new Japanese cultural trait. A new mentality has been forming to allow the Japanese to actively achieve personal challenges.[65] Traditionally, the Japanese have been taught to keep their personal feelings and ideas to themselves, and to observe strict social conformity.[66] Through the *Ninth,* however, they can satisfy their personal need, prove their worth and gain individuality.

Plate 10.5 *JAL's Borderless Choir Daiku in 2007, sponsored by Tokyo FM*[67]
(JAL 2007: 140) (Photo by Österreich Werbung / Trumler)

Conclusion

While many of those participating in a *daiku* performance do so because it is now an annual ritual,[68] many Japanese take part because of very personal reasons, regardless of their age and gender. We see expecting mothers, kindergarten children, senior citizens, disabled people, amateur music lovers, professional musicians, and people from just about all walks of life contributing to the phenomenon.[69] Each participant is there because he or she wants to prove to themselves that despite being untrained in the skills and techniques required for the

grand musical finale, they can still accomplish the task of performing a difficult masterpiece, with enough of the dose of the four elements mentioned before.[70]

Is it a manifestation of mere groupism? Superficially, it does appear to pertain very much to the nature of simple groupism. The Japanese tend to feel safer acting in groups, sometimes due to fear of being ostracised in a society that is severe on outcasts and abhors the abnormal, and where strict social rules apply at all times. *Daiku* at least presents an opportunity where the passively group-oriented Japanese demonstrate strong individual needs and desires, but still contained within the safe and comfortable conditions provided by groupism.

The *daiku* phenomenon has often been critically attacked, deemed empty and inferior to the kind of *Ninth* that should have been (Sunakawa 1991: 88-91).[71] However, it is unjust to dismiss the *daiku* experience as lacking in culture and making comparisons with conventional performances of the *Ninth*. Japan's *daiku* is in its own right quite original and authentic. A cultural feature of one country can be adopted by another in such a way that it is no longer only a 'cheap imitation' of the original. As Barenboim tells us: 'The sense of belonging to different cultures can only be enriching' (Barenboim and Said 2004: 6). What is more, 'transfixation' of 'the Other' is an important process of understanding and accepting cultures not of one's own (Barenboim and Said 2004: 11). In this sense Japan has always been skilful in its adaptation of foreign cultures. And in the case of *daiku,* while Beethoven's music and Schiller's words may be products of Occidental ideology and mentality, they have left a powerful and profound impact on the Japanese, for many have found some degree of salvation through melody and the power of the words.

Notes

1   Hereafter referred to as *'the Ninth'* or *'Ninth'*. All websites referred to were current in June 2008.
2   The term 'groupism' has been coined to stereotypically brand the Japanese social behaviour. It signifies the 'sheep mentality', where a group of people flock together and jump on the bandwagon to follow trends without contemplating what their individual needs or wants may be; or perhaps better described as 'belongingness' by Lebra (1976) and later as 'longing for belonging' by Ozaki (1983), who dedicates an entire chapter to the importance of 'institutional affiliation' of the Japanese.
3   頑張る（がんばる）To strive, work hard at, arduously aim at, be diligent.
4   我慢する（がまん・する）To persevere, endure, be patient, be tolerant.
5   As demonstrated through workshops by Barenboim and Said; sharing of a common experience, particularly through music, can make bringing peace and harmony possible (Barenboim and Said 2004: 9-10).

6 The translation is my own. French original is given here:
   'En décembre 1983, le chef allemand Peter Gülke, invité à diriger l'Orchestre de la radio télévision japonaise NHK dans la Neuvième Symphonie de Beethoven, rencontre dans le hall de l'hôtel de Tokyo son collègue Gunther Herbig. "Qu'est-ce qui t'amène ?", lui demande ce dernier. "La Neuvième", lui répond Gülke. "Moi aussi", reparit Herbig, "espérons que ça n'est pas avec le même orchestre !"'

7 Not to be mistaken as *'the Great Ninth'*, as *dai* is also the reading for the *kanji* character for 'big, large (大), although given the scale of the phenomenon it does seem rather befitting.

8 年末の第九 (ねんまつのだいく *nenmatsu no daiku*): A term commonly used in Japan to refer to the daiku phenomenon, meaning *'year-end Ninth/daiku'*.

9 祭り(まつ) Festivals.

10 花見(はなみ) Flower-viewing, especially denoting the viewing of cherry blossoms.

11 花火大会(はなび・たいかい) Fireworks festivals.

12 紅葉狩り(もみじがり) Lit. 'autumn foliage hunting', denotes the enjoyment of strolling among trees with vibrant autumn foliage and collecting fallen (maple) leaves.

13 More about this aspect of seasonal changes and their impact on the Japanese is dealt with in Chang (2007).

14 This section draws mainly from my master thesis.

15 東京音樂學校(とうきょう・おんがく・がっこう) Tōkyō Ongaku GakkōEstablished in 1887 and merged with Tokyo School of Fine Arts – Tōkyō Bijutsu Gakkō– in 1949 to become Tokyo National University of Fine Arts and Music – Tōkyō Geijutsu Daigaku.

16 久留米(くるめ)

17 千葉県(ちばけん)

18 鳴門(なると)

19 徳島県(とくしまけん)

20 松江豊寿(まつえ・とよひさ)

21 楽聖(がくせい gakusei)

22 Since the *Messiah* was very popular around the beginning of the 1950s, the *Ninth* really only began to shape into *daiku* from around the 1970s as the rapid economic growth picked up pace.

23 Polish conductor, born 27 January 1895 in Kraków and died 17 October 1985 in New York. He was full-time conductor between August 1936 and September 1946, Principal Conductor between March 1956 and March 1957, and Honorary Conductor between August 1951 and October 1985 for the NHK Symphony Orchestra.

24 Russian-born German classical pianist, born 13 March 1884 in St. Petersburg and died 30 October 1953 in Tokyo. He arrived in Japan in 1938.

25 One such notable orchestra is the Leipzig Gewandhaus Orchestra, once directed by Mendelssohn, which had a tradition of performing the *Ninth* in its year-end/New Year concert programme.
   The following is a notice taken from a Leipzig concert information page (LTMa 2004-2006) mentioning the tradition:
   2004年12月29日～31日
   大晦日の第九コンサート
   1918年12月31日、アルトゥール・ニキッシュが、クリスタルパラストで2,800人の観客を前にルードヴィヒ・ヴァン・ベートーヴェンの第九交響曲を披露したことで、大晦日コンサートの伝統が始まった。今年も年末のこの伝統あるコンサートのために多くの人が音楽の街ライプツィヒを訪れる。この偉大な交響曲はゲヴァントハウス常任指揮者の指揮でライプツィヒ・ゲヴァントハウスに響き渡る
   問い合わせ先:
   ライプツィヒ・ゲヴァントハウスGewandhaus zu Leipzig
   住所: Augustusplatz 8, D-04109 Leipzig

Tel.: +49-0341-1270280
Fax: +49-0341-1270222
E-mail: ticket@gewandhaus.de
www.gewandhaus.de
The Japanese reads:
29-31 December 2004
New Year's Eve Ninth Concert
Artúr Nikisch presented Ludwig van Beethoven's Ninth Symphony in front of a 2,800 audience at the Kristallpalast on 31 December 1918, setting off the tradition of New Year concerts. This year also, many people will come to visit the musical city of Leipzig for the end-year traditional concert. Under the Principal Conductor of the Gewandhaus Orchestra, this masterpiece will resonate throughout the Leipzig Gewandhaus.
Enquiries:
Gewandhaus zu Leipzig

26 うたごえ運動（うたごえ・うんどう）

27 労音（ろう・おん）or officially 日本勤労者音楽協議会（にほん・きんろうしゃ・おんがく・きょうぎかい Nihon Kinrōsha Ongaku Kyōkai）

28 山根銀二（やまね・ぎんじ）1906-1982, Music Critic. His view on Rō-on's *Ninth* published in the December 1966 issue of Tokyo Rō-on's journal Hibiki was quoted by Suzuki.

29 The foundation of Tokyo Rō-on (2004: 14) began amidst the founding of numerous cultural circles and organisations operated by people from all walks of life who felt oppressed during the war, such as the working class and students.

30 Based on data provided in Tokyo Rō-on Movement History Editing Committee (2004).

31 In the beginning there was the 'general' Beethoven's *Ninth Symphony*, which had a universal function no matter where in the world it was performed. The *daiku* phenomenon is a uniquely Japanese product, and such performances of the *Ninth* by Tokyo Rō-on and other similar post-war organisations inherited the spirit of Beethoven and Schiller's message and went on to help shape today's *daiku*.

32 Based on my own study of major concerts between 1970 and 1996.

33 That is, art, music, language learning, fashion and the like.

34 憧れ（あこがれ）Longing, yearning, admiration, adoration. I have opted for the more appropriate noun form.

35 盛り上がる（もりあがる）To heighten enthusiasm, to enliven. I have opted for the more appropriate verb form.

36 感動（かんどう）Moving, impressive, touching. I have opted for the more appropriate noun form.

37 Beethoven's own challenges in life that resulted in immortal masterpieces have attracted many Japanese fans. His struggle to overcome gradual loss of hearing and a troubled personal life has become symbolic to the Japanese. The cosmology and philosophy behind the Ninth discussed in many literary works provide them with great life inspirations. This is also a prominent factor in why *daiku* has remained an ongoing phenomenon.

38 Such as their *akogare* to live abroad, to be a flight attendant, to speak English with foreigners, to play the piano, to look elegant in a *kimono*, and so on.

39 For instance, apart from traditional ones, modern festivals spring up in great numbers to include modern revivals of old traditions and new festivals whose themes may be snow, ice, samba, fireworks, fireflies, dance, food, illumination, among many others. Japan is essentially a nation that lives on festivities of all kinds.

40 As mentioned in the introduction, while *gaman* is also an essential Japanese trait, today it is often shunned by the young generations, who are then criticised by the older generations for lacking the traditional virtue of persevering. The element of *gambaru*, however, is still much practised.

41 内／外 (うち・そと) The internal/inside vs. the external/outside. This is still a very prominent cultural code. For instance, while the Japanese in general may appear to be very accommodating and hospitable to a foreigner, the trench between them is still deep, as a foreigner is always accepted only as a foreigner, placing him/her outside of the inner circle of the Japanese society, which exists at different levels and on varying scales.

42 サントリー1万人の第九 (さんとりー・いちまんにん・の・だいくSantori ichiman'nin-no daiku)

43 大阪城ホール (おおさか・じょう・ほーる Ōsaka-jō hōru)

44 国技館墨田第九を歌う会 (こくぎかん・すみだ・だいくをうたうかい)

45 第九ひろしま (だいく・ひろしま)

46 The Japanese text literally reads, 'Sing about myself. Sing with everyone. And let the flowers of the sun [blossom] in each and everyone's [participants'] heart'.

47 Lesson 31 of Episode Sixteen.

48 第九を歌おう (だいくをうたおう) There are also many other 'get-together' groups under the same or similar names nation wide.

49 井上道義 (いのうえ・みちよし Inoue Michiyoshi) 1946-, conductor. The guide was published by NHK in 1991 for a rebroadcast of a previously aired series, a step-by-step guide to accomplishing one's participation in a performance of the Ninth.

50 The explanation given by the site on the origin of the *daiku* phenomenon, however, is not entirely, nor even adequately, informative, as there is in fact an array of factors and reasons in the making of the phenomenon.

51 Winter 2003. It must be noted here that the article refers to the *Ninth* and the phenomenon as '*daikyu*', which is clearly incorrect. While the characters are normally read as '*dai-kyū*', as a special term used to refer to the piece and the phenomenon discussed in this paper, it should be read as '*daiku*'.

52 バルトの楽園 (ばると・の・がくえん) The word *baruto* is the Japanese syllabic equivalent of the German word Bart, meaning beard (although also used to mean any facial hair such as moustache in this movie). The literal translation of the movie title is thus: The Music Paradise of the Bearded (i.e. the Japanese and German generals featured in the movie and seen in the poster). The idea is apparently to show that two different races that were at war against each other and represented by their two generals, who are both bearded, were able to become friends through music (the *Ninth*). Thus, the camp itself signifies the 'Eden of music that brought the two peoples together' (the *kanji* used usually mean paradise or Eden, but the first character *raku* can also mean 'to be at ease' or be read as *gaku*, meaning 'music'.

53 The place is dubbed 'home of joy', alluding to the 'joyous' message in *Ode to Joy*. Admission is 500 yen for adults and 200 yen for children below junior high age. The location park operates daily except between 1 and 4 January. However, after about three years of opening to the public, the site was closed at the end of February 2009, awaiting further decisions on its future due to land rights and maintenance issues. Part of the site is scheduled for reopening in autumn 2009.

54 This film is the latest of a number of similar productions, the first being the documentary film「望郷 － 日本初の第九交響曲 坂東捕虜収容所」(Nostalgia — The first Ninth Symphony in Japan. The Bandō Prison Camp) produced by TV Man Union and Fuji Television Network and broadcasted nationwide on 17 December 1977 (Hayashi 1978: 148).

55 That is to say,
    akogare = the admiration for Beethoven and German culture;
    moriagaru = enliven what would otherwise have been full of sadness and misery, heighten the joyful feeling of the friendship;
    kandō= the great sensation of caring and loving people of different races and backgrounds;
    and *gambaru* = to persevere in the hardships inflicted upon them by the war and survive.

56 Many examples have been given in my MA thesis (Chang 2000), most of which are from newspaper clippings from the 1980s and 1990s. Also, as mentioned before, the Suntory, Sumida and Hiroshima grand concerts began as commemorations of the inauguration of a new building.

57 One might even consider that the *Ninth* would likely be featured if concerts were held to commemorate peace.

58 Attempts have been made in my MA thesis (Chang 2000) and a recent paper (Chang 2007) to explain why the *Ninth* transformed into *daiku*, while much of the fundamental information has been provided by a very few authors, in particular Suzuki (1989).

59 Beethoven and German culture.

60 French title of Wasserman's book on *daiku*:
    Le Sacre De L'hiver – La Neuvième Symphonie De Beethoven, Un Mythe De La Modernité Japonaise.
    English translation: The Celebration of Winter – The Ninth Symphony of Beethoven, a Legend of Japanese Modernity.

61 There are two types of *daiku* participation: the *audience* type and the *participation* type; it is the latter being dealt with in this paper.

62 The *Ninth*, being considered the grandest work by the great *Meister* Ludwig van Beethoven, who himself persevered through gradual deafness to achieve great success, naturally became the ultimate and symbolic goal for people who wish to prove their worth, to be part of something greater, or simply to fulfil the need for closer human interaction.

63 From the 2006 *Suntory 10,000-Singer Daiku;* what participants said about their personal *daiku* experience (MBS 2007). The summary in English is my own. The Japanese original cannot be provided here due to the site contents being updated, and only information from the year before the current one is available. At the time of first writing, in 2007, this paper drew information on the 2006 concert from the website, and the same data could not be included for this revised edition. However, comments by participants each year made available on Suntory's website remain similar to the data retrieved for this paper.

64 Such as the number 'nine' or the number of years a *daiku* event has been held that coincides with their age and so forth.

65 In this sense, they do not simply follow what others do, even if such 'following' is present and often explained away as groupism, it is not the only driving force that encourages participation in a *daiku* event. In addition, one should also be careful in how to interpret such 'following' and 'groupism' in modern Japan.

66 De Mente says, 'The social and political systems that prevailed in Japan for centuries required that the people suppress their individuality and their natural instinct for independent thought and behavior. They were required to conform to precise forms of behavior, much of which was government-regulated and enforced with strict sanctions' (Matsumoto and De Mente 2003: 121).

67 'Borderless Choir' provided a chance to participate in a six-day charity concert tour in Vienna. Beethoven's *Ninth Symphony* was performed by the Vienna Chamber Orchestra directed by Daniel Hoyem-Cavazza.

68 It is in human nature to participate in large festive events from time to time for the sake of it, such as New Year's Eve parties and fireworks festivals that can also be seen around the world.

69 Unfortunately, it is not possible to list and discuss more of the events that can provide a clearer picture of the extent of the passion, or in some cases obsession, of the Japanese for singing the Ninth.

70 *Akogare* (passion) / *moriage* (excitement) / *kandō* (sentiments of being moved and touched) / *gambare* (diligent work).

71 Such as the manner of the solemn performance of the piece prior to the unification of the divided Germany.

11 Performing Cosmopolitan Clash and Collage: Krishen Jit's Stagings of the 'Stranger' in Malaysia

Charlene Rajendran

Introduction

The challenge for contemporary discourses on identity is to develop dialogic and open processes of reworking essentialised and fixed constructs that often stem from nationalist discourses whilst simultaneously engaging fluid and permeable aspects of identity aligned with cosmopolitan imaginings. Theatre as a site that deals with this duality is able to reflexively examine the multiplicity in society in a situated and imaginative frame, offering opportunities to participate in alternative embodiments of Self and Other that are open to the clash and collage of cultural difference. This paper discusses the theatre of Krishen Jit, Malaysian theatre director, critic and educator, whose critical insights into the complexities of culture produced powerful performances of identity that dealt with the clash and collage – the tensions and potential – of being and becoming Malaysian in the 1990s. Jit's ability to weave the local and the global, the national and transnational, was significant at a time when Malaysia was moving towards increasing cultural and economic liberalisation in the larger tide of globalisation, generating spaces and stories where 'conversations with the stranger', a notion developed by philosopher K.A. Appiah (2005), were an integral part of developing understanding and respect for difference as desirable and not disruptive.

Engaging the stranger in society: Dialogic spaces for identity and difference

> The real challenge to cosmopolitanism isn't the belief that other people don't matter at all; it's the belief that they don't matter very much. It's easy to get agreement that we have some *obligations to strangers*. We can't do terrible things to them. Perhaps if their situation becomes completely intolerable and we can do something about it at reasonable cost, we may even have a duty

to intervene. Perhaps we should stop genocide, intervene when there is mass starvation or a great natural disaster. But must we do more than this? Here's where the assent starts to fray. (Appiah 2006: 153; emphasis added)

Many of us live in a global environment that is increasingly bombarded with images and stories that portray the putative ongoing 'clash of civilisations' (Huntington 1996) where cultural difference is depicted as deviant, difficult and disruptive while suggesting that uniformity is harmonious, peaceful and orderly. The warning 'Don't talk to strangers' given to young children by their parents in a bid to protect them from danger may characterise a parallel relationship between paternalistic and authoritarian governments and their politically infantilised populace in an effort to limit the risk of unwanted influence and reduce outside threat. 'Strangers' are typically those who are unknown and unfamiliar, incomprehensible and thus unpredictable and considered the undesirable Other. Despite their commonality as members of the human species and co-inhabitants of the planet Earth, strangers are usually regarded with caution and suspicion rather than warm curiosity or empathetic enquiry. So philosopher Kwame Anthony Appiah's (2006) question about an 'obligation to strangers' on moral grounds is clear enough when there is critical distance and 'charity' can be meted out with little or no interaction. The situation, however, is more complex when the Strangers are one's neighbours and the Self is characterised by these Stranger-Others who clearly do matter – but how so?

Apart from being perceived as threatening, cultural difference is otherwise framed as exotic, enticing, an 'entertaining collage' of unusual mix – here alluding to difference as fetish and freakish, ranging from dancing women in exotic costume to tribal men brandishing their spears. These sensationalist notions create representations of diversity as a form of cultural amusement that now characterises much popular media and tourism. They also maintain the critical distance between viewer and viewed to ensure a 'safe boundary' that is not meant to be crossed. Again, the Stranger is regarded with a detached observer's interest but not engaged as a co-participant in the process of co-existence. Thus, difference, whether dangerous or delightful, remains largely as something that is commodified and represented, but not discussed or negotiated with depth or diligence. Consequently, the more critical and empathetic[1] discourses on difference tend to be exclusive and inaccessible, unable to penetrate the popular psyche in most societies.

