

WOMEN IN ASIA NEWSLETTER

November 1994

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Asian Studies Association of Australia

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EDITORIAL TEAM NOTES

This is the first issue of the Newsletter to be produced in Queensland and we are looking forward to support from all members whether that be in terms of news, views or research notes. The Newsletter serves the Women's Caucus in its goals of promoting the study of women in Asia and providing networks for women Asianists.

We have decided to include a brief article from a guest columnist each issue and Melody Kemp, a social commentator based in Jakarta, will begin the series with a polemical piece on the recent APEC summit. We also aim to include a Work in Progress Report from a postgraduate student each issue by way of introducing new scholars to the Asian Studies arena. Fang Yew-Jin of UQ's Dept. of Japanese and Chinese Studies presents a summary of her research into language and ideology in this issue.

Besides the usual news and views, the Newsletter will also include a section that focusses on one particular theme. The March issue will address some of the issues raised by the Cairo population conference and we welcome any contributions on this theme as well as the usual general information.

A note of thanks is due to the outgoing editor, Dr Antonia Finanne for keeping the Newsletter regular and informative. Recognition is also due to Melbourne University's History Dept. for its support of the Newsletter over the past few years.

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

WOMEN'S CAUCUS E-MAIL NETWORK

To make it easier for women's caucus members to contact each other we are compiling a list of E-mail numbers to be included in forthcoming issues of the Newsletter. If you have E-mail facilities and want to be on the list please send a message to Dr Mina Roces at Central Queensland University. As E-mail becomes more common this could be an extremely useful way of helping each other with quick advice and news.

Send her a message *now* while you remember!

m.roces@ucq.edu.au

NEXT ISSUE

The theme for the next issue of the *Women in Asia Newsletter* will be population and fertility control and how this affects women in Asia. The recent Cairo summit on population stimulated a considerable amount of discussion and in the March newsletter we will address some of the issues raised.

Please feel free to contribute a short piece to the newsletter on this theme—either work in progress, miscellaneous jottings, cartoons, polemical notes etc.—along with the usual news.

Copy deadline is Feb 15 1995

—Melody Kemp—

APEC: The Invisible Woman

The recent APEC conference in Jakarta was a triumph for the male side of politics—if indeed a women's side exists. The striking aspect of all the photos was the inevitability of the blue suits featuring trousers, not skirts. The mass of soldiers and police making sure the leaders were kept safe from those who may have wanted to put an alternative view were another striking example of male power. With surly looks and tight-stuffed trousers that put lumps in improbable places, police hassled and glowered as they cleared the street traders, sex workers and other undesirables off the streets of Jakarta—who were, after all, just trying to practice free trade.

So where were the women? This summit was about developing free trade. In Asia women comprise the majority of the manufacturing workforce who supply the goods for trade. They comprise the bulk of those paid less than subsistence wages ensuring that Asia has that vital competitive trading edge. In Indonesia women are the strikers, shouting their demands to oblivious employers and angry factory guards—who are these days, inevitably army men in plain clothes.

Women fill the roads to the cities to earn money to sustain their families, who have lost their land to male developers and male golf-course titans. They are sitting by the roadside nursing babies as the traffic streams past, in the absence of any other place to be. They are defending their homes against demolition. They are hiding beneath the jibabs in an attempt to come to terms with an increasingly male dominated religious hierarchy, that has little concern for God, but a lot for extending control and power.

They are the raped and tortured women of East Timor and the beaten Protestant women of Batak Sumatra. They are the victims of incest and domestic violence. They are the single women who the state has decreed cannot have access to contraception. They are silent and invisible at APEC.

Trade is not value free. It insinuates that self-sufficiency and subsistence are underdeveloped and that barter is invalid. It deems that consumerism is the superior. It celebrates the dominance of capitalism and the arrogance of continuing resource depletion. It creates industrial feudalism and makes farmers serfs in their own society. Much of that consumerism is directed towards women, despite women being amongst the poorest of the poor.

So where were our male leaders at this time? Paul Keating was obviously pleased that the (male) East Timorese students had not occupied the Australian Embassy grounds and thus confronted him with the reality of desperation and oppression. Instead he was able to assert that APEC was only about trade, thereby cleanly severing the links between human lives and production. As the roads had been cleared for his armada, he was inured from the throngs of people scratching for a living in this country of economic miracles. Thus he was, in his best belief that the poor no longer exist, a triumph for the boys in Treasury. All Australia has to do now is make sure the Asian elites are happy and do not close the doors to Australian male entrepreneurs who are arriving by the plane load, and whose links with Asian women are largely via sex workers in hotels and the secretaries for rent in hotel business centres.

