



Women in Asia

November 1996

*Women's Caucus
Asian Studies
Association of
Australia*

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- Update 5th Women in Asia Conference

This issue of *Women in Asia* includes innovative research on the issue of health planning in Asia from the team at UQ's Tropical Medicine Program. Case studies from Thailand, The Philippines, China and Indonesia are included. Accompanying these reports is one from ACU's Barbara Evans on the British colonial administration in India and another on women's power in Chinese and Taiwanese villages from Susanne Brandtstädter of Free University in Berlin. Nicole Woelz has provided a brief note on her research into Muslim women studying in Australia.

Once again the diversity of the Asian region is explored and the strength of Australian research on Asia demonstrated. The current national debate on immigration and multiculturalism, (with its particular

focus on Asian and Aboriginal Australians) reveals how crucial it is for a broader section of the nation's population to develop a more sophisticated understanding of Asia. The level of ignorance about Asia revealed by this debate shows that Australian Asianists still have a crucial role to play in helping to dismantle racist attitudes. This is both a professional and moral obligation that we hope readers of *Women in Asia* will embrace.

Louise Edwards (ACU-Qld)
Anne Cullen (Griffith)

NEXT ISSUE

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5th Women in Asia Conference!

Uni of New South Wales

October 3-5, 1997

(see inside for details)

¶ The ASAA Women's Caucus would like to thank Australian Catholic University and Griffith University [FAIS] for their support in the publication of this bulletin. We would also like to thank Lyndsay Farrell of ACU's Visual Arts Program for designing the logo for *Women in Asia*

This paper summarises research we undertook in 1993-94, which looked at the ways in which Australian NGOs have worked, in collaboration with local NGOs and community-based organisations (CBOs), in Thailand, Lao PDR, China, Vietnam, Indonesia and the Philippines. The projects of interest to us emphasised women's health, with each project developed in response to local needs and perceptions, local resources and infrastructure.

Our particular interest was the way in which the projects used participatory discussions and needs assessments to determine women's priorities. This order of procedure was typical, ensuring that gender issues were taken into account in nearly all projects. In addition, training programs were often incorporated in the projects, in order to enhance the impact of projects, their success and sustainability. The use of trained local women to pass on their skills and knowledge to others from their own communities established networks of skilled women, but able to support each other, and to increase or consolidate their spheres of influence.

Characteristically, the projects were concerned with socio-cultural, religious and gender factors affecting women's care seeking (Timyan, Brechin, Measham & Ogunleye, 1993). A project in Lao PDR (1), for example, addressed gender issues in the selection of health trainers and training, selection of topics for training, curricula design and village outreach activities focussing on women's health. Subsequent training of village health workers (VHVs) and traditional birth attendants (TBAs), and construction of a new dispensary, stimulated community interest and was, in 1993, expected to 'impact on the community's internal organisation and self-identity' (Draper, 1993, p.11).

Case Studies of Women's Health and Development Projects

Two projects - one in China (2) and one in Indonesia (3) - highlight the links between economic status and health. These projects raised the status of the women involved and empowered them to instigate further projects and retain ownership over the initial projects.

China: Animal husbandry and the improvement of health care

In this project in Guanxi Province, China, (4) women gained status by attending pig husbandry and poultry courses, an activity not normally

RESEARCH COMMENTARY

WOMEN'S PARTICIPATION IN HEALTH AND DEVELOPMENT PROJECTS

TANYA MARK & LENORE MANDERSON

UNIVERSITY OF QUEENSLAND

undertaken by village women. The husbandry project, which women felt would raise their income generating capabilities, aimed to fulfil needs which women themselves identified. Women's horizons widened because they travelled beyond their local villages to the county capital to learn husbandry skills and to meet other women; some 5,000 women were trained in

groups of 50; women got to know each other through billeting and attending the courses together. The acquisition of new skills was their first step to empowerment. The aid money was used to buy piglets which were bred to produce piglets to sell, and with new knowledge and a small loan, they were able to increase their overall income. The All China Women's Federation, a government body, which visited the projects in Du An County after hearing of their success from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Economic Co-operation, became closely involved. After the animal husbandry training program, women decided that the provision of basic health services was a priority in their county. The decision to improve local health services resulted in a program to train some 200 women as "barefoot doctors". Thus this scheme too was conceived by women in response to a recognised need. On behalf of the village women who had attended the animal husbandry training programs, the All-China Women's Federation approached the Australian NGO, and jointly they developed and implemented a Barefoot Doctor's Training Program (1993). The Australian NGO, with the All China Women's Federation, is now involved in developing a project for up to 300 women, to be implemented at county level by the Women's Union. Village women will be offered a training course in tailoring and basic business management, at the end of which they will be eligible for loans of \$100 each to buy sewing machines to establish tailoring businesses. Half of the loan will be paid back into a revolving credit fund for other women. The initial projects have therefore had a significant multiplier effect (cf. Chu 1994).