In Malaysian society, cultural difference, particularly of race and religion, characterises the discourses of politics and identity. Although 'race' with its implication of essentialised identity is an increasingly

contested term, it is still used officially in Malaysia to refer to the main ethnic groups: Malays (50%), Chinese (25%), Indians (7%), and other groups that are either indigenous (Kadazan, Dusun, Iban) or Eurasian. Official policies of political equity and socio-economic entitlement are based on racial and religious identity, informed by colonial constructs of what British administrator and political writer J.S. Furnivall termed 'plural society', which he argued had subsequently propagated a 'caste-like division of labor' (Furnivall cited in Hefner 2001: 4). This created segregationist practices that in turn produced special privileges for some, namely the Malays, on the basis of indigeneity. Although 'Malay', like other racial categories, remains a contested term, it is wielded politically to perpetuate prejudicial practices that are based on ethno-religious lines.[2] Within the Malaysian constitution, those regarded as 'Malay' are accorded special rights in order to safeguard their controversial place as 'rightful heirs' of the nation. Political, economic, educational and cultural privileges are given to Malays based on the principle that, as the 'original' inhabitants of the land, they should be given 'special rights' which respect their 'special position'.

Dealing with difference in one way or another is thus an integral part of everyday existence for many, if not most Malaysians. This is due not only to the divide between Malays and non-Malays, but also to the sheer multiplicity of racial and religious identity that is both officially and unofficially a characteristic of Malaysian life. In addition, diverse languages are spoken and heard in informal and official discourses, and it is common practice to switch between languages as well as between registers in a range of contexts and situations. The Stranger in society is in this context rarely a 'strange' phenomena, but more likely to be 'estranged'.

Yet, critical discussions on negotiating and engaging racial and religious difference are uncommon in Malaysia as these are considered 'sensitive issues', which 'lie beyond the bounds of public discourse' (Loh 2002: 24), thus limiting the capacity of the public to gain insight and maturity about their civil rights and political agency as citizens of a nation that professes democracy.[3] As Mandal (2004: 50) points out, 'the landscape of race politics in Malaysia has been little ploughed with a disciplined critique and towards elucidating the instability of race as a concept and social phenomenon'. This results in 'the absence of a shared public space within which social and cultural differences may be negotiated by dialogical means' (ibid.: 53). The growing need for these dialogic spaces emerges with increasing connectivity and networks that bridge the gaps between groups and communities whose boundaries are becoming increasingly blurred, and which are thus seeking to make sense of each other.

Considering that the Malaysian state is often regarded as authoritarian, semi-authoritarian or quasi-democratic (see Crouch 1996; Loh 2002; Case 2004), the opportunities for articulations of resistance to the state hegemony are understandably limited and thus all the more significant. Be it political opposition parties, civil society groups or arts companies, the state has time and again targeted expressions of dissent and dissatisfaction with an array of assaults that range from water cannons to artistic censorship, revoking of licenses to detention of activists.[4] Thus, the strategies of cultural contestation and resistance must consider the implications of a political climate unused to participatory democracy or political liberalisation. Although the 'political tsunami' of the 12th Malaysian general elections on 8 March 2008 witnessed unprecedented support for the opposition coalition, the newly formed Pakatan Rakyat (People's Alliance),[5] this has also produced a slew of reactionary outcomes that include inflammatory statements made about race and religion. The unexpected 'victory' for the Malaysian populace, now empowered with a more balanced and critical voice in government, is also considerably sobered by ongoing struggles to deal with issues of racial and religious tension, both within and between the main parties of the government and the opposition. While the 'vote' may have signaled a strong anti-government protest with a willingness to opt for a relatively untested alternative, it also marked the urgent need for critical and empathetic discourses on politics and identity in Malaysia.[6]

Strategies and skills for developing contextually resilient and sustainable practices of inclusion remain scarce in the Malaysian socio-political landscape. Few sites exist where dialogues on difference occur with a capacity to engage diversity and divergence, without having to coerce agreement or compliance. More often than not, banal or token gestures towards difference are made, characterised by either the fear of disapproval or the pressure of conformity.[7] As a result, the anxiety and insecurity that stem from the recurrent rhetoric about 'unstable' and 'fragile' ethnic relations help perpetuate a deeper status quo of dependence on a controlling state.[8] This overshadows the potential for reform towards more participatory democracy that could emerge from open and dialogic deliberations on difference.

Critically exigent theatre practice is one site where the arts can intervene to provide more dialogical spaces for engagement about the clash and collage of difference – the tension and the creative potential. Whilst the theatre of politics, particularly in recent times, has had a powerful draw on the popular imagination in Malaysia, the politics of theatre is less familiar. Yet, critical articulations of culture and identity that are produced within this space warrant attention, particularly in relation to issues of cultural difference. Mandal (2001: 163) suggests that 'what the arts proposes is not a naïve or sympathetic nationalism

but a dialogue with the nation's historical and cultural constituents'. In this vein, he discusses how theatre produces a 'particular sense of pluralism and hybridity', and one of the markers of this interaction is that 'much operates on the basis of empathy rather than tolerance ... where difference between cultures is not regarded as alienating' (ibid: 163). This capacity to nurture and cultivate empathy is crucial in building an environment where the harsh effects of alienation may be reversed.

Resisting reductive and essentialist norms of identity in Malaysian culture and engaging with difference as an embedded norm and not an aberration, Krishen Jit (1939-2005), Malaysian theatre director, critic and educator, dealt critically and imaginatively with the clash and collage of Malaysian identity on the Malaysian stage. Recognising the need for culture to extend beyond the individual, community and nation, Jit's cosmopolitan imaginings for the theatre were 'rooted' and thus drew extensively from local history and tradition, whilst being simultaneously open and informed by global influences that broached the capitalist drive towards consumerism as well as the transnational experience of 'multiple belongings' and 'overlapping allegiances'.[9]

In this paper I will consider how two of Jit's theatre productions in the 1990s, *The Cord* (1994) and *A Chance Encounter* (1999), reflected a critical capacity to engage with 'cosmopolitan clash and collage' within a local intra-national cultural space whilst also reflecting the global trans-national.[10] By examining how Jit's inter-racial casting and multilingual performance impacted on the way the texts developed meaning for an urban audience in the Malaysia of the 1990s, I hope to suggest that Jit's capacity to negotiate difference with empathy and criticality by staging the conflicting tension and creative potential that emerge from cultural difference made his theatre-making an important space for insights into being and becoming Malaysian – locally and globally. These processes and expressions were indicative of Jit's insightful and dialogic approach to issues of cohesive multiplicity and inclusive political ideology.

Conversing among strangers: The clash and collage of being Malaysian

In 1990, many Malaysians welcomed Mahathir's[11] Vision 2020 which espoused explicit commitment to forging a *bangsa Malaysia*, a Malaysian nation, which transcended ethnic identities. This objective was to be achieved partly through the creation of an 'economically just' society with inter-ethnic parity. The need to develop a *Bangsa Malaysia* had drawn attention to the issue of equality for all citizens, be they *Bumiputera* or non-*Bumiputera*.[12]
(Gomez 2004a: 3)

While Malaysia in the 1990s was characterised by economic and cultural liberalisation that brought about marked changes such as the notable expansion of a middle class and technological development especially in infrastructure (see Gomez 2004a: 1), this did not lead to increased political reforms or expanded spaces for critical dialogue on sensitive issues and civil liberties. In fact, Loh (2002) argues that the 'politics of developmentalism' in the early 1990s moved towards coercive authoritarianism and created a 'privatisation' of freedom and ethnicity, which crippled the call for 'rule of law' and 'participatory democracy' that grew in the late 1980s (Loh 2002: 21). Dr Mahathir's Vision 2020 was geared towards Malaysia attaining fully developed nation status and entailed becoming more commercially savvy and industrially developed. But it did not include becoming more politically transparent and democratically mature. As a result, Malaysians, particularly in the urban capital city Kuala Lumpur, responded to socio-economic changes that arose from increasing globalisation but were rarely informed by a deeply contextual understanding of how the nation's changing politics and culture were affecting their rights and identities. A *Bangsa Malaysia* was a 'welcome' notion, but few resources, skills and spaces were allocated towards achieving this idea.

Cultural difference, often skillfully negotiated with tacit knowledge and sharp instincts, was merely an accepted part of a multiracial society and hardly examined to reveal the difficulties of clash and the possibilities of collage that were emergent amidst the social changes. Dr Mahathir's posturings towards 'inter-ethnic parity' by introducing the notion that by 2020 Malaysians would be capable of 'accepting each other as they are, regardless of race and religion' (Dr Mahathir cited in Loh 2002: 33) was clearly meant to iron out problems that emerged due to 'intra and inter-ethnic dis-parity [sic]'. These stemmed from a range of factors that included the disenchantment of rural Malaysians, Malays included, whose share of the nation's wealth was seen as being squandered by self-serving politicians. Rising factionalism within the Malay community meant support of the ruling coalition was no longer as strong, and the issue of equality was no longer confined to the issues of race but pointed to socio-economic class and the rising gap between the rich and poor.[13] As a result, the rhetoric raised questions about this problem but did little to actually develop frames and paradigms for a *Bangsa Malaysia* to be expressed and experienced. Even though this concept 'anticipated the cosmopolitan social disposition of an even more integrated global economy' (Mandal 2004: 49), it produced little commitment from the state to developing a more inclusive and open cultural vocabulary. On the other hand, politically engaged civil society and arts groups that sought to reform a fragmented and ra-

cialised society worked towards challenging the essentialised notions of identity that resulted in cultural alienation and polarisation.

The need for cultural contestations that generated discursive spaces and inspired reflective and reflexive expressions of the relatedness of Self and Other were becoming more crucial even if largely ignored by the mainstream media and ruling coalition. This entailed creating 'conversations across boundaries' (Appiah 2006) in order to inculcate 'habits of coexistence' (ibid.: xix) that 'interact[ed] on terms of respect' (ibid.: 145). These 'conversations' would then enable participants to 'evaluate stories together', and thus provide the basis for an inclusive engagement that

> ... can often guide one another in a cosmopolitan spirit to shared responses; and when we cannot agree, the understanding that our responses are shaped by some of the same vocabulary can make it easier to disagree. (Appiah 2006: 30)

Appiah's argument for empowered 'conversation' reiterates the need for thoughtful and safe spaces to interact with the 'strange' and 'estranged' in society, in order to hear their stories and develop a better understanding towards a position of respect and empathy. When theatre does this, it contributes towards building a mature and democratic society.

Jit's stagings of identity were one of the few cultural sites that worked towards conversations of this nature and thus produced alternative cultural imaginings that resisted the state hegemony, by performing stories that embodied and enacted the conflicts and configurations of a plural society.[14] While acknowledging the importance of national narratives and local norms, as well as international influences and global forces, Jit was fashioning notions of a *Bangsa Malaysia* in his theatre-making processes prior to its official declaration, but perhaps with particular emphasis in the 1990s, to resonate with and critique the rhetoric being produced. While Mandal (2004) locates Jit as one of the local arts practitioners who worked towards 'transethnic solidarities' where 'Malaysians participate in society without respect for ethnic backgrounds' (Mandal 2004: 50), I suggest that Jit's work was in fact more cosmopolitan in its approach, albeit oriented towards a 'rooted cosmopolitanism' as developed by Mitchell Cohen (1995, 2005)[15] and a 'critical cosmopolitan imagination' as defined by Gerard Delanty (2006).[16] Within this rooted and critical cosmopolitan approach, the emphasis is on a capacity to deal with difference, as 'situated and open, dialogic and transformative' (Delanty 2006), whilst working with the 'plural dimensions of human identity which don't rest easily with each other, and sometimes not at all' (Cohen 1995) – thus able to negotiate the 'clash and collage' as valuable and non-dis-

ruptive. It posits a frame that is grounded in lived realities whilst being permeable to influences beyond the boundary of the local, and in a manner that is discursive and non-prescriptive, thus able to embrace the shifts and struggles that ensue.

Whilst the cosmopolitan is often associated with the global and post-national or transnational, it is also increasingly becoming an approach with which to negotiate multiplicity within local spaces and national boundaries, something Delanty (2006: 25) describes as 'post-universalistic kinds of cosmopolitanism'. The national is engaged in an un-bounded fashion to include the universalistic aspects of the cosmopolitan, without denying the importance of either one.[17] This approach acknowledges the relationships between the 'rootlessness' of globalisation and its 'rootedness' to time and place, where Strangers need not be from afar nor kept at arm's length, and the 'Otherness' of the Other is seen as an integral part of Self.

Having himself grown up and lived all his life negotiating difference in a plural context, Jit's theatre practice, which stretched from the 1960s until his untimely demise in 2005, encompassed a wide range of cultural forms and styles (modernist, traditional, postmodern, post-colonial, devised, text-based, site-specific, multilingual, culturally Malay, Chinese, Indian, etc.), indicating his own capacity to experiment with diversity and engage culture as 'contested, temporal and emergent' (Clifford 1986). This capacity to examine and articulate culture in an inclusive and revealing manner stemmed from Jit's interest in culture as unbounded and multiple, a phenomenon prevalent in Malaysia and similarly plural societies where official boundaries between communities are often transgressed in lived experience. In an interview about his theatre practice, Jit explained:

> I actually believe that in the case of plural societies such as Malaysia and Singapore, and even certain parts of India, multiculturalism is in one body. We tend to think of it as a negotiation between one body and another, but I actually think it is in one body, and in many ways I have been trying to excavate that in one way or another. (Jit in 2004)[18]

Jit's process of 'excavation' entailed reassembling the elements of culture and identity by bringing together disparate and 'strange' parts of the Malaysian community and reworking the boundaries that keep ideas, images, accents, textures and sounds in confining, separate realms. However, Jit's theatre did not merely mix and fuse, it also raised questions about the normative in an effort to create alternative interpretations of history and identity, problematising the Self and Other and their relatedness, in order to produce 'a transformative vi-

sion of an alternative society' (Delanty 2006: 40). Nor did it dwell on the harmony of multiplicity but told stories that 'live[d] out the tensions between universalism and particularism' (Cohen 2003: 76) in order to resist both limiting nationalism and homogenising globalisation.

Having travelled widely in his career as a theatre director and scholar, Jit was influenced by the theatre discourses and practices that were both regional and international. His study and engagement of the way local and national, international and global theatre responded to changes in the physicality and psyche of theatre-making were based on interactions, collaborations and critical deliberations with directors and practitioners that spanned Singapore and India, the USA and Indonesia. Jit's own reflections on two seminal multicultural theatre performances that embraced wide-ranging cultural differences, Peter Brook's *Mahabharata* (1985) and Ong Keng Sen's *Lear* (1999), indicated his views that the relationship between the particular and universal, local and global, needs to be negotiated more thoroughly to reflect cultural sensibilities adequately. His assertion that 'you have to traverse through the local cultural contexts in your journey to a global resolution' (Jit 2003: 117) reflects his awareness of the problems that arise in simply mixing, fusing or even hybridising cultural material with little insight or integrity. Whilst he analysed both performances as spectacular and strategic negotiations of the struggles of multicultural theatre in a global society, he was nonetheless critical of the lack of 'equal value' given to the 'local concerns' (Jit 2003: 117), reflecting his dissatisfaction with reductive expressions of identity and culture.

Jit's own multicultural productions, albeit on a smaller financial scale and more often within the boundaries of a national frame, sought to avoid these problems by developing conversations between local 'strangers' that gave voice to the uncertainties and incompleteness that emerge in situated yet transitional identities. By working with local stories that paid careful attention to issues of being Malaysian and the challenges of negotiating a complex and varied Malaysian sensibility, Jit's work recognised the 'need to talk to strangers' (Appiah 2005: 222) and expressed the 'thick and thin relations' (ibid.: 230-231) between members of the community and nation.[19] The value of Jit's reflexive engagement and imaginative interaction produced stagings of stories with the potential to evoke 'a cosmopolitan spirit' (Appiah 2006) that sought to perform and elicit dialogic and imaginative responses instead of passive and prescriptive ones. If 'the basic human capacity to grasp stories, even strange stories, is also what links us powerfully to others, even strange others' (Appiah 2005: 257), then the questions that arise are how Jit proceeded to do this and how adequately these expressions of cosmopolitan clash and collage managed to interrogate socio-political issues with clarity and resonance in a largely depoliticised audience.

This also leads to concerns about how much of the process of cosmo-politan imagining succeeded in being transformative, for all its open-ness and reflexivity.

The stranger beneath the surface: Towards a questioning theatre in Malaysia

> I feel we don't ask enough questions about our normative beha-viour. We are not investing enough into what we see as Malay-sians. I am trying to penetrate the whole issue of how we ima-gine our community. Even if it is "imagined", what is it that is imagined? (Jit in Ambikaipaker 1999)

Since its independence from British colonial rule in 1957, Malaysia has struggled to come to terms with its diverse cultural populace as a na-tional 'imagined community' (Anderson 1983). Led politically by the Barisan Nasional (National Front),[20] an alliance of racially defined par-ties, race informs many aspects of socio-cultural life and has led to Ma-laysian theatre being divided along ethno-linguistic lines, producing Malay Language Theatre (MLT), Chinese Language Theatre (CLT) and Indian Language Theatre (ILT), often leading to participation in these spheres along the same ethnic lines. The exception is English Lan-guage Theatre (ELT), due to English being initially a colonial and then educated upper-class language of power that overrides barriers of race.[21] In more recent times English has become the language of high social status due to its prominence in international trade and a lan-guage of popular culture due to its prevalence in global media – thus, no longer simply regarded through older frames of colonial culture and power. Jit's theatre was largely part of ELT, and his explorations and articulations of 'what is imagined' were within this somewhat ex-cluded and elite space, confined to urban Malaysia and participated in primarily by upper- and middle-class Malaysians – thus making his cosmopolitan stagings susceptible to the criticism of being unavailable to the masses.

In plural postcolonial societies such as Malaysia, where hierarchies of culture have characterised the practices of multiculturalism and thus perpetuated prejudice and segregation, the challenge is to transcend these structures whilst respecting and representing the identities con-cerned. Theatre that thus embodies and enacts the interstitial spaces where the individual, community, nation and world intersect develops a means of processing how these transitional constructs of identity can provide a vocabulary of dialogic and cosmopolitan imaginings – even if not widespread. By staging the tensions rather than denying them,

forms of pluralist co-existence can be performed, viewed and reflected upon, generating imaginative spaces where border crossings and overlapping allegiances are enjoyed as well as problematised – despite the limited reach. The process of viewing and re-viewing identity in this way is potent as it engages the bodies and voices, memories and experiences of performers and audiences as simultaneously present texts in connection with each other. The doubleness of theatre, which engages the difference and relatedness between performer and character, place and space, text and context, elicits multiple interpretations and translations of meaning as valid responses to images and ideas, words and actions, stories and situations – albeit within narrow confines. This challenges totalising nationalist narratives, which tend to define or delineate with absolute certainty rather than grapple with openness and flexibility. To resist practices that privilege a select few and perpetuate a discriminatory status quo, the cosmopolitan ideal of 'equity for all' advocates that a fundamental right to respect and dignity are due to all persons and cultures – regardless of their differences. This argues for a sense of justice that operates within and transcends the boundaries of nation, ethnicity, religion, class, gender, etc., dismantling the hierarchies of culture in order to develop more equitable paradigms of plural practice, particularly within globalising economies. Not easy nor likely to occur in the near future, but no less valuable as a principle for rethinking culture, modernity and nationhood.

