

No 1, March 2004


NIAS *nytt*
Asia Insights

Fresh Insights and Perspectives on Women and Politics in Asia

Sons and Daughters: Benevolent Patriarchy in Singapore

Women, Citizenship and the Politics of Dress in Twentieth-Century Philippines

Caste, Gender and Armed Conflict in Rural Bihar

Sexual Harassment and Empowerment of Women in Japan

Combating Domestic Violence in China: Contemporary Strategies of the Women's Federation

Under-Representation of Women in Thai Politics

When Competitive Elections in China Let Women Down

Quota Systems in Pakistan under the Musharraf Regime

Women's Studies, Women's Movement, and Women's Policy in Korea



THEME:
Women and Politics in Asia

Nordic Institute of Asian Studies



NIASnytt is published by the Nordic Institute of Asian Studies and appears 4 times yearly with 1,500 copies distributed worldwide.

Editorial and production

Nordic Institute of Asian Studies (NIAS), Leifsgade 33, DK-2300 Copenhagen S, Denmark
Tel: +45 3532 9502
Fax: +45 3532 9549
Email: leena@nias.ku.dk
Online: <http://www.nias.ku.dk>

Online version

Economic necessity forces us to print fewer copies of *NIASnytt* than are demanded. However, we also produce *NIASnytt* in a web version at <http://www.nias.ku.dk/nytt>

Responsible editor

(under the Danish press law)
Jørgen Delman

Coordinating editor

Leena Höskuldsson

Guest editors for this issue

Wil Burghoorn, Kazuki Iwanaga, Qi Wang, Cecilia Milwertz

Editorial committee

Jørgen Delman
Leena Höskuldsson
Gerald Jackson
Timo Kivimäki
Erik R. Skaaning

Language editor

Janice Leon

Coming Issues in 2004

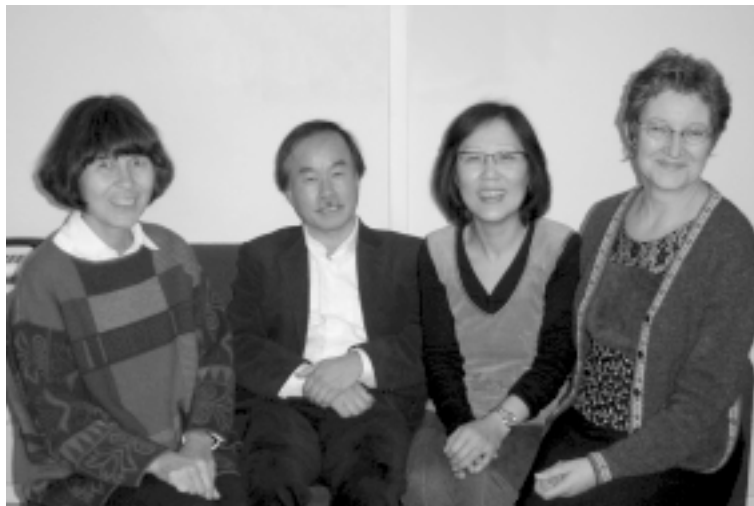
2 (June): deadline 1 May
3 (September): deadline 1 August
4 (December): deadline 1 November

Cover photograph by Kim Su-Gil:
Members of the Women Making Peace demonstrating against the Korean government's decision to dispatch troops to Iraq

Printed in Denmark by
Herrmann & Fischer



ISSN 0904-4337



The guest editorial group for this issue gathered in a family portrait. *From left:* Wil Burghoorn, Senior Lecturer at the Centre of Asian Studies, Göteborg University, Kazuki Iwanaga, Senior Lecturer and Head of the Department of Political Science, Halmstad University, Qi Wang, Guest Researcher at NIAS, and Cecilia Milwertz, Senior Researcher, NIAS.

Women and Politics in Asia:

- Fresh Insights and Perspectives on Women and Politics in Asia • *Qi Wang* 4
- Sons and Daughters: Benevolent Patriarchy in Singapore • *Phyllis Ghim-Lian Chew* 6
- Women, Citizenship and the Politics of Dress in Twentieth-Century Philippines • *Mina Roces* 8
- Caste, Gender and Armed Conflict in Rural Bihar • *Suruchi Thapar-Björkert* 10
- Sexual Harassment and Empowerment of Women in Japan • *Muta Kazue* 12
- Combating Domestic Violence in China: Contemporary Strategies of the Women's Federation • *Derek Hird* 14
- Under-Representation of Women in Thai Politics • *Juree Vichit-Vadakan* 16
- When Competitive Elections in China Let Women Down • *Jude Howell* 18
- Quota Systems in Pakistan under the Musharraf Regime • *Irene Graff* 21
- Women's Studies, Women's Movement, and Women's Policy in Korea • *Shim Young-Hee* 23

Also in this issue

- Innovating NIAS's Nordic Ownership and Mandate • *Jørgen Delman* 3
- Staff News 25
- NIAS Database 26
- NIAS Grants 27
- Recent Visitors 25, 28–29
- Constructing Femininity in South India • *Anna Lindberg* 30
- NIAS Press 31–32

NIAS Library and Information Centre (NIAS LINC) has compiled a bibliography on Women and Politics in Asia (titles published between 1990 and 2004). The bibliography is in the form of a searchable database, which can be found at http://www.niaslinc.dk/gateway/Women_Politics_Asia

Innovating NIAS's Nordic Ownership and Mandate



Jørgen Delman

Since publication of the editorial in the previous issue of *NIASnytt* – ‘NIAS in the Melting Pot’ – work on the restructuring of NIAS has now started.

The Nordic Council of Ministers has set up a working group comprising of the University of Copenhagen, Copenhagen Business School, Lund University, the Danish Ministry of Science, Technology and Innovation, the Council of Ministers itself, and NIAS. The working group has been asked to come up with a consolidated proposal for the new ownership of NIAS. It appears that this will include a binding agreement among the three universities mentioned, a partnership among Nordic universities, a legal construction under the Danish university law, a strategy for the new NIAS and an action plan for the transfer of ownership and start-up of activities under the new regime.

While formally nothing has been decided yet, we can see the contours of an interesting solution emerging. This is that the three universities would share joint responsibility for the running of NIAS while one of them would act as the host institution required under Danish law. The name of the host institution has still to be decided.

The three universities all have a strong interest in Asian Studies and see considerable benefits in supporting and strengthening Nordic cooperation, while benefiting from direct participation in the ownership of NIAS. The involvement by the University of Lund means that the ‘ownership’ will be lifted beyond the national level.

It is critical to ensure the Nordic dimension of the new NIAS. Continued funding from the Nordic Council of Ministers will ensure that. Therefore, we also intend to offer other Nordic universities with a strong interest in Asian studies a strategic partnership in the future NIAS. The universities would be involved through a consortium built around a mutually binding agreement. The larger group of universities should have an influence on the strategy and operation of the new NIAS through membership of the new Board. Naturally, they should continue to benefit from our collaboration.

There is precedent for such collaboration at a Nordic level. The Nordic Centre at Fudan University (homepage: www.lu.se/nc) is gradually building up a programme of education and research at the Fudan University in Shanghai. The centre has 20 Nordic universities as owners/partners. A Nordic centre in India (homepage: www.nci.uio.no) is also emerging with a group of owners/partners that is fairly similar.

Our new ownership is an innovative legal and institutional arrangement, and one that has yet to materialize. However, we believe that it will do so and that it will have substance. Achieving this goal would mean that NIAS and its new owners and partners would innovate Nordic collaboration while continuing to develop NIAS's Nordic mandate and services. In the future, for example, NIAS intends to get much more involved in enhancing the development of PhD and Masters education in Asian Studies. This follows NIAS's initiative in 2003 to establish a truly Nordic joint venture around the NorfAsia research school in Asian Studies. The application had strong involvement and backing from a range of institutions and potential supervisors. Unfortunately, our application at that time (to the NORFA fund) was not successful. However, we now know that there remains a strong interest in developing collaboration in research education along these lines. Obviously, this is something that NIAS would look to pursue again once our future ownership has been sorted out.

Meantime, I trust that you enjoy the present issue of *NIASnytt*. Needless to say, gender studies is one of our priorities and we are happy to be able to make available an issue of *NIASnytt* that presents research by a wide range of scholars in the field.

Jørgen Delman
Director



Qi Wang is Guest
Researcher at NIAS

Fresh Insights and Perspectives on Women and Politics in Asia

By Qi Wang

Asia is the world's most populated region, embracing the two most populous countries in the world, China and India. Out of a total population of 3,679,737,000, there are 1,800,320,000 women, or more than 50%. For every six people in the world, there is an Asian woman. Asia presents great cultural multiplicity and religious diversity. The richness and colorfulness of the Asian cultures and religions both shape men's and women's lives and are shaped by the everyday life of Asian people. Asia mutates and develops on the conjunction between past and present and between tradition and change. In the era of post-colonialism and globalization, Asia stands out with its rapid economic growth and profound socio-economic changes. Although not always recognized, women have played a tremendously important role in Asia's economic development and social reforms and in the processes of political transformation that Asia is currently undergoing. The wane of hard-line communist regimes goes hand in hand with waves of democratization, outlining new contexts and opportunities for the development of democratic institutions, civil society and citizenship. In short, Asia is an actor for the world to watch.

This was the background that motivated us to address the role of Asian women in politics at the conference on 'Women and Politics in Asia', which was held at Halmstad University in June 2003. The Nordic Institute of Asian Studies, and the three Swedish institutions: Halmstad University, the Center for Asian Studies at Göteborg University and Lund University jointly organized the conference.

The Aims of the Conference

First, we wanted to bring forth new insights and perspectives on women's roles in politics in Asia that could both account for and reflect the nuances, diversity, fluidity, multitude, width and depth of the subject across cultural and national boundaries, time and space. Asia is not, and should not be treated as, a holistic, homogeneous and stabilizing category. As far as women's roles in politics are concerned, we believe that there are many discursive and yet overlapping categories and each of these categories is, at the same time, multidimensional and many layered.

Second, we were particularly interested in how women's roles in politics alter in pace with the ongoing process of social change and democratization in Asia and how the shifting configuration of power between the forces of tradition and modernity shape women's roles in politics and women's relations to politics.

Third, we wanted to look into the gendered nature of politics/political practices and women's roles as political agents in different domains and at different levels. Politics, as we understand it, plays out both within and across formal political institutions and beyond. The boundaries between what is considered as political and non-political are shifting and hence negotiable.

Finally, we were keen to bring forth indigenous voices and promote integrated research collaboration between the European and Asian scholarly communities.

Cultural Interaction

Thanks to the active involvement of conference participants and the support of Halmstad University staff and

students, the conference was a great success, bringing together a large number of Nordic and European-based scholars and scholars from various Asian countries. To borrow the remark made by the Dean of the Social Science Faculty at the hosting university, the conference was 'very colorful'. Yes indeed, it was a colorful conference, and the colorfulness was not only reflected in skin color and the splendidly beautiful dresses of the participants, but also in the richness of intellectual thought and diversity of approach that the conference presentations demonstrated. The conference vividly proved how much cross-cultural and transnational academic interaction and face-to-face exchange can enrich us.

Asia and Scandinavia

Jude Howell's keynote speech on women's political participation in China analysed the sources of support and constraint embedded in what she calls 'state-derived feminism'. Her insightful and concise analysis led us to reflect upon Scandinavian state-feminism and the striking



similarity between the Chinese and the Scandinavian cases.

Drude Dahlerup's keynote speech on gender quotas in politics worldwide showed convincingly how cross-cultural perspectives can improve – and help us to modify – our assumptions about ourselves. To the extent that many Asian countries have adopted gender quotas rather recently and hence have been able to increase women's representation in politics to various degrees, Scandinavia is not a worldwide model any longer. The so-called Scandinavian model entails incremental development of education, integration of women in the labor force and a welfare system. Now that women's representation is increasing with the aid of gender quotas in various Asian countries before a women-friendly educational, occupational and welfare system is fully developed, why should Scandinavia be a model and how can we claim the legitimacy of the model? Rather, as Drude Dahlerup put it, the Scandinavian and the Asian experiences represent two different and parallel tracks, with the former as a kind of 'slow track' and the latter as a kind of 'fast track'.

Articles in This Issue

The conference included papers that presented empirical cases of – and theoretical reflection upon – how practices and discourses in family, civil society and the political domain affect women and how women through their action and negotiation, either individually or collectively, influence and transform political discourses and practices. The articles presented here, in this issue of *NIASnytt*, mirror some of the themes touched upon by the conference. The authors have written their articles mainly on the basis of their presentations

at the conference and they can be grouped into four themes:

1) *State and women*: Phyllis Chew examines how benevolent patriarchy in Singapore is reflected in politicians' language use and how policies ostensibly designed to achieve gender equality in reality maintain a patriarchal structure. Young-Hee Shim traces the development of women-related laws and policies in South Korea and argues that these have been formed in a process influenced by an active women's movement, the establishment and development of women's studies and South Korea's membership of the United Nations.