Indonesia: Literacy and hygiene

In Indonesia, a literacy training project arose from the needs of illiterate members of a small traders' group that ran a savings and loans scheme.⁽⁵⁾ Over 70% of the group's members were illiterate and this affected the functioning of the groups. Following internal discussions, the small traders' group contracted a Jakarta-based NGO to run a needs assessment and train-the-trainer program in literacy for its salaried staff and volunteers. The program

had a high attrition rate, however, due to its highly didactic teaching methods. A new curriculum and alternative teaching method were developed, focusing on local issues and using the print media to illustrate local situations to prompt discussion. The new format was successful in attracting new members and retaining the interest of existing participants.

After three months, women identified access to clean water as the next crucial issue for their community, and with assistance from a local NGO, they organised their local community to dig the first of three wells. In this project, women's self-confidence was enhanced by functional literacy training; they then identified the need for and decided to have wells dug, thereby resolving issues related to work and labour (time taken to carry water), water quality, and hygiene (improved access to potable water). Outcomes of the project included improved understanding of legal documents, their ability to administer both household, savings and loans' scheme budgets, and reduction of pressure on divorced or widowed women to remarry, in an area of high divorce rates.

Conflicts and Tensions

Projects reported as sustainable generally emphasised the extent to which women determined their own needs, participated in efforts to obtain funding, decided on their terms of reference, implemented and continued the projects themselves to achieve common objectives, and provided their own motivation for projects to be improved, extended or continued.

Project success relates also to the ability of NGOs to set realistic and achievable objectives to maintain the motivation of participants and ensure sustainability. In a commercial sex worker (CSW) project in Thailand (6), for example, realistic targets were set and preliminary results showed that there was an increased awareness and knowledge about HIV/AIDS, and behavioural change. Although these outcomes cannot be attributed directly or exclusively to the project, some participants had observed changes in their and others' behaviour after their involvement with the project. Results of a knowledge, attitudes and practice (KAP) survey among CSWs showed more than a 50% increase in knowledge, a 20% increase in attitude and up to a 50% increase in practice of condom use in penetrative sex, compared with baseline data collected prior to the implementation of the project (eg: AIDSTECH, 1992).

Conclusion

In recent years, there has been increasing awareness and understanding of the importance of gender in determining health outcomes, and the crucial role that women play in health care within families and

beyond (Rathgeber, 1990). Within governments and non-government organisations, including Australian NGOs, this is reflected in research, planning, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of health, gender and development projects, pushed both by expectations and requirements of funding bodies that such issues be addressed, and by the sensitivities of the agencies and their key staff (Australia, 1993; Zivetz & others, 1991).

In addressing women's health needs, these projects emphasise the imperative to train women as health workers, skilled community workers, formal health educators, and peer group educators, in ways that fit in with local cultural, social and economic factors. However, within project planning extra time is needed for consolidation (e.g. revision courses) and follow-up support, to ensure that workers are able to maintain their knowledge base and motivation (Manderson, Valencia and Thomas, 1992).

The projects highlight some of the strategies that have influenced women's access to and use of health services. As we have described, all projects had an impact on women's health, either directly as a result of planned strategies, or indirectly due to unanticipated outcomes such as raised status and empowerment of women, income generation, or the formation of local NGOs/women's groups. The projects emphasise the value of listening and talking with women at local and community levels, via participatory discussions and focus groups, about their perceived and real health care needs.

Sustainability depends on both human and economic resources, hence the importance of trained personnel and local volunteers to continue work beyond the life of specific projects. Sustainability cannot be assumed without community participation in development projects designed to include women and take account of gender (Rathgeber, 1990). Women frequently give higher priority to income generating activities, literacy, and piped water than to activities directed to reduce the incidence of particular diseases. When women have been able to set their own priorities, and once their most important needs are met, their interest in health-related projects follows.

ENDNOTES:

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2. CARE Australia, Monitoring a poverty alleviation project in Guangxi Province, China: small projects for women of poultry and pig husbandry income generating schemes and a bare foot doctors' training program, 1993-1994.
3. Australian NGO (name withheld on request) Freedom from illiteracy project and small project initiated by women, 1991-1995.
4. See note 2 above.
5. See note 3 above.
6. World Vision Australia (WVA), Songkhla AIDS prevention and control project Thailand 1991-1994.

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SOCIAL JUSTICE,

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PERSPECTIVES

MELBOURNE, AUSTRALIA

30 June - 2 July 1998

The International Federation for Research in Women's History/Federation Internationale pour la Recherche en Histoire des Femmes announces a conference on the theme 'Women and Human Rights, Social Justice, and Citizenship: International Historical Perspectives', to be held in Melbourne, Australia from 30 June to 2 July 1998.

Proposals are invited for presentations on historical understandings, across time and place, of the experiences of women as they relate to issues of human rights, social justice, and citizenship. The programme will include sessions that analyse the origins of these terms and categories, contestations over their meaning and implementation, and their expression in a range of social and cultural contexts.

Proposals could either be in the form of individual papers or panels. Panels should consist of two or three presenters and a chair/commentator. Round tables should consist of three to five speakers. Proposals should include the paper title, a short vitas and an abstract. Proposals can be sent to convenors of national committees, to IFRWH Board members, or directly to the conference coordinator, Professor Patricia Grimshaw, History Department, University of Melbourne, Parkville, Vic. 3052, Australia.