As a Malaysian theatre practitioner and educator, my interest is to examine theatre as a medium that negotiates difference and examines the conflicts of plurality in order to articulate and embody alternatives to the dominant discourses of unitary cultures. My own identity as a Malaysian resists being labelled officially as 'Indian' and 'Christian' when my culture is meaningless if not able to be inclusive of Malay, Chinese, English, Hindu, Muslim, Buddhist and so on. Hence my partiality towards processes in theatre practice, such as Jit's, where multiple and overlapping identities are reflexively represented and thus able to intervene in a cultural imaginary. This is admittedly part of my own journey to comprehend and extend the dialogues of difference that operate within and without me – personally, socially and politically. Jill Dolan (2005: 2) refers to theatre's ability to provide 'utopias in performance' where the coming together of persons in live performance offers hope because they 'share experiences of meaning making and imagination that can describe or capture fleeting intimations of a better world'. This intersubjectivity of performer and audience that leads to reimaginings of what is possible in generating alternatives is something Jit's theatre sought to provide.

Among the strategies that Jit deployed to embody and enact this negotiation of plurality were inter-racial casting and multilingual perfor-

mances, where difference was performed as an integral part of Malaysian culture, and the multiple belongings and overlapping allegiances of identities were explored as enriching resources of how ordinary people deal with ordinary and extraordinary situations and why it matters.

Casting the stranger as no longer other

When Jit cast Malay and Chinese actors in Indian-Malaysian roles, or Indian and Malay actors in Chinese-Malaysian roles, he prodded performers and audiences to reconsider what is meant by Malay, Chinese or Indian in a highly racialised Malaysian context, and how the interaction of these identities within one body can occur – as in a Malay man can be an Indian character and thus what is Indian or Malay is necessarily constructed from the ideas, experiences and actions that are 'performed' and not prescribed or inscribed. This raised issues about the signification of an Indian character by a Malay actor, which refracted meanings beyond race as literal to race as part of a composite that is symbolic of power structures. This was not always readily received by audiences, perhaps unwilling or unable to 'read' the signifiers in question.

In 1994, when Jit cast a talented young Malay actor from MLT, Hamzah Tahir, as Ratnam, a young Indian working-class plantation worker, in an ELT play *The Cord* by K.S. Maniam, two reviewers referred to the actor as 'miscast' (Khoo 1994; Karim 1994). The character Ratnam is situated at the heart of a community of disenfranchised estate-worker Indian-Malaysians who resent feeling like outcasts in a country they had chosen to make their home. Raising issues about entitlement and belonging, the play centers around Ratnam's relationship with his embittered estate-worker father, Muniandy, and Muthiah, an arrogant English-educated Indian clerk who rises in status among the other estate workers and is revealed as having fathered Ratnam by raping Lakshmy, Muniandy's deceased wife. Ratnam is the angry young man, disappointed with his lot in life and lives in dreams of escape that include buying a Yamaha motorcycle which 'when you sit on it, you're riding heaven' (Maniam 1994: 33).

Jit's casting of a young Malay actor from small-town Malaysia in this lead role pointed to the shared disenfranchisement of non-urban, working-class Malays who were also made to feel like outcasts in a country that purported to serve their interests. Whilst all the other actors who played Indian-Malaysian roles were of upper- and middle-class urban Indian background, myself included, it was the casting of Hamzah that seemed to unsettle and raise questions. In both reviews, little was said about his performance skills, but allusion was made to his being

unsuited to the role by virtue of his background. Somehow, the fact that the rest of us were not working-class Indians did not raise concerns about our suitability to perform these roles. So was it Hamzah's accent, or his racialised skin that did not fit?

I suggest that the verisimilitude of class alone was less important because the play was in English, and it felt 'normal' to hear upper-middle class Indian-Malaysians take on working-class roles, speaking in an apparently 'unmarked' accent of Malaysian-English, not quite free of the registers of class and race, but more similar to the accents of an ELT audience perhaps. However, the corporeal presence of a MLT actor speaking English in his own accent, inflected by both class and ethnicity, disrupted the imaginings of a unitary culture of working-class Indians. By staging Hamzah's portrayal of Ratnam in a manner that overtly juxtaposed Hamzah's identity with Ratnam's, Jit pushed towards a confrontation of cultures where that which is considered contamination due to hybridisation and thus mongrelisation and impurity of identity, was reclaimed as empowering as it challenged the normative comforts of elite culture.

In the hubris of economic affluence that characterised the early 1990s in Kuala Lumpur, the idea that an urban English-speaking group of Malaysians expected to watch a performance about disenfranchised estate Indians without notions of implication indicates not merely the elitism of ELT, but also its general insulation from the less palatable questions about political equity and social justice. Thus, when a MLT actor is seen to refract the meaning of marginalisation, and Ratnam says to Muthiah, played by Vadaketh Chacko[22], in a bitter confrontation about his worth:

> You nothing but stick. You nothing but stink. Look all clean, inside all thing dirty. Outside everything. Inside nothing. Taking-making. Walking-talking. Why you insulting all time? Why you no like me? Why you sit on me like monkey with wet back-side? (Maniam 1994: 64)

Hamzah's political presence could unsettle an affluent audience unwilling to confront the prejudices they embody – whatever their race.

Although Malay-Malaysians are indubitably the politically dominant race, fluency in English gives access to a different kind of prestige, and thus it is possible that ELT audiences (largely non-Malay) secure their notion of 'superiority' – between and within races – by classifying language as a significant determinant of acceptance, even within the apparently neutral space of ELT. In this way, the 'oppressor' is not simply the powers of state, but the forces of culture and society that perpetuate exclusion and prejudice – within and beyond the nation. This conveni-

ently deracialised segregation of the upper-class, deliberately sustained by the ruling coalition in order to project an image of 'equality and justice' in the bid towards a *Bangsa* Malaysia, was being shaken and stirred by Jit's astute staging of marginalisation as beyond race. The language of class and culture were performed to pry open the tensions that lay beneath the surface and the apprehension of the reviewers signals the reluctance or incapacity to deal with this. Language – spoken, gestured, embodied and performed – is thus recognised as a potent theatrical signifier of social and cultural identity (singular and multiple), as well as political and economic mobility (upward and downward), thus able to produce both solidarity and suspicion simultaneously.

Conversing with the Stranger and the Self

Issues of language use and language policy weave an intricate and complex map in Malaysian society as the diversity of languages that are spoken retain intellectual and affective, national and communal, personal and global value. Whilst Malay is the national and official language, English, Chinese (Mandarin, Cantonese, Hokkien, Hakka, etc.) and Indian (Tamil, Telugu, Hindi, Malayalam, etc.) languages are also spoken, and in a wide variety of mix and match. Most Malaysians are fluent in more than one language, if not accent, register or dialect, thus making it inevitable for switches and mixes to occur, depending on the demands of context. Particularly in spoken discourse, languages are mixed and accents frequently switched to indicate the corresponding meanings implied by these changes. This is done not merely to accommodate the listener, but also to enhance the vocabularies of the speaker with more than one register of interaction and connection. This deals with difference in a syncretic and fluid way, able to use the everyday to 'invent a personal language', something de Certeau (1988: xxii) identifies as one of the 'strategies of modernity'.

Jit's multilingual performances were often devised plays in which he would work with actors of diverse racial and class backgrounds and encourage a collage of stories in multiple languages through an improvisation process to produce a conversation between Strangers for performance. This produced multilingual texts that depicted the diversity of the performers and the characters they embodied, revealing the intersections and interstices that marked what these languages meant together and apart. Whilst some performers spoke only in the language associated with their 'official' identity (e.g. a Malay speaking Malay, a Chinese speaking Chinese), others would perform in a mix of languages that included those deemed 'Other' to them (e.g. a Chinese

speaking Malay, a Malay speaking English, etc.).[23] Jit's multilingual texts were characterised by constant language and code switching to portray the fluidity of communication that is possible when the needs exceed the rules. A performer could speak in a variety of languages within one sentence, from different accents of English to variations of Malay and Chinese. What is significant is that this would not seem strange to a local Malaysian audience (or audiences accustomed to living in a multilingual environment) adept at processing language as mixed and multiple.

In one such devised work performed in 1999, called *A Chance Encounter*, Jit explored the negotiations of difference between two women who meet across a cosmetics counter in a shopping mall. They are from differing backgrounds, generations and ethnicities and, despite this, draw on their sense of shared vocabularies to communicate stories about their lives and memories. Their interaction is encoded in multiple texts that use diverse registers and vocabularies, unbound by official grammars or rules. The young Chinese cosmetics saleswoman, Anita, played by Foo May Lyn, speaks in educated, grammatical English, Cantonese-inflected English, Cantonese and a patois of Malay, as if it were all part of the same language – one of the many 'Malaysian' languages that are concocted to meet the requirements of the speaker and listener. This range depicts not only the more 'rooted cosmopolitan' diversity of the character, but the versatility of the actor as well, suggesting that various cultural worlds operate in her construct and operation of self.

The elderly Indian-Muslim housewife, Fatima, played by Faridah Merican, speaks only Malay (specifically Penang-Malay, which is marked by a distinct accent and vocabulary) but understands a smattering of English as well.[24] Being more provincial and of an older generation, Fatima commands due respect from the younger woman, who accommodates the older woman's linguistic needs as part of her goal to promote and sell her product. As the two women talk about looking beautiful, being healthy and using cosmetics, they reveal a capacity to establish diverse connections with each other, such as a shared love of movies and telling ghost stories. This eventually leads to them sharing more private episodes about their families and relationships, and in so doing, they unravel their stories, values and cultural frames and come to realise that they are in fact not strangers but were once neighbours in a different city. Their 'chance encounter' as Strangers produces revealing insights into how their lives are in fact part of a shared narrative. As they engage with the cosmetic makeover of exfoliation and hydration – now familiar processes in the global beauty market – they peel off layers of dead skin to reveal what lies beneath.

As a devised play, the dialogue performed was not scripted but created in rehearsal when the director and actors, with the additional help of the playwright, Leow Puay Tin, improvised with a language that could convey the complexities of the fluid context. They devised a code of speaking that was inflected by expressive and demonstrative actions – gestures that helped to build meaning and connection across their multiple styles of signification. This is in fact a way of being 'Malaysian' that is identifiable to most urban Malaysians who deal with their cultural space by accommodating as they see fit; and theatre offers the ideal site for staging and problematising this reality. By weaving the fiction and reality with a cosmopolitan imagination, Jit was challenging the notion of 'pure' languages that need to be used according to a 'standard'. Jit explained that the language used was:

> ... not broken[25] Malay but an invented language that is not-not Malay ... It is a language for the stage that is not real but can convey the ideas necessary with a Malaysian accent, tone and colour. (Jit in 1999)[26]

By giving credence to this 'invented' language, Jit performed a politics of language that was open to incorporating non-standard varieties as their own creolised mixtures, which needed to be fluid and able to integrate change as it occurred. The freedom to 'mix and blend' also gave agency to the performers to create a language they could wield and own, whilst imagining the possibilities that occur on a daily basis.

For example, when Anita explains some of the benefits of her beauty products, she uses literal and thus awkward translations of English phrases into Malay (e.g., *'makan itu lemak'* – devour that fat, *'kasi kilat'* – give shine) to describe how they work. However, at other times she would use the technical terms in English (e.g., anti-cellulite, light-reflecting) but struggle to pronounce these words as they are clearly not part of her familiar register. However, what is most effective is the crucial language of gesture such as when she demonstrates 'toning and firming' by physically outlining her svelte figure and pointing to how it *'jadi satu S la!'* (becomes an S you see) to indicate the curves in the right places. The value of staging and performing this process of translation is an opportunity for the audience to reflexively interpret how language works in pluralist spaces and how an open and fluid approach to conversation enhances the possibilities of making connections.

Apart from the appealing humour of these moments, the resonance of hearing and watching these 'invented' yet 'identifiable' languages challenged the viewer to question what really constitutes the language of Malaysians when encountering strangers on the street. Whilst the

play was a veritable success and reviewed as being 'one of the most powerful works of Malaysian theatre in recent times' (Khoo 1999) and a 'penetrating reflection of Malaysian life' (Dass 1999), it was also admittedly difficult to access for the 'less local' audiences who were either not Malaysian or whose knowledge of Malaysian languages were more singular.[27] Here Jit turned the tables, particularly on the urban English-speaking global citizen, to privilege the Malaysian-speaking local citizen whose capacity to span several languages whilst moving comfortably between them was not denigrated as contaminated, but celebrated.

Conclusion

> ... a pluralist liberal democratic society does not deny the existence of conflicts but provides the institutions allowing them to be expressed in an adversarial form ... A well functioning democracy calls for a clash of legitimate democratic political positions. This is what the confrontation between left and right needs to be about. Such a confrontation should provide collective forms of identification strong enough to mobilize passions. If this adversarial configuration is missing, passions cannot be given a democratic outlet and the agonistic dynamics of pluralism are hindered. (Mouffe 2005: 30)

A cosmopolitan imagining that is grounded in a socially situated and political understanding of culture does not avoid the tensions that emerge in spaces where the collisions of culture and identity occur but develops spaces and vocabularies for engaging with them creatively and reflexively. Mouffe's (2005: 1-34) argument for 'agonistic' processes that allocate space for the representation of conflicts that emerge as a result of the 'we/they' dichotomy stresses the need to ensure differences remain and disagreements are reflected in the effort to sustain working relations. By developing platforms and stages where the stories of these conflicts can be told from a variety of voices, to reflect the range of ideologies and diverse practices, the clashes and collages can be examined and apprehended with more insight and depth.

   The stories we tell and the experiences we share in theatre characterise our preoccupations and perceptions in one way or another. They are arguably 'collective forms of identification strong enough to mobilize passions' (Mouffe 2005: 30) that are produced through the lenses of performativity and the semiotics of staging. In that sense they provide 'democratic outlets' as opportunities to converse with one another and confront the sensibilities that determine our responses to each

other, providing insights into how we negotiate encounters with the different and similar, strange and familiar. As inhabitants of a world that is becoming increasingly interconnected with each new technological device designed to improve connectivity and networking, the need to be skilled in dealing with difference escalates further. The presence of greater diversity in the cities and transit lounges that also reflect the rapidly growing migratory flows that result from new trade agreements and outsourcing contracts also point to the need to transcend the demonising of the Stranger. But how do we process our interactions with Strangers in a manner that improves the dynamics of conversing with Strangers, without having to coerce them into losing their 'strangeness'?

Theatre that questions the normative notion of Strangers as 'unknowable and undesirable' by recognising the commonalities we share as human beings resists the socialised tendency to distance Strangers by revealing the relatedness of Self and Other, 'we and they'. In addition, much theatre has come to recognise its capacity to reckon with the 'strange-nesses' in that which appears familiar – the Self in the Other, 'them in us', and vice versa. Defamiliarisation, or Brechtian alienation, prods a conscious and active reflection about what is being staged and how it is being staged – moving away from naturalist assumptions about theatre being a simple mirror of reality. Here theatre operates more like a prism to refract the images and ideas that may at first appear incomprehensible but are really a process of developing more acute critical consciousness and political insight.

Jit's theatre-making processes to produce experimental yet resonant performances were informed by his insatiable curiosity about the human condition and an empathetic understanding of the complexities that pertained to being human. His capacity to operate as a 'cosmopolitan bricoleur of resistance and cooperation' (Hardt and Negri 2004: 50) and skillfully draw on difference as a cultural resource was related to his experience as a trained historian and his own participation in theatre within a range of capacities – as director, producer, educator, critic and adviser. This plurality of lives that Jit led, within and without the theatre, gave him insights into culture and identity that evoked questions about how the multiplicity and interactions that produce the drama of our existence can be better articulated and reflected on. His choice to then experiment with stagings of the Stranger that sought to articulate the 'agonistic dynamics of pluralism' (Mouffe 2005: 30) was an effort towards confronting the tensions of recasting difference and questioning the representations of inclusive plurality. By problematising normative constructs and performing alternatives based on openness, Jit indicated how theatre's capacity to converse is critical to story-

telling and story-sharing, thus crucial to the 'modern solidarity' (Appiah 2005: 245) that will proffer a cohesive multiplicity.

Notes

1 The notion of empathy is characterised by a capacity to feel for the Other even if one is not able to understand everything about the Other's position and perspective. In a discussion on transethnic solidarities within Malaysian political and cultural practice, Mandal (2004: 65) also refers to the need for 'empathy towards difference' in the process of moving away from coercive processes of dealing with identity that create tolerance more than acceptance.

2 Malays are defined by not only their racial category but also religion: constitutionally being Malay in Malaysia includes being Muslim as well. Whilst Indians are associated with being Hindu and Chinese with being Taoist-Buddhist, these aspects of their identity are not constitutionally defined. Being Christian does not imply any particular race, but it does suggest being non-Malay and is associated with being Anglophone, although several churches operate in Chinese, Tamil and Malay. The continuation of policies that privilege the Malays and subsequently deny non-Malay segments of society equal rights is evident in political discourses that perpetuate concepts such as 'ketuanan Melayu (Malay supremacy) and pendatang (newcomer)' to refer to Malaysians of Malay and non-Malay lineage, respectively. This discriminatory and chauvinistic practice asserts a rightful claim for Malays to be granted privilege and special status that alienates the non-Malay citizen (see Mandal 2004: 57).

3 See Loh and Khoo (2002) for comprehensive discussions on the problematic discourses of democracy in Malaysia, particularly in the 1980s and 1990s.

4 Most recently, the stirring images of the HINDRAF demonstrations in December 2007, when unarmed demonstrators from the marginalised Indian community, including men, women and children, were dispersed by the state with water cannons, depict the kinds of civil rights abuse that produce anger and resentment. See http://www.malaysiakini.com/news/75315 for a compilation of special reports on the HINDRAF events. In other instances human rights and arts groups have also been the target of state crackdowns. See Khoo, Tikamdas and Wong (2003) for a discussion on the Malaysian arts community's struggle to resist censorship in the 1990s; and Rajendran (2002) for an examination of the politics of theatre that attempts to resist the normative through strategic devices of artistic framing.

5 The Pakatan Rakyat (People's Alliance) is a newly formed coalition of opposition parties that are multiracial and multireligious in character. Combining the secular DAP (Democratic Action Party) and the Islamic PAS (Parti Islam SeMalaysia) with the Parti Keadilan (Justice Party) formed by Anwar Ibrahim after his dismissal from office in 1998, this new political process requires the skill and space to create new platforms for political organisations that are no longer ruled by racial or religious profile. This capacity to deal with this challenge will determine the success of the coalition in the long run.

6 See http://www.malaysiakini.com/news/80152 and http://www.malaysiakini.com/news/81611 for a range of articles on the implications of 8 March 2008, now termed a 'political tsunami' to reflect the scale and unexpectedness of what occurred. The tsunami metaphor also points to the large task ahead to rebuild national integrity and political justice after several decades of severe erosion due to corruption, cronyism and nepotism, three evils identified in particular with the Mahathir era.