Globalisation is not about women, its not about people, its about power and power breaking. Ethics, morals and human compassion have little place in this melee. Is that how we want to live our lives?

It may not be inevitable but women can forge another way. Gandhi may have been a bloke, but he made a lot of sense in terms of gender and the environment. We don't need dhoties, but we need to make our voices heard.

[Melody Kemp is a writer and researcher based in Jakarta]

—Yew-Jin Fang—

Traditionally, mass media researchers have examined the economic, political, social or psychological aspects of journalistic routines and news processing in their attempts to show that news can and should be reported in an unbiased manner. However, it is noticeable in recent years that more and more news studies have accepted that news, by nature, cannot be completely objective, researchers have thus turned their attention to the role of language as the tool for constructing or defining reality. Gradually, the focus of research shifted towards the relationship between the use of language and power and ideology in society and the mass media.

In the past two decades, an increasing number of studies have adopted a so-called critical perspective. My interest in discourse and ideology was basically stimulated by the theories in 'critical linguistics'. In contrast to the more traditional methods of studying news, the 'critical linguists' believe that language is a reality-creating social practice. They emphasise the need to critically examine the role of language, which continuously insists on systems of beliefs that legitimise the institutions of power. In short, ideology is inherent in discourse, and it is the job of the analyst to study the relationship between linguistic structures and ideology/systems of beliefs.

There are, naturally, many approaches to the study of news-texts. In recent times, discourse analysis has become a popular tool. This method encourages a shift towards an examination of the structures and their functions at the discourse level, rather than merely at the lexical and sentential levels. In general, the purpose of discourse analysis is to discover the principles used to generate and understand discourse, and how people are able to distinguish one type of discourse from another. Therefore, it requires a description of the discourse structures, and further elaboration on how the structures function.

Drawing on theories in critical discourse analysis and text linguistics, my dissertation examines the use of language in the *People's Daily* (PRC) and *Central Daily News* (Taiwan) when reporting about international events such as 'riots' and demonstrations. As many will agree, 'riots' and demonstrations are complex events; what one calls a demonstration, others might label a riot. The persuasive strategies used by the two newspapers to define and construct such events for their readership are essentially the focus of my study. I hypothesised that the manner in which controversial events—such as unrest, disturbances, riots—are reported is influenced by the 'us' against 'them' mentality, which is manifested at the lexical, syntactical and discourse levels.

In terms of methodology, traditional critical linguists usually concentrate on one or two texts at a time, usually carrying out detailed qualitative analysis on the texts, in order to explain how a text is constructed to support the existing dominant ideology. The major concern with this method is the findings cannot be generalised, as the small sample selected is not always representative. In order to overcome this problem, I have decided to collect a representative sample of news reports over a longer period of time (namely, 10 to 12 years). Furthermore, my research will include the quantitative and qualitative analyses of the news stories. The results will enable me to draw some conclusions about the underlying ideological stance adopted by the newspapers. It is through understanding the structures and functions of discourse that one may begin to challenge the way ideologies are reproduced and legitimised in discourse.

[Yew-Jin Fang is in the department of Japanese and Chinese Studies at UQ and has recently published an article entitled "'Riots' and demonstrations in the Chinese press : A case study of language and ideology," *Discourse and Society*, 1994, vol. 5 (4), pp. 463-481.]

PUBLICATION NEWS

—news on journals and publishers—

◇ *Hecate: A Women's Interdisciplinary Journal* is interested in publishing more material with an Asian content and welcomes contributions of critical articles, conference reports or creative writing relating to women.

Contact:

Dr Carole Ferrier,
Editor *Hecate*
PO Box 99, St Lucia,
Brisbane,
Qld 4067

◇ The School of Hawaiian, Asian and Pacific Studies at the University of Hawaii is calling for book manuscripts to publish in its **Library of Translations Series** and its **Library of Asian Studies Series**. The former aims to "make available English translations of works of enduring significance from all parts of Asia and the Pacific" and the latter to "producing comprehensive yet readable syntheses of topics in Asian studies that will be of particular relevance in the classroom". For further information contact

Dr Barbara Watson Andaya
Publications Director, SHAPS
Moore Hall 316
1890 East-West Road
Honolulu, HI 96822,
USA

◇ The Academia Sinica's Institute of Modern History is looking for manuscripts for their journal titled *Research on Women in Modern Chinese History*. They welcome articles, research notes, reports and book reviews in English, Chinese or Japanese.