2) In a second theme on *women politicians and dress* Mina Roces shows how the politics of dress has gendered implications in the Philippines and how women have used clothing and gender stereotypes as part of their political strategy.

3) Three articles address the issue of *gender and violence*. In rural Bihar in North India *Dalit* women have taken up arms in response to violence against them by upper castes. Suruchi Thapar-Björkert examines the dynamics of caste through intersecting discourses of gender and violence. Tracing the introduction of the concept of sexual harassment to Japan, Kazue Muta asks whether being political in relation to everyday life experiences can be a way for women to become involved in politics in a society where women are not easily politically mobilized. Moving on to the People's Republic of China, Derek Hird critically explores the role of the All China Women's Federation in combatting domestic violence.

4) In the fourth theme on *political representation*, Juree Vichit-Vadakan examines consequences and causes of under-representation of women in politics in Thailand. In the People's Republic of China the



popularization of village elections has attracted considerable attention. Jude Howell points to the lack of concern about the impact of democratic elections on women's political representation. In Pakistan quota systems ensure the representation of women. Irene Graff examines consequences and complications involved in terms of accountability to the public and class representation.

By presenting this cluster of articles on various aspects of women and politics in different Asian contexts by authors of various disciplines, we hope to share with you some fragments of the conference as well as some of the fresh insights and perspectives brought forth by the conference. 🌻

If you want to secure that *NIASnytt* is sent to your private address also in future, please urgently advise Carol Richards <carol.richards@nias.ku.dk> that you wish to continue your subscription.



Phyllis Ghim-Lian Chew is Associate Professor at the Nanyang Technological University Singapore.

Sons and Daughters: Benevolent Patriarchy in Singapore

By Phyllis Ghim-Lian Chew

In the last forty years of its independence, the lion state Singapore has developed a 'good and strong' governance inspired by the Confucian principle. This form of benevolent patriarchy has a clear manifestation in the language of politicians. In the use of metaphors in public speeches, Singaporean statesmen often envisage the state as the benevolent father and refer to Singaporean citizens as sons and daughters.

Nowhere is the practice of Confucianism listed as state ideology in Singapore. Paradoxically, in its rather successful modernization efforts, Singapore has been basically inspired by the Confucian principle (Zhang 2002). In the last forty years, a one-party (the People's Action Party) government, has governed Singapore with an interventionist and paternalistic outlook in virtually all areas of life. For example, in its effort to guarantee political and social stability as a means of attaining material progress, the Party has effectively used incentives and rules to control the economic system, trade unions and mass media.

The State as a Paternalistic Father

Good and strong governance is essential for emergent nation states with a penchant for material success. As Prime Minister Goh Chok Tong (PM Goh) put it: 'An army of sheep led by a lion is stronger than an army of lions led by a sheep.' What is not so obvious, however, is that the lion and the sheep are almost always male. The influential 1991 *White Paper on Shared Values* states that the government should be ruled by '*honorable men* ... who have a duty to do right for the people, and who have the trust and respect of the population'.

The *lion* state is popularly conceived as the 'benevolent

father' and this can be discerned in the use of metaphors in public speeches. PM Goh often addresses Singaporeans as 'sons and daughters':

Singapore can only do well if her good sons and daughters are prepared to dedicate themselves to help others. I shall rally them to serve the country. For if they do not come forward, what future will we have?

The leader is a strict but benevolent parent-trainer. Senior Minister Lee Kuan Yew (SM Lee), PM Goh's predecessor, is often portrayed as an authoritarian and, at times, quite angry Confucian patriarch. In PM Goh's words:

... Mr. Lee was like a critical parent – very disciplined, very demanding, very impatient of faults and wanting to improve these faults very quickly. I would think I am more of a nurturing parent; that means, I would give more positive strokes and be a little more tolerant of mistakes.

A father needs to fend for his sons and daughters and anticipate territorial dangers that may be lurking. Not surprisingly, government speeches have always referred to the hungry predators lurking around a 'successful' island. The adversarial mode is evoked continually and there is constant concern about Singapore's 'survival'.

In a memorable political speech a few years ago, PM Goh referred to economic stagnation as a 'martial enemy', a central

metaphoric concept that he extended in his speech through the use of other metaphors, such as *pincer strategy, battle, trap, defeat, beat, combat ration, haemorrhage, bleeding, parachutes failing to open* and *the need for modern ships and survival through rough waters*.

PM Goh explains his role as leader:

... I think Mr Lee is like the leader of a revolutionary force; so he himself is a strategist, propagandist, a commando, a fighter – and that is the way he is. Whereas I am more like a commander-in-chief of a conventional army in peace time.

Sons and Daughters

While men are soldiers, women are *naturally* mothers, wives and daughters-in-law. The government views women's main role to be in the private sphere – in short, continuing the species and tending to the needs of the household. Women are the mothers of the nation and the imparters of core values, such as 'society before self' and 'the family as a basic unit'. Indeed, women's issues in the young republic are often confused with, or subsumed under, and limited to promotion of the family. Policies and programmes ostensibly designed for women are in reality pro-family within a patriarchal structure (Lazar 1999).

But this is not necessarily unbeneficial for daughters for a

benevolent father rewards *both* sons and daughters, as long as they follow his policies. Thus Singaporean women have gained a lot – at least materially in –the last forty years of independence. Demographic and health statistics indicate that they enjoy a better standard of living today than they did at the onset of independence in 1959. Their educational level has risen to the level of their brothers. They can find jobs and be independent financially.

But where succession is concerned, the patrilineal line prevails. Sons are deemed to be better as leaders and managers. As PM Goh puts it:

Can you find a woman who has the same kind of quality as a man, who is as good as a man, and whose husband or potential husband and boyfriend would allow that woman to carry on a hazardous and time-consuming profession?

Thus, while benevolent patriarchy allows material progress for both genders, it appears to preserve gatekeeping operations for the male.

Severe under-representation of women is apparent in political and decision making in Singapore. This is surprising, bearing in mind the fact that the daughter is as well-educated, if not more so, as the brother. For example, in the workforce, 60% of female workers have a secondary education, compared with 50% of male workers; and in the universities, there are as many women graduates as there are men.

The glass ceiling is seen most clearly in political life. From 1959 to 2000, the representation of women in Parliament has remained between 2% and 6% while the regional average was around 15% (Chew, 1993). Numbers aside, the *type* of representation is also important and Singapore has yet to see a woman in Cabinet.

Similarly, in 1999, while more than 50% of employees in the Singapore Civil Service were women, they were mostly concentrated at its middle and bottom ranks. Also, women made up only 53 out of the 230 'Administrative Officers', the premier category of the Civil Service. The same scenario can be found where leadership at the grassroots level is concerned.

The Confucian Worldview

The main reason behind such an imbalance lies in the fact that the Republic is thoroughly immersed in the discourse of the Confucian worldview, so much so that there is a taken-for-granted routine of reality in which things are the way they are. Values which already exist – about social hierarchy, money, family life, gender, etc. – are reproduced in daily discursive interaction between the powerful media and the reader, and it is obvious that in a worldview where paternal and patrilineal tendencies hold sway, the political woman is regarded as an apolitical creature.

The division of labour is, after all, based on the principle of mutuality. It is a collaborative effort to raise a family, indeed a nation, and is recognized as a necessity and a virtue by all family members. Daughters appear uninterested in leadership positions, and fathers, sons and mothers are not motivated in persuading them otherwise.

But if the benevolent patriarchy is supported by both sons and daughters who have equal voting rights, it is also because it is, implicitly, a mutual contract. Fathers and sons bring in the grain, mothers and daughters raise the family. As long as both parties keep their contract, all will prosper. Besides, paternalistic intervention in marriage,

procreation and toilet habits also has intrinsic advantages – the so-called nanny state has delivered material goods and growth and this has been the basis of the People's Action Party's continued dominance.

In all fairness, benevolent patriarchy has enabled the fledgling island to evolve into an economically viable nation whose significance reaches beyond its shores – a remarkable feat. In addition, while it has taken other countries centuries to forge their people into a nation, Singapore has managed to compress the process into just over two generations through a coherent and tightly knit strategy as revealed by its official metaphors.

While women have gained a lot materially, women's issues in the young republic are often confused with, or subsumed under, and limited to promotion of the family. Likewise, the governance of benevolent patriarchy bears both pros and cons in relation to women's role in politics.

It does appear that benevolent patriarchy, which has defined Singapore for 40 years, will continue to thrive, at least in the near future. ☀

References

- Chew, Phyllis Ghim-Lian (1993) *Report on Singapore Women*. Kitakyushu: Kitakyushu Forum on Asian Women. See also Inter-Parliamentary Union website <http://www.ipu.org/wmn-e/world.htm> 19/10/2003.
- Lazar, Michelle (1999). Family Life Advertisements. In Phyllis G. L. Chew and Anneliese Kramer Dahl. *Reading Culture. Textual Practices in Singapore*. Singapore: Times Academic Press.
- Zhang, Wei-Bin (2002). *Singapore's Modernization: Westernization and Modernizing Confucian Manifestations*. New York: Nova Science Publishers, Inc.



Mina Roces teaches at the School of History at the University of New South Wales in Sydney, Australia.

Women, Citizenship and the Politics of Dress in Twentieth-Century Philippines

By Mina Roces

Historically, the politics of dress as expressed in terms of a Filipino dress/Western dress binary had gendered implications. Women as 'bearers of tradition' wore national dress while men wore the western suit and jacket, reflecting the gendered power relationship in the society. Because of the stark visual contrast between these two types of dress, these visual markers became politically potent. Women in the Philippines, from suffragists to powerful women, have used clothing and gender stereotypes associated with particular forms of dress as part of political strategy and empowerment.

Politicians of all ilk and of both sexes have manipulated dress precisely because it is a very visible public marker of one's allegiance, identity and political colour. And yet, the study of the politics of dress has not yet been given much attention in the production of knowledge on politics in the Philippines. Instead, dress studies have focused on the history of Philippine costume, the ethnography of dress, or the history of clothing materials. This article is a step towards a history of appearances in twentieth-century Philippines, focusing on the politics of dress and its gendered implications. It explores how women have capitalized on the semiotics of dress as part of political strategy and empowerment. When national dress was 'invented' in Asia, women were represented as 'bearers of tradition' associated with the emerging nations' past. But they were very astute readers of the semiotics of dress and used clothing as a strategy for pursuing quite radical agendas.

In the American colonial era (1902–1946), Filipino men (but not women until 1937) were permitted to vote and run for office at the local and national levels as part of America's policy of democratic tutelage in which the Philippines was to be

gradually 'given' the institutions of democracy (free press, elections, etc) in preparation for self-government. The gender inequity in citizenship was reflected in attire. Men wore the western suit and jacket (the Americana) while women wore national dress in terms of a *terno* (national dress with butterfly sleeves) and a *pañuelo* (Filipino national dress). This sartorial binary with men in Western dress and women in native dress mirrored in vestimentary code the political power axis: Western dress reflected the powerful colonizers, and Filipino men by donning Western attire were associating themselves with the powerful colonizers; while native dress was worn by women, who as disenfranchised citizens, epitomized the colonized subject – the bearer and wearer of tradition. Although, in actual fact, women were already entering universities, business and the professions, and therefore were behaving distinctly 'modern', men still imagined these women as 'traditional'.

'Repacking' the Modern Woman

But the fact that the suffragists chose to wear the *terno* and *pañuelo* did not imply that these women were accepting unproblematically, the role

assigned to them by their menfolk. Filipino suffragists campaigned for the use of Western dress as uniforms in classrooms at schools and universities and in the workforce because they argued that it was more practical attire. They claimed that wearing the voluminous butterfly sleeves could prove dangerous in a chemistry laboratory with Bunsen burners as they could easily catch fire. Yet, they themselves wore the *terno* and *pañuelo* to work and for all official duties. The *terno* and *pañuelo* were so associated with the suffragists that one scholar has labeled them 'pañuelo activists' and caricatures of them always depicted them in this attire. These women were actually proposing radical changes to the Spanish Civil Code as well as campaigning for the vote at a time when the majority of men were against woman suffrage. Lobbying for women's equality seemed less 'modern' if the lobbyist was dressed in a *terno* and a *pañuelo*. In reality, the Filipina had come a long way. But in literally 'repackaging' the modern Filipina in the 'traditional' women's narrative, the suffragists were able to win a campaign for the vote despite overwhelming odds.