7   A notable exception is the website led by the academic and political activist, Dr Farish
    Noor, which calls itself 'The Other Malaysia' in which the team declares, 'We are
    committed to an academic culture that is democratic, progressive, pluralist, multicul-
    tural, anti-racist, anti-sectarian and anti-communalist. We take as our starting point
    the premise that Malaysia is and has always been a plural society where respect for
    alterity and difference has to be made a priority. But for pluralism to be defended
    and cherished, a society like ours requires a common national narrative and imagery
    that is inclusive rather than exclusive, accommodating rather than reactionary'. See
    Noor (2008).
8   The racial riots of May 1969 are cited time and again by the state as a warning that
    racial relations in Malaysia are a 'fragile' and 'sensitive' area. Whilst undoubtedly the
    events of May 1969 remain as a vivid reminder of the extent to which economic and
    cultural disenfranchisement can lead to violent outbursts, the socio-political situation
    in Malaysia has changed considerably and is more complex than it used to be.
9   'Multiple belongings' and 'overlapping allegiances' are phrases frequently used in the
    discourse on cosmopolitanism to discuss identity constructs as inherently plural,
    even in seemingly homogenous cultures. They challenge the idea that 'singular' be-
    longings and 'distinct' allegiances, ideas propagated by nationalism and communal-
    ism are the only valid basis on which to build a sense of social cohesion.
10 Mandal (2001: 160) cites Jit's work as 'articulations of Malaysia's hybrid realities' that
    reiterate the capacity of Jit's theatre to deal with difference as desirable rather than
    deviant – stagings that drew on difference as a resource for understanding the hu-
    man condition with more depth and dialogue.
11 Dr Mahathir Mohamed was the Prime Minister of Malaysia from 1981-2003. During
    this time he implemented several changes in policy that led to the Mahathir era be-
    coming one of the most complex and dynamic in Malaysian political history. See
    Cheah (2002: 159 -184) for a discussion on Mahathir's rule as Prime Minister.
12 The word *bangsa* refers to 'race' or 'ethnicity' but does not translate exactly as either
    one. *Bumiputera*, which literally means 'prince of the soil' is the term initially used to
    refer only to Malaysians of Malay origin and is now inclusive of other indigenous
    groups such as the Iban, Kadazan and Dusun groups.
13 See Gomez (2004b) for discussion on these issues and the impact of poor imple-
    mentation of state policies on the state of Malaysia.
14 For more extensive discussion on Jit's stagings of difference in Malaysia, see Rajen-
    dran and Wee (2007).
15 Mitchell Cohen's (1995: 233) 'rooted cosmopolitan' frame proposes a 'dialectical con-
    cept' that 'accepts multiplicity of roots and branches and which rests in the legiti-
    macy of plural loyalties, of standing in many circles, but with common ground'.
16 Delanty (2006: 38) distinguishes the cosmopolitan imagination as being 'a form of
    cultural contestation' which is 'reflexive', 'internalized' and 'defined by an openness',
    which engages the tensions between the local and global, universal and particular as
    the 'basic animus' (ibid.: 35) of cosmopolitanism.
17 Among the diverse cosmopolitanisms that have emerged in the discourse, the 'verna-
    cular', 'discrepant', 'rooted' and 'cosmofeminist' speak particularly to this idea. See
    Robbins (1998) on the various cosmopolitanisms and Cheah (1998) for a discussion
    of how the 'cosmopolitical' is a 'mutating global field' in which the opposition be-
    tween cosmopolitanism and nationalism is questioned, and the hyphen between the
    nation and the state informs the relationship with the global. Cheah and Robbins
    (1998) provides a comprehensive range of deliberations on the links between the na-
    tional and the cosmopolitan and the ensuing relationships between them that are not
    necessarily oppositional.
18 Krishen Jit, May 2004, in a recorded interview with Charlene Rajendran.

19 In a chapter entitled 'Rooted Cosmopolitanism' Appiah (2005: 213-272) discusses the difficulties of 'obligations to strangers' in relation to the abstractness of nationalism and how it 'posits a relation among strangers' (ibid.: 238) and thus 'relations between citizens must, of necessity, be relations between strangers' (ibid.: 217). In connection with this he distinguishes between moral and ethical obligations using Avishai Margalit's notions of 'ought' to characterise the difference between thick and thin relations – thick relations pertain between those who share a past or collective memory compared to thin relations, which apply to strangers who simply share a humanity (ibid.: 230-231).

20 Malaysia's main political coalition, the Barisan Nasional (Malay: National Front) is made up of communally defined parties that are meant to represent the interests of each group accordingly. Each of the main party components, namely the United Malay National Organisation (UMNO), Malaysian Chinese Association (MCA) and Malaysian Indian Congress (MIC), also has a sub-party for women that is allocated a quota of representatives within the main party. Whilst this reflects a plural society, it also prevents a more integrated cohesion in national identity. See Shamsul (2001) for an extended discussion on pluralism and plural society in Malaysia and its transformation in the course of history.

21 See Philip (2005) and Rowland (2005) for discussions on how ELT provides a 'neutral' space within which issues of race are examined with greater openness and critique. Their arguments assert that English is both an international language as well as a Malaysian language – no longer simply regarded in contemporary Malaysian contexts as a 'colonial' language that needs to be resisted. As a result, theatre in English has been the most integrative and plural as practitioners are not dominated by any particular racial group unlike in Malay, Chinese and Indian language theatres.

22 Educated in local and international education institutions of high repute that included the Victoria Institution, Malaysia, and Cambridge University, in the UK, Chacko invariably represented the elite and upper-class Indian in Malaysia, and his accent would have been noticeably inflected with these markers as well.

23 Unfortunately, these did not include the more marginalised groups and languages, namely Indian and Aboriginal, reflecting theatre's poor reach to these sections of society.

24 Significantly, Faridah Merican is a well-known ELT and MLT actor whose public presence as an English newscaster on television and radio makes her portrayal of this role one that is also layered with questions about the mix and fluidity of her own identity.

25 'Broken English' is the term used to refer to ungrammatical English. English that incorporates words and syntactical structures from other languages such as Malay, Cantonese and Tamil is sometimes called Malaysian-English – seen as an 'impure' version of the standard.

26 Krishen Jit, March 1999, in a video-recorded interview with Ray Langenbach.

27 A small number of audience members, mostly foreign to Malaysia, expected to see a play in English and left soon after they encountered problems with the language being used. Some demanded a refund of their ticket, and their contention was that the title was in English and thus gave the wrong impression. This raises questions about whether a multi-lingual performance should also have multi-lingual titles. It also reiterates the need for Malaysian theatre to rework its division along linguistic lines and become more inclusive of cultural experience beyond the boundaries of 'official' languages.

12 Constructing Identity: Visual Expressions of Islam in the Predominantly Catholic Philippines

Vivienne SM. Angeles[1]

Introduction

Government policies in response to Muslim agitation for independence as well as the increasing contacts between Muslim and non-Muslim Filipinos on the one hand and the Middle East on the other have impacted the way Philippine Muslims present themselves visually. From their perspective, their traditional status as members of ethnic groups has evolved into one of membership in a worldwide *umma* that looks to Saudi Arabia as the centre of Islam. There is, therefore, a de-emphasis on ethnic clothing, art and architecture and the acceptance and promotion of what they consider to be Islamic forms of dress, art and architecture characteristic of the Middle East. Filipino converts to Islam, many of whom were introduced to this religion in the Middle East where they were contract workers, have followed suit. Muslim identity formation happens now through visual expressions of Islam as manifested through clothing, art and architecture within the contexts of minority status, Philippine Christian-Muslim relations and the escalating Philippine labour migration to the Middle East.

The Philippines: Asia's Catholic country

The combined efforts of Spanish missionaries and conquerors in the Philippines from 1521 to 1898 resulted in the conversion of a majority of Filipinos in Luzon and the Visayas islands to Christianity.[2] Muslims in the southern part of the country resisted Spanish incursions, but the latter's continuing military advances relegated the former to provinces in the southern island of Mindanao that became identified as Muslim areas. The interplay of religion, politics and economics made for a confrontational type of relationship between Muslims and Spaniards in the course of over three centuries of colonisation (Majul 1973; Warren 1985). Considering the Spanish goal of Christianisation and their success in most parts of the country in this regard, religion be-

came a salient feature of Filipino identity. American occupation, which began in 1898, sustained this religious distinction by creating the Bureau of Non-Christian Tribes as an administrative unit, in spite of the American ideal of a separation of church and state. Today, the Philippine population is estimated at 96,061,680 of which 80.9% are Roman Catholics and 5% are Muslims.[3]

Until the 1970s, Muslims were concentrated in the southern parts of the Philippines where they constitute a religious majority in several provinces such as Sulu, Lanao del Norte, Lanao del Sur, and Maguindanao. By the mid-1970s, Muslims started moving to other parts of the country for better economic opportunities, education[4] or as refugees from the military conflict in various Muslim areas. As they moved northwards, they either lived among Christians or created their own communities. The number of Muslims in the non-traditionally Muslim areas has been growing, and they have become very noticeable because of how they express their Muslim identity visually through their mosques, art and the clothes they wear.

The study

This study focuses on visual expressions of Islam. It concentrates on the material culture of religion as a form of visual language used to express believers' understanding of their religion, their perception of themselves and how they want others to view them. It is a form of communication in which, through objects, clothing, art and architecture, a person's beliefs and religious identity are conveyed to the viewer. Although the use of these material objects may have been affected by other reasons, such as peer or parental pressure, these expressions can primarily be taken as religious statements because the individual believes that how he or she presents herself is a way of actualising religious beliefs. However, this non-verbal form of communication has to be viewed in the context of Philippine realities: the continuing tension between Muslims and Christians, especially the seemingly never-ending conflict in the south of the Philippines – in recent years armed confrontations between the Moro Islamic Liberation Front and the military take place intermittently – and the increasing labour export to the Middle East. We will look at the mosque, clothing, home and some art forms as vehicles for visual expression of Muslim identity in a country that is predominantly Christian.

The research focuses on visual expressions of Philippine Islam as manifested in the traditionally Muslim and non-Muslim areas and the changes to which they are subjected. It will be argued that Philippine government policies in response to Muslim agitation for independence together with increasing contacts between Philippine Muslims and the

Middle East have affected the way Philippine Muslims view and present themselves. Government responses to the secessionist movement led to policies that made conditions favourable for Islamic resurgence and, hence, helped usher in a more vigorous Muslim assertion of their identity. Equally important is the increasing contact between the Philippines and the Middle East insofar as it has influenced Muslim perception and expression of their identity as part of the global *umma*. This contact with the Middle East has also affected the religious composition of the country.

The setting

The Philippines comprises about 7,100 islands with a total land area of 117,000 square miles. Muslims are concentrated in the largest southern island of Mindanao, particularly in the southwestern region, which is closer to Malaysia and Indonesia than to the capital city, Manila. My choice of research locations was dictated by the need to visit communities that are representative of the northern, middle and southern parts of the country. The intention was to see how far North Muslims have settled and also observe how Islam continues to be expressed visually in one of the first places to which it was introduced: Simunul Island.

Plate 12.1 *Map of the Philippines. Highlighted areas indicate places visited*

Islam and ethnicity in the Philippines

Muslims in the southern Philippines are from different ethnic groups distinguished by various characteristics. The major Muslim ethnic groups are: Tausug, Maranao, Maguindanao, Yakan, Samal, Sangil, Jama Mapun, Palawani, Molbog, Illanun, Kalibugan and Kalagan. They speak different languages, pursue different occupations, and tradition-ally wear different types of clothing with distinct weaves and colours particular to these tribes. These ethnic differences notwithstanding, they share a common Muslim identity, which is critical to their rela-tionship with the government and Christian Filipinos (Noble 1975). Their identity traditionally combines ethnicity with religious identity; thus being a Muslim became synonymous with being a member of these tribes. The distinction, therefore, between what is Islamic and what is ethnic is blurred in the eyes and understanding of the non-Muslims and, in some ways, also the Muslims.[5] Muslims I interviewed over the years see Islam and their ethnic customs and traditions as so strongly intertwined that one is identical with the other.

When traders and missionaries introduced Islam to the Philippines in the 14th century, it was received by the people in a way quite differ-ent from the tension and conflict that characterised the Spanish con-version to Christianity (Majul 1973). The depth, intensity, and centrality of the Filipino experience of Islam varied, but the fact that these Filipi-nos considered themselves Muslims at the point of Spanish contact im-plied a sense of community and connectedness with Muslims in other parts of the world. The intensity of their 'Muslimness' has been ques-tioned by colonial writers (Combes 1897: 41-44) and contemporary scholars (McKenna 1998), but from the perspective of religious studies, we see that Islam provided them with a sense of identity and commu-nity vis-à-vis the majority Christian population. Expressing this identity in the non-Muslim areas, however, has not been easy because of ten-sions between Muslims and Christians.

Muslims and the Philippine government

The relationship between Muslims and the independent Philippine government has been fraught with difficulties since 1946. Largely re-sponsible for this is the Spanish colonial heritage of Christian-Muslim conflict, the government-sponsored Christian settlement of Muslim an-cestral lands and general government neglect of Muslim areas, all of which left a legacy of mutually negative perceptions among Muslims and Christians. Muslims felt alienated from what they called the 'Christian government' and began to consider their poor economic si-

tuation as the result of government discriminatory policies (Angeles 1987). One of the Muslim responses to this state of affairs was the formation of the Moro National Liberation Front (MNLF) in 1969. The MNLF defined itself as a revolutionary movement whose goal was to establish an Islamic state in the southern Philippines.[6] By the time President Marcos declared martial law in 1972, the MNLF had become a well-organised and well-funded movement, enjoying wide support among Philippine Muslims and from countries like Saudi Arabia, Libya and Pakistan. Soon after this declaration, the government and Muslims engaged in a full-scale war that resulted in great numbers of military and civilian casualties. As the military conflict escalated, Muslim countries pressured the Philippine government to resolve the conflict.

Part of the government response was to launch policies that were not only conducive to the practice of Islam but also contributed to the articulation of Muslim identity, particularly in places outside of Mindanao. While maintaining the perception of the Philippines as Asia's Catholic country in its travel promotions, in 1973 the government started to officially recognise Islam as part of Filipino heritage. Then President Marcos issued a decree asserting that the preservation and enhancement of Islamic tradition and the promotion of well-being of Muslim communities would guide the policy in Mindanao.[7] With the intensifying conflict in the background, various other presidential decrees were issued, among them a decree recognising Muslim holidays – the *Eid al Fitr, Eid al Adha, Maulid al Nabi, Laila al Isra wa'l Miraj* and *Ammon Jaddid* – as legal Philippine holidays.[8] In the same year, President Marcos also signed a decree establishing the Philippine Center for Advanced Studies at the University of the Philippines, which includes an Institute of Islamic Studies.[9] In 1978, the government created the Philippine Pilgrimage Authority to take care of *hajj* arrangements for Philippine Muslims. Although these actions raised possible issues about the separation of church and state as guaranteed in the Philippine constitution, the government was quick to emphasise that it was responding to the needs of its ethnic minorities who happen to be Muslims. On the part of Muslims, these decrees served to break down the barriers that alienated them from feeling part of the Philippine nation because of their different religion[10] and allowed them to more openly and visually express their Muslim identity in the non-Muslim areas. The government hoped that these legal instruments, albeit promulgated during the period of martial law, would lead to an improvement in relations between Christians and Muslims and would end the rebellion.

The MNLF rebellion reached its height in the mid-1970s and took its toll on the people and government. Many Muslims left their homes to

seek refuge in other parts of the Philippines and in Malaysia. Some moved all the way north to Aparri and built communities, established mosques and *madaris*.[11] Before long, enclaves of Muslims emerged in various Philippine cities and towns, but since land area is limited, homes in these enclaves are tightly packed. These places became venues for Muslims to preserve and maintain their lifestyles, their religion and its material culture.

Philippine Muslims and the Muslim world

Historically, Philippine Muslims had trade contacts with the Middle East long before the advent of Spanish colonisation. It was, however, the late 1950s when Filipinos began going to the Middle East to study, particularly to Egypt's Al Azhar University.[12] The number of Muslim countries offering scholarships to Muslim Filipinos increased over time, so that by the 1980s Filipinos were also going to Syria, Jordan, Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Pakistan and Malaysia for their education.

Filipino contact with the international Muslim community is not limited to Muslim Filipinos. In the last 25 years, labour has become the major Philippine export, with the majority of overseas Filipino workers (OFW) going to the Middle East, especially to Saudi Arabia.[13] OFWs can also be found in the United Arab Emirates, Kuwait, Qatar, Jordan, Lebanon, Libya, Bahrain and other countries in the region. These linkages, whether through education or employment, have helped not only in promoting an Islamic consciousness among Philippine Muslims, but also in drawing them to active involvement with the larger, international *umma* (Angeles 2001). At the same time, this situation introduced many Christian Filipinos to Islam, which eventually led to conversion in a number of cases. Lacar found out from his interview of 322 converts that about a quarter of them had been to the Middle East as OFWs, but most converted upon their return to the Philippines. Only about 6% converted while they were still in the Middle East (Lacar 2001). This phenomenon of Filipino Catholic conversion continues to grow, and in the Philippines this has given rise to the various *Balik Islam*[14] groups, several of which are involved in missionary activities. One of them, the Islamic Studies Call and Guidance (IS-CAG), has established Muslim communities centred on a mosque in various parts of the country. Together with the internal northward migration of southern Philippine Muslims, the establishment of *Balik Islam* communities has contributed to the growing visibility of Muslims in the non-Muslim areas of the Philippines.

The mosque as visual expression of Muslim identity

The mosque comprises several categories of material culture: artefacts, landscape, architecture and art. Mosques are man-made, they alter the landscape, they reflect a particular type of architecture, and it is also a place where Islamic art is visible. As a sacred space where believers prostrate themselves before God, it is important to look at the mosque structure in terms of ritual actions – specifically prayer. One of the 'pillars' (basic requirements) of Islam is *salat* (prayer), which is to be performed five times daily.[15] Muslims perform their prayers wherever they are, but the congregational prayer at Friday noon (*salat al jumma*) should be done in the mosque. Majul (1978: 780) asserts that from a philosophical point of view, the mosque on Fridays 'represents the place where the concerted submission of all Muslims to a rigidly conceived monotheism is publicly expressed'. The structure of the mosque is linked to actions involved in praying. The Qur'an (2: 144, 149, 150) requires facing in the direction of Mecca, hence the *qiblah* wall, which gives the directional orientation for the worshipper. On the *qiblah* wall is the *mihrab,* a niche on the wall which is usually the only part of the mosque that has elaborate designs – either mosaic or calligraphy. Mosques include a *minbar,* from which the *khutbah* (homily) is delivered, and the *dikka,* a wooden elevated platform where the respondents of the mosque repeat the ritual actions of the *imam* and speak the responses. Because praying requires different positions such as standing, prostrating and sitting, the mosque is bereft of furniture. Interiors of Philippine mosques have the above essential components of *mihrab, qiblah,* and *minbar,* but they do not usually have the *dikka* or the *ihsan* (courtyard), which are more common in the Middle East. Also, the *mihrab* is simpler and rarely contains the elaborate calligraphy that is often found in the *mihrab* of Middle Eastern mosques.

The first mosque in the Philippines was established in the town of Tubig Indangan in the southernmost island of Simunul in Tawi Tawi province in 1380. It was reconstructed several times and has taken on different forms through the years. The earliest picture available of this mosque, hanging by its entrance, shows a construction of wood and cogon grass with a two-tiered roof – a very common architectural feature of mosques in the Southeast Asia region in earlier times.[16] In 1980, Tubig Indangan celebrated 600 years of Islam in the Philippines. In preparation for the event, the mosque was reconstructed based on a new design and with donations from Muslim countries. It was inaugurated on 7 November 1980 by President Marcos, as a demonstration of support for Filipino Muslims and in keeping with the earlier government declarations that Islam is part of Filipino heritage. As can be seen from the accompanying pictures, the Tubing Indangan mosque

has been structurally transformed from a typical Southeast Asian struc-
ture to one that relates more to its Middle Eastern counterparts. For
about 600 years, its design was typical of the region until the 1980 re-
construction. The four pillars inside the mosque with the traditional
okkir[17] design are the only reminders of the local and regional character
of the mosque.