The closing date for proposals is **30 JUNE, 1997.**

Program enquiries should be sent to Diane Kirkby, History Department, La Trobe University, Bundoora, Vic. 3083, Australia.
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RESPONSIBILITY FOR

HIV/AIDS:

MY KARMA, YOUR PUNISHMENT

BY PRANEED SONGWATHANA

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I spent a year doing a field work on issues related to HIV/AIDS care in Hatyai district, southern Thailand, as part of my doctoral research study at the Tropical Health Program, Australian Centre for International and Tropical Health and Nutrition, University of Queensland Medical School. Being a woman, mother, and working as a nurse in a familiar environment, all enabled me to explore perceptions of illness and understand the cultural meanings and experiences of illness. The first area of inquiry relevant to the study of AIDS in the social context of care, may be described as the cultural conception of illness and caregiving.

The main objectives of my research were to reveal the way in which people perceived and responded to illness, the general provision of care, and particular issues related to HIV/AIDS. Women were a major focus of the study because of social and cultural expectations that women will provide care in the popular sector. Eight focus groups (52 women) among housewives who had experience in caring for sick family members were conducted. In addition, 9 interviews were conducted with women with HIV/AIDS and 13 with women who were main caregivers, whose involvement in the research allowed them to reflect on their experiences. Illness is socially constructed principally in terms of illness causes, epistemological basis, and the accepted mode of practice. However, the subjective reality of illness is influenced by social processes, embedded in the biomedical model, receives less attention in Thailand.

Traditional cosmologies and patterns of thought of illness were described by Thai women. Two ideas predominate. First, illness was described as natural event of life within the Buddhist concept, so that any disease or episode of illness would be perceived as "natural". However, any diseases which are serious, incurable or non-preventable are perceived to be a result of "karma". The beliefs of karma are related to one's own actions within the present or past life. The balance between immoral and moral behaviour along a continuum of this and previous lives are the main factors affecting people's ideas of karma. Illness of unknown causes or unexpected conditions are perceived as a fate related to karma, or misfortune. As van Gorkom (1988) and Ratanakul (1988) emphasise, good and bad fortune, including serious illness, are believed to be natural consequences of actions in this or a previous life. Therefore, good actions result in good luck, and bad acts or evil lead to bad results. As the proverb says: "do good, receive good; do evil, receive evil" (tum dee dai dee, tum chua dai chua). One woman explained: "It is his karma because he did bad things in the past. So, he must be punished to have this

disease" (Interview, patient's oldest sister). When asked what kind of bad things he had done, she replied, "Yes, he did really bad things, for example telling lies, stealing inheritance from his brother and sister, being promiscuous, gambling. All of these are wrong and immoral. It is a bap (demerit, punishment, or sin)". This

woman's reasoning is consistent with Buddhist concepts in which illness is believed to be a consequence of one own's past actions. Karma was the most common explanation for illness among study participants, although women were more likely than men to attribute illness to karma (FGDs, in-depth interviews and observations). Moreover, women who believe illness is the result of their karma are also more likely to accept that it is their responsibility to take care of themselves or their own family members who were suffering (Sindhu, 1996; my study, 1996).

Consistent with these basic cosmological concepts, AIDS is perceived to be a karma disease (Rok kong khon mee kam), particularly by women who were infected with HIV from their husbands and by those who were taking care of HIV/AIDS patients. Two different examples illustrate this. A woman gave the following account of how she felt about her son who had AIDS, and her role as a primary caregiver:

My son was suffering from this disease because of his karma. I was always compassionate and sympathetic with his suffering because he was really ugly, he had a dirty skin lesion. I know he is going to die soon. I believe everyone born must die and this is a natural event. I feel that this is not only his karma but also my wan (suffering). I have had little opportunity to tham bun (merit-making, reward) in my life, this may be because I did bad things and so had bad karma too.

In another context, karma is used to explain "conditions which must be accepted because there is nothing one can do about them" (Keyes, 1983: 265). So the notion of karma serves as an important explanatory device in relation to health and disease. Another woman explained:

I was shocked after I learnt that I was HIV-positive at 16 weeks gestation. I was first angry at my husband who had brought the disease to me. I did not punish him because he was realised that he had been "Thiew Phu Ying" (seeing prostitutes). So I accept this situation, it is my karma. The negative blood test for my baby gave me hope, and I decided to keep my baby after discussion with my mother. I was depressed after learnt that my daughter was HIV-positive too. It was a very bad luck as if we were trapped of karma.

Focus group discussions and in-depth interviews among men were also conducted and revealed some interesting findings. The notion of karma is less likely to be used as an explanatory model by Thai men. Punishment is more meaningful

because men think that persons who have been infected with HIV have become so intentionally as a result of having promiscuous sex, using illegal drugs, or having any high risk behaviour. Men's admission of guilt and responsibility for their infection results in women feeling pity and that they are responsible for care. In contrast, women tend to regard infection as a consequence of karma but do not expect others to share their burden nor to relieve their of other familial roles and responsibilities. They feel they must do so for this life, with the expectation of happiness in a future life under the principle of transmigration and reincarnation.