The Moral Power of Nuns

During the Marcos dictatorship (1972–1986), militant nuns also used the semiotics of dress and tapped cultural constructions of the feminine as ‘moral guardian’ to resist authoritarian rule. Nuns were aware of their ‘moral power’ and of the symbolic capital exuded by the nun’s habit. Vatican II recommended that nuns shed their habits and veils so that they could mingle with the ordinary people and avoid privileged treatment. Just at the very time nuns in the US were discarding their habits, Filipino nuns discovered that the habit was an instrument of ‘moral power’ in the Philippine context. Since Catholicism was a source of legitimacy, one way to advertise their moral power was to wear the habit. Nuns usually stood in the front lines of strikes based on the premise that the military would hesitate to ‘beat up’ a nun, and nuns smuggled documentation on political prisoners inside their habits. In the People Power 1 ‘revolution’ that toppled the Marcos regime, nuns armed with rosaries faced the macho military armed with machine guns, and triumphed.

The suffragists and the nuns were disenfranchised – partial citizens in the body politic. In the early twentieth century, women could not vote. In the Marcos years, elections were meaningless due to vote ‘rigging’. Dress was used by the marginalised as a strategy in the bid to claim citizenship rights.

The Iron Butterfly

At the other end of the spectrum, First Lady Imelda Marcos (the wife of President Ferdinand Marcos, the other half of the conjugal dictatorship), manipulated clothing (specifically ‘national dress’) in her attempt to equate herself with the body politic.

The most powerful woman in the Philippines in the 1970s, she popularised the *terno* (though a modern *terno* without the *pañuelo*) and was seldom seen in any other attire in public. This was part of the First Family’s agenda of fashioning themselves as the legendary characters of Philippine folklore and as nationalist subjects. But this self-representation was not endorsed by local audiences. Instead the *terno* became metonymy for Imelda rather than metaphor for nation. In political cartoons depicting her before and after the end of martial law, the *terno* was the signifier for the former First Lady who was given epithets such as ‘the Iron Butterfly’ in reference to the *terno*’s butterfly sleeves.

Gendered Strategies for Negotiating Power

The struggle for full citizenship was expressed in sartorial code as clothing was used as a strategy by the disenfranchised to negotiate for space in the body politic and by a powerful woman who claimed to represent the ‘nation’. The politics of dress expressed in terms of a Filipino dress/ Western dress binary had gendered implications and complex gendered strategies for negotiating power. Since national dress is also constantly being reinvented, politicians, both male and female, have sought to reinterpret national dress based on their agendas. Precisely because dress expresses a multitude of codes, the battle over ‘national dress’ becomes more than a struggle to alter appearances. ●

References

Alzona, Encarnacion (1954). *The Filipino Woman: Her Social, Economic and Political Status, 1565–1937*. Manila: Benipayo Press.



A cartoon of Encarnacion Alzona. From the Personal Papers of Encarnacion Alzona, Ateneo Library of Women Writers, Ateneo de Manila University.

Gwekoh, Sol H. (1952). *Josefa Llanes Escoda: A Life Dedicated to Humanitarian Service*. Manila: Fortune Publishers.

Rafael, Vicente (2000). ‘Patronage Pornography and Youth Ideology and Spectatorship During the Early Marcos Years’, *White Love and Other Events in Philippine History*. Durham & London: Duke University Press.

Roces, Alfredo, and Irene Roces (1992) *Medals and Shoes: Political Cartoons of the Times of Ferdinand and Imelda Marcos, 1965–1992*. Metro-Manila: Anvil Publishing Co.

Tirona, Mary Grace Ampil (1996). ‘Pañuelo Activism’, *Women’s Role in Philippine History: Selected Essays*. Quezon City: University Center for Women’s Studies, University of the Philippines.



Suruchi Thapar-Björkert is a lecturer at the Sociology Department, University of Bristol, UK.

Caste, Gender and Armed Conflict in Rural Bihar

By Suruchi Thapar-Björkert

In rural Bihar in North India, untouchable landless Dalit women have taken up arms in response to violence against them by upper castes. To understand contemporary caste 'wars' or 'genocide' in the state of Bihar, but also in Tamil Nadu, Maharashtra, Karnataka, and Gujarat, it is integral to examine the dynamics of caste through intersecting discourses of gender and violence.

Caste, a contentious and much debated conceptual category, is an important dimension of the inequality which shapes gender relations in Indian society. Both material as well as ideological factors have been important in perpetuating and maintaining social and economic inequalities in rural Bihar. This is coupled with a less dynamic economy and steady politicization of caste. Interpersonal and caste-related violence between the upper castes and the *Dalits* (also referred to as the 'untouchables, depressed classes, the 'broken' people, or scheduled castes) or between upper castes and lower castes, is well documented by human rights organizations. The *Dalits* are 'off the social ladder' of the caste hierarchy, which includes the Brahmans and Khastriyas, as the dominant castes, and Vaishyas and Shudras lower down the hierarchy.

Atrocious Brutalities Enacted Against *Dalits*

The 'untouchable' and lower-caste men and women have historically been subject to discriminatory practices but more recently have been made a target of atrocious brutalities (ranging from their limbs being cut off, having their eyes gorged out or being made to witness gang rapes of women of their households). For example, the infamous case of Bhukli Devi who was paraded naked by Bhumihar Brahmans on the charge of stealing four potatoes

from a field in Samastipur district (Bihar) in 1994. She was raped; then her sari was inserted into her vagina and she was killed. The insertion of a piece of cloth in her vagina can be understood as symbolic of the 'impurity' of the womb of the *Dalit* women and condemnation of the birth of any further progeny by the upper castes.

In another instance, on November 15, 1995, at the district and sessions court in Jaipur, the judge acquitted all five men accused of raping a 'backward caste' woman, Bhanwari Devi. The judicial system refused to believe that 'respectable upper caste men could rape lower caste women'. Instead, the court cast aspersions on Bhanwari's character by suggesting that she was an 'adulteress'. Section 155 (4) of the Indian Evidence Act (part of the Indian judicial system) allows the 'moral character' of the victim of rape to be taken into account. Honour and shame are seen by the upper castes as their prerogative and since lower-caste women are perceived by upper-caste men as polluted and without 'honour', upper-caste men can justify customary access to their sexuality. Thus the rape of Bhanwari was seen not worthy of any serious attention. Moreover, the Indian state has kept caste and gender as separate issues and this, to some extent, can explain that while removal of caste-based discrimination is a commitment made on both national and state

levels, interpersonal violence 'on women' is on the rise.

Contextualizing Caste Conflicts

These caste conflicts have to be contextualized through the historic shift in relationships. They cannot be explained as sporadic or seen through only one lens of 'oppressor' and 'oppressed'. Changing dynamics are displacing established positions. *Dalits* have excelled in education, which has historically been a strong upper-caste preserve, and they also have representatives in the Congress party at the local level. Thus the absolute control of the upper castes is weakening with *Dalits* making inroads in the field of education and politics as well as developing a strong political consciousness. The upper castes maintain their social and material hegemony through coercion and violence.

More recently, in Bihar's so-called lawless rural countryside, *Dalit* women are the chief arm bearers and responsible for most of the inter-caste killings. *Dalit* women have been taught to retaliate as well as defend themselves from the private armies of land-owners. The army of the backward castes is the *Dalit Sena* army and it has its women's wing. The *Sena* started training women in 1994 and since then there has been a marked drop in atrocities towards women. Earlier the landlords did not allow *Dalit* women to draw water from the

wells. *Dalit* women say that now they are scared to stop them from doing so. Approximately 8,000 women in 500 villages in Bihar have been given basic arms training. The *Sena* has grown and has an arsenal consisting of automatic weapons such as AK47 rifles. They undergo a basic 'rifle training' to aim at human targets.

The Intersectionality of Gendered Subjectivities with Class and Caste

The mechanisms and processes through which women access and negotiate power and violence re-open debates on the intersectionality of gendered subjectivities with class and caste. Structural inequalities have positioned *Dalit* men and women as equally vulnerable. The economic and sexual hierarchy between the sexes is less rigid in the lower castes. Low-caste and specifically untouchable-caste women not only have to make substantial economic contributions because of extreme poverty, but along with men also participate in 'polluting' tasks (lavatory cleaning) for upper-caste households. Women's work for the continuity of caste-based occupation is important, irrespective of caste, whether it involves agricultural or scavenging tasks.

However, the diffusion of public and private also makes *Dalit* women more vulnerable to rape, sexual harassment and threats of public violence. Paradoxically, *Dalit* women can access public space when it involves working for upper caste households, but the public space cannot be used as a site of protest and resistance. Evidence points to women being lynched and killed when they dared to protest. The management, maintenance and reproduction of hierarchical and politicized upper-caste structures, on the other hand, are achieved by

regulating and managing their own women's sexuality. While control over labour and sexuality of upper-caste women is legitimized through a purity/pollution concept, the economic and sexual labour of lower-caste women is made available for the consumption of upper-caste men and women. Economic dominance is closely associated with issues of access to lower-caste/*Dalit* women's sexuality reflected in statements such as 'give her a few measures of grain and she will be quiet'.

A Continuum of Masculinities

However, since the debates on class and gender are negotiated on the sexualized (impure and available) body of the *Dalit* women, they have taken the responsibility for their own protection. In protecting their violation *from violence with violence* women not only challenge the hegemonic masculinity of upper-caste men, but also reconstruct their own men's 'disempowered masculinities'. If gender analysis is confined to women, and in particular to only the inequalities experienced by women then such an approach will not be able to accommodate men's experience of vulnerability, their exploitation and gendered powerlessness. Moreover, if gender analysis is limited to women, then such an approach brings out the culturally constructed and culturally constituted female gender identities but leaves the impression that male gender identities are natural – that masculinity is a given and does not need to be defended or achieved.

Gendered violence constructs masculinities on a continuum – as diverse and relational rather than singular and fixed. When gender relations are mediated by other differences, such as class and religion, women make strategic

investments with men of their own community even if this involves taking up arms and waging violence. During these strategic moments, women's resistance of 'private' patriarchy shifts towards a fight against 'public patriarchy' (the patriarchal state, feudal lord) along with the men, since the 'public' patriarch exploits men and women equally. This is not to deny that patriarchal relations do not exist in a *Dalit* household but since patriarchy sustains itself through a particular construction of masculinity, the construction of the upper-caste hegemonic masculinity undermines all other masculinities. The incredible subservience of lower-caste men is exemplary of this, as is also seen in the book and movie adaptation, *Bandit Queen*. The 'Bandit Queen' was a low-caste woman called Phoolan Devi, who had a brief political career as member of lower house of parliament (1996). She was murdered in July 2001.

Activism among Women in India

Oppressed groups will find ways of resisting, however crude or extreme their subjugation is. The arming of women in rural Bihar by 'militant' *Dalit* organizations is certainly a unique phenomenon though not part of generalized trends of *Dalit* female militancy to fight oppressive caste equations. If anything it can be seen as part of the activism sweeping Indian women, whether it is sex workers demanding their 'work' rights or women approaching the courts for justice despite threats and coercion, or women taking up violence. ●

Reference

Kannabiran and Kannabiran (1991), 'Caste and Gender: Understanding Dynamics of Power and Violence', *Economic and Political Weekly*, September 14, pp. 2130–2133.



Muta Kazue is Associate Professor at the Department of Human Sciences, Osaka University, Japan.

Sexual Harassment and Empowerment of Women in Japan

By Muta Kazue

To be 'political' in everyday life draws women closer to politics. The introduction of the concept of 'sexual harassment' to Japan after the exposure of a case shows how consciousness raising around the issue of sexual harassment empowered women through changing the perspectives of how women see their daily-life experiences. Perhaps, being 'political' in everyday life is the correct direction for women to head in a highly developed and stable society such as Japan where women are not easily politically mobilized?

In a democratic, secular and highly developed country like Japan, women and men enjoy equal status in the Constitution and laws. The Government enacted laws such as the Equal Employment Opportunities Law in 1986 and the Basic Law for a Gender-Equal Society in 1999. Still, there is a long way to go for Japanese women to acquire equal status with men on a true and veritable level. For, in spite of the high percentage of labor force participation of women, very few of them hold managerial or administrative positions and women's representation on political bodies remains low.

But it would be wrong to think of Japanese women as merely victims who could be liberated only through further political participation and legislative reforms. To the extent that many Japanese women are happy with their status quo and therefore do not eagerly seek change, it is not enough simply to encourage them to be politically ambitious and run for office. Rather, if we are to hope for a higher degree of equality in Japanese society, it is more, or at least equally, important for women to be 'political' in their everyday lives. This may seem to be a roundabout way, but I believe that in a mature society such as Japan, it is the correct direction for women to head.