Plate 12.2   *Tubig Indangan mosque in the 1960s*

The Islamic City of Marawi[18] has the greatest number of mosques in
the Philippines. Muslims in this city generally belong to the Maranao
ethnic tribe and constitute about 92% of the city's population. Travel
brochures boast of Marawi as the Islamic cultural centre of the Philip-
pines. It has many Islamic schools where Arabic, Islam and the Qur'an
are taught. The city's Mindanao State University houses the King Faisal
Institute of Islamic Studies and the Zayd Ibn Thabit Qur'anic Studies
Center. Mindanao State University is a public institution, but the pre-
sence of a mosque and the Qur'anic centre visually express the univer-
sity's Islamic identity in this Islamic city. Most of the mosques in Mar-
awi feature multi-domes and minarets. In keeping with the colours of
the mosque of Medina, several mosques are painted white/cream and
green, like the Bacolod Grande, Bacolod Chico, King Faisal and Gnassi

Mosques. The biggest mosque in Marawi is the Marawi Islamic Center located in the heart of the city near the marketplace. People I interviewed could not give the exact date of the mosque's establishment, but noted that Kuwait, Libya, Abu Dhabi and Saudi Arabia were major benefactors.

Plate 12.3   *Tubig Indangan mosque in 2004*

To Maranao Muslims, constructing a mosque is pious work and prominent Muslims feel they have an obligation to build a mosque for the community (Abbahil 1980: 97). Once established, even if largely unfinished, the mosque is not only a constant reminder of the religion[19] but also serves as an anchor for the community and as a symbol of Muslim presence in the area. The mosque is a gendered space. Islam does not require women to go to the mosque, but when they do, they are expected to conform to prescribed gender-based use of mosque space. Men occupy the front section of the prayer area while women are either behind the male congregation or in balconies overlooking the

main prayer hall. In most mosques, there are separate entrances for men and women, but in others, like Tubig Indangan, women also enter through the front door, but then immediately turn left towards the stairs leading to the women's section. To further enhance gender segregation, a black curtain is hung along the entire width of the railing. In the Blue Mosque in Cotabato, there is a free-standing lattice wall that segregates women from men. While there is a continuing debate on the mosque as gendered and contested space and on women's roles within it in the West (Kahera 2002: 118-135), this has so far not happened in the Philippines. The women I interviewed accept gender segregation within the mosque as a requirement of Islam, and sitting in the specific areas in the mosque is part of expressing and accepting their identity as Muslim women.

In many Middle Eastern mosques, a courtyard provides the transition between the mosque and the street, but in the Philippine situation, almost all mosques I have visited have no courtyard owing to space limitations. Muslim enclaves in MetroManila have tightly packed dwellings, and many Muslims are squatters on either private or government land. The establishment of a mosque creates a focal point for the community and gives a sense of permanence, thus making it difficult for land owners to evict the Muslim squatters.

There are two major mosques in MetroManila: the Masjid Mindanao, also known as the Blue Mosque, and the Globo de Oro Mosque. Located in Maharlika Village, the Blue Mosque was built on 34 hectares of land that is part of Fort Bonifacio, a military facility. Maharlika Village was established by Proclamation 1217 of President Ferdinand Marcos in 1973, as part of the government response to Muslim unrest in the South, and to accommodate the growing number of war refugees. The design is essentially Middle Eastern, as demonstrated by its exterior and details such as the woodcarving design over the door in the form of geometric arabesques, which is more commonly seen in the Middle East. The other major MetroManila mosque is in the Quiapo district of Manila. It is more popularly known as Globo de Oro Mosque because of its gold-painted dome and location in the Globo de Oro section of Quiapo. It is the largest mosque in MetroManila and can accommodate 3,000 worshippers. The structure has Middle Eastern features such as the dome and the minaret, but at the same time incorporates the colours and variations of ethnic Maranao, Maguindanao and Tausug art, particularly the *okir/ukkil* design in traditional colours. The flowing and curving lines are reminiscent of the *naga* or serpent motifs in Maranao art.

Plate 12.4 *Dome of Globo de Oro Mosque, Manila*

There has been an unprecedented growth in the number of mosques in the Philippines since the 1970s. Many were built by private individuals either for their own use or for the community, while others were constructed with Middle Eastern financial help. Even the government was involved in building or repairing several mosques, which were damaged in the course of the war in the mid-1970s.[20] Where before 1970 there was no mosque or Muslim community on the island of Luzon where Manila is located, now there are mosques in every province, with major communities in Baguio City, Pangasinan province and Manila. The widely visible minarets and domes readily point to the presence of Muslim communities.

Islamic art and the art of Filipino Muslims

A primary characteristic of Islamic art is the absence of figural representation. Scholars writing on the subject explain this in terms of several *ahadith*[21] attributed to the prophet Muhammad: 'The angels will not enter a house in which there are images and paintings'. There is also the popular *hadith* where Muhammad asked that a portrait in a house be taken down because on judgment day the artist would be asked to breathe life into the painted image. With these traditions against figural representation, the foremost expression of Islamic art throughout the Islamic world, then, has been calligraphy. However, except for a few mosques in Mindanao,[22] calligraphy has been kept to a minimum in the Philippines. In the Masjid Awwal in Tawi Tawi, the

only calligraphies present are the words 'Allah' and 'Muhammad'. However, many private Muslim homes and business establishments in Mindanao and in MetroManila have framed calligraphies on their walls, the more popular ones being the framed 99 names of God, Surah 112, as well as the cross-stitched calligraphy of 'Allah' and 'Muhammad'. Many framed calligraphies I saw in homes and stores were imported from Egypt and Saudi Arabia, brought by returning overseas contract workers, or by pilgrims as mementos of their pilgrimage to Mecca.

Plate 12.5 *Okkir art on protruding beam of a torogan (home of royalty) in Marawi area*

Okkir or *Ukkil* is a major art form among the Muslims of the southern Philippines. (Maranaos use the term *okkir* while the people of Sulu use *ukkil*, from the word *ukit,* which means to carve. For consistency, I will use the term *okkir*.) In their detailed study of *okkir*, Saber and Orellana (1981) noted indications of Hindu and Chinese influences, particularly in the *naga* pattern, which is one of the most popular motifs in *okkir* art. This *naga* design is a stylised form of a mythical dragon or serpent. As seen in the *panolong* (protruding beam) of a *torogan* (ancestral home of royalty), the *naga* or *niyaga* motif is stylised with leaf and graceful spiral fern designs. With the increasing contact between the Middle East and the Philippines from the 14th century onwards, it is possible that Middle Eastern Islamic art came to the country and influenced the already existing *okkir* art, resulting in more stylisation and an increas-

ing absence of figural representation in the designs. Like the arabesque of Middle Eastern designs, this *panolong* consists of smaller motifs that are connected to each other, thus allowing for a sense of unity of design. It also exhibits movement, as the leaves and spiral ferns lead viewers to the other component motifs. The *okkir* on the beam under the *torogan* shows the rhythmic pattern of plant forms, which in turn demonstrates dynamism, movement and unity of design as the arabesque does.[23]

Muslim art in the southern Philippines, however, is not entirely lacking in figural representation. One of the popular figures in Philippine Islam is the *buraq*, the winged horse with the head of a woman, which figured in Muhammad's ascension to heaven. This story of Muhammad's ascension (*miraj*) is based on Qur'an (17: 1), which speaks of Muhammad's journey by night from 'the sacred mosque to the farthest mosque'.[24] The *miraj* is celebrated annually on the 27th day of the month of Rajab all over the world. In many villages in the Sulu islands, the celebration is highlighted by chanting the story of Muhammad's journey either in Arabic or the local Tausug language with very vivid descriptions of the seventh heaven (NCCA 2001). With this yearly ritual, the *buraq* has assumed an important place in early Philippine Muslim imagery. The *buraq* image is also embroidered on the *ol-ol*, a canopy that is attached to the ceiling of the house and serves two functions: as a catch-all for whatever may be falling from the thatched grass roof and as ceiling decoration. Scenes of Mecca and Medina are also portrayed on the *ol-ol*. Another winged white horse, called *kurah sambalani* by the people of Sulu, is believed to transport the soul of the dead *mujaheedin* (warrior) to heaven (Sakili 1988: 50). There are life-size wooden *kurah sambalani* in Muslim areas with *okkir* designs painted on them.

The *okkir* design is also applied to both decorative and wearable clothing. One of the popular designs on the *likos* (which is used as decoration in homes and public spaces during celebrations of weddings and festivals like *Eid al Fitr*) is the 99 names of God embroidered in coloured thread and sequins on every panel. The motifs displayed in the *panolong* (beam) of the *torogan, buraq, likos, ol-ol* and *boras* (mats) of Muslim Mindanao demonstrate the proliferation of *okkir* art that has also been combined with themes and symbols of Islam. These *okkir* designs also utilise the principles of the arabesque: rhythm, repetition, interconnected lines, interlacing and movement. This unity and suggested infinity of design have been interpreted as an expression of *tawhid* – the unity of God, which is the central belief in Islam (Burkhardt 1976; Landau 1955).

Plate 12.6   *Ninety Nine Names of Allah*

Identity through clothing

Philippine Muslims' clothes have always reflected the traditional styles and colours of their ethnic background, which in turn identified their tribal affiliation. Since they are Muslims, the dress is also construed as Muslim dress, particularly by non-Muslims. This linkage of the ethnic and Islamic has been more markedly observed since the colonial period. While the majority of the Philippine population then converted to Christianity and adopted a Spanish-influenced type of clothing, the Muslims of the South became more distinct from the rest of the population through the ethnic clothes they continued to wear.

Colonial literature provides descriptions of Philippine clothing from the 1600s to the late 1800s. Combés (1906: 143) noted that women made 'a sack nine *palmos* long and open at both ends. They gird this at the waist as much as may be necessary ... They adjust it by drawing it close to one side of the body and by making folds on the other side of all the extra width in proportion to their body ... [It] serves at night for mattress, sheets and curtain ... on retiring, they ungird the sack and the part which they doubled about the knees they put up on the head'. Obviously, Combes was referring to the *malong*, a tube skirt commonly worn in Southeast Asia. About 200 years later, Hunt's (1968: 39) description of clothing was basically similar except for the headdress. He added that the men of Sulu preferred the *pulicat* red handkerchief, which they tied around their heads. He also noted the strong Chinese influence for everyday wear and special occasions. Tausugs wore *kantsu* – loose pants that, when tucked at the waist, give the semblance of a skirt. It is also a unisex garment like the *malong*. Colonial pictures show bare women's heads in their everyday lives, and Orosa (1923: 73) noted that Muslim women in the Philippines did not cover their faces the way Muslim women of other countries did. Men generally wore the headdress mentioned by Combés (1906: 142), such as the *tobao* (kerchief folded, rolled and tied on the head) or the *kopia*. For ceremonial occasions, members of royalty wore richly decorated clothing like that

worn by Sultan Jamalul Kiram in an official portrait that appeared in several American newspapers in the course of his visit to the United States in 1910.

A head cover was not usually part of an everyday outfit. Up to the early 1970s, many women, men and children wore ethnic clothes without a head cover. Others wore Western clothing. Some wore white head covers – either turbans, or white scarves – to signify their having performed the *hajj*. A professor at the Institute of Islamic Studies of the University of the Philippines asserted that when he was growing up in Sulu, women only wore a head cover when doing the *salat* at home or in the mosque. Children wore it when they went to the *madaris* because it was part of the school uniform.[25] He himself wears Western clothes when he goes to work and uses the *malong* and *kantsu* only at home.

There have been notable changes in Philippine Muslim women's clothing as demonstrated by the use of loose and long pants, long sleeved shirts with matching head covers, or the loose, long, Middle Eastern dress, the *abaya*. From the mid-1970s on, many Muslim women have integrated the head cover into their style of clothing and, at the same time, the *malong* has given way to different outfits used with the head cover. The head covers come in different forms: *hijab*, with face exposed, scarves that wrap around the head loosely, and the *niqab* that covers the face except the eyes. The combination jeans or pants, loose, long-sleeved shirt and head cover are now common attire for working women. For those in Islamic schools, however, the standard attire is the loose long dress with a head cover.

At the BangsaMoro[26] women's consultations in Marawi City in June 2004, participants came in different versions of what they consider to be proper Muslim dress. Local Muslims have also integrated imported pieces of clothing into their attire such as long, loose dresses from Abu Dhabi, Saudi Arabia and other Middle Eastern countries, which were brought home as presents by family members who were contract workers. Another attendee, a Muslim woman activist and head of a non-government organisation (NGO), was wearing a tailored shirt and pants that reflected some traditional design. She believes it is important to follow the dress requirements of the religion and to show her identity as a Muslim, but since she also belongs to the Maranao tribe, she feels that she should project that ethnic background as well.[27] Everyone wore a type of head cover with only one participant wearing the *niqab*.[28] There were different styles of clothing: from loose pants, long skirts to *abayas*, but conspicuously absent was the traditional, ethnic *malong*.

Plate 12.7 *BangsaMoro women*

The increased use of a head cover in the Philippines was particularly noticeable in the mid-1970s. This was the time when the war in Mindanao was at its height, and Muslims, particularly the Moro National Liberation Front (MNLF), wished to emphasise that the Philippine Muslims had never been colonized. They wanted to assert their separate identity as an independent people who had been oppressed and deprived of their rights in recent times. The MNLF encouraged its women members to wear a head cover and required it during their meetings. An MNLF woman member said that this was a way of asserting their identity as Muslims, and they were inspired in this by the worldwide Islamic resurgence. When President Marcos issued presidential decrees acknowledging Islam as part of Philippine heritage, many MNLF women members felt that the decrees gave long-overdue recognition to Islam and the Muslims. Although the decrees did not really end the conflict in the south, the official recognition paved the way for a more open expression of their identity as Muslims and made them feel empowered. Other Muslim women also started wearing a head cover to show their solidarity with the cause of the MNLF. The head cover then became a symbol not only of the identity of Muslims asserting their rights in a predominantly Christian country, but also of a growing and intensifying Islamic consciousness.

There are no published debates about the use of a head cover among Muslim women in the Philippines, but in my interviews with Muslim women, they offered various reasons for wearing it. Foremost is the

idea that the head cover is prescribed by Islam. The men and women of the group called Islamic Studies Call and Guidance (ISCAG) believe they must conform to the dress requirement of Islam described as: 'loose but not tight, long but not short, thick but not thin and with a veil'.[29] The *abaya* fits this description since it is loose, thick and long. This also reflects the orientation of the ISCAG organisers who encountered Islam in the course of their employment in Saudi Arabia. They are converts from Catholicism, from the traditionally Christian areas in the Philippines, and did not share the ethnic characteristics and heritage of southern Philippine Muslims. Other Muslim women also took to the *abaya* since, as Mrs. Alonto, wife of former Senator and Muslim leader Domocao Alonto, said, it is more comfortable and easier to wear than the *malong*. ISCAG women, however, emphasised that their dress conforms to the Qur'anic verses that call for modesty.

Plate 12.8   *Maguindanao Muslim woman in traditional attire but with modern skirt design*

While the *ulama* in Marawi City enforced the use of a head cover, there were Muslims in other parts of Mindanao who demanded the right to use a head cover. In 1993, Muslim women in Cotabato City demonstrated against Notre Dame University when it implemented a memorandum from the Secretary of the Department of Health prohibiting the use of a head cover for medical and nursing students working in the hospital. In response, Muslims in Cotabato organised the Islamic Resistance Against Hijab Prohibition (IHRAP) while the female medical personnel and students refused to comply with the departmental order. Hundreds of Muslims, including schoolchildren, marched in the streets of Cotabato city carrying banners and placards protesting against the memorandum. Eventually, the Secretary of Health amended the memorandum and allowed Muslim women 'to wear the head veil prescribed by their religion while on duty, provided that sterility of vital areas is ensured'.[30] Muslims welcomed the amendment, and one of the protest participants said that part of their *jihad* is the struggle to be recognised as Muslims and to exercise the right to dress the way they want.

Among men, the growing popularity of the *galabiyya*[31] in the mosque and everyday life has become more noticeable in recent years. Men also wear a variety of head covers, from the fez, to the *tubao,* to the Maranao *totop* or *kopia,* similar in shape to the Jewish *yarmulke.* Some wear Arab headdress for special occasions. In ordinary circumstances, the only thing that makes a Muslim man visibly different from a non-Muslim is the head cover. Members of the *Jami at Tabligh*[32] wear long, loose shirts over pants cropped at the hemlines and white head cover. They are readily identifiable because of this clothing as well as their beard, which is obligatory. Men of the Islamic Studies Call and Guidance group (ISCAG) may wear regular clothes except that they cannot expose their navels, and shorts should go below the knee. Men grow their beard and may grow a moustache that should be trimmed. Most men at the ISCAG compound generally wear clothes similar to those of other Filipinos: shirt and pants; but what distinguishes them from others is the beard. Nuh Caparino, of ISCAG said that fancy hairstyle for men is not acceptable, but noted that 'men can be bald, semi-bald, or wear his [sic] hair shoulder length'.[33] Other Muslim men, however, like Professor Asiri Abubakar of the Asian Center of the University of the Philippines, emphasised modesty as the major characteristic of men's clothing. He wears the usual type of clothes worn by other Filipinos, but for formal occasions, he wears a long-sleeved, batik-printed shirt, imported from Malaysia or Indonesia. Employees of the Office of Muslim Affairs (almost all are Muslims) in the MetroManila area wear uniforms of either the traditional Philippine *barong tagalong*, a shirt that was identified in colonial times with the Christian areas, or a mod-

ified version called *polo barong,* while women wear ankle length cloth-
ing with a head cover. While Muslim students in Manila's universities
in the 1960s and early 1970s wore similar clothes to their Christian
classmates, today they no longer feel bound to conform as Islam is
now officially recognised as part of Philippine heritage. There are a
number of women, some of them converts, who wear the *hijab* on the
University of the Philippines campus.

Sartorial customs change over time. Crane (2000: 5) contends that
fashion during the second half of the 19th century 'appeared to offer
possibilities for a person to enhance his or her social position'; but the
recent change in clothing, from the traditional ethnic attire or the or-
dinary clothes of the ethnic Muslim Filipinos to the typical 'Muslim
clothing' reflects instead a person's intention to emphasise his or her
religious conviction.

The Philippine Muslim home

The 'Muslimness' of the home reflects how Muslims present their
identities in their use of private space. In the home of Imam Harun
Magadapa in Cebu City, the walls display passages from the Qur'an in
either brass, tin or plastic, which came from Malaysia and Saudi Ara-
bia. In this home, prayers are done upstairs where there is a dedicated
space directed towards the Ka'aba, which in the Philippines means fa-
cing west. At the home of the mosque administrator in Ecoland, Davao
City, there are several framed calligraphies from the Qur'an and the
words 'Muhammad' and 'Allah'. In other houses, chapters of the
Qur'an, imported from Egypt or Saudi Arabia, line the walls. Chapter
112 – Surah Ikhlas, proclaiming the oneness of God, and the *ayat kursi*
(throne verse) are the most popular calligraphies in homes, businesses
and mosques, and are done in print, embroidery or cut out from calen-
dars. Like the African-American Muslim homes of Philadelphia de-
scribed by Beverly McCloud (1996), Philippine Muslim homes usually
have calligraphy or images of the Ka'aba in print and on carpets hung
on the wall. In other Muslim homes, like one of those we visited on
the outskirts of Marawi City, we see the combination of the ethnic and
Islamic art as indicated by the use of the *likos*[34] with the *naga* design
draped on the upper wall and the placement of carpet featuring the
Ka'aba. There are also framed or embroidered renderings of the throne
verse[35] together with the Surah 112 and the 99 names of God. Not all
homes have a copy of the Qur'an, but the calligraphy on the walls
serves as visible reminders of the teachings of Islam.