Contact:

Editor
Research on Women in Modern Chinese History
Institute of Modern History
Academia Sinica,
Nankang, Taipei
Taiwan ROC

◇ "Women In Asia Publication Series"

This series is produced by the Asian Studies Association of Australia in association with Allen and Unwin. Manuscripts are sought for consideration by the editorial committee. Manuscripts will be read by two members of the editorial committee and referred to an external reader for fuller comment. Members of this committee include Beverley Hooper (UWA), Christine Inglis (Sydney), Susan Blackburn (Monash), Vera Mackie (Melbourne) and Bob Elson (Griffith). Manuscripts should be around 70,000 words typed on A4 paper and double spaced and should be sent to the Series Editor Dr Susan Blackburn, Politics, Monash University, Clayton, 3168.

—recently published—

Duffy, Jennifer and Anson, Gary (eds). *Encounters with Japan* (Sydney: Angus and Robertson, 1994)

Edwards, Louise. *Men and Women in Qing China* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1994)

Lee, Lily Xiao Hong. *The Virtue of Yin: Studies on Chinese Women* (Broadway: Wild Peony, 1994)

McLaren, Anne E. *The Chinese Femme Fatale: Stories From the Ming Period* (Broadway: Wild Peony—University of Sydney East Asia Series, No. 8, 1994)

McNamara, Deborah and Trood, Russel (eds). *The Asia-Australia Survey 1994* (Macmillan Education Australia, 1994).

O'Regan, Tom (ed.). *Critical Multiculturalism. Special Issue of Continuum: The Australian Journal of Media and Culture* Vol. 8, No. 2 1994. This volume includes articles on Japan, Indonesia, and Asia-Australia relations.

NEW JOURNAL

◇ *Gender, Culture and Society: An International Journal*

—Dr Renuka Sharma—

"Participate in the launch of this radically new International Journal by submitting a paper and/or becoming a CHARTER SUBSCRIBER.

The boundaries of feminism have implications for culture and society, its praxis, paradigms of thought and institutional complexities. The construction of identity concerning women in non-metropolitan countries are fraught with any number of epistemological difficulties. There are complexities of class, subjectivity, and historical cultural development. How these experiences structure the everyday reality of women's lives can be understood from a number of perspectives, viz. anthropology, psychoanalysis, philosophy, criticism, post-colonial discourse and subaltern studies. The aim of the journal is to explore theoretical frameworks and their implications for praxis with particular reference to the cross-cultural and comparative contexts.

This journal wishes to raise to the foreground the issue of boundaries of modernity which has been unwittingly identified with progress within a Western tradition. Modernist and progressive ideas within the Asian, African, native American and other non-Western intellectual traditions have only recently been noticed and come into contact with Western ideas. The journal hopes to provide a meeting space for scholars, writers and students of all theoretical persuasions to dialogue and discuss new ideas in theory, criticism and interpretation within a broad interdisciplinary scope. One issue a year will be published with occasional special supplements.

Contributions are to be submitted on Mac or DOS/IBM disc. Contributions may be innovative to a maximum of 4000 words. Deadline for 1st issue papers is **31 March 1995**. Longer work of substantial length may be considered for a monograph in a supplement series."

Subscription and other Inquiries to
Dr Renuka Sharma
tel (03) 889 2161 : fax 629 1001
e-mail rsharma@ariel.its.unimelb.edu.au

Contributions should be sent to:
Editor, *Gender, Culture and Society*
South Asian Women's Culture Study Group
National Centre for South Asian Studies
4th Floor 20 Queens St
Melbourne Victoria 3000

BOOK REVIEW

CUSO, *Sustainable Development: Voices from Rural Asia* (Studio Driya Media and CUSO, Jakarta, 1994)

Review by Anne Cullen (Griffith—AIS)