In the following I shall show how the issue of sexual harassment has been playing an interesting and important role in raising Japanese women's consciousness by exposing them to the idea that 'the personal is political'.

Sexual Harassment and Consciousness Raising

Sexual harassment, as a problem, came to general attention in Japan in the late 1980s when a female worker in Fukuoka, a city in southern Japan, brought the first sexual harassment case to court in August 1989. Though the phenomenon of sexual harassment itself in Japan stretches back at least to the beginning of modernization and industrialization in the mid-19th century, there was no term of description until 1989. The word for sexual harassment simply did not exist.

The Fukuoka case made a substantial change. Initially the case was reported by the press and TV news nationwide. Although some forms of media such as tabloids and entertainment TV programs trivialized the issue and spread confusion and misunderstanding of the problem, the broad media coverage made the term and concept sexual harassment very popular in a short time. Then a new Japanese word

sekuhara was coined from the English term sexual harassment and spread quickly.

Though the word *sekuhara* itself was new, what it describes was not unfamiliar to many women at all. Just after the Fukuoka case went to court, a questionnaire survey of 6,500 women conducted in 1989 revealed that 59.7% had experienced sexual harassment in the workplace. The harassment took forms such as unwelcome sexual talk, physical touching, exposure to nude posters or pornography, unwelcome advances, and even rape or attempted rape.

Such research had never been possible before the concept of sexual harassment was introduced into Japan. Although many women had been sexually harassed, as the survey indicated, women's experiences with sexual harassment and their revulsion against the insult had never come out in the open, but remained silent and hidden. The word *sekuhara* addressed women's unspoken discomfort and provided them the means to express their unpleasant or even sickening experiences.

As a result of obtaining the word for sexual harassment, or *sekuhara*, women have now realized that their experience of sexual harassment was not their fault. They do not have to

endure such behavior, and they have the right to speak out against it. For Japanese women, it was very much a radical change of the perspective of how they see their daily life experiences. I would say that Japanese women realized that 'the personal is political' through uttering their personal experience with sexual harassment.

Japanese Culture and Sexual Harassment

The concept of sexual harassment has even wider implications when taking Japanese culture into account. The cultural characteristic of Japan to emphasize group ethos rather than individualism makes it more difficult for women to speak up about their sufferings related to sexual harassment and other forms of discrimination. In Japan, it is often perceived as impolite to express one's individual wishes and feelings within a group, and this is especially true for women. According to strict cultural norms, Japanese women are expected to be generous, tender, modest, and reserved. They will be punished if they speak out too assertively, even if their remarks are just. Working women of low status are in the least advantaged position to reject unwelcome advances, and are also the least able to speak out. So there is a strong bias in Japanese culture against women's self-expression and complaints.

Wa, the principle of group harmony, is very important in Japanese society. In companies, both employers and employees would try hard to maintain good relations with each other. Outings, banquets, overnight trips – such occasions are often used in Japanese companies for the purpose of developing *wa*. Here, drinking is always customary, and foolish or outlandish behavior is often

expected and tolerated. It is thus not uncommon that sexual harassment incidents occur during the efforts to develop *wa*. As far as such behavior including sexual harassment is justified in the name of developing *wa*, it is difficult for women to refuse or to speak out. In ordinary office environments, unwelcome sexual jokes are often perceived as creating harmony in the office. Since group harmony is so important, those women who openly complain about sexual harassment are seen to disrupt it. Very often, they are pressed to resign or even fired.

Given that the value of social cohesion in Japanese society tolerates or even encourages sexual harassment against women, it is eminently important that women empower themselves through consciousness raising. To view sexual harassment through a political lens is not only important in the fight against sexual harassment but also in terms of women's dignity, rights and respect. It is necessary for women to learn that they do not have to endure unwelcome sexual conduct. By learning how to speak out against sexual harassment women would become assertive and self-confident in various fields of their life. In other words, consciousness raising against sexual harassment is about learning and respecting women's human rights and personal dignity.

Law and Empowerment of Women

In 1999, a law that requires an employer to establish a policy against sexual harassment in the workplace was enacted as an amendment of the Equal Employment Opportunities Law. At the same time, the Government and local governments issued a code that bans sexual harassment among public officials. With the

legislation in force, most Japanese workplaces, including universities and colleges, have established their own policy against sexual harassment. The progress in policies and regulations concerning sexual harassment, as a result of women's effort to address the issue in the public, should further contribute to help and empower women.

It is, however, important to bear in mind that legislation and regulation from above is not the only way to deal with sexual harassment, a phenomenon that is deeply rooted in culture, gender norms and gender power structures. Without genuine respect for women and women's human rights, sexual harassment can still happen despite laws and orders. Sometimes, the effect of legislation and regulations can be superficial and very limited. Moreover, protection from the authorities should not be based on the assumption that women are mere victims who are too powerless to speak up. In the fight against sexual harassment, women are actors and agents of change themselves. From this point of view, empowerment of women is of paramount importance.

Raising awareness of the problem of sexual harassment, or *sekuhara*, and learning to fight against it is a powerful way for women to become political, especially in the social and cultural context of Japan. Women can empower themselves in daily life through tackling the problems, which could eventually prevail in various fields of their lives. Sexual harassment is simply one example. In a developed and stable society such as Japan where women are not easily politically mobilized, raising consciousness about daily life experiences would enlarge the meaning of 'politics' and bring politics closer to women. ●



Derek Hird is a PhD student at the Center for the Study of Democracy, University of Westminster, London, UK.

Combating Domestic Violence in China: Contemporary Strategies of the Women's Federation

By Derek Hird

Men's domestic violence against women impedes their full economic, social and political participation in society. Since the 1990s, such violence has been addressed as a public issue in the People's Republic of China and increasingly domestic violence is being viewed as a human rights issue. The All China Women's Federation plays a central role in these developments.

The All China Women's Federation is a mass group for women whose organizational structure is very closely inter-linked with the Chinese Communist Party (CCP). Its dual role, as promulgator of state policies and advocate of women's interests, sometimes produces tensions within the organization and between it and other groups. It has been criticized for being too closely beholden to the Party, thereby unable to make forceful criticisms of the Party and state bodies such as the police. On the other hand, its supporters say that its position within the state gives it strong influence over policy and lawmaking.

It was not until the early 1990s that concern about domestic violence entered mainstream public discourse in China through media articles highlighting the problem. Concern about domestic violence then gathered momentum in the approach to the United Nations Fourth World Conference on Women, held in Beijing in 1995. By 2000, a national non-governmental network had been established to research and combat domestic violence.

Voices in the official discourse on domestic violence, such as the Women's Federation, often attribute the fundamental cause of domestic violence to the lingering effect of feudal patriarchal attitudes. They also

tend to emphasize domestic violence's destabilizing effect on the family and social stability. There is comparatively little acknowledgement of the ongoing production of gender hierarchies or that freedom from domestic violence can be viewed from the perspective of women's rights.

Raising Awareness and International Involvement

The Women's Federation works to make officials and the public more aware of the seriousness of domestic violence. For example, the Chongqing Women's Federation worked with the Municipal Committee and the Public Security Bureau to produce a circular stressing that a husband's violence to his wife is not merely a family dispute, but a violation of the law. The Beijing Women's Federation has established anti-violence programs in surrounding rural areas, in particular devoting a lot of attention to Yanqing County. Working jointly with the Yanqing Women's Federation, they have raised awareness about domestic violence through local print and broadcast media. They also developed an educational music and dance performance that toured the area.

The Women's Federation also works in partnership with non-Chinese donor institutions to deliver training schemes. The Canada-China Women's Law

Project is a partnership between the Association of Canadian Community Colleges and the Women's Federation that has been training women since 1998 in the protections available in the law. In the Huimin district of Inner Mongolia, it has also helped train the police in gender awareness and how to deal with domestic violence cases. This has reportedly led to much closer cooperation between the local Women's Federation and police, and a special court office has been set up to ensure that women's rights are not neglected.

The Women's Federation has also jointly organized legal training workshops with Australian women's legal centres and government and police departments. A team from the Shandong Women's Federation went to Australia in 2000 and then took part in a workshop in China involving Chinese and Australian experts. Their experience was built on by a team from the Qinghai Women's Federation that visited Australia in December 2000. The subsequent workshop in China in May 2001 formulated a policy on domestic violence that was subsequently adopted by the Qinghai provincial government. Moreover, these activities inspired the Deputy Governor to implement a publicity campaign against domestic violence.

Economic Assistance, Centres and Shelters

Some Women's Federation branches provide economic assistance to women who have suffered violence to develop their own businesses. They claim that as women gain more economic independence, less violence is reported. Professor Marianne Hester, Bristol University, reports that in such schemes the funding may be withdrawn if the husband continues to be violent – an approach she criticizes for not tackling men's violence directly but instead making abused woman responsible for containing their husbands' violence.

Many centres dedicated to helping women who suffer domestic violence have been established throughout China in recent years with the help of the Women's Federation, including dedicated injury appraisal centres. The first such centre was built in 1999 and receives funding from the Ford Foundation and from the Dutch, Swedish and Norwegian governments. China Central Television made a documentary on the centre that focused, in line with current government policy, on how family harmony helped economic growth.

Until recently, the CCP and the Women's Federation generally viewed shelters for victims of domestic violence as undesirable because they break up the family. Women's NGOs have attempted to establish shelters but their efforts have met with resistance from the authorities. A shelter in Shanghai was forced to close after the Women's Federation complained it was not run by them. Permission to open a shelter in Beijing has consistently been denied to activists. The Yanqing Women's Federation has said that they do not find shelters helpful to long-range development of women victims

and their families. However, the Women's Federation has recently softened its attitude and is now more predisposed to the establishment of shelters.

The Influence of NGOs

NGO activities have forced the Women's Federation to adopt more progressive ways of thinking about women's rights. The Federation, through its status, has influenced government policy, resulting in the introduction of more and more legal and social measures to combat domestic violence. The influence of international feminist theory and practice has no doubt hastened the process of putting domestic violence more prominently on the political agenda in China. However, the most vital role has been played by those Chinese women activists and academics who dared to challenge the Women's Federation and pioneered the setting up of NGOs in China.

NGO campaigning has forced the issue of domestic violence into the public sphere. The change in policy by the Women's Federation, from insisting that abused women should seek refuge with their parents to accepting to some extent the virtues of shelters, is one marker of a breakthrough of the issue of domestic violence from the private realm to the public sphere. It suggests that doctrinal objections to splitting up families are becoming less prominent and are being replaced by a more pragmatic attitude of immediate and professional support for victims of domestic violence.

Strengths and Weaknesses in Future Activities

It is evident that the Women's Federation is now devoting considerable energy and resources to combating domestic violence, but it is too early to say how effective

these measures have been in reducing it. The Federation's strong point is its capacity to work with local government authorities across China in setting up centres and implementing measures to counter domestic violence. Its weakness is its institutional conservatism, which delays its acceptance of new ideas such as shelters, but it has responded to pressure from NGOs and academics in this and other regards in an attempt to stay relevant to the increasingly articulated concerns of ordinary women in China. Although the Women's Federation cannot be expected to diverge substantially from CCP policy, NGOs have shown great willingness to explore different solutions. These NGO activities are crucial in stimulating change in state organizations.

Although many of the current measures being used to combat domestic violence are good, they are not sufficient. Entrenched ideological barriers still remain, for example in the equation of patriarchy with feudalism. Until the Women's Federation and other official organizations embrace a more trenchant, gendered analysis of contemporary Chinese society and the production of domestic violence, the rate of progress in combating domestic violence in China will be held back. ❁

References

Hester, Marianne (2000). 'Domestic Violence in China'. In Jill Radford, Melissa Friedberg and Lynne Harne (eds) *Women, Violence and Strategies for Action*, pp. 149–66. Buckingham: Open University Press.

Milwertz Cecilia (2002). *Beijing Women Organizing for Change*. Copenhagen: NIAS Press.

Ping-Chun Hsiung, Maria Jaschok and Cecilia Milwertz with Red Chan (eds) (2001). *Chinese Women Organizing: Cadres, Feminists, Muslims, Queers*. Oxford: Berg.



For information on the Women's Federation and domestic violence (in Chinese), see their website at <http://www.women.org.cn/womenorg/weiquan/weiquanshijiao/jiatingbaoli>. The English version of the website (<http://www.women.org.cn/womenorg/English>) also carries some articles on domestic violence.



Juree Vichit-Vadakan is Professor at the School of Public Administration, National Institute of Development Administration, Bangkok, Thailand.