Plate 12.9   *Muslim home in the outskirts of Marawi City*

Conclusion

Visual expressions of Islam in the Philippines have undergone changes that were ushered in by both local and global developments. Since being Muslim was previously linked with ethnicity, forms of clothing, art and architecture reflected the ethnic backgrounds; but over time, as Filipino Muslims became more exposed to the Middle East either through education or employment, they began to adopt the forms and styles of the Middle East, especially the loose clothing style. Clothing performs an important role in constructing Muslim identity because it is readily visible, and the person wearing 'Islamic clothing' is actually proclaiming to others his/her identity as a Muslim and at the same time is conforming to a religious requirement. Although the extent of religiosity of the person may not be easy to measure, some Muslim wo-men, such as the women of ISCAG whom I interviewed, see the wear-ing of the *niqab* as an indicator of deeper religiosity. While clothing of the different Muslim tribes traditionally indicated marks of distinction (considering the colours and styles used by royalty and lower-ranked in-dividuals), the adoption of Middle Eastern outfits like the *abaya* and *ga-labiyya* somehow democratises clothing to the extent that one is no longer restricted to the colours that designate ethnic tribe or one's place in the social hierarchy. The wearing of the Arab-style dress links the wearer to global Muslimhood while the earlier ethnic outfits had

limited the identity to particular ethnic groups that happened to be Muslim.

Clothing has a symbolic importance for Muslims in the public sphere because it involves behavioural expectations. One of the women of ISCAG I interviewed who was wearing a black *niqab* explained that wearing the Muslim dress involves a responsibility to act as a Muslim woman and in a way that lives up to the provisions of the Qur'an. A convert from Catholicism, she said that in spite of the warm Philippine climate, a Muslim woman still has to fulfill the dress requirement of the religion because 'the way you dress, the way you talk, the way you carry yourself, you are presenting to others that you are a Muslim and one has to be very careful about that'. That kind of responsibility – of presenting oneself as a member of a religious group visually through clothing and internally through the responsibility dictated by the religion – was something, she said, she had never experienced as a Catholic.

There are new patterns of consumption emerging as Muslim women not only consider what is appropriate Islamic dress but also what is fashionable. Carmina Abbas, wife of a Maranao Muslim whom I interviewed in 2005, noted that 'if Filipino Christians look to New York and Paris as fashion centres of the world, for Muslim women, it is Saudi Arabia and the Middle East'. The goods I saw in the Aldovinco mall in Davao city and stores in Quiapo, Manila, near the Globo de Oro mosque indicate that dresses are also sourced from Malaysia and Indonesia. The provenance of the clothes, however, has less significance than the message the clothes are trying to convey: 'I am a practising Muslim'. The interviews show that Islamic dress demonstrates a religious distinction within and outside the Muslim communities, but at the same time expressed a sense of moral righteousness of the wearer.

The Middle East plays a significant role in these changing visual expressions of Islam in the Philippines. The Middle East, especially Saudi Arabia, is a choice destination for overseas Filipino workers, most of whom are non-Muslims. This has led to classes being offered on Islam and the Qur'an at Islamic centres in Riyadh and Jeddah for Filipino workers. Countries, such as Libya, Saudi Arabia and the Emirates have also been providing funds for the construction of mosques with a Middle Eastern flavour. Philippine mosques have abandoned the typical regional structure of multi-layered roofs and adopted architectural features of the Middle East. These countries, especially Saudi Arabia, have also helped establish *madaris,* published materials on Islam, provided funds for translating religious materials into the local language and also trained religious teachers. These religious teachers bring with them the Wahhabi form of Islam that is now becoming evident in some *Balik* Islam movements. As several *imams* and women told me,

they are now more exposed to the purity of Saudi Islam and so they are able to distinguish between what is really Islamic and what is not. The mode of dress always enters into the discussion as one of the things they claim Philippine Muslims have learned.

The Philippine government's relationship with local Muslims also affects the latter's relationship with the global *umma*. The government's responses to the rebellion, like its proclamations on recognising Islam as part of Philippine heritage, made conditions favourable for an Islamic resurgence, which in turn made it easier for Muslims to express their identity. Although there are continuing problems with groups like the Abu Sayyaf in the southern Philippines, about the unsettled issue of Muslim ancestral lands, Muslim *dawa* activities are gaining a considerable following.

The increasing labour export to the Middle East, particularly to Saudi Arabia, the growing inclusion of Muslims, their religion and culture into Philippine society, and the mounting contacts with global Muslimhood have all contributed to the changing forms of visual expressions of the Philippine Muslim identity. To the Muslims I interviewed, Saudi Arabia provides the anchor for Islam – it is 'the navel' of Islam and whatever happens there filters through to the rest of the world. However, the situation has also generated questions about Islam in the Philippines: will there be a homogenised Islam with Saudi Arabia serving as the religious model or will the future bring a more diverse kind of Islam? To what extent is Philippine Islam being de-ethnicised? High speed travel, the internet, the overseas Filipino workers have all become agents of globalisation, and their effects on Philippine Islam and Muslims merit continuing interest and study.

Notes

1   A shorter version of this paper was presented at the ICAS4 in Shanghai, China, in 2005. I am grateful to the Lindback Foundation for the research grant that enabled me to conduct research in the Philippines and present my findings at ICAS4.
2   For methods employed by Magellan in effecting the first conversions to Christianity, see Antonio Pigafetta (1952).
3   July 2008 estimate. https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/ geos/rp.html#People (Accessed 10 September 2008).
4   In 1957, Philippine Congress passed Republic Act 1888 creating the Commission on National Integration. The law provided for the creation of scholarship funds for national minorities, and Muslims were the major beneficiaries. They pursued various academic degree programmes at universities in Manila and Quezon City, which are predominantly Christian areas.
5   There are other issues attendant to this, for example, insofar as Islamic laws are concerned. In interviews I conducted for another research project, several respondents considered *adat* (custom) as Islamic and vice versa.

6 In 1996, the Moro National Liberation Front (MNLF) signed a peace agreement with the Republic of the Philippines. Its chairman, Nur Misuari, subsequently became governor of the Autonomous Region of Muslim Mindanao. When his term of office ended, the MNLF became involved in a conflict in Jolo, Sulu. Nur Misuari fled to Malaysia as the Philippine government filed charges of rebellion against him and other members. Malaysia repatriated Misuari to the Philippines where he was put under house arrest in the early 2000s. With Misuari under house arrest, the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) emerged as the major Muslim movement with which the Philippine government is currently negotiating.

7 See Republic of the Philippines, 'Seeking Solutions to the Philippine South', (January 1976) p. 3.

8 Presidential Decree 291, 12 September 1973.

9 Presidential Decree 342, 22 November 1973.

10 For further discussion on this see Angeles (2001).

11 *Madrasah* (singular): school. In the Philippines *madrasah* is the term used for schools that focus on the teaching of Islam, Arabic and the Qur'an.

12 Egypt was the first Middle Eastern country to offer scholarships to Filipino Muslims.

13 There were 240,000 Filipino workers in Saudi Arabia in 2004. http://www.census. gov.ph/data/sectordata/2005/. More recent figures released by the Philippine Embassy in Riyadh and the Philippine Consulate General in Jeddah show an estimated 1,016,820 Filipinos working in the kingdom. http://images.gmanews.tv/html/research/2007/ (Accessed 10 January 2008).

14 *Balik* means 'return'. *Balik Islam* refers to Muslims who have 'returned' to Islam. This is based on the idea that Islam was the dominant religion of the people of the Philippines prior to Spanish colonisation.

15 The other pillars being *shahada* (testimony of the faith), *sawm* (fasting), *zakat* (wealth-sharing) and *hajj* (pilgrimage). Prayer is performed in the early morning, noon, midafternoon, sunset and evening.

16 ˡMadale (2003) discusses the traditional form of Philippine mosques. The mosque Wilkes (1906) saw in the 1800s in Jolo had a high roof of similar materials.

17 Wood carving.

18 Formerly Marawi City but was renamed Islamic City of Marawi in 1980.

19 Noradja, personal interview 6 January 2005, Salmonan Mosque, Davao City.

20 The Philippine armed forces were involved in rebuilding mosques damaged in the war in some ways. They provided transportation, materials and even labour (Angeles 2001: 194).

21 Traditions, plural.

22 Like the Gnassi Mosque and Islamic Center of Marawi.

23 The pattern here is actually comparable to that of the mosque of Amr al Fustat in Cairo.

24 'Sacred mosque' and 'farthest mosque' have been interpreted to mean the Ka'aba at Mecca and the location of the dome of the rock, respectively.

25 Asiri Abubakar, personal interview, 19 June 2004, Asian Center, University of the Philippines.

26 BangsaMoro means Moro nation. Moro was a derogatory term used by the Spaniards to refer to Muslims in the Philippines.

27 Baikon Cayongcat Macaraya, personal interview, 22 June 2004, Marawi City.

28 The head and face cover that exposes only the eyes of the wearer.

29 Nuh Caparino, personal interview, 20 June 2004, Dasmarinas, Cavite. The exact words were: *mahaba, hindi maikli, makapal, hindi manipis, maluwag, hindi masikip, at nakatalukbong.*

30 Republic of the Philippines, Department of Health, Memorandum Order no. 1 s. 1994, 21 June 1994.
31 Arab men's long garment.
32 *Jami at Tabligh* members from Pakistan started coming to the Philippines in the mid-1970s.
33 Nuh Caparino, personal interview, 20 June 2004.
34 Decorative wall hanging, usually with calligraphy of the 99 names of God.
35 Qur'an 2: 255.

13 Islam and Orientalism in New Zealand: The Challenges of Multiculturalism, Human Rights and National Security – and the Return of the Xenophobes

Erich Kolig[1]

New Zealand has a relatively small Muslim minority. Most are immigrants or descendants of relatively recent immigrants. Although officially bicultural, New Zealand is practically multicultural, as state and government like to proclaim with great vigour and conviction. In recognition of the nation's increasingly multi-ethnic and multi-religious composition – the outcome of an ethnically largely unregulated immigration policy – statutes and legal instruments ensure the exercise of civil liberties in relation to freedom of belief and culture within a framework of generally applicable laws. In accord with the model of Western liberal democracies, this situation creates an atmosphere of tolerance and provides practically the conditions of far-reaching multiculturalism.

Yet, the identity 'Muslim' creates certain difficulties. The generally tolerant social discourse is at times challenged by another, which is centred on the ideas of national cultural integrity, incorporates concerns of national security, and engenders a degree of Islamophobia.[2] Following the events of 9/11, the question of national security has moved into the focus of jurisprudential and socio-political initiatives. At times this sharply juxtaposes the presence of Muslims and their identity with a security-conscious nationalism. This highlights not only the potential for future conflict, but represents a kind of challenge that all liberal democracies of the Western world are facing.

In the aftermath of 9/11, New Zealanders displayed such a degree of fair-mindedness that I could write of an 'accord of cautious distance' (Kolig 2003) between Muslims and the host nation. No serious physical attacks on Muslims or their property occurred, although some people took it upon themselves to verbally abuse Muslim women. These obviously provide an easy target: readily identifiable by their dress and usually peaceable, they become easy prey to expressions of Islamophobic sentiments. Some minor damage to mosques such as graffiti and smashed windows were also recorded. However, a few relatively harmless incidents notwithstanding, there were no strong signals of hostility towards the Muslim minority of the kind that happened elsewhere.[3]

Yet, in the longer term this watershed event and especially subsequent terrorist attacks in other parts of the world have incrementally eroded the previously rather irenic 'ethnic' conditions. It was in particular the attack in London in July 2005 which aroused a wave of sympathy in New Zealand – obviously by activating the traditional mother-country bond – and generated acute suspicion of Muslims living in the West, more so than the Madrid bombing (2004), the Beslan massacre (2004) and even the two attacks in Bali (2002 and 2005) had done previously.[4] Suspicions, accusations and even attacks on persons and property poisoned the previously peaceful and tolerant ethnic relations. In a broader sense, legislative initiatives appeared to be poised like a Damoclean sword to tighten entry to the country, to threaten expulsion and detention without trial, and to increase search and surveillance. In some form or other a process appeared to be unleashed that foreshadowed the erosion of civil liberties which hitherto had been taken for granted. The state's duty of providing national security began to grate against its role as protector of human rights and guarantor of civil liberties.

The number of Muslims in New Zealand has risen sharply in the last 10 to 15 years (see Shepard 2002, 2006). The Muslim presence goes back over 100 years, but for a long time comprised only a few hundred people. The numbers rose in the 1980s to approximately 2,000, and in 1996 to c. 13,000. Now Muslims officially number c. 36,000 (according to the census of 2006); but some estimates[5] put the figure as high as 45,000 – a minority of around 1% in a population of c. four million. Most Muslims are immigrants; a smaller number are the second- or third-generation descendants of earlier immigrants, and a few (numbering probably fewer than a thousand) are New Zealand converts of Pakeha and Maori stock.[6]

New Zealand is officially bicultural, recognising the partnership between Anglo-Celtic and Maori cultures and elevating *tikanga Maori* to a privileged position of, theoretically, co-equality with European culture. Biculturalism is enshrined in a host of acts and statutes and is designed, theoretically at least, to secure equal respect for the Maori culture with the dominant European (Anglo-Celtic) culture. Practically, however, New Zealand is multicultural, acknowledging in various ways the reality of ethnic, cultural and religious plurality under a benign Western patronage. Muslims are part of this increasingly colourful socio-cultural fabric, which gradually begins to outshine the traditional cultural monochrome. However, in the debate about the national identity, unlike Europe, Muslims hardly play any role. Their numbers are too small to be generally considered of significance in influencing the national pluralist composition, although the impact of Islam on the social discourse is a matter of some discussion. Concerns about loss of national identity through massive immigration of cultural Others – as

expressed for instance by Fukuyama (2005, 2006) and Huntington (2004) – assumes the version of worrying about the nation's 'Asianisation' in New Zealand. In this debate, 'Asians', a label which refers mainly to East Asians and within that category especially ethnic Chinese, have attracted some attention. (Indians are also drawn into this category.) They number 350,000 according to the 2006 census, and their numbers are steadily climbing. Islamophobia was not imported from Europe by the early (19th century) settlers, as there hardly were any Muslims, and the very few ones around seemed to keep their religion to themselves. Instead, xenophobism and 'racism' focused from the beginning on a small minority of immigrant Chinese. In recent years, and especially in (parliamentary) election years, concerns about Asian immigration have become part of a populist election propaganda. It is periodically trumpeted by a small, yet influential political party with an anti-immigration platform. Not surprisingly, this party (called 'New Zealand First') also vents its spleen at times about Muslim immigration, as do a few politicians of other parties. This party's anti-Asian and anti-Muslim rhetoric is pursued as an election platform in conjunction with the representation of the interests of the elderly in an obvious assumption that the interests of senior citizens, and their presumed conservatism, coincide with xenophobism. This establishes an unfortunate link with the violent racist agenda of some small fringe groups (the so-called 'National Front' and more broadly so-called 'skinheads' and 'white supremacists') arranged on the extreme right of the ideological spectrum; groups that carry out occasional attacks on mosque properties and on individuals, who can be physically identified as Asians and Africans.

Leaving to one side such expressions of 'physical and cultural racism',[7] the national picture in general is much more friendly. Immigration for the most part is merit-based and not race- or culture-based. Basically tolerant and accepting of immigrants of many different ethnic backgrounds, New Zealand society is assuming an increasingly multi-ethnic, multi-cultural and multi-religious composition. Human rights-inspired legislation prohibits discrimination, guarantees freedom of religion and culture, and offers the liberty of conduct grounded in religious belief. However, subliminally this tolerant discourse, though based on a seemingly firm legal basis, is now being increasingly challenged by another, centred on the ideas of national cultural integrity and drawing on concerns about national security. This discourse erupts at times into full public view through expressions of Islamophobia. Following the events of 9/11 and subsequent attacks by Islamic militants, despite the fact that they have happened far from New Zealand shores, the question of national security has moved into the focus of juridical and socio-political initiatives. It is now firmly associated with negative

perceptions of Islam. Terrorism Suppression Acts have been passed (and amendments are being considered by parliament at the time of writing) which are tailor-made for organised, Islamically inspired terrorism but are unable to deal with other violent threats.[8] This creates a sharp juxtaposition of the presence of Muslims, Muslim identity and Islamic interests with a security-conscious nationalism. It does so to an extent that does not apply to other religious and ethnic minorities. Worldwide, the rapport achievable between the West on the one side and the Muslim world and Islam on the other has been subject to some intense scrutiny. Aside from Samuel Huntington's (1996) pessimistic – but very influential – evaluation of Islam's significance in the modern world, there is also Bernard Lewis's (1990, 2003) rather acerbic analysis of Muslim motives. Both scholars have attracted considerable attention and have proved influential in critically viewing global Muslimhood and especially Muslim minorities embedded in Western dominant host societies. The 'Muslim problem' thus conceived not only obliquely points to the potential for future conflict of Huntingtonian proportions[9], but represents a kind of challenge that all liberal democracies of the Western world are facing. In countering what is believed to be the Islamic threat, and in the face of an increasingly hostile stereotyping of Muslims and the demonisation of Islam, the problem arises: how to preserve the ideals of tolerance, civil liberty and religio-cultural freedom? And what is more, demands to tighten national security are threatening to impact on the rights of everybody. New Zealand is also poised to be drawn into this vortex.

Immigration, nation-state and human rights

The West has a strongly homogenising culture which, well into the second half of the 20th century, was reinforced by assimilation policies that made it incumbent on immigrants to speedily adopt not only the formal laws of the host country, but also to abide by its customs and conventions and to shed, as much as humanly possible, their previous cultural identity. In more recent years Western societies have become increasingly pluralised, abandoning assimilation as a concerted policy in dealing with immigrant cultural and religious minorities. Globalisation has been instrumental in this shift by increasing access to and knowledge of alternative lifestyles and cultures, as well as enhancing tolerance of cultural Otherness and respecting cultural choice. The resultant acceptance of cultural diversity is backed by human rights conventions, which assure minorities of civil liberties and the right to maintain their culture, lifestyle and religion. Massive immigration in the affluent West – partially caused and promoted by globalisation –

from ethnically and culturally very different groups is fast dispelling the traditional, largely monocultural, hegemonic insularity of many Western nations. The presence and co-existence of culturally very diverse immigrants not only vividly exemplify cultural plurality, but also demand cultural and religious tolerance, and sometimes test its limits. The ideals of a liberal democracy and equality of the citizenry emphatically embrace cultural and religious tolerance. Although these ideals may sometimes be imperfectly applied in social reality[10], they are usually supported now by the requisite legislation protective of minority interests, religious freedom, and cultural choice. Assimilation ideas, i.e. the expectation of immigrants surrendering their cultural distinctiveness, in short order blending into the respective mainstream society and becoming rapidly absorbed into its hegemonic culture, have been replaced by a more realistic vision of an only vaguely conceptualised integration. Although in actual practice there is a wide divergence of opinion about what constitutes successful integration, in a general sense it is conceptualised as acceptance of the host society's socio-political structures, democratic participation, submission to the dominant legal system and adoption of the core values of a liberal, secularised democracy (for example, respect of other citizens' culture and religious beliefs).