Martin McCann begins the preface for *Sustainable Development: Voices from Rural Asia* by stating "The book you hold in your hands in an attempt by the Asian staff and the many Asian friends of the Canadian NGO CUSO to illuminate some of the concepts of sustainable development based on our experiences." This apt appraisal of the two volume compendium begins an intriguing insight into the understanding, and on occasion mis-understanding, of the term 'sustainable development' by Asian and non-Asians, and the impact this term has on international aid programs. Produced for seemingly in-house use, the book still has a lot to offer the non-CUSO (a non-profit, independent Canadian development agency) reader. Contributions from noted NGO workers, academics and activists, such as Vandana Shiva, Martin Khor, Julian Francis and Hira Jhamtani, working on areas as diverse as India, Laos, Bangladesh through to Indonesia, ensures an interesting pot-pourri for readers. The book mixes analytical writing with country profiles, technical evaluations and personal perceptions of programs and sustainable development issues in Asia. Issues that the volumes address, within the framework of sustainable development, are equally as diverse; health, land tenure, forestry, agriculture, gender issues, environmental concerns and many others. The one constant aspect of both these volumes is the commitment and passion of the contributors to the issues and the people with whom they work. *Sustainable Development: Voices from Rural Asia* is not available in bookshops as yet, however all inquiries may be directed to CUSO Asia Regional Office, Jl Kalibata Utara IV/2, Jakarta 12740, Indonesia (FAX 62 21 797 4993).

CONFERENCE REPORTS

◇ "Linking Our Histories: Asian and Pacific Women as Migrants"

Report by Dr Kalpana Ram (Gender Relations Project—ANU)

Jointly organised by the Gender Relations Project (Australian National University) and the Gender Studies Research Unit (Melbourne University), this conference brought together an unusual conjunction of speakers and participants. These included researchers, but also researcher/activists from the Australian, Pacific and Asian regions (the last, funded by the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade), and policy makers from the Department of Immigration and Ethnic Affairs.

The themes of the conference focussed on two critical new perspectives. The first was to provide a broader Asian-Pacific regional perspective on female migration, since this is an issue that gets discussed in Australia primarily in terms contained by our national boundaries. The second innovation of the conference was to highlight the specificity of female migration as opposed to the generic category of "human migration."

A rich array of papers (44 in all!) followed, as can be judged by the following topics in the program: the political economy of the increasing feminisation of migration in the region; the struggles of South Sea Island women to gain official recognition in Australia; detailed anthropological and sociological research on rural/urban and circular migration of women in the Asian region; culture, religion, memory and representation as contested categories for immigrant women; and migratory feminism. Special panels were also held on the following subjects: women migrants as domestic workers, presented by researchers affiliated to the Asian Pacific Development Centre in Kuala Lumpur; a panel on women as refugees and the gender politics of resettlement; a panel on migrant women in the Australian labour force.

The interaction was adjudged by participants to be a particularly productive one in setting up new research linkages on female migration across the region. Plans for publications were further discussed in a follow-up plenary at the Australian National University.

◇ "Asian Studies Association of Australia Biennial Conference: Environment, State and Society in Asia" Murdoch University, July 13-16, 1994.

This huge conference covered a diverse range of topics and provided yet another chance for the Women's Caucus to meet again (see AGM notes to follow). Members contributed to all aspects of the conference including initial organisation, presenting papers and attendance. Key note speakers included Vandana Shiva and Dai Qing who both spoke on environmental concerns for the Asian region.

At a previous meeting the Caucus had decided not to have a separate Women's Caucus day attached to either end of the conference (as had become the custom in the past) but rather to integrate papers on women in Asia into the main body of the conference. This seemed to work well and there were certainly a large number of papers related to women. Panels included that convened by Carla Titherington on "Gender and Cross-cultural Interaction: The Chinese Dimension", Anne McLaren's on "Researching Chinese Women", Cathy Robinson's "Women and the State", Anne-Marie Medcalf's "Researching the History of Women and Society in Asia", Gaynor Dawson's "Women in Development Programs", Narti Purwaningsih's "Women, Children and Social Change", Roziyah Omar's "Reproductive Rights and Traditional and Modern Medicine in Southeast Asia," and Rosemary Haddon's "Gender in Chinese Literatures".

Women's caucus members also contributed to a wide range of other panels including cultural or environmental topics. All in all the conference confirmed the strength of women Asianists in Australia and their tremendous contribution to Asian studies in general.

The women's caucus held a lively dinner at a local Chinese restaurant in Fremantle and continued at a coffee shop nearby. A great time was had by all. The dinner provided a small enough forum for women to meet new friends and catch up with old ones.

◊ "International Conference on Women, Power and Cultural Difference"
National Centre for South Asian Studies,
Melbourne, July 26-28, 1994.