Under-Representation of Women in Thai Politics

By Juree Vichit-Vadakan

Politics in Thailand, as in many other societies, remains one of the firmest bastions of male dominance. Two of the questions frequently asked concerning the under-representation of women in public office are: What difference does it make? What are the reasons for the paucity of women in politics? Many factors help shape the structure of opportunities for women's representation in elective office in Thailand, including the role of structural barriers, the impact of political culture, and the importance of social relations. In addition to these factors, the differences in how men and women politicians define and perceive politics restrict women's advancement in political life.

Why Women? Why Politics?

Many years ago when I first studied the issue of women in politics, I was asked repeatedly by a host of people, both men and women, but mostly women, why should women be bothered with politics. The questioners varied in background and disposition. Some were honestly curious and wanted to know, while others were annoyed at the subject matter for different reasons. One line of thinking argued that since politics was considered 'dirty' and not 'honorable', women should steer clear from it. Another line of thinking believed that society should adhere to the division of labor by allowing men to dominate the public sphere while women should devote themselves to caring, nurturing and properly socializing children. Others thought that women have enough 'duties' and responsibilities already, and they should not be encouraged to take on more.

Many strides and much progress have been made since then. Although some of the above questions may still be raised from time to time, more women and some men will now argue that women's participation in politics is necessary because society needs to have balanced views on both men and women's needs and requirements. That

public policies should be formulated with the interests of both sexes represented. That the allocation of resources has to address the needs of both men and women. We have also learned that women tend to advocate better health, education, environment and other quality of life issues, which represent the 'soft' side of development that are so critical and yet often neglected. Hence, women's role in public decision making will be invaluable to society as a whole.

Under-Representation of Women in Politics

In Thailand, since the abolition of absolute monarchy in 1932, democratic politics was introduced along with electoral politics which did not exclude women from voting or from becoming candidates for political election. Today, in 2004, more than seven decades later, women are still greatly under-represented at different levels. After the last national election of 2001, only 47 women won seats as members of parliament accounting for 9.2% of all MPs. In the last senate election of 2000, only 21 women out of 115 women candidates were successful in winning seats. The 21 women represent 10.5% of the total members of the senate. Of the

current 36 cabinet members, three are women, an improvement on past governments but still less than 10% in the cabinet.

Reasons for Under-representation

Structural Dimension: Political parties that choose candidates, groom them and field them in elections tend to be dominated by men. As such, intentionally or unintentionally, women are overlooked by the existing structure and system. Male political leaders socialize and bond mostly with men. Familiarity, trust and comfort with members of the same sex make party decision makers generally choose male candidates. Unless a female candidate is exceptional, she will be tossed aside in favor of a man.

Cultural Dimension: Thai cultural beliefs and practices in the past assigned women to be subservient to men in general, and in leadership and public roles in particular. Hence women's place was in the inner/domestic/private domain, to help and support their menfolk as 'hind legs' of the elephant. Such belief invariably imposed limits on women to speak up, to assert their opinions and to make decisions. The best that women could do was to operate behind the scenes. The culturally prescribed public role of a refined

woman was that of a polite, soft spoken, agreeable, obedient, and supportive wife, daughter or sister. It was believed that as women, they were more imbued with bad karma than men and consequently had to play a subservient role to men. Such beliefs and practices have bound women to believe that they are less intellectual and less capable in making major decisions and judgements than men.

Having less opportunity to exercise leadership and decision-making, most Thai women in the past, and even in the present, simply lacked the confidence to go forth in the public sphere.

Social Dimension: The traditional division of labor in Thai society placed the duties of child-care, care for the elderly, household chores and maintenance and upkeep of all social relations and reciprocities on women. These duties were in addition to income generating activities like helping to work in the field or other economic undertakings. As mutual assistance and reciprocities among relatives and friends were crucial to maintain a network of social relations, women would have to pitch in to help others to be in their good graces. Such requirements and practices have been carried over even into society today. We find women perpetually busy with juggling various tasks and requirements. In an earlier study, I found Thai women less informed about current events and political news simply because of the pressing commitments to their family and social relations. For as long as men do not co-share in household and parental duties, most women will not be able to participate fully in politics.

It is not uncommon for women to be involved in public life and politics after their children have grown up. It is better late than never, one may

well say. But to do politics is highly competitive and demanding, and to enter late in the game inadvertently places one at some disadvantage. Experiences on the job, learning and seniority count in the field of politics. Perhaps, this is one reason why women politicians in Thailand do not tend to rise to the highest level as they cannot place themselves in the field as early as the men.

Politics: Defined, Perceived and Experienced

Although more empirical studies need to be carried out to verify initial findings about the differences in how men and women politicians define and perceive politics, some preliminary differences in the case of Thailand can be put forth here.

Women and men tend to define politics in broad and euphemistic terms like an act to help the country; to work for the people; to improve society; to represent the interests of the constituency; to solve social and economic problems; to introduce meaningful changes, etc. The common theme is that politics is for the good of the others and never for oneself. Interestingly enough, women politicians tend to define good politics as servicing and helping others in society. In fact, many have defined politics as the supreme avenue for charitable acts, almost as if good politics is charity well executed.

How then is politics perceived in terms of serving personal goals? Women politicians of some years back have de-emphasized their own interest to the point of obliterating their own goals and objectives in

politics. None professed to make politics a career with upward mobility. Declaring that positions were not important, they insisted that they intended to carry out good deeds to benefit others. In fact, it was not a question of modesty or humility among women politicians of yesterday; it was a perception of their primary role as good 'social workers' with no personal agenda or motive to gain higher positions. Hence, women politicians did not aim high nor did they dare aspire to be party secretary, party leader or executive. They did not scheme, plot and plan, bargain and negotiate to get cabinet posts or other positions like key parliamentary committee membership. In fact, many women politicians tolerated the fact that powerful committee memberships were either not given to them or were taken away from them.

Most male politicians, however, as a rule, appeared to be more competitive and oriented to upward mobility. They seemed to see politics as an opportunity for a long-term career and different levels of rewards to be attained. In other words, they would plot and plan to form alliances and networks to get into the inner circle of power, to advance themselves into positions of perceived or real power. Male politicians would easily admit to aiming for and wishing for advancement.

The stark contrast perhaps explains why Thai women politicians stay in politics for a shorter period than men. Tolerance of criticisms (which are often less kind and unfair to women than to men) appears to be low. Women politicians tend to leave the field in disillusionment, defeat, or even heartbreak from less than satisfactory or even painful experiences in politics. ●

When Competitive Elections in China Let Women Down

By Jude Howell

Jude Howell is Professor of Social Policy and Director of the Center for Civil Society at the London School of Economics and Political Science, UK.

The popularization of village elections across China from the late 1980s onwards has attracted considerable domestic and international attention. Whilst optimistic democrats have hailed these as a 'silent revolution', paving the way for democratization from the grassroots upwards, more cynical observers have depicted these as a mere façade, aimed solely at relegitimizing the Communist Party in the rural areas and staving external critique of China's authoritarian polity and human rights record. However, there has been remarkably little concern about the impact of democratic elections on women's political representation in rural areas.

With the introduction of multi-candidate elections and grassroots nomination of candidates through direct elections, the numerical representation of women in village committees has suffered a decline in some villages and counties. In the past, village cadres were appointed by the township authorities and committees generally included one woman so as to ensure the implementation of family planning policy. Though systematic figures are not available, reports from local Women's Federation cadres from the late 1980s onwards and village case-studies have drawn attention to the declining representation of women in village committees. According to Fan (2000), only 1% of all village committee chairs and 20% of all members are women.

The trend is remarkable on a number of counts. First, unlike many countries, China is spearheaded by a political party that has, throughout its history, promoted gender equality, as evidenced in the prohibition of and campaigns against child marriage, wife-beating, polygamy, and support to women's participation in the waged economy, state provision of child-care and other measures. Second, again unlike

many countries, China has a long established women's state machinery, primarily in the form of the All China Women's Federation, whose tentacles reach down to most of China's villages. Third, since liberation in 1949, women in China have had a high level of participation in economic production, which in Marxist theory is a crucial ingredient for women's emancipation. Finally, it might be expected that the introduction of democratic practices such as competitive elections would enhance rather than hinder the advancement of political equality between men and women. Why is it then that female political representation in rural areas has been on the decline? What combination of factors account for this new trend. What counter-measures are local governments and the Women's Federation taking?

Accounting for Inequality – Women's Federation Perspectives

Theories of gender and political representation point to a combination of variables that hinder women's advancement in formal politics. These include structural factors such as the gendered household division of labour which leaves women primarily responsible for child-

care and household maintenance; cultural and religious factors which shape the way women and men are socialised into particular roles, how gendered notions of the 'public' and 'private' are constructed and maintained, and how gendered norms affecting roles and behaviour are reproduced; political and institutional factors such as the working hours of legislatures, the political system, and the selection procedures of political parties; and patriarchal ideologies which reinforce notions of the inferiority and subordination of women. In the case of China, all these factors play a role and are acknowledged in relevant academic literature, in the reports of local Women's Federations, and in everyday discourses on the subject. Reference is invariably made to the effects of the remaining vestiges of feudal ideology, the double burden, women's 'low quality' (*suzhi di*) compared to men, and discriminatory recruitment, selection, promotion and retirement policies. As a senior city Women's Federation leader put it, 'First, women don't come forward; second their educational quality is low; and third, men don't want to be led

by women'. Though all these factors undoubtedly combine to affect women's political representation, they cannot explain the ebb and flow of women's numerical political representation over time, and the notable decline in women's political representation in rural areas during the reform period. To understand this, we have to turn to the notion of 'state-derived feminism'.

The Paradox of State-derived Feminism

State-derived feminism describes not just the official gender ideology in post-1949 China but also the set of practical strategies used to enhance women's status and the particular institutional arrangements made to that end. It is 'state-derived' because the Party-state produces the official gender ideology, crafts the strategies for addressing the causes of female oppression, and mobilizes processes of social change. By establishing the All China Women's Federation as the mass organization representing women, the Party-state created a monopolistic structure of representation, an institutional channel through which to mobilise women both for their economic and political advancement and for the promotion of Party policies and purposes. State-derived feminism has a monopoly on the analysis of women's oppression, on the management of social change, and on the construction of alternatives. Yet state-derived feminism proves to be a paradox: on the one hand, it has been crucial to getting women both into economic production and politics; on the other hand, it has become an impediment to analysing afresh the new challenges facing women in the reform period and devising strategies to

overcome these. There are several reasons for this.

First, while state-derived feminism may have been an appropriate ideological and institutional force in the era of planning, in the context of competition, both in the marketplace and now in the grassroots arena of village elections, state intervention has become harder to justify and indeed harder to realise. Furthermore, recent central government measures to reduce the burden of fees on village residents has led to a trimming down of village committees, auguring less well for the participation of women in such organs. Second, the Marxist-Leninist-Maoist analysis of gender oppression, which underpins official gender ideology, cannot adequately explain the changing forms and sources of oppression in the reform period. Even though the growth of more independent women's organizations and women's studies centres in the 1980s and 1990s has stimulated new approaches to understanding female oppression, tight-publishing controls, self-censorship and the reluctance of the All China Women's Federation to take on board different perspectives have limited the impact. Third, in the meantime 'unreconstructed' official gender ideology competes uncomfortably with the emergence of new gender ideologies introduced through the marketplace that present alternative notions of femininity, womanhood and gendered life roles. By dampening discussion of non-Marxist gender analyses, the All China Women's Federation has ended up stalling the adaptation of official theory and ideology to the changing circumstances of the reform period, thereby widening further the gap

between women's diverse realities and official ideology. Marooned in the rut of an unrevised Marxist theory and ideology, the All China Women's Federation is unable to explore the structural roots of gender oppression. As a result, it has to rely on appeals to the need to 'protect' women as an essentially vulnerable group, a strategy which reinforces not only the idea of women as weak, but also the emphasis on the discursive rather than the more uncomfortable structural. Finally, the dependency of the Federation on the Chinese Communist Party for its legitimacy, for its overall purpose and direction, and for its basic resources has undermined its capacity to act resolutely in the interests of an increasingly diverse constituency of women. Illustrative of this dependence is the preoccupation of top leaders of the Federation with the numerical representation of women in politics rather than with a broader strategy of empowering women to participate in political and policy processes that affect their everyday lives. In brief, though enduring feudal, patriarchal thinking, women's double burden, women's internalization of constructions of themselves as less capable and weak, and discriminatory personnel practices all contribute to women's low representation in politics, state-derived feminism too has paradoxically played a role. Faced with the competition of the political market at village level, state-derived feminism has been unable to counter a backlash against women.