The image of women in Thailand generally described as the perfect embodiment of mother-namely obedient, virtuous and self sacrificing. Another image of women is of nurturer, associated with love, attachment and compassion. However, I argue that the quality of the marital bond may be limited in terms of commitment to care where a patient has HIV/AIDS. Ambivalence between obligation and fear of contagion continue to be a vital issue. However, the dominant image of motherhood and emotional bonds still influence caregiving of people with HIV/AIDS. To promote and sustain the health of women, the beliefs of karma and experience of women afflicted or affected with HIV/AIDS should be taken into account and with culturally appropriate consideration of their needs, problems and reactions to illness.

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5th Women in Asia Conference

3-5 October 1997

**University of New South Wales
Sydney, Australia**

We have identified six broad themes for the conference-

The Search for the Individual
Women in Public/Political Life
Women and Literacy
Women and the Home
Women and Religion
Women Travellers

Offers of papers and/or suggestions for panels should be submitted no later than 3 March 1997 to Organising Committee Contacts-

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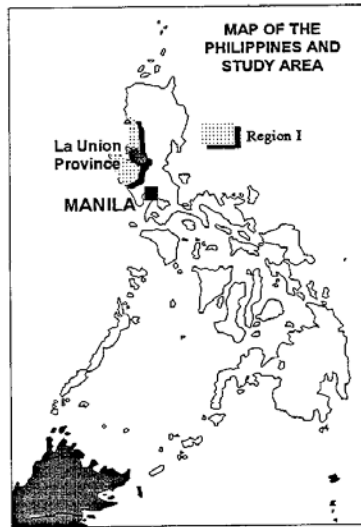
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POSTGRADUATE PROFILE

"I SAID NO"

**NOTES FROM THE FIELD
by Lorraine Yap**



*La Union, Philippines
March 1996*

It was late morning, about 11.30am, and the Outpatient Room of the Surgical Department of the Regional Hospital was already crowded and overflowing with people, all waiting to see the one doctor who had just recently been called away to the Emergency Department. It was hot and humid and the small ceiling fans were working overtime to circulate the warm air which was filled with the stale sweat from the bodies of so many people crowded in one room. The sounds of infants could be heard screaming next door where the hospital nurses were giving the triple antigen vaccines as part of the EPI program.

Meanwhile, I sat at a desk, waiting for the surgeon to come back from the emergency room, impatiently tapping my pen on my observation fieldwork notebook. I surveyed the room, thinking how hot it was and wondering how long this day was going to last, when my attention was drawn to an old woman sitting next to me in a rusty wheelchair. She was quite ordinary, her brown face was lined with age, her hands were resting on top of her lap which was covered in a red batik printed skirt.....except.....there was a most unpleasant odor emanating from her, as if she was harbouring a dead animal on her person.

After a while, the doctor came back to the room and asked the woman in the wheelchair to approach his desk. Her husband accompanied her to the doctor's table where he revealed that his wife had a lump on her breast. His wife had first

discovered a lump on her breast two years ago and now there were many more big lumps on her breasts. His wife did not say anything. The doctor took down more of the woman's medical history from her husband and then asked the woman's husband to lay her on the examination table. He then asked the woman to remove her blouse so that the lumps on her breasts could be examined.

*The doctor and I were surprised when she refused. She cried, "No! No! I don't want you to look at it" . **

The woman's husband urged her to remove her blouse since the doctor needed to look at the lumps on her breast. The woman still refused.

The woman however allowed the doctor to look at one of her lumps only from the site of her armpit. The lump was red and swollen. The odor which I had smelt before had come from the lump which had already burst, spewing forth blood and pus, staining the cloth which she had used as a bandage to protect the numerous lumps on her breasts.

The doctor looked at me and said in English, "It's a CA (cancer)."

He then expelled a long sigh. There was nothing more he could do for the woman. He'd seen too many advanced cases like this already.

The doctor asked the husband to come with him to a quiet corner of the room, leaving his wife with the volunteer nurse. He revealed to him that his wife had breast cancer. The husband was not surprised at this disclosure. They had already been to a private doctor several months ago and he had given them the same diagnosis and had recommended a mastectomy. After this visit to the private doctor, the husband had told his wife her diagnosis. The woman already knew that she had cancer.

The woman then left the outpatient room with her husband, refusing the doctor's suggestions for palliative surgery which would involve a mastectomy of both breasts and chemotherapy to slow the growth of the cancer cells and perhaps to also relieve some of the pain and discomfort of her disease. She told me that she was afraid of the surgery and that the chemotherapy was too expensive, it would be a waste of money when she was going to die anyway. So she left the hospital with a prescription from the doctor for a mild pain reliever only.

Introduction

The case regarding the woman with breast cancer is not unique particularly for women living in developing countries. The World Health Organisation estimates that about five million people every year will die from cancer while seven million new cases are diagnosed. Half of the cases are in developing countries in which at least 80% of these patients are already incurable by the time the disease is diagnosed (WHO 1990:12).

Cancer is frequently not perceived as a significant health problem in developing countries, where infectious disease and perinatal and maternal mortality have usually received more attention. Yet once an individual has survived the first five years of life, cancer becomes one of the major causes of death in developing countries, as it is in developed countries.