As the nation-states' sovereignty gets eroded worldwide, their coercive forces weaken, and their capacity for producing a culturally homogenous and homomorphic kind of citizenry is impaired, as is eliminating, expelling, incarcerating and discriminating against all that resists. The legal basis for applying assimilation pressures on immigrants (the self-fulfilling prophecies of the melting pot theory) and screening out those considered deficient in adaptive capacity also diminishes through international conventions and domestic legislation. A global human rights ideology ensures a drastic reduction in highly (racially and culturally) selective and restrictive immigration policies and discriminatory practices. In New Zealand such practices were applied in pursuit of an unofficial 'White New Zealand' policy in the 19th and 20th century (until 1974). Even later, a quota system was designed to ensure that the country would remain culturally Anglo-Celtic. In earlier years a poll tax had been enforced on Chinese immigrants, who were the single, largest, non-European immigrant group, with the unofficial purpose of keeping a lid on this 'highly undesirable' influx of the 'yellow peril'.[11]

As immigrant minorities with widely divergent cultural backgrounds congregate in ever larger numbers in New Zealand, as they do in other Western nation-states, international conventions and national legislation ensure personal rights and the rights of minorities to freedom of cultural adherence, of religious belief and its expression in actual conduct. A new global scenario has been created primarily by the United

Nations Declaration of Human Rights 1948, the UN Declaration on the Elimination of all Forms of Intolerance and Discrimination Based on Religion and Belief 1981, the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights 1967, and the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights 1967. These instruments are usually backed by national pieces of legislation and statutes[12]. In New Zealand, specifically, there is the Bill of Rights Act 1990 and the Human Rights Act 1993 which, as relatively strong statutes, guarantee rights to culture and religion (including the right to manifest religious belief in social conduct with the tacit proviso that such conduct does not violate criminal law) and enshrine the right to be free of discrimination (see Kolig 2005).

New Zealand has acquired a reputation of being – and likes to think of itself as – a very tolerant society. The traditionally laissez-faire tolerance has been facilitated by the fact that this is an avowedly secularised nation, which neither favours nor hinders any kind of religious belief. Since the inception of nationhood, New Zealand did not have a nexus linking state and a religious denomination together in a pact of some form. Despite strong links with Great Britain, the Anglican Church never enjoyed precedence over other churches. The most recent governments, in various forms, have declared the secularist nature of state and governance. Official policy is indifferent and neutral to religious enterprise of any kind, thus purposely avoiding any link of state philosophy and world view with any religious persuasion.[13] Membership in mainstream Christian churches in general is declining,[14] thus decreasing the critical mass of voters of a religiously orientated polity. All this helps in creating a climate of benign indifference towards religions of any kind including Islam, and favours an official policy of non-interference.

As can be expected in a highly secularised nation such as New Zealand, Islam is not discussed in terms of divine revelation or its competition with Christian or Jewish dogma.[15] Instead, if and when attention is directed towards Islamic dogma, it is discussed in terms of its compatibility with Western civilisation and its cultural norms. Theologically, Islam is completely acceptable, as is any other religious denomination. Any argument about the spiritual validity of Islamic belief would be shrugged off as 'crankiness', whereas discussing it in relation to its adaptability to normative and customary Western socio-cultural standards is considered relevant.[16] It is in this sense that there are signs of late that the benevolent multicultural climate, engaging the host society and its Muslim minority, is being eroded by an increasingly sceptical attention directed at Muslims.

The Orient within the Occident

In Western countries, mainly through the course of increased immigration in the last two or three decades, a Muslim presence is now becoming a sizeable and often very conspicuous component of society. The presence of Muslim minorities is becoming increasingly noticeable for cultural reasons. Religiously grounded practices of prayer, fasting, celebrating certain *eids* (religious festivals), dietary rules, veiling, gender separation, religious architecture, and the like tend to make this minority more conspicuous than other religionists or ethnic minorities.[17] The strength and, sometimes, uncompromising nature of Islamic imperatives, as well as a rising emphasis on a distinct Muslim identity, seem to create a barrier to mutual rapprochement. Superficially, it appears as though Islam would generate a disinclination to adapt to the same extent as other immigrants and minority religionists do to the demands of the Western host society. Religious obligations and values appear sometimes to create tensions between Western secularised liberal democratic values and Islamic ones, and some prescriptions of Islamic law sit uneasily or even clash with Western laws. Contributing factors to the difficulties are also the mounting initiatives by Muslims themselves to create the social spaces in which to unfold their religious identity more fully and visibly express their cultural values. Sometimes such spaces can be created only through the dominant society making concessions in their conventions, laws and aesthetics. There is now a rising fear in some European countries with large Muslim minorities that increasing Muslim pressure and granting concessions on the basis of acknowledging the democratic rights of Muslims as citizens will change society as a whole and may lead to far-reaching and largely undesired results. There are also increasingly strong, stereotyped notions about difficulties supposedly inherent in Islam that create adaptive barriers: above all, a perceived inability of Muslims to truly embrace a Western-style democratic system and to be religiously tolerant not only of other religions, but to accept apostasy and blasphemy as legitimate expressions of personal freedom of thought and belief. Equally, there is a perception that there is a reluctance to embrace complete gender equality inherent in Islam. In the post-9/11 era, even more gravely, suspicions surface now about the political motives of Muslim immigrants *sui generis* and the nature of Islam as basically violent and hostile. Episodically, it appears that New Zealand is gradually inclining towards taking a similar path, as discussion about cultural difference, considered unsurmountable, assumes now sometimes the bigoted form of 'cultural racism', which conflates issues of religion, culture and national identity. In this form anti-Muslim and anti-Islamic sentiments may episodically become useful for political mobilisation.[18]

Muslim adaptationists and rejectionists

There are indications that Muslim national communities are becoming polarised in their response to the diasporic condition. One can recognise now a split into two major antagonistic factions: the 'adaptationists' for whom adjustment to the demands of the host society by and large poses no particular problem; and what for lack of a better word one might call the 'fundamentalists' who are motivated by a sense that Islam cannot be compromised for the sake of adjustment (see Kolig 2006c). For some Muslims who belong in the latter category, the adaptation to the host societies' standards, values and beliefs has gone too far already, and the differences between secularised Western society and the duty of remaining faithful to Islam cannot be reconciled. It may also be the perceived absence of their enfranchisement by the host society and perhaps what is seen as its hostile stance toward 'the Muslim world' at large that create antagonism. This diffuse sense of disillusionment about the failures of the West in some Muslims may generate attitudes of acute alienation culminating in outright rejection and implacable, aggressive hostility. The readiness is small on the part of the majority society to view this phenomenon, in a broader context, as a socio-critical one similar to the radical left, Marxist and anarchistic extremism, and student protest movements of the late 1960s, 1970s and early 1980s. It seems long forgotten that this phenomenon also produced the urban guerrilla movement of the Red Brigade, the Weathermen, the Baader-Meinhofs and the like, in their methods and aims quite similar to modern Islamic terrorism. Born from a radical interpretation of ideas taken over from another time and place, it was adapted to the objectives of a radical critique of the (then) social status quo combined with global aspirations.

The question has been raised whether Islam per se is resistant to assimilation to Western conditions (including integration and acceptance of secularisation) to an extent greater than is the case with other religions. If this is so, it would force Muslims emphatically to negotiate spaces in Western host societies to unfold their religious identity or in extreme cases to reject the validity of their diaspora.[19] Muslim perception of the preordained primacy of Islam in the world is deeply ingrained and doctrinally inculcated,[20] and the fact that the actual reality does not bear out this divine ordinance may cause resentment as well as antagonism. The acceptance of infidel governance may also pose a problem as much as the traditional cosmological dichotomy between *Dar al Islam* and *Dar al Harb*. That adaptation to Western political and ideological conditions does pose a philosophical problem to some Muslims is reflected in the work of Muslim scholars in which they argue that adaptation is possible, for instance by transferring only the princi-

ples of Islam (not its cultural substance) to the diasporic situation and that 'just' infidel governance is acceptable (Ramadan 2004: 72-73). In France the propagation of a concept of *Dar al Ahd* to mitigate the stark opposition between the Islamic world and the West is clearly designed to increase the ideological acceptance of the diaspora and to make life in a foreign 'infidel' country emotionally more comfortable for millions of Muslims (Lewis 1994: 10; Kepel 1997: 151; Esposito 2002: 35; Ramadan 2004: 72-73).

Another factor causing suspicion is the Muslim tendency to maintain a sense of solidarity with the global *umma* (community of believers) that is frequently believed to prevent a sense of solidarity with the host society. As Muslims appear to be transnational and translocal to a larger extent than other immigrants, not surprisingly their loyalty to the nation is often brought into question. It is not just the real or potential transnational mobility, but also the propensity of retaining strong ties to their places of origin and ideologically also of tending to harbour sentiments of allegiance to the worldwide *umma*. In a climate of heightened suspicion towards Muslims, such links, real or imaginary, with a global 'imagined community' (in Benedict Anderson's sense) can only add fuel to the fire. When Muslims demonstrated in New Zealand against the US-led coalition's intervention in Afghanistan and Iraq, some people misunderstood this as a lack of commitment to their country of residence, regardless of the fact that a large body of opposition existed in the general (and non-immigrant) population.

In New Zealand, the original Muslim immigrants came mainly from South Asia (including Fiji Indians) and seem to have been willing to adapt rapidly and to not challenge the dominant system. Thus, their brand of Islam could fairly easily exist in a grey zone of laissez-faire tolerance. With increasing Muslim immigration in recent years, the situation is changing. The present Muslim minority is of a highly complex composition, deriving from about 35 to 40 different countries including a wide sweep of countries in the Middle East, Maghreb, sub-Saharan Africa, Afghanistan, South and Southeast Asia. Many of these adhere to a more conservative or traditionalist version of Islam. As Muslim numbers increase, so do demands that the dominant or host society acknowledge their religious needs. Asserting a Muslim identity more openly, initiatives increase which demand that the New Zealand state and society create the necessary spaces for it to be able to unfold more fully – which in turn has a propensity to draw unfavourable attention from the wider society.

Contrary to public perception, Muslims in New Zealand, as everywhere else in the Western world, do not form one monolithic bloc of great inner cohesion joined by a sense of mutual solidarity. Being ethnically heterogenous and divided by sectarian differences, the Muslim

community internally is subject to tensions, creating internal rifts
which not only engender an impediment to the formation of an effec-
tive political front, but also create a spill-over effect in which internal
differences and problems come to public awareness and create strongly
negative impressions. Doctrinal divisions in Sunni and Shia, Miladis
and anti-Miladis,[21] linguistic and ethnic differences between South
Asians and Arab and African Muslims, and the like create problems of
practical solidarity and prevent the formation of a cohesive, internally
supportive community. With increasing numbers, mounting hetero-
doxy and ethnic-cultural complexity, there comes, as the European ex-
ample shows, a characteristic minority profile that shows a split into
two factions: adaptationists and the more conservatively and funda-
mentalistically inclined who are unwilling to make concessions in their
religious belief and observance to fit in better with the host society.

   As elsewhere in the West, Muslim initiatives are increasing in New
Zealand to have religious needs better recognised in the public do-
main. Cases in which Islamic law challenges the host society's conven-
tions do appear in public now.[22] As a consequence of ethnic diversity,
occasionally differences among Muslims come to the surface, indicat-
ing a widening bifurcation between 'hard-liners' and adaptationists.
Such an indication was vented publicly, for instance, when a Muslim
organisation challenged the correctness of *halal* slaughter methods in
the meat industry (one of the major export revenue earners of the
country). *Halal* slaughter and processing in the meat industry are su-
pervised and sanctioned by the national Muslim umbrella organisation
FIANZ[23], which is dominated by adaptationists. An openly aired chal-
lenge of this kind could potentially have very damaging economic ef-
fects on a nationally very important industry, which in turn invites ac-
cusations of Muslims showing a lack of loyalty to the country. Another
publicly vented difficulty was the accusation raised by some Muslims
against some regional representatives who were trying to involve the Is-
lamic charity organisation al Haramain, which is suspected to have al-
Qaeda links. Yet another indicator of internal conflict was, for instance,
the accusation, launched in the press from Muslim sources, that a re-
gional association is advising Muslims to beat their wives or that fun-
damentalists are on the rise and have a sinister agenda of enforcing
the harsh laws of the *sharia,* such as stoning as a fit punishment for
adultery and homosexuality. Such episodes hint at inner-Muslim ten-
sions, which arrive with increasing complexity and ethnic and sectarian
plurality. They have the effect, however, of feeding the wider society's
growing wariness of Islam.

   A majority of New Zealand's Muslims seem to have a pragmatic atti-
tude.[24] For most, in my experience, practical adaptation does not pose
a philosophical problem at all; others who may be more theologically

inclined have cited *darura*, necessity, as an all-encompassing reason excusing them from a very stringent interpretation of *sharia*.[25] In their view for the sake of economic betterment, education, as well as being allowed to practice religion unhindered, it is permissible to live in a secularist, non-Muslim society. The requirement to practice *hijra*, i.e. to leave infidel rule and migrate to a Muslim country, does not appear to be an issue of conscience. Few in fact seem to perceive of a theological need to justify their presence.[26] However, through a series of terrorist incidents overseas, the Muslim minority is attracting public attention and is tarnished with the same brush. Together with an increasing stereotyping of Islam as an inherently dangerous religion and of Muslims as fanatics, this has the effect of fuelling negative perceptions in the wider society.

Rising Islamophobia

In Europe the perception of radical cultural alterity was for centuries mainly focussed on Islam, bringing with it the misconceptions and prejudicial notions of Islam and negative-stereotypical views of Muslims.[27] In New Zealand due to geographic realities, this was not the case. The small number of Muslims of South Asian extraction may even have enjoyed some paternalistic benevolence as fellow Commonwealth people. For the most part their presence was simply overlooked because of their small number, aided by the absence of a strong drive on their part to assert their cultural and religious specialness. Xenophobic projections about the presence of a dangerous cultural Other were focussed on the Chinese, who tended to come into the country in somewhat greater numbers. Bringing with them a radically different culture, and being physically distinct and therefore easily identifiable, they became ready targets of prejudice and discrimination.

   Muslim minority groups, now firmly embedded in the West – in New Zealand as much as elsewhere – are afflicted with two stigmas. Nowadays, it is not only a sense of cultural incompatibility that lifts Muslims out in the West's consciousness, but also a suspicion about the potentially subversive and dangerous nature of their presence. Nourished by the myth of a clash of civilisations and gross stereotypes that all Muslims have a propensity towards violent fundamentalism, the level of suspicion towards Islam and Muslims has sharply risen: what Cesari (2004: 35) calls the 'bin Laden effect'. It seamlessly continues the 'reservoir of negative images associated with Islam and Muslims in "the Collective Unconscious" of the West' (Hassan 1996: 368). It is hardly surprising, Hassan writes, 'that, since the demise of the Soviet Empire, "the World of Islam" is being seen as the new "Enemy"

which is perhaps even more incomprehensible and intractable than the last one'. This has led to 'the routine portrayal of Islam as a religion spread by the sword and characterized by "Holy War" and of Muslims as barbarous and backward, frenzied and fanatic, volatile and violent'. No doubt there is justification in seeing a seamless continuum in attitude from early religiously construed forms of Orientalism to the image of Islam as global political enemy of the West in the post-Soviet era. At first, it was based mainly on the anti-American expressions of the Iranian Islamic revolution, but now it is vastly exacerbated by an image of the *jihad*-crazed enemy of the post-9/11 era.

It cannot be a surprise that, increasingly, Western democratic civil rights-based discourses, grounded in the globalised human rights ideology, after having gained much traction in recent years, now have to defend themselves against discriminative discourses damaging to the gains just made. The powerful and increasingly popular argument of national security demands sacrifices in terms of diminished civil liberties not only for Muslims, but for all citizens. New Zealand is no exception. The events of 9/11 for New Zealanders may have been a first step towards practical Islamophobia, but its impact was heightened then by subsequent terror attacks.[28] Politicians of minor political parties began to speak out against Muslim immigration, against hosting large numbers of Muslim asylum seekers, and warning against the dangers of ending up harbouring a large Muslim minority. The theme of '*jihadis* under the bed' for the time being is still counterbalanced by positive themes of successful integration.[29] However, acts of violence against Muslims and their property and verbal attacks against individuals have certainly increased but still remain proportionally rare events of individual thuggery. After the London attacks, several mosques were smeared with graffiti and windows smashed, women were attacked and the like, but the damage was inflicted by only a few individuals, most of whom were promptly caught and convicted. Also, hate mail sent to Muslims appears to have largely been isolated incidents. Apart from occasional exceptions in the print or electronic media (in the form of television commentaries, a very few talk shows known for the host's anti-Islamic tendency[30], etc.), the media have by and large retained a neutral stance. The exception was a television programme in July 2005, which portrayed Islam as a sinister force arising in the form of fundamentalism in New Zealand. Quite incorrectly, intolerant aspects of Islam towards adultery and homosexuality were blown up out of proportion to underline the supposedly anti-liberal character of fundamentalism.[31] At several points concerns were raised that 'fundamentalist' preachers had visited the country's Muslim communities and could spread their hateful message unhindered.[32] However, suggestions to introduce 'hate speech' legislation, so as to curb hateful Islamic

teaching, were rejected by the government by recourse to the freedom of expression.[33]

Thus, in the Islamophobic discourse the spectre of a new identity emerges, the identity of 'the dangerous (would-be) citizen' or the 'anti-citizen', a category of people whose presence bears within itself potential dangers and calls for vigilance. This conjures up visions of war and crisis situations in which citizens, simply on the basis of their national origin or ethnicity, come under suspicion – which sometimes seems to justify harsh recriminatory action by the state.

Four major themes emerge in the Islamophobic discourse: doubts about the potential of Islam to assimilate to (representative and electoral) democracy, its apparently misogynistic gender relations, its presumed religious intolerance (i.e. the Islamic attitudes towards apostasy and blasphemy and its treatment of non-Muslim religionists), and its alleged inclination toward *jihad*-intoxicated fanaticism. And of course another ingredient is the perceived medievalism of Islam and its inability to reform or modernise itself. Symbolic constructions about Islam, based on poorly understood facts, come to be instrumental in exaggerating the adversarial potential of this religion; and in this form may assume disproportional importance in the political discourse. Billig (1995) shows how nationalist symbols in our surroundings are so common and prosaic that they largely pass unnoticed and become unconsciously absorbed. Equally, anti-Islamic notions focused on Islam's antagonist capacity and re-enforced by negative stereotypes may become tied in with nationalist rhetoric and symbolisms to the extent that national security, and even the preservation of a national identity, may become anathema to the acceptance of Muslims.[34]

National security and the Islamic threat

Instruments of multiculturalism, cultural pluralism and human rights are now beginning to be infringed upon and pushed aside by legal instruments designed to protect national security. The main threat inevitably is seen to emanate from Islam in some form: this may be the intolerance of Muslims vis-à-vis others which may be thought to disturb the social peace internally or more specifically the threat of Islamic terrorism. Many nations now have so-called anti-terrorist legislation on their statute books, much of it hastily drafted at the behest from the USA.[35] New Zealand has the 'Terrorism Suppression Act 2002' and 'Terrorism Amendment Act 2003'. These Acts designate a number of organisations and named individuals as terrorist.[36] The government declares that under international law it is obligated to give effect to UN resolutions against terrorism, including taking steps to prevent terror-

ist financing, recruiting or other forms of support. New Zealand considers itself further obligated to apply these measures against specific entities listed by the UN Security Council as being associated with the Taleban or Al-Qaeda network. The police coordinates requests to the prime minister for designation as terrorist entity, which is then announced in the New Zealand Gazette.

A further amendment to the Terrorist Suppression Act 2002 is before parliament at the time of writing. Some politicians[37] have warned that, if enacted, among some detrimental innovations, it is capable of criminalising liberation movements. Under its aegis, agitation to end apartheid, for example, would have been labelled terrorist. It brings home the age-old adage that someone's terrorist is someone else's freedom fighter.[38]

Symptomatic for the volatile combination of Islamophobia and a demand for strengthened national security, there has been a debate in New Zealand newspapers about whether Al-Qaeda has investigated the potential of this country to serve as a safe haven for terrorists. This is a veiled charge that security is lax in this country and needs to be boosted. Speculations have been raised that Al-Qaeda's no.2 man Ayman Al Zawahri visited New Zealand in the 1990s to explore the situation. The immigration debate has also heated up since in May 2005 an opposition politician embarrassed the government by revealing the politically dubious background of some would-be immigrants from the Islamic world who are already residing in New Zealand. [39] Through oversimplification and generalisation, these accusations managed to add fuel to anti-Muslim sentiments.