Promoting Women's Representation in Politics

State-derived feminism, however, is not a lost cause. It would be foolish to discard an

organization such as the All China Women's Federation, which has extensive outreach and inroads into Party-state institutions and political processes. Nor indeed should a ruling party that maintains a progressive gender ideology and rhetoric and in good faith seeks to 'protect' the 'weaker, vulnerable sex' through policy and legal measures be lightly cast aside. The key issue facing the Party-state, and specifically the All China Women's Federation, as the competitive principle takes a stronghold in political life, is how to revise state-derived feminism so it can serve as a more effective force to promote women's representation in politics.

Already there are indications that some forward-thinking women in both the Federation and the Ministry of Civil Affairs, the ministry responsible for overseeing village elections, at national and local levels, are seeking to halt the decline in women's representation in village committees through fresh approaches and new tactics. Since the late 1990s, the local Women's Federation in Qianxi County, Hebei province has actively sought to promote women's representation on village committees through voter education and leadership training for women. This initiative has since extended to other provinces, with training focussed on potential women

candidates prior to an election. Women activists and scholars are challenging the construction of women as being of 'low quality', suggesting not only that this notion reflects women's lack of self-confidence but also that it serves to perpetuate their subordination. Awareness is growing that the clause in the Organic Law requiring there to be 'an appropriate number of women' on village committees is inadequate for ensuring the representation of women. In the light of this there is increasing interest in the idea of quotas as a way of ensuring that women are represented on village committees. The provincial Civil Affairs Bureau and Women's Federation in Hunan province has introduced a regulation requiring that village committees have at least one woman member. In a similar vein, Qianxi County is considering reserving a place for women on the village committee. All these initiatives provide some hope that not only can the underrepresentation of women in politics at all levels be stemmed but also that state-derived feminism can be saved from irrelevance.

Effective Representation

Nevertheless, even if women's representation in village committees does increase in the next decade, the thorny issue remains that numerical representation is no substitute

for effective representation. In many countries it is well known that women political leaders do not always have a concern for gender issues, let alone pursue a gender agenda. In the case of China, women in village committees invariably are assigned the task of implementing government policy on family planning, rather than other portfolios such as village economic development. As a result, they are perceived more as government officials than representative agents concerned with gender issues. What is clear is that the introduction of democratic practices will not automatically bring benefits to women. Village elections may herald a new politics in China, but without a revised state-derived feminism, women may be left behind. ●

References

- Fan Yu (2000), 'Cunweihui Xuanju: Nongcun Funü Fazhan de Jiyu yu Tiaozhan' (Village Committee Elections: Opportunities and Challenges for Rural Women's Development), in China Women's Research Conference and UNIFEM (eds), *1995 Shijie Funü Dahui Wu Zhou Nian Yanjiuhui* (Beijing Plus Five Conference), Beijing, pp. 273–275.
- Howell, Jude (2002), 'Women's Political Participation in China: Struggling to Hold Up Half the Sky', *Parliamentary Affairs*, vol. 55, no. 1, January, pp. 43–56.

The theme of the next issue of *NIASnytt* will be 'Multilateral Organizations in Central Asia'. The guest editor is Dr Indra Øverland of the Norwegian Institute of International Affairs (NUPI). Dr Øverland is also organizing a conference on multilateral organizations in the Caucasus and Central Asia, in Oslo on 10–11 June 2004. The conference will be a unique forum for academics and practitioners to meet and interact. A programme will be available from mid-April 2004. • Web site: www.nupi.no/conference/

The June issue of *NIASnytt* will, naturally, reflect the main topics of the conference: multilateral organizations and their operation in the sphere of the conference themes 'Humanitarian and development aid', 'Conflict prevention, management and resolution' and 'Migration and refugee policy'. If you wish to contribute a paper to the conference and/or an article to the next *NIASnytt*, please write to Indra Øverland at <conference@nupi.no>

Due to the date of the conference, *NIASnytt* no 2/2004 will – exceptionally – appear later, at the *end* of June.

Quota Systems in Pakistan under the Musharraf Regime

By Irene Graff

Political empowerment of women has for decades been on the international agenda. Both the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights ensure women an equal right with men to political participation. A much favoured measure for implementing these aims, both by the CEDAW committee and the Human Rights Committee, is the introduction of quotas for women in political bodies. In recent years, the Musharraf government in Pakistan has put into force various quota systems, which have resulted in a larger share of political representation by Pakistani women than ever before.



Irene Graff is a researcher at the Institute of Women's Law, Department of Public and International Law, University of Oslo, Norway.

Pakistan became an independent state in 1947. In 1956, Pakistan's first constitution was adopted, containing a provision reserving a small number of seats (5%) for women in the National Assembly. The current constitution, adopted in 1973, contained a similar quota provision as previously, but expanded quotas to the provincial assemblies. In 1988, however, the quota system under the 1973 Constitution lapsed. Despite protests, lawsuits and campaigns from Pakistani women's organizations, the quota system was not revived over the 1990s. In 1996, Pakistan signed the CEDAW, taking on a legal obligation to ensure Pakistani women their rights under the convention. In 1999, General Pervez Musharraf seized power through a military coup. The goals of his government are to give the people of Pakistan 'true democracy' and render power back to the masses, including women. Following the recommendations of international human rights bodies, the Musharraf government has introduced quotas for women's political representation. In 2001, the government reserved 33% of the seats in all elected local

government bodies for women. In 2002, 20% of the seats in the provincial assemblies and the national Parliament were reserved for women.

The Federal- and Provincial-Level Quota Systems

Pakistan is a federal republic with a two-tier governmental structure: the federal and the provincial level. At the federal level, the Parliament is separated into two chambers: the National Assembly and the Senate. 60 out of 342 seats have been reserved for women in the National Assembly, and 17 out of 100 seats in the Senate. In each of Pakistan's four provincial assemblies, about 20% of the total number of seats is now reserved for women.

While candidates for general seats in the national and provincial assemblies are directly elected, the reserved seats for women are allocated through an indirect election. During general elections, each party submits two lists of women candidates in every province, one for the National and one for the Provincial Assembly. How many women are elected from each list will then depend on the total number of general seats secured by their political party in the respective assemblies. Thus, in order for a woman to

be elected on a reserved seat, she must convince her party leaders to put her name on the party's lists of female candidates and hope that her party will do well in the elections. In the general elections on October 10th 2002, 12 women were directly elected to general seats in the National Assembly. Together with the 60 seats that were reserved for women, this brings the total number of women representatives in the assembly up to 72 out of 342 (21%).

In the Senate, however, there is no difference between general seats and women's seats in election procedures. Both are elected by the members of the provincial assemblies through a single transferable vote system. Consequently, female Senators can avoid the discriminatory treatment that women elected on reserved seats can be subject to, by referring to the fact that they were elected through a fair and equal election.

The Local-Level Quota System

In 2001, the Musharraf government introduced a new local government structure, which consists of three levels of governing bodies: the Union Council, the rural *Tehsil* Council/the urban Town Council, and the District

Council. The new system reserves a 33% quota for women and was mainly implemented through the 2001 local elections. In the elections, over 30,000 women were elected to the union councils, which was considered a great victory in the eyes of the quota supporters (Reyes 2002).

The Union Council is the lowest level of the new local government structure. The union constitutes a multi-member ward for election of the council members, and all members of a Union Council are elected by universal adult suffrage. Since six out of its 21 seats are reserved for women, the quota for women at this level is actually 28,57% instead of 33%. This is because no quotas are allocated for the mayors' and non-Muslim seats. At the next level, the *Tehsil* and Town Council consists automatically of all Union Council deputy mayors in a *tehsil* or town. In addition, 33% of the council seats are reserved for women, who are indirectly elected by all members of the Union Councils in that *tehsil* or town. At the district level, the District Council includes automatically all Union Council mayors with an additional 33% seats reserved for women. These seats are divided among the *tehsils*/towns in the district according to the number of unions in each *tehsil*/town. Female members of the District Council are indirectly elected by the members of the Union Councils in the district.

Effects of the Quota Systems

It seems that the Musharraf government has, by implementing the quota systems, taken a big step to fulfill women's political rights under CEDAW. As a result, women's political representation has increased significantly. To

the extent that improvements of women's status have been far from adequate in Pakistan, the introduction and implementation of quotas for women is definitely a positive change.

Considering that the quota systems have been functioning for only one–two years, however, it is still early to say what effects quotas could have in relation to gender equality and women's equal exercise of political power. Clearly, for Pakistani women to enjoy equal participation in politics with men, many social and cultural barriers must be overcome. Not until this has been achieved can women and men be equally treated in competition for political positions.

In a socially segregated society like Pakistan, gender equality in politics as an issue has a class dimension and should therefore not be discussed in isolation. The enlargement of women's representation in general does not benefit women in different social groups equally. As a matter of fact, it is women from the upper classes that dominate the provincial and federal assemblies, while women from the lower classes are only represented at lower levels. This is unfortunate from an equal representation perspective, and gender quotas alone will not be able to change the situation unless specific quotas for the lower classes are introduced in higher government bodies.

Quota Sizes and Political Accountability

While the quotas undoubtedly represent a vast improvement for the political representation of Pakistani women, it is questionable whether the 20% quota at the federal and provincial levels is enough. Should the quota be bigger to

give women the necessary political clout? The 33% quota at the local level, however, is generally regarded as adequate for the women councilors to build a 'critical mass' (Dahlerup 1998). Nevertheless, no extensive research has been done so far to examine the effect of an enlarged women's representation. At the local level, newspaper reports suggest a mixed picture. In some communities the women councilors seem quite active, while in others they do not even attend the council meetings. It seems that the number of women elected is an important, but certainly not the only factor to consider regarding women's participation in politics.

A great concern of the Pakistani women's movement is the political accountability of the elected female representatives. Due to the extensive use of indirect elections, they fear that female candidates will be made completely dependent on the goodwill of their colleagues and parties in order to be elected. Without being directly accountable to the public, these women may evade from taking a stand in issues related to women's rights once elected. It is, amongst others, for this reason that the Pakistani women's movement is demanding direct elections of women on reserved seats. ●

References

- Dahlerup, Drude (1998). 'Using Quotas to Increase Women's Political Representation', in Azza Karam (ed.) *Women in Parliament: Beyond Numbers*, International IDEA 1998, pp. 91-106.
- Reyes, Socorro L. (2002). 'Quotas for Women for Legislative Seats at the Local Level in Pakistan', International IDEA.

Women's Studies, Women's Movement, and Women's Policy in Korea

By Shim Young-Hee

Women-related laws and policies can be used as indicators of women's status in South Korea. Recently these laws and related policies have changed. Women's studies and the women's movement have played a major role in bringing about these changes.

The number of laws and policies relating specifically to women in Korea has increased drastically within the past ten–fifteen years. As women's social participation began to expand, laws and policies to secure equality in employment between the sexes were enacted in the 1980s. In the 1990s, a series of new legislative measures were introduced. The Ten Tasks to Expand Women's Social Participation accepted a partial quota system for political representation and a Women Development Act (1995) was enacted. To prevent discrimination in education and work, the Gender Discrimination Prevention and Relief Act was legislated in 1999. In addition, maternity protection clauses were added to the Basic Labour Act, the Sexual Equality in Employment Act, and the Employment Insurance Act, and these were enacted in 2001. The aim was to reinforce maternity protection for working women, to support them in taking care of their children while working, and to relieve and/or subsidize the cost of maternity protection.

Sexual violence and domestic violence can be strongly punished based on such legislation as the Special Act on Sexual Violence (1993) and the Prevention of Domestic Violence and Victim Protection Act (1997). Regulations on sexual harassment can be found in the Gender Discrimination Prevention and Relief Act (1999). Since 2000, the Youth Sex Protection Act has enforced regulations on youth prosti-

tution. In addition to these laws from the 1990s and the year 2000, women's organizations are currently working for a Sexual Trafficking Prevention Act.

Three factors have played a role in bringing about increased legislation for gender equality: first, societal changes and the impacts of modernization conflicts, and heightened awareness of women. Second, the institutionalization and development of women's studies. Third, vitalization of the women's movement and institutionalization of the political bodies handling women's policy.

Institutionalization and Development of Women's Studies

It is well known that South Korea achieved rapid economic growth through government-led export-oriented industrialization, aided by developmental authoritarianism, from 1961 to 1987. Critical reflections on the pathological consequences of this so-called 'rush to modernization' worked as an important driving force behind the institutionalization and the development of women's studies in Korea. To understand the organization and institutionalization of women's studies, we need to briefly review the establishment of departments and courses on women's studies in colleges and universities.

In 1976, women's studies courses were offered at Ewha Woman's University for the first time in Korea. Later, in 1981, the university also established a graduate department of women's

studies. The women's studies courses created by many colleges and universities in the mid-1980s rapidly gained in popularity. Women's universities and co-ed universities, including my university, the Hanyang University, started graduate programs in women's studies in the 1990s. With the institutionalization of women's studies, the Korean Association of Women's Studies, a voluntary organization of researchers in women's studies, was created in October 1984 in recognition of the need for a common intellectual forum to develop women's studies into an academic discipline.