** I found out later from the woman's husband that the faith healer she was currently visiting had told her not to let anyone view the lumps on her breasts or else she would die more quickly.*

The number of cancer patients and overall cancer mortality in the world today is increasing. Mortality rose significantly in developed countries between 1960 and 1980 and the increase in some developing countries was more marked. Cancer mortality is expected to rise in nearly all regions of the world. The major reasons for this are a general increase in the average age of the world population, control of other major health problems, and an increase in the use of tobacco (WHO 1990: 13-14).

Present Situation in the Philippines

In the Philippines where I conducted my fieldwork, cancer has been identified by the Philippine Department of Health as the fourth leading cause of death affecting both males and females. Chronic illnesses as a result of cancers are also one of the ten leading causes of morbidity in most regions in the Philippines and particularly affect those aged five years old and upwards (Department of Health, Philippines, 1995: 1).

Among men, the most common cancer sites are bronchus and lung, which are mostly preventable, but account for the highest mortality rate. Breast cancer is the most common cause of death among women (Department of Health, Philippines, 1995: 1; Health Action Information Network 1992: 129-130).

Cancer incidence is expected to rise in the Philippines, the main reason being tobacco use and paradoxically, better health care such that, people live longer, therefore, they stand a greater chance of developing cancer. Two thirds of all cancers moreover are attributed to lifestyle and other environmental factors and at least one third of all cases are preventable (Department of Health, Philippines, 1995: 1).

Study Site

Fieldwork was conducted between November 1995 and October 1996 in the province of La Union, Philippines, situated about 300 kilometres north of Manila. The province of La Union was chosen since statistics from the Department of Health in the Philippines revealed that cancer was the fourth leading cause of death in that province.

Out of the four provinces in the region (Region I), La Union was the only province with easy access to the Department of Health's Regional and Provincial Health Offices and to the regional hospital, the Ilocos Regional Hospital. The regional hospital also served as a training hospital for resident surgeons. There also existed a cancer registry on patients that had been admitted to the hospital for the last five years.

The Regional Health Office of the Department of Health was situated next to the Regional Hospital, thus providing easy access to the coordinators of the Cancer Control and Traditional Medicine Unit programs, where I was permitted access to the registry on traditional healers. Nearby was the Provincial Health Office for La Union, which also had links with the Traditional Medicine Unit in the Regional Health Office.

Study Population and Methodology

In-depth interviews, participant observation and focus group discussions were conducted with physicians, traditional healers, women diagnosed with breast cancer who were admitted to hospital and their families, and other women with lumps in their breast who refused to have a check-up or be admitted to hospital for a biopsy and/or surgery. I also accompanied one herbalist and one faith healer intensively for several months to become more familiar with their patients and their practice. This allowed me the opportunity to follow up most of their patients suffering from all types of cancer, particularly those with "lumps" - especially breast lumps.

Cancer Issues on "The Woman Who Said No"

Several questions arise from the above scenario of the woman with breast cancer. Some of the questions I asked during my fieldwork included: What were her perceptions and understanding of cancer, lumps, breasts etc.? Why did she seek the services of a faith healer first? How did the faith healer diagnose and treat the woman's disease? Why did she refuse and delay seeking help from health care workers? Why was she afraid of having surgery?

Some issues that were considered also involved the disclosure of the diagnosis which included: Why was the woman silent during her interview with the doctor? What were her reactions to her husband disclosing to her that she had cancer? Why did the doctor disclose to the husband first that his wife had cancer rather than revealing the diagnosis to both of them?

Finally, other issues were considered in relation to palliative care such as: How did she cope with the pain and discomfort of her disease without proper medical attention? Who and what kinds of support did she receive during the course of her illness? How did her husband and family react and cope with her illness? Did the traditional healer provide financial and/or psychosocial support for the woman and her family?

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In the 1980's Edward Said's work revolutionised the study of Europe's colonial past by demonstrating that the way in which imperial states such as Great Britain or France had administered their holdings was deeply indebted to the academic tradition of Orientalism. Said described Orientalism as both a style of thought based on the juxtaposition of East and West, and a corporate mechanism which assisted Western imperialists to structure their perceptions of the East as a region fit for domination (Said 1991 rpt: 2-3). One of the enduring legacies of Said's work amongst historians of the colonial world is the questions raised about the validity and reliability of contemporary sources. These questions have been particularly disquieting because, as in the case of British India and in many other colonial settings, the vast bulk of the materials available to modern researchers are the product of European minds. The doubts which Said's work had originally raised were compounded by the arguments advanced in the rapidly expanding field of semiotics. What were once historical sources on British India were now European constructions of India; their usefulness had become problematic.

These questions were foremost in my mind a year ago when I was invited to write an editorial introduction to a forthcoming reprint of William Logan's *Malabar*. Logan's *Malabar* first appeared in 1887 as the last volume in the series of Madras manuals. The manuals were intended to serve newly transferred British civil servants within the Madras Presidency as a reference work and their composition was indicative of a general drive amongst British administrators in the period to gather, sort and publish information about their subject lands and peoples. The growth in official data was accompanied by an increasing desire to present knowledge in regularised forms. It was evident in the increasing preference for classification over description, and in the new standardised methods of collecting data by systematic survey rather than by observation. In the case of the Madras manuals, although no formula was laid down for their composition, typically each volume comprised a gazetteer of the district as well as chapters dealing with social customs and social structure, a glossary of local terms as well as an exposition of the district's history. The most striking difference between Logan's work and the efforts of his counterparts is the sheer scale of his undertaking which occupied him intermittently from 1870 and which resulted in a massive compendium of information. Logan's manual for Malabar district was not reworked until 1908 and in any case the new version incorporated much of Logan's research.