While public and political discourses show occasional signs of Islamophobia, state and government remain neutral and even benevolent (for instance, through interfaith support; immigration and visa laws do not discriminate against Muslims). However, somewhat paradoxical is the stance in a few cases taken by the government in matters concerning Muslims. They are unsettling in the sense that transparency of the legal process may be set aside in the interest of national security.[40]

In a somewhat self-congratulatory manner, New Zealand's human rights record has often been called exemplary, not least owing to the current government's favouring many initiatives that champion human rights causes and legislation, both nationally and internationally[41]. It makes concerted efforts to 'liberalise' New Zealand society, advance gender equality, create multi-ethnic harmony, promote interfaith dialogue, and enhance the civil liberties of sexual and cultural minorities. Yet it has been zealous in its pursuit of the case against the Algerian Islamist Ahmed Zaoui,[42] who was accused of representing a terrorist threat to the country.[43] Despite a relatively liberal policy of providing a haven for refugees and asylum seekers of all kinds under the aegis of

international human rights conventions, in the name of national security and in contravention of human rights standards, the state and government have insisted on exhausting all possible juridical means to engineer Zaoui's imprisonment with a view toward his eventual expulsion. This case creates the distinct perception, nationally and internationally, that he is singled out because of his Islamist background.[44]

It stands to reason that Zaoui is the first identifiable victim of a growing national stance that connects security issues with Islamophobia. A former Algerian cleric and politician Zaoui became a cause célèbre, rallying the defenders of civil liberties and rights of refugees against those arguing for caution and the primacy of national and international security interests over human rights considerations. Zaoui, a religious scholar who had been democratically elected in 1991 to the Algerian parliament as a delegate of FIS (Front Islamique Salut), arrived in New Zealand from Malaysia in December 2002. Having tried during the voyage to destroy a false South African passport, upon arrival he claimed refugee status under international law. However, declared a threat to national security, he was arrested at the airport and imprisoned on suspicion of having a terrorist background. Subsequently, a security risk certificate was issued against him by the Security Intelligence Service (SIS). He was held without charge, despite the fact that in August 2003, the Refugee Status Appeals Authority granted him refugee status. Through secret dossiers, their contents never revealed, received from European and, one presumes, Algerian security sources, the New Zealand government took advice about his allegedly dangerous background and sinister intentions.

Concrete charges against him were not publicly disclosed, not even to the court of law hearing his appeal for release, nor to his defence lawyers. Acting on the secret and privileged information, he was held imprisoned until the Supreme Court, despite Crown opposition, ordered his release on bail, in December 2004, after two years of detention – part of it in solitary confinement. An appeal by the government is pending before the Appeal Court about the right to deport him. Hence Zaoui's future remains uncertain. In April 2005 the Inspector-General of Intelligence created a position called 'special advocate' to access and examine the SIS evidence held against Zaoui. Applauded by constitutional lawyers for making the case fairer, it is still not an ideal situation inasmuch as the substance of charges against him will not be made public. Meanwhile Zaoui has been released on bail and is staying with the Catholic order of Dominican friars.[45]

In this case, even when it was before the courts, surprisingly all the public could surmise was that Zaoui had apparently been accused by overseas intelligence sources of involvement in terrorist activities or of

association with terrorist groups and interests. Zaoui denies these charges vehemently, maintaining that he was never a member of GIA (Groupement Islamique Arme; Al- Jammah al-Islamiah al-Musallah), by some accounts a radical splinter of FIS (Front Islamique Salut), the party he represented in parliament. GIA pursues a violent *jihadist* agenda since it split off from FIS after the Algerian government suppressed the Islamic party. There can be little doubt that Zaoui is an Islamist whose engagement with Algerian politics was aimed at bringing about an Islamic state, presumably based on the *sharia*. But the evidence available to the general public only suggests that as a democratically elected parliamentarian he intended to use legitimate democratic means to achieve this end and that simply for that reason he fell foul of the autocratic military regime in Algeria. There is no evidence in the public domain that would suggest that he ever subscribed to a violent Machiavellian, or *jihadist*, view or himself engaged in such activities.

Zaoui's fate is a case in point of the increasing infringement of so-called security needs on human rights and civil liberty discourses; and of security needs setting aside the normal rule of law. Quite blatantly, the Inspector General of Intelligence and Security, who oversees the activities of the SIS, argued at the time that in issuing the certificate of risk, he does not have to take Zaoui's human rights into account, nor does he have to consider whether Zaoui faces persecution overseas.[46] In a counter-move the Court of Appeal issued an opinion that in extraditions, the human rights situation in the country to which a person gets extradited has to be taken into account. In 2004, in a Supreme Court hearing, the Solicitor-General confirmed that despite the security risk posed by Zaoui, he would not be extradited to a country where he would suffer persecution in contravention of the Convention against Torture. But this did not constitute a decisive win for the pro-Zaoui lobby. The heavy hand of security interests continues to dominate the situation: for security reasons the grounds on which the certificate of risk had been issued, it was claimed, could not be revealed or the evidence be made publicly available, nor could it be made available to Zaoui's defence lawyers. The reliability or otherwise of this evidence thus cannot be scrutinised independently or discussed beyond privileged intelligence circles. Hence, the rationale for his detention, in violation of a basic democratic right, remained obscure beyond the vague explanation of the state having good reason – or at least well justified suspicions about his (presumed) terrorist connections – for detaining him. As this is not a paper on the juridical aspects of this course of action or to what extent of severity it may have violated Zaoui's human rights or his rights as a refugee, we shall not enter further into this debate. But it clearly does raise questions about whether anti-terrorist leg-

islation entitles, or should entitle, a *Rechtsstaat* to act in this way, and whether this is excusable in the interest of protecting its citizens.

It seems that open discourse on such questions is being thwarted and stifled even in Western liberal democracies, in the interest of national security; there seems to be a radicalisation of this discourse drawing the concept of what constitutes terrorist threat ever wider and making it more inclusive. Perhaps understandably, the state apparatus does not want to be found remiss in protecting the citizenry by being lax in its attention, as there appears to be now a convergence between the historical wholesale denigration of Islam in a climate of Orientalism and the present-day wholesale suspicion of all Muslims as potential terrorists and sympathisers.[47]

Some perceived of the government's role in imprisoning Zaoui as pandering to America's exaggerated security needs and bending to suspect intelligence efforts of other countries – and in the process trampling on his rights under international laws as a bona fide refugee. Others, obviously suspecting him to be a Trojan horse of *jihad* in New Zealand, demanded his immediate expulsion from New Zealand. This debate showed the widening dichotomy of the human rights spirit and a liberal sense of multiculturalism on one side versus a combination of Islamophobia and a heightened perception of the need of being vigilant on the other. Some politicians, expressing no doubt the sentiments of a sector of the population, used this case to voice misgivings about Muslim immigration, opine on the incompatibility of Muslims and even Islam itself with Western culture, and condemn Islam's tradition of disregarding civil liberties. This seems to replicate the European situation, though in a much more subdued sense, where politicians in defending liberal core values have argued against Muslim immigration because through their rising numbers Muslims might endanger the liberal climate in modern Western society or might bring about unwanted changes in the national character, or might pose an outright security risk. Some couch this opinion in terms of Islamic culture and religion being inferior and are not shy in expressing this supremacist view, knowing that their words would find a receptive audience among voters. While the latter view is simply a newer, post-colonial version of Orientalism, albeit not as crude as earlier notions, it offers an interesting moral contradiction. In advocating the abrogation of civil liberties and rights of some to preserve the rights of others, it damages the core values of Western liberal democracies. On a more useful level it is apt to point to the intricate and complex problems of multiculturalism.

The 'Muslim problem' not only obliquely points to the potential for future conflict, it even more seriously represents a challenge that all liberal democracies of the Western world are now facing: struggling in the face of Muslim extremism – and the resultant hostile stereotyping

of Muslims and demonisation of Islam – and demands to tighten national security, to preserve their ideals of civil liberty and multicultural tolerance. In this dilemma the transparency of the legal process seems to suffer. Western countries now have to come to grips with the pressing need of preserving core values of freedom of speech and belief, humanitarianism towards asylum seekers, upholding the human right of open and fair trial, all of which so far have been considered the cornerstones of a modern, free and democratic society.

Addendum

The Terrorism Suppression Amendment Act 2007 was passed in November of that year. Ahmed Zaoui's risk certificate was withdrawn on 13 September 2007 and he is free to stay as a refugee.

Notes

1   The original paper in abbreviated form was presented at ICAS 4, Shanghai, in August 2005. Participation was supported by grants from the Asian Studies Research Centre and the School of Social Sciences of Otago University. Research on which this paper is based was conducted in New Zealand and Western Europe over several years, partially supported by Otago University grants and through sabbatical leave.

2   'Asians' (mainly Chinese ethnics, Koreans, Indians) too are subjected to critical comments about their impact on national identity, but this bears no connection with security issues.

3   See, for instance, Allen (2004).

4   I surmise that the second Bali bombing (2005), the Beslan tragedy (2004), the Australian embassy attack in Jakarta (2004) and numerous attacks in countries like Philippines, Saudi Arabia, etc. had only some minor effect in terms of deepening further suspicion via-à-vis Muslims.

5   The state-organised census, every five years, does not make it mandatory to declare one's religious affiliation.

6   Maori are the descendants of the indigenous, pre-European population of New Zealand. The term Pakeha refers mainly to the descendants of 'white', European settlers.

7   'Cultural racism' refers to the argument about the insurmountability of cultural difference which has replaced the thoroughly discredited biological race debate (see, for example, Modood 2005). However, the concept of 'cultural racism' needs to be used judiciously, for if it is put forward too vigorously it is detrimental to reasoned debate. By attaching to it the label 'racist', it has the unfortunate tendency to stifle the debate about cultural difference and threatens to suffocate a seminal discussion of multiculturalism.

8   In 2007, an attempt by police to indict a few Maori and Pakeha 'rebels' under the Terrorism Suppression Act 2002 resulted in utter failure. The Act turned out, according to informed opinion, to have been tailored for the specific purpose of thwarting organised Islamic terror.

9   I am referring to Samuel Huntington's argument (1996) that a major fault line runs between the West and the Islamic World and bodes for a calamitous showdown.

10 While examples of lack of tolerance and equality vis-à-vis minorities could be enumerated *ad infinitum*, Unni Wikan (2002) describes the exact opposite, a Norwegian case where human rights and a citizen's right to protection by the state are ignored for the sake of observing cultural rights.

11 Current immigration policy in New Zealand selects in accordance with language proficiency and targets desirable skills obviously with a view of facilitating integration. Gaining citizenship is associated with swearing an oath of fealty (which Muslims can swear on the Qur'an), or an affirmation of allegiance to the British Crown and the nation, but requires no proof of an assimilatory effort (such as the citizenship tests in some countries).

12 See, for instance, Poulter (1998).

13 The New Zealand state provides 'pluralistic liberty', i.e. indifference and neutrality towards religion and non-religion alike (see van der Vyver 1996: XIX).

14 The Statement on Religious Diversity [in New Zealand]1991-2006 gives declared Christians as demographically declining, but still by far the largest category hovering between 2 million to 2.5 million. The 'no religion' category is rising noticeably from below one million to approaching 1.5 million now. Other major religions also show a rising tendency, but are far behind at around 200,000.

15 Olivier Roy suggests that Western Muslims should be simply regarded as a Western faith community, not as bearers of an alien culture (interview with O. Roy www.qantara.de; accessed 27/4/08.) This seems to miss the point that following this religion to the letter (i.e. following a conservative theological course in social conduct) poses some adaptive problems in Western society.

16 Muslims are numerically surpassed by Hindus, who are nearly twice as numerous, and Buddhists (2006 Census: 63,500 and 52,000, respectively). There is also no restriction on sectarian activity – so-called cults – as long as they do not come in direct conflict with the criminal law code.

17 With the exception of Sikhs. Their conspicuous head dress is often taken by the uneducated as Islamic.

18 To use Muslims/Islam for political mobilisation in the West is not unusual and goes back to pre-9/11 days (see Vertovec and Peach 1997: 4).

19 As some like to point out, there is a resistant ingredient in Islam which opposes it to the homogenising force of Western culture and basically causes an incompatibility between the two. (This is the familiar argument of many anti-Muslim and anti-immigration parties and interest groups.) In a related sense Ernest Gellner's (1994) argument of the imperviousness of Islam to secularisation is also relevant here.

20 For example, by such scriptural references as 'You are the best community raised up for the benefit of humankind' (Qur'an 3/110).

21 Those who celebrate the Prophet's birthday and those who refuse to do so as in their minds it constitutes illicit worship of a mortal and violates the doctrine of the indivisibility of Allah, the *tawhid*.

22 For instance, the '*burqa* case' of 2004-5, in which two Muslim witnesses refused to unveil before the Auckland district court (see Kolig 2006a).

23 The Federation of Islamic Associations of New Zealand, which acts as the national umbrella for several regional organisations, is dominated by Muslims of South Asian extraction.

24 For a discussion of Muslim integration in New Zealand, see Kolig 2006b.

25 See, for example, An-na'im (1996: 346).

26 For instance, by recourse to a mediating concept such as *Dar al Suhl, Dar al Ahd* or *Dar al Aman*; concepts about an ideologically neutral realm that allows Muslims and 'infidels' to live together in peace.

27 Edward Said's 'Orientalism' (1978).

28 Especially the Bali bombing of October 2002 (in which three New Zealanders died) and then again the London attacks in July 2005 (in which also a New Zealander died). In this case the main catalyst of empathy was probably the old colonial ties to the 'motherland'.

29 For instance, the reportage about some Afghan refugees from the Tampa, who were shown being grateful for the humanitarianism received from New Zealand as well as being successfully integrated migrants. The so-called Tampa affair – when New Zealand took in Afghan refugees rejected by Australia on the principle that these were illicit would-be immigrants and 'queue-jumpers' – attracted world-wide attention. (Kabir 2005: 295-305; Kolig 2003: 33-34)

30 Characteristically, Muslims also take emphatic pro-Israel statements as inherently anti-Muslim. The basis for this attitude most probably lies in a sense of pan-Muslim solidarity, causing the *umma* (the global Muslim community) generally to feel empathetically for the co-religionist Palestinians.

31 TV 3 '60 mins' 4 July 2005. This programme portrayed what was called Islamic fundamentalism as a sinister and dangerous force rising in New Zealand society, threatening to overwhelm New Zealand with hateful and intolerant practices such as stoning homosexuals to death and reducing women to second-class citizens. Some Muslims had been 'co-opted' into confirming in various ways this rather scare-mongering agenda. (See the daily newspaper *Otago Daily Times* 13 July 2005, p.15.)

32 The latest offering of this kind is an article in the journal *InvestigateMagazine* (7/74) of March 2007 (Ian Wishart, 'Preachers of Hate'). Under stirring subtitles of Al-Qa'ida's men in New Zealand' and Helen [Clark, Prime Minister] hoodwinked by preachers of hate', it presents a litany of overseas Islamic preachers with allegedly radical credentials who have been invited on speaking tours to New Zealand and could spread their message unhindered.

33 'Anti-hate legislation' may have been used to curb expressions of Muslim extremism such as the propagation of violent *jihad* in mosques, making anti-democratic, anti-government or anti-Western statements, or preaching homophobia by attacking sexual liberalisation and demanding the death sentence for homosexuality and adultery. But it may also have given Muslims the opportunity to act against expressions of antagonism towards them. However, enacting 'hate-speech' legislation has so far been rejected by the New Zealand government, arguing that as long as it remains just 'speech', it is protected by the right of freedom of expression, and if translated into action, 'incitement to violence' is already punishable under criminal law.

34 In 2008 during ANZAC day celebrations (commemorating the military cooperation between New Zealand and Australia during several wars), a speech by a military leader (Air Commodore Moore) reportedly touched on present-day security provided by the miliary in its fight against radical Islam. ANZAC celebrations are deeply patriotic and emotional events. The speech thus established a negative link of nationalism and patriotism with Islam.

35 The 'Patriot Act' of the US, which sets a precedent for a highly invasive surveillance method over citizens, infringes on civil rights and privacy under the rubric of 'countering a threat to national security'. The UK has the 'Anti-terrorism and Security Act 2001' with roughly similar powers.

36 www.legislation.govt.nz. Interestingly, it lists only organisations and persons linked with either Taleban or Al-Qaeda. There is no mention of IRA, ETA, and others.

37 In particular, a member of parliament of the Green Party (who is the party's human rights spokesperson) in a widely publicised message in April 2007.

38 This dilemma is exemplified also by the metamorphosis of some violent extremist groups into a parliamentary party (Maoists in Nepal) or their elevation to government through democratic election (Hamas in Gaza). Shifting and highly subjective percep-

tions account for the countless cases of guerillas fighting against foreign occupation or domestic oppression (regarded by some as entirely legitimate at the time) and in the process changing from criminals to respectable liberators and eventually to legitimate political parties and governments (for example, Mugabe's Zanu-PF party in Simbabwe, the African National Congress in South Africa, the MauMau in Kenya, etc.).

39 This campaign was specifically directed against Iraqis. When in May 2005 an Iraqi immigrant complained to a television channel about what he saw as unfair reporting, he received in reply from this channel an email message that he should watch out for bombs under his car.

40 For instance, when three Middle Eastern men applied for visas in order to learn to fly at a New Zealand institute of technology, they were refused without any reasons given (television news TV3, 'late news', 1 May 2008).

41 At the time of writing the Human Rights Commission had just developed an 'Action Plan' which among several things proposes to take 'steps to achieve harmonious relations among New Zealand's diverse communities', 'steps to strengthen ... cultural rights', and 'a commitment to ensure the legal framework fully protects human rights'.

42 A more detailed description of the case in the context of asylum policies can be found in Lafraie (2006).

43 In another interpretation of this case, the reason for his treatment is not that authorities believe that he is a terrorist threat to the country, but rather they fear that New Zealand may appear internationally as 'a soft touch'. Zaoui had previously been extradited from several European countries and, given that this case has gained international attention, New Zealand does not wish to appear that it applies asylum standards more generously or leniently than other Western countries.

44 I define Islamism as an Islamic orientation which sees religion and politics as inseparable (*din wa daulah*), desires to implement the *shari'a* as state law, and aspires to the creation of an Islamic theocratic state.

45 While this is a significant gesture of interfaith solidarity, the impression of goodwill has been dampened by the fact that Zaoui's main Dominican mentor has been arrested on charges of ideologically motivated vandalism. As a member of the Christian pressure group 'ANZAC Ploughshares' (peace activists) he, together with two others, (in April 2008) broke into the satellite communications monitoring facility (popularly called electronic 'spy facility') of Waihopai, which is used in the war on terrorism, and inflicted significant damage to the installation. It triggered the 'aha' response: one extremist sheltering another one!

46 In June 2005 the Supreme Court re-affirmed the Inspector General's position, and determined that possible extradition lies in the hands of the minister of immigration who should take human rights issues into account. (This makes the case a matter of political decision and not legal determination.) Deportation to Algeria may theoretically not be possible under the United Nations Refugee Convention as his life must be considered to be in danger there.

47 By comparison with its neighbour Australia, New Zealand has so far managed to retain a moderate perspective on the issue of its Muslim minority (see Kolig and Kabir 2008). No armed raids have as yet been conducted on Muslim homes or Islamic centres. For example, a British Muslim preacher with a reputation – deservedly or undeservedly – for radicalism was allowed to visit the country on a speaking tour in August 2005, while he was denied even a one-hour stop-over in Australia en route from Europe.

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