What then is the current status of research on women's issues in Korea, which still has the legacy of Confucianism and is still a patriarchal society? Through the institutionalization of women's studies, research on women's issues has produced a large quantity of studies related to the women's movement, substantially adding to the studies made before its institutionalization. Because of its interdisciplinary character, women's studies have drawn female researchers from diverse fields, bringing about not only quantitative but also qualitative changes over the past 30 years.

First of all, the 1990s has seen a notable change in the focus of research. Research topics have diversified to a great extent, and once popular topics such as labour, gender and class are being supplanted by a rising interest in culture and sexuality,



Shim Young-Hee (Sim, Yeong-hui) is Professor of Sociology and Women's Studies at Hanyang University, Seoul, Korea.

including sexual violence and sexual harassment. Theoretical orientations have also changed. In the 1990s, the scope of theory was expanded through the translation of books, which present more comprehensive and inclusive theoretical frameworks including socialist feminism, which had occupied a central place in women's emancipation theory in the 1980s. In particular, books incorporating poststructuralist and postmodernist theory were widely introduced. The appearance of theories of difference in the second half of the 1990s brought with it philosophical discussions on the possibility of a feminist epistemology and feminist ethics based on the unique characteristics of female psychology, sexuality, and morality.

Methodology also changed. With the growth of women's popular culture in cinema, drama and art, discourse analysis and cultural analysis were applied with higher frequency. Furthermore, unlike the 1980s, research on women's issues stopped being 'ghettoized' and began to be incorporated into the academic mainstream. As a result, feminist philosophy, feminist jurisprudence, feminist literature, and the history of

women have established themselves as independent fields of research.

Finally, the composition of the group of researchers themselves changed. In the 1970s and 1980s, the majority of women's studies scholars were activists in the women's movement and consequently, women's emancipation theory heavily invoked women's movement theory. With the progress of institutional developments, such as the establishment of the Korean Association of Women's Studies and degree programs, the 1990s saw an expansion and increased specialization in the body of researchers as well as a diversification of research topics. In the area of practice, efforts to secure women's rights at the institutional level focused on the experiences of oppression unique to women, as well as structural problems, legislation and revision of laws, and policy demands.

Vitalization of the Women's Movement and Institutionalization of Specialized Bodies in Charge of Women's Policy

The institutionalization and development of women's studies, in turn, were an important force in vitalizing the women's movement and institutionalizing specialized bodies in charge of women's policy. Those involved in women's studies participated in the women's movement and formed the nucleus of the movement. Moreover, the activities of the women's movement diversified with the development of women's studies. While the women's movement of the 1980s focused on the labour movement and demands for equal participation and treatment of women, in the 1990s it diversified into the movement to eradicate sexual violence and patriarchy and to make peace nationally,

internationally and in everyday life, and it actively sought international alliances.

The bodies and agencies in charge of women's policy also underwent changes which seem to have had an influence on the demands voiced by women's movement groups. The Korea Women's Development Institute and the Women's Policy Review Committee were established in 1983. In 1988, the Office of the Second Minister of Political Affairs was created to handle issues related to women, children, juveniles and the elderly, and since 1990 it has focused on women's affairs only. With the creation of the Special Committee on Women's Affairs in the National Assembly in 1994, laws concerning women's affairs could be passed with the agreement of twenty or more representatives according to the National Assembly Law. This enabled women-related policies to be written into law.

The post of Ministry of Gender Equality was established in January 2001. On the international stage, as Korea joined the United Nations in 1991, it came to participate in a variety of activities relating to women pursued by the UN. With Korea's endorsement of the UN Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), the environment was created to make and implement women's policies in line with international standards upholding the principle of equality between men and women. The formation and change of women's policy and the corresponding rise of women's status in Korea can be understood in this context of an active women's movement, the establishment and development of women's studies and the entry of Korea into the UN system. ☀



Members of the Women Making Peace are demonstrating wearing white garments symbolizing peace at Myongdong Cathedral, Seoul, 24 July, 2003. 29 July 2003 was the 50th Anniversary of the Armistice Treaty of the Korean War. The slogans read: 'Fifty Years (of Armistice) Is Enough!', 'Change Armistice into Peace!'
Photo by Kim Cheol-Soo, Voice of the People

Staff News



Anja Møller Rasmussen was employed as new Head of the NIAS Library and Information Centre (NIAS LINC) and IT Supervisor. Anja Møller Rasmussen took up her position on 2 February 2004. Anja has previously worked for the Danish Meat Research Institute, the Danish Ministry of Foreign Affairs and COWI Consult.



Camilla Tenna Sørensen, MA (Political Science), is working at NIAS in February–March, to help to organize a seminar on the March 20 presidential election and referendum in Taiwan. The seminar will be held at NIAS on 24 March.

Camilla also – on behalf of the Danish Ministry of Foreign Affairs – planned a programme for the visit to Denmark of Mr Madhav Kumar Nepal, General Secretary of the Nepalese Communist Party from 27 February to 3 March.



Michael Jacobsen rejoined NIAS for the spring. Michael Jacobsen will be formulating a research project with the working title 'Diasporic Linking and De-Linking in Southeast Asia: Comparative Studies of Chinese Entrepreneurs in Indonesia and Malaysia'. The project introduces a multisided approach towards the current Chinese diaspora in order to delineate and compare processes of diasporisation and de-diasporisation in different societal settings in selected regions in Indonesia and Malaysia.

Recent Visitors



Indrajit Banerjee, Nanyang Technological University in Singapore, rejoined NIAS for the period 20 November – 22 December 2003. During this visit Indrajit Banerjee continued research consultations with NIAS researchers.



Gørild Heggelund, Ph.D. and Senior Research Fellow at Fritiof Nansen Institute, Oslo, gave a lecture on resettlement and environmental policymaking in connection with the controversial Three Gorges Dam project, on 18 February.

Register in NIAS's Contact Database for information and subscription services

In order to provide optimal services to our users and partners, NIAS maintains a Contact Database, which enables us to send you up-to-date and relevant information on contemporary Asia and the field of Asian studies. We now offer a number of services to our users and plan to expand our information services further with more area specific information. Present services include:

NIAS Update: NIAS's monthly electronic newsletter of Asian studies events in the Nordic countries and beyond. Subscribers to NIAS Update will also receive NIAS This Week, an occasional news bulletin about NIAS events. The latest issue of NIAS Update is available online at <http://www.nias.ku.dk/activities/publications/update>

NIASnytt - Asia Insights a quarterly with thematic articles on current Asia-related issues by both Nordic and international experts. For more information on *NIASnytt*, and for access to issues available online, please visit: <http://www.nias.ku.dk/nytt>

NIAS Press Book Catalogue: annual presentation of new and backlist titles published by NIAS Press

NIAS Press Book Alerts: electronic news on new and forthcoming books from NIAS Press
For more information on NIAS Press please visit NIAS Press website at <http://www.niaspress.dk>

New Books in the NIAS Library and Information Centre, NIAS LINC: electronic list of new acquisitions in the library, sorted by region and country and issued more than 50 times a year.
For more information on NIAS LINC's services please visit the website at <http://www.niaslinc.dk>

NIAS SUPRA Database: NIAS's Support Programme for Asian Studies is open to students residing in the Nordic countries, carrying out thesis work on an Asian topic within a MA or PhD university program. Services offered are: interlibrary loans, NIAS scholarships, information services, thesis advice, international research workshops-cum-training courses, publication of dissertations, discount on NIAS Press titles, NIASnytt, SUPRA News.

For more information on SUPRA, please contact **Erik Skaaning** at erik@nias.ku.dk or visit <http://www.nias.ku.dk/activities/supra>.

NIAS Curriculum Vitae Database: NIAS wants to develop an up-to-date database of Asia researchers within all academic disciplines in the Nordic countries. (Researchers from elsewhere will also be welcome.) The purpose of the database will be to maintain up-to-date information on researchers interested in working with NIAS in collaborative research projects and research-based consultancy projects.

For more information on the CV Database, please contact **Carol Richards** at carol.richards@nias.ku.dk.

To subscribe to the services above you need to first register in NIAS' Contact Database, which you can do online at <http://www.nias.ku.dk/contact/contactdb.htm>. When you register in the database you can also choose geographical and/or subject areas of interest to you. This information is optional, but as it is this information which will enable us to provide you with more area specific information, we would recommend that you indicate your preferences here. It is possible to choose max. 4 geographical areas and 4 subject areas.

As a subscriber of *NIASnytt* your basic address information has automatically been registered in the database. To view and update your details, subscribe to more services and/or provide us with details on your specific areas of interest, you will need your password and login. You can obtain these by sending an e-mail to **Carol Richards** at carol.richards@nias.ku.dk.

————>>>>



Erik Skaaning



Carol Richards

NIAS Grants

Guest Researcher Scholarships for Nordic Scholars

This type of scholarship is designed for senior researchers and doctoral candidates based in the Nordic countries. It offers researchers an opportunity to work at NIAS as an affiliated researcher for 2 or 4 weeks. A scholarship includes inexpensive travel to and from Copenhagen and accommodation with full board in a NIAS room at Nordisk Kollegium. The guest researcher enjoys full access to the Institute's library services and research tools, computer facilities, contact networks and scholarly environment. Stays are arranged subject to a time schedule administered by NIAS.

The application form is available at

<http://www.nias.ku.dk/activities/supra/NIASNordicGuestResearcherSch.doc>

Contact Scholarships for Nordic Graduate Students

These scholarships are designed to make NIAS's library and other resources accessible to graduate students in the Nordic countries. A scholarship covers inexpensive travel to and from Copenhagen and accommodation with full board in a NIAS room at Nordisk Kollegium for a period of two weeks. Stays are arranged subject to a time schedule administered by NIAS.

The application form is available at

<http://www.nias.ku.dk/activities/supra/NIASContactScholarshipsAppli.doc>

Øresund Scholarships

Researchers and students from Lund and Roskilde universities are invited to apply for NIAS's 'Øresund Scholarships'. The candidate will be seated in the library's reading room and will be offered the same extended library services as the regular holders of contact scholarships. Only transport costs are covered by the scholarship. Accommodation costs and incidental expenses are not covered. Stays are arranged subject to a time schedule administered by NIAS.

Find the application form at

<http://www.nias.ku.dk/activities/supra/NIASresundScholarshipAppliac.doc>

Application Deadline

Monday, 5 April 2004 for scholarships during the period May–June, and August–September 2004.

Further information on NIAS's scholarship programme on the web:

<http://www.nias.ku.dk/activities/supra/scholarships.htm#students>.



Erik R. Skaaning can be contacted for further information on NIAS's scholarship programme at erik@nias.ku.dk

Please note that subscribers who don't check or update their information in the Contact Database at least once a year will be deleted from the database!

For more information on NIAS's Contact Database and related services, please visit <http://www.nias.ku.dk/contact/contactdb.htm>

Recent Visitors



Trudy Jacobsen from the University of Queensland in Brisbane, Australia stayed at NIAS in November–December 2003. She is a Cambodia specialist, who is collaborating with Alexandra Kent, NIAS.



At the end of January, **Md. Asaduzzaman**, University of Helsinki, held a Guest Researcher Scholarship; **Reetta Lindgren**, also University of Helsinki, held a Contact Scholarship. Md. Asaduzzaman is carrying out a Ph.D. project on *Decentralisation in Bangladesh*. Reetta Lindgren is working on an MA thesis on *Women and Work in China*.



Budi Agustono, Lecturer at the University of North Sumatra in Medan, Indonesia, will be working at NIAS from January through April. Budi Agustono, who is writing a doctoral thesis on *Regional Conflicts in North Sumatra*, is collaborating with Timo Kivimäki on a project financed by EU's Asia-Link Programme.



Su Hao, Deputy Director of the Center for International Security at China Foreign Affairs University, Shanghai, visited NIAS on 13 February. He gave a lunch talk and introduced the Center.



Sunniva Engh, University of Oxford, held a Contact Scholarship in January. She is carrying out a Ph.D.-project on *Aid and Population Policies in the 20th Century – Scandinavian Aid to the Indian Family Planning Programme*.



Anne-Maria Mölläri, University of Oulu held a Contact Scholarship in December. She is writing an MA-thesis on *The Independence Demonstration in Korea 1919 through the Eyes of American Missionaries*.



Hannu Koivisto, University of Turku, and Anna Hamre, University of Bergen, held Contact Scholarships in the beginning of February. He is working on an MA thesis on *Ethnic Chinese in Indonesia*. and she on an MA thesis on the subject, *Does Oil Hinder Democracy?* Per Hansen, NIAS librarian, to the left.