Report by Dr Renuka Sharma (South Asian Women's Study and Support Group (SAWSSG))

The SAWSSG inaugural conference was held in conjunction with the 6th International Feminist Bookfair, July 26-31. Overall the conference was attended by 250 delegates many of whom also attended the Bookfair. There were ten panels covering topics such as theoretical feminisms, gender representation, development and third world aid, fundamentalism, ecofeminism, trade unionism and emigration issues. The Melbourne Declaration on the Freedom of Non-Western Writers was recorded in reference to the writer Taslima Nasreen. A film evening examined the politics of signification in relation to the works of the Indian filmmaker Vaccani.

Participants at the conference were from a range of disciplines (women's studies, politics, law, publishing, psychoanalysts, historians as well as activists from various Asian subgroups) making the discussion and dialogue at the panels heated and productive. Of the thirty one papers offered eleven were international with the rest reflecting the growth of Asian Gender Studies within the national framework. This heterogeneity of perspectives challenged the position of a unitary notion of feminism so current in the literature. It was heartening to see reflexive and critical analysis of the position of women in and from the region of South Asia. Many of the emergent themes were thought to be of relevance to Asia as well as offering insights and contrasts to the constellated "other" of western feminism.

The history of feminism in Pakistan was discussed by Dr Sameena Yasmeen with an analysis of the setbacks engendered by President Zia and the present isolation of the women's movement from mainstream politics despite of Bhutto's presence. The ubiquitous 'Sari' as metaphor was explored by Suvendrini Perera and a cutting critique of Bronowski's book *The Yellow Lady* by Foong Ling Kong highlighted the presence of orientalism in present times.

Panels on fundamentalism in India and Bangladesh provided insights into the oppressive presence of religion in its extreme form in the lives of women. The Hindu Right was discussed by Urvashi Butalia, a feminist publisher from India. The feminist movement in Bangladesh was discussed by Farida Akhter who gave a historical account of the present furor in relation to Taslima Nasreen. Historically the feminist movement dates a century, begun by the works of Begum Rokhyia.

Overall the conference was exuberant in the exchange of ideas and was also the sight of the launch of the journal *Gender, Culture and Society*. The aim of which is to develop some of these ideas in the future.

[See PUBLICATION NEWS—NEW JOURNAL for information on *Gender, Culture and Society* and PTO for the Melbourne Declaration—eds]

◊ "Women's Sexuality and Development in the Australia and the Asia-Pacific Region"
Sydney University, Women's Studies Centre,
November 3-5 1994.

Report by Fiona Miller (Research Institute for Asia and the Pacific, SU)

The Women's Studies Centre of Sydney University presented a conference on "Women's Sexuality and Development" on 3-5 November. The conference explored issues of sexuality and sexual health for women in Australia and the Asia Pacific region. Keynote speakers included Elizabeth Reid (WHO), Rosemary Pringle, Basil Donovan, Juliet Richters and Kendra Sundquist. Sessions at the conference covered such issues as: fertility, infertility, population control; sexuality—dealing with cultural differences; sex work; setting up women's health care centres; health policy; lesbian health; STDs; ways of negotiating the medical profession; women and HIV; safe sex; menopause; women and depression. If you require more information you can contact the Women's Studies Department on (02)351 3638.

◇ "Translation of Chinese Literature"
University of Queensland, Key Centre for
Asian Studies and Languages, September 25-
27, 1994.

This workshop aimed to encourage dialogue between practising translators of literary works from Chinese into English. The conference generated discussion about both the technical problems associated with literary translation and ideological issues generated by the processes involved in translation. Professor Bonnie McDougall from Edinburgh University, Dr Eva Hung, Chinese University of Hong Kong and Dr Joseph Lau of Lingnan college HK provided international expertise. Australian based participants included a number of Women's Caucus members—Mabel Lee, Rosie Roberts, Louise Edwards, Debbie Cao, Li Xia, Yan Qian, Lance Eccles and Kong Soo also presented papers. For further information or copies of the papers contact Professor Kam Louie, Co-Director, Key Centre for Asian Languages and Studies, University of Queensland, 4072

◇ "Workshop on Southeast Asian Women"
Monash University, Monash Asia Institute,
September 29, 1994.

This one day workshop covered a range of disciplines including women's health, images of female power, economic position of women and representations of women in contemporary SE Asian writing, as well as providing a forum for discussion of general problems related to research methodology. Main presenters were Pranee Rice from