RESEARCH COMMENTARY

CONSTRUCTING BRITISH INDIA

BARBARA EVANS

AUSTRALIAN CATHOLIC UNIVERSITY

Logan's rendering of the district was therefore important both to the district officials who relied on it and to the historians and sociologists who have since widely employed it.

Logan's various postings had provided him with a breadth and

depth of field experience which was highly pertinent to the compilation of a district manual. He possessed comprehensive experience of both revenue and judicial matters. His work had taken him to a number of different stations within his district and he had toured Malabar extensively. His fluency in Malayalam and interest in rural conditions made him accessible to ordinary cultivators as well as to landlords. He was also sufficiently familiar with rural conditions elsewhere in south India to draw detailed comparisons between these and those prevailing in Malabar.

This practical experience was complemented by his scholarly approach of the task of writing a district manual. Initially he concentrated on a systematic examination and cataloguing of all the British sources dating back to the eighteenth century. With respect to the pre-British period Logan found so little reliable information that he circulated a request throughout Malabar, Cochin and Travancore in 1881 for historical "records of fact" which produced a collection of 58 deeds. Despite this success Logan was aware of the imperfections of the documentary record and the constraints that this imposed upon his account. He noted that,

"In Malabar proper there has unfortunately never been a survey and registration of titles, so that materials are not forthcoming on the public records. Even in the Cochin deeds there is a great blank. Between Nos.1 and 2, which go back to the eighth century A.D., and No.15, which is dated A.D. 1622, there is but one deed, No.7 (date A.D. 1290) to carry us over the gap of nearly eight and half centuries".

According to Logan, the deeds would allow for an accurate rendering of agrarian relations in the ancient and early modern periods but what had happened in between, "must remain for the present more or less a matter of conjecture" (Malabar Special Commission, 1882: 16).

In short, Logan's scholarly methods and instincts coupled with his intimate experience of the region appear to have made him an ideal choice for the task of producing a district manual. However, Logan's views on landed relations and British agrarian policy were highly controversial. It was probably only the increasingly insistent demands made by the Government of India that the Madras administration bring the series of manuals to

completion that allowed Logan's work to go to print (I.O.L.R. 1879).

The sections of *Malabar* which deal with agrarian relations were largely the product of the investigations Logan carried out during a Special Commission into agrarian discontent in Malabar in 1881-2. The impetus for the enquiry had been the receipt of an anonymous petition warning the Government of Madras that a fresh peasant uprising was about to take place. The petition further alleged that this rural discontent stemmed from the failure of landlords to compensate their tenants adequately for improvements made to the land and from the complicity of "native officials" in the dispossession of the tenantry. Logan's brief was largely concerned with investigating the general subject of land tenures in Malabar including the question of tenant rights.

It is important to note that Logan was not without firm convictions on the subject of landlord-tenant relations prior to conducting the enquiry. In 1877 in dealing with forest reservation and the possibility of recognising communal claims to land, Logan wrote that this "would be a better prospect" for the indigenous inhabitants "than sinking into the abject position of Malayali kudiya, whose position has of late years, in spite of seemingly liberal tenant customs, been gradually and surely passing from bad to worse, owing to the grasping avarice of Malayali landlords, backed by the influence of our Civil Courts in recognising no bounds to a landlord's claims" (I.O.L.R. 1878). Similarly, when the Madras government solicited his response to the petition he noted that banditry in the region was a product of starvation and the injustice of landlords who attempted to extract more in rent from their tenants than they were legally entitled (I.O.L.R. 1881a).

Despite these convictions there is every indication that Logan approached the task of gathering information on the landlord-tenant question in an objective fashion. He was acutely aware that the materials he collected during the enquiry should be representative of relations in the District and carefully devised a method to help ensure this. Some mention might also be made of the thoroughness with which Logan conducted the enquiry of 1881-1882. His investigation took him on a near continuous tour of more than six months duration through all but one small area of the District (Malabar Special Commission 1882: Appendix X). He received and read 2,200 petitions from 4,021 individuals (Malabar Special Commission, Vol. 1 1882: ix). The wealth of detail recovered, recorded and interpreted is extraordinary given the dearth of human and physical resources at Logan's disposal. With the aid of only one full time Assistant and the part-time services of a handful of subordinate officials, Logan employed many techniques familiar to the modern anthropologist and social scientist to lay before his readers both the raw framework of

Malabar society and much of the complexity of its human relationships.

In Logan's conclusion the basis of British maladministration of land revenue was clearly stated. According to Logan, the British had misunderstood the whole situation in Malabar. They had simply transferred the Roman idea of *dominium*, or outright ownership of the soil, to Malabar, whereas the Malayalis regarded their lands as held in trust, and only authority over temples, villages and the produce of their fields was thought of as disposable (Logan 1951 rpt.: 597-604). Logan believed that by enshrining freedom of contract as the basis of landed relations in Malabar, British policy makers in Madras were contributing to the growth of feudal relations by privileging a minority over the majority. Logan proposed instead that British law should be in keeping with Indian custom to produce "a harmonious union", familiar and acceptable to the people.