Satu Elo, University of Helsinki, held a Contact Scholarship in January. Satu is writing an MA-thesis on *Reproductive Health and Reproductive Rights in India. Indian Population Policy since the Cairo Conference in 1994*.



Randi Mørk Lildballe, University of Aarhus held a Contact Scholarship in December. She is writing an MA-thesis on *The Sangh Parivar Family and the Future of Indian Secular Democracy*.

The Asia Intelligence Service

10-day free evaluation opportunity

AsiaInt's 'Asia Intelligence Service' is a comprehensive information resource for everyone with professional or business interests in Asia. It comprises two 'monthly reviews', a weekly briefing service, special reports, and 24/7 access to the AsiaInt on-line intelligence database.

You may register for a 5-day free evaluation by visiting <http://www.asiaint.com> and selecting the free-registration link.

Asia Intelligence Ltd, 33 Southwick St, London, W2 1JQ, +44-20-7402-4044



Tiejun Zhang, Vice-director of the Office for American Studies in the Shanghai Institute of International Studies (SIIS), worked at NIAS on 9-13 February. He also discussed collaboration with NIAS in the field of studies of East Asian potential conflicts.

Book Extract



Anna Lindberg is a researcher at the Department of History, Lund University

Constructing Femininity in South India

The South Indian state of Kerala is well known for its progressive policies, high social indicators and comparatively high women's status. However, in her forthcoming study Modernization and Effeminization in India (details on backcover) that traces changes since the 1930s in gender relations among the low-caste cashew factory workers, Anna Lindberg shows that processes of modernization have had an ambiguous impact on women; in absolute terms their position at work and in society may have improved but they are now seen as weaker and more dependent on men than in earlier decades.

A major concern of this study is to understand the construction of masculinity and femininity and the power relations in this process. Central to its theme is the consciousness and identity of female workers and their own agency or passivity in the process of constructing those identities.

Among those I interviewed, I found that an essential part of a woman's identity, irrespective of caste affiliation, was being a wife and a mother – and ensuring that for the next generation. A commonly heard expression was 'we must marry off our daughters'. Social pressure also seemed to be strongly in evidence, as a middle-aged cashew worker indicated in saying, 'If we don't marry, people will make fun of us'. Marriage is not only viewed as a social and cultural necessity, but as an economic one as well.

The explanations for poverty one frequently hears have a familiar ring: 'My husband is dead [or sick, alcoholic, disabled, unwilling, unemployed, or has disappeared] and can't provide for me.' 'My parents chose the wrong husband for me.' 'I have just had bad luck in my marriage.' At the individual level such women have started to identify themselves as

anomalies. Several said that the gender roles in their family situation were reversed and not 'normal'. This may be an outcome of their having constructed their gender identity through the perception of femininity and masculinity that has been nourished in factories, trade unions, and Malayalee society at large.

The system of *modern dowry* has given women an inferior identity. Newer dowry patterns have effeminized poor female cashew workers further by defining them as dependent in an overt way. Despite its illegality under current law, the dowry system has to some extent been tacitly acknowledged by the trade unions. In the statutes of the male-dominated Kerala Cashew Workers' Relief & Welfare Fund Board, in existence since 1988, it is stated that cash advances can be given to workers when their daughters – not their sons – are about to get married.¹

These women were loving mothers, who remained extremely close to their children and dutifully bore the responsibility for their support, while the dominant gender discourse simultaneously held men to be the breadwinners of their families. Thus, there is a paradox between discourse and

practice. The same prevailing discourse also assigns men the roles of radical workers, loyal unionists, and party members. The strength of these identifications overshadows or entirely displaces the breadwinner role, leaving men to pursue their political aims, even to the detriment of their family, and yet not be looked down upon as anomalies.

Poverty is a great leveller and has driven not only women but some men to be 'disloyal' to the trade unions. The difference between women and men in the *kudivarappus* [illegal factories where women work for half the minimum wage] is that it is considered necessary to bribe male workers to secure their loyalty to the factory owners. The gender discourse that has developed defines *all* men as radicals and potential troublemakers, whereas women are considered docile by nature. Three or four generations earlier, the gender discourse was not as dichotomized among low-caste people as it now is.

Note

¹ Note on the Activities of the Kerala Cashew Workers' Relief & Welfare Fund Board, Kollam, Kerala (copy supplied by A. A. Azeez, chairman).

Forthcoming in 2004

Women and Politics in Thailand

Edited by Kazuki Iwanaga and Marjorie Suriyamongkol

This edited volume, including contributions from some of the leading scholars in the field, addresses the challenges, obstacles and opportunities for increased women's political representation in Thailand. Will Thai politics be different with an increase in the number of women politicians? What are the possibilities for Thai women to take proactive initiatives that aim to transform Thai politics into being more gender aware and equal? In seeking to address these and related issues, the analysis brings together a complex interplay of factors, such as traditional Thai views of gender and politics; the national and local political context of the new Thai constitution of 1997; and recent experiences of selected women politicians in the legislative and executive branches of Thai government.

Key Points

- First study in English to analyse in detail the position of women in Thai politics.
- The study subjects various dimensions of women and politics in Thailand to both theoretical and empirical scrutiny; in so doing, it draws together into one volume previously fragmented research in this field.

NIAS Press, August 2004, 250 pp.

Hbk • 87-91114-34-9 • £50

Pbk • 87-91114-35-7 • £16.99



NIAS Bookshop Quarterly Sale

Theme: Women and Power in Asia

Fertility and Familial Power Relations: Procreation in South India

by Minna Säävälä

Curzon Press, 2001, 272 pp., illus

Hbk • 0-7007-1484-7 • £60 {£70 kr}

250 kr

Renegotiating Local Values, Working Women and Foreign Industry in Malaysia

by Merete Lie and Ragnhild Lund

Curzon Press, 1994, 175 pp.

Pbk • 0-7007-0280-6 • £35 {£39 kr}

100 kr

Women's Bodies, Women's Worries, Health and Family Planning in a Vietnamese Rural Commune

by Tine Gammeltoft

Curzon Press, 1998, 288 pp.

Hbk • 0-7007-1111-2 • £60 {£70 kr}

250 kr

Beijing Women Organizing for Change

by Cecilia Milwertz

NIAS Press, 2002, 192 pp., illus

Pbk • 87-87062-72-0 • £14.99 {168 kr}

150 kr

Organizing Women's Protest: A Study of Political Styles in Two South Indian Activist Groups

by Eldrid Mageli

Curzon Press, 1997, 288 pp.

Pbk • 0-7007-0440-X • £17.99 {£201 kr}

100 kr

Women in Rural China: Policy Towards Women Before and After the Cultural Revolution

edited by

Vibeke Hemmel and Pia Sindbjerg

Curzon Press, 1984, 165 pp.

Pbk • 0-7007-0164-8 • 80kr

50 kr

Managing Marital Disputes in Malaysia: Islamic Mediators and Conflict Resolution in the Syariah Courts

by Sharifah Zaleha Syed Hassan and Sven Cederroth

Curzon Press, 1996, 260 pp.

Pbk • 0-7007-0454-X • £19.99 {£223 kr}

100 kr

The Veiling Issue, Official Secularism and Popular Islam in Modern Turkey

by Elisabeth Özdalga

Curzon Press, 1998, 105 pp.

Hbk • 0-7007-0983-5 • £55 {£614 kr}

150 kr

The Vietnamese Family in Change: The Case of the Red River Delta

by Pham Van Bich

Curzon Press, 1998, 288 pp.

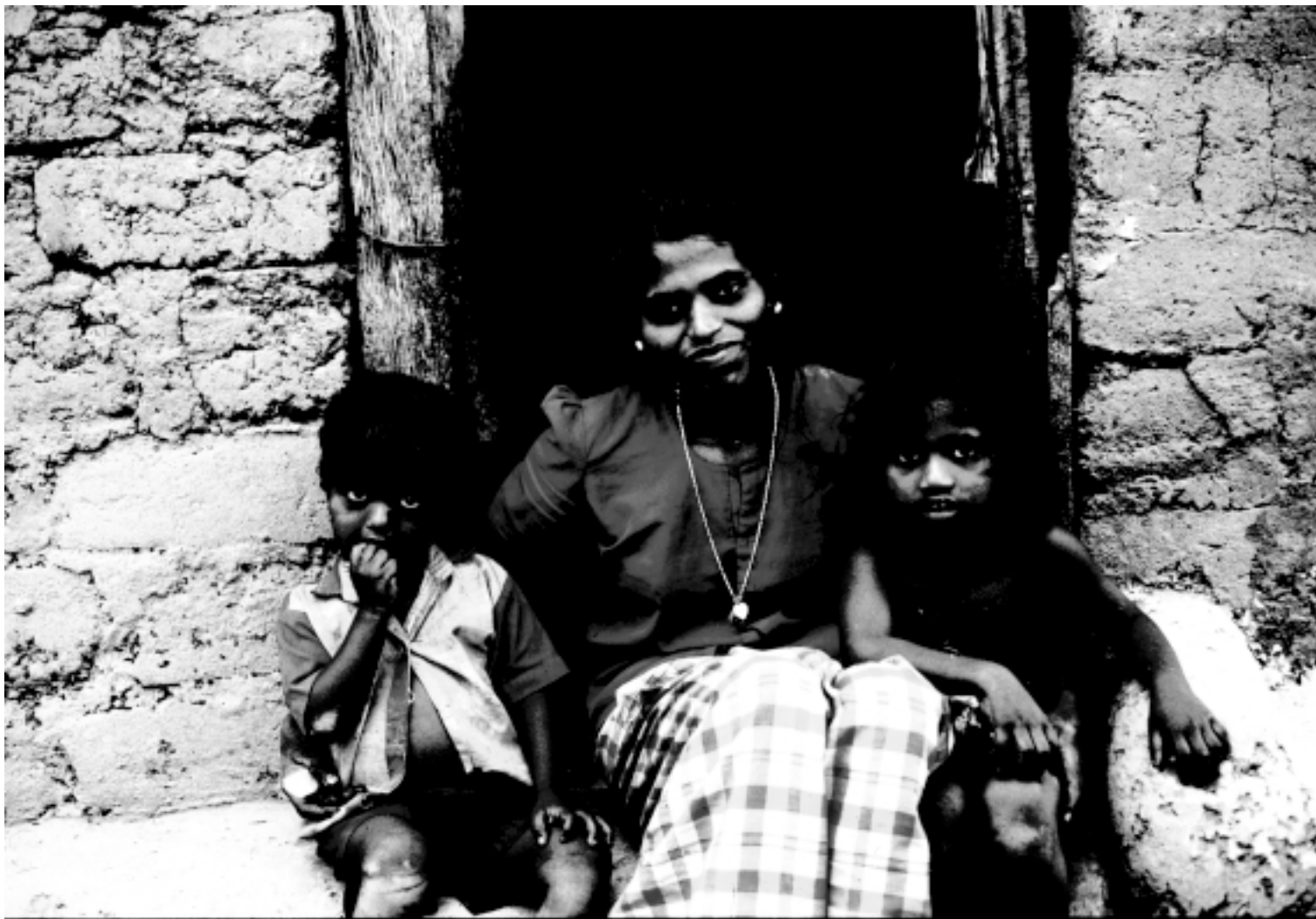
Hbk • 0-7007-1105-8 • £65 {£726 kr}

250 kr

Limited number of copies available. Orders: books@nias.ku.dk (credit card only). Delivery charged at cost.

‘A husband should provide for his family, but in my case it is the other way around.’

This young female cashew sheller is the sole provider for her two children and unemployed husband. In addition, she made the mud bricks for this simple one-room house with her own hands and built most of the house herself – and nevertheless is defined as ‘helpless’.



RETURN ADDRESS

Nordic Institute for Asian Studies

Leifsgade 33

DK-2300 Copenhagen S

Denmark

Modernization and Effeminization in India

Kerala Cashew Workers since 1930

Anna Lindberg, University of Pennsylvania

The South Indian state of Kerala is well known for its progressive policies, high social indicators, and comparatively high women's status. Processes of modernization, however, have had an ambiguous impact on women. This study of female cashew factory workers in Kerala combines meticulous historical investigation with anthropological research, including a wealth of in-depth interviews. The author traces changes since the 1930s in gender relations among low-caste men and women by examining processes of modernization in the organization of work, trade union activities, and ideologies regarding marriage and family life. Her main conclusion is that women have obtained better absolute conditions at work and in society but – due to a process of effeminization – they are now seen as being weaker and more dependent on men than in earlier decades.

NIAS Press, May 2004, 288 pp., illus.
Hbk • 87-91114-21-7 • £50, \$60