However, it would be easy to overplay Logan's support of tenants' rights as the driving force behind his investigation of Malabar land tenures. At base, Logan's motivation was primarily imperial rather than humanitarian. In both his response to the petition of 1880 and in a report filed one month later, Logan pointed out why current measures failed to secure peace in Malabar. As he explained, the practice of fining perpetrators was ineffective in preventing further violence because fines would merely add "to the general poverty which prevails among them, and diminish *pro tanto* their fear of again being fined" (I.O.L.R. 1881b). In short, repression reduced their stake in British rule whereas removal of their real grievances - impoverishment and dispossession - would increase it. It is also clear that Logan favoured an administrative style characterised by personal discretion rather than rigidly enforced regulations, as his description of the most effective way to treat the peasants of Malabar reveals.

"the hand that controls them as a class must be firm and punishment when justly merited must be inflicted with severity; for leniency is interpreted as weakness..... of which advantage is to be taken." (I.O.L.R. 1881b:198)

Logan's description conjures up images of the stern but benevolent officer whose power and authority is underpinned by his knowledge of those he ruled.

Logan's work therefore provides support for Said's argument that European imperialism encompassed "an increasingly profitable dialectic of information and control" (Said 1991 rpt: 36). At its most basic level the district manual was intended to contribute to the efficiency of British administration by providing a brief to a newly appointed or transferred official. However, the close inter-relationship between knowledge and dominion is also evident in the care which Logan took to construct an accurate history of Malabar, for in his view, a workable revenue policy had to be firmly

rooted in customary expectations and past practices. For this reason, Logan's manual cannot serve as an unmediated source for the modern day researcher. The perspective adopted by Logan on agrarian relations is that of an insider but his account also reveals the motives and interests of an external, imperialistic authority. Logan's work serves to remind us that the European construction of the Orient was both multi-stranded and complex (Said 1991 rpt: 36).

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RESEARCH NOTE

The Effect of Westernisation on the

Status of Iranian and Javanese

Married Women Undergoing

Tertiary Education in Australia

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It is widely understood that Islamic women in South East Asia are less oppressed than women in the Middle East. Javanese and Iranian women have been chosen in a comparative study examining women's status. The underlining cultures of Iran and Java have been viewed as a major cause in the difference of the status of women, for the first culture is strongly patriarchal and women for most of their history have been segregated, secluded and subservient to men. The Javanese culture, conversely, is matrifocal in nature and has historically provided women with economic independence. This comparative study examined if Western-educated married Muslim women both inside and outside the home, in their home country and in Australia, was greater for Javanese Muslims than Iranian Muslims. In-depth interviews were conducted with twenty Javanese and Iranian women presently studying in Australia. The responses were then analysed under four different headings relating to women's status: husband and wife relationships including roles, responsibilities, the concept of equality and authority; women's power to make decisions in the private and public domain and issues relating to personal freedom; education, including opportunities, power and authority; and women's work outside the home, including women's roles, freedom to work, and status in the work place. The hypothesis was that Iranian women who live in a Western country would remain lower in status than their Javanese counterparts overseas and that the differences in culture would not be eroded by exposure to Westernisation, education and globalisation. This hypothesis was proved correct. Iranian women remain lower in status in Australia. Their personal freedom and decision making abilities are still heavily restricted. Most of the women cannot leave their home or flat in Australia without the permission of their husbands. They can not travel by themselves internationally without their husbands endorsement. They still have to abide by the strict Islamic code of dress. Furthermore, they are not the financial managers of their home. However, each of these restrictions do not apply to Javanese women living in Australia.

POSTGRADUATE PROFILE

**TRAJECTORIES: GENDER, KINSHIP &
AUTHORITY STRUCTURES IN RURAL
CHINA & TAIWAN.**

AN ANTHROPOLOGICAL COMPARISON
OF
TWO VILLAGES IN CHANGE

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The effects of economic transformation on gender relations is a much discussed topic in the social sciences at least since Ester Boserup's path-breaking study "Women's role in development" (Boserup 1970). While research in most countries of the "Third World" has focused on the effects of commercialization and technologization, of the "world market" on the position of women, in socialist countries, on the other hand, it was the effects of political action on gender relations which aroused most attention. In both cases, however, changes in gender relations were often described as a one-way street from the macro- to the microlevel.

Important exceptions in the Chinese case are Ellen Judd (1994) and Judith Stacey (1983), who demonstrated successfully that patriarchal thinking itself gave important impulses to the Chinese revolution.

The subject of my dissertation is the comparative study of changing gender relations in two Chinese fishing villages, one in Taiwan and one in Fujian Province, PRC. Based on anthropological fieldwork in both villages, I use the "view from the well" to analyse the changing embeddedness of women in social relationships as well as the changes in the structure of the social field, in which these relations are localized and in which strategies are realized. Rather than describing change as a one-way street, my understanding of these changes is that of an "interaction" between macrostructural change, the actors on the local level and the micodynamics of gender- and kinship relations - a viewpoint which puts forward and includes the strategies and values of actors at the local level. My comparison is built on the premise that gender relations are not only rooted in the household, but are affected by social, economic and ideological relations outside the household (Harris 1981), as well as the premise that gender and kinship are mutually constructed. As Collier and Yanagisako (1987) have pointed out, gender and kinship are realized together in particular cultural, economic and political settings. Any analysis of gender relations must therefore begin with social wholes.

As a unit of analysis I take in both cases the village, not as an autonomous unit but as a face-to-face community and the arena where most social action takes place and is aimed at. As a community, it is affected in its structure and internal workings by processes of economic transformation as well as the nature of the political field, the expression of state

power in the authority structures on the local level. My first field site was Niaoyu, a fishing village on one of the smaller Penghu-Islands off the west coast of Taiwan. Here, the commercialization of the local economy and the industrialization of Taiwanese society has been the major motor of change for the last decades, resulting especially in the re-orientation of the villagers towards the outside world and a greater social mobility. One major result of this process has been the

weakening of a formerly strict gender division of labour. Not only have women started to work with the men in the fishing, the main economic activity on the island, but a huge percentage of young unmarried women leaves the island for several years to work in Taiwan's factories and support their families at home.

While at the beginning of the century male economic activities accounted for 87%, female for only 13% of a family's income, the contribution of both sexes to the families income is now much more balanced, with female work producing the more regular part of a family's income. The new economic role of women on the island was described to me with the words: "In the past, we relied on the sea, now we rely on our daughters." This statement, however, also hints at a new position of women in social relations. In daily life, the most important support a family in Niaoyu receives is from their affinal relatives. Women in Niaoyu, who support their natal family before and even after marriage are not considered to be "spilled water", that is, the upbringing of daughters to be a lost investment.

As a result of the integration of the village community into the wider society, the father-son bond has lost some of its prominence in family relations. But also authority structures beyond the household have changed. With the opening up of the village community to the outside world, traditional authorities have lost influence in the village and agnatic kinship is now largely unimportant as a organizational force outside the household. With agnatic kinship losing its potential to integrate households along hierarchical lines, this task is shifting to networks of dyadic relationships between families. Women who often act as mediators between households especially in economic relationships, occupy a prominent position in these

relationships. The shift from hierarchical authority structures to dyadic relations has brought women a larger role in the public sphere of the village. Close relationships with their natal family also mean a greater sense of social security and a power resource for women. Young women in Niaooyu who have relied on their family's financial help to set up an own household, can often be seen spending time with their parents, sharing meals with them and helping them in the household. Besides fulfilling the moral postulate of filial piety, women thereby also put forward a new idea of "family" which includes their own parents and runs counter to the dominant model of the patrilineal family.

In the Fujian fishing village of Meidao, the rural reforms of the early 1980's had at first sight very similar effects on social relations in the village. Also here, economic liberalization lead to a stratification of the village community in terms of wealth and the formation of a new economic elite. Also here, families depend more and more on outside income sources, mainly on contract labour of the young people—men and women alike—abroad. Families now often prefer to engage in economic relations with affines because "the feeling is better" than between agnates, and "women can mediate in problems". However, there are important differences to the situation in Niaooyu. In spite of a policy which understood the "liberation of women" as part and parcel of rural revolution, women in Meidao behave less self-assured in public and are less outspoken than their Taiwanese counterparts.

Also the gender division of labour is more pronounced in Meidao, where women and men had worked in different work teams during collectivization and continue to engage in separate activities. In stark contrast to the situation in the Taiwanese village, lineage affiliation is the major organizational force in the village, and lineages figure large in village politics. Here, not only intra-village marriage is prevalent, but also marriage inside the lineage. Economic relationships, in which women play a major role, are thereby contained in the hierarchical lineage structures and subordinated to them. Women are marginalized in these structures and thereby marginalized in the public sphere. The informal political influence of women in small communities is nothing new, although it had been often overlooked or underrated in early ethnographic descriptions of Chinese society.

By focusing on the village as a social whole rather than on the family or household, I can show that as a result of the opening of the village community to the outside world, accompanying shifts in local authority structures and the strategies of families and individual women, women in Niaooyu could not only enlarge their sphere of influence, but in their mediating roles are now centrally included in the new integrating mechanisms of the community. In Meidao, on the other hand, authority structures did not change in a similar way

as they did in Niaooyu. While the structure of production teams as units of work and residence had perpetuated the territorial integrity of the agnatic group during collectivization, also the political dimension of lineages and lineage membership after the reforms can be understood as a new interaction between state and local society. Village cadres who retained some control over the allocation of resources are still at the center of patron - client relations. Like the representatives of the new economic elite, they now take part in the lineage committees, the executive organ of a lineage. Different power structures which stand in opposition to each other are thereby united in the body of the lineage and can combine their forces against outsiders in the competition over access to economic resources. Lineages are built around these clientelist structures at the intersection of state and local society. The hierarchical nature of "grounded state power" (Judd) in Meidao has led to a perpetuation of the political dimension of agnatic kinship structures and a stronger marginalization of women in the public sphere.

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Feb 20 1997

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COPY DEADLINE FOR THE NEXT ISSUE

Feb 20 1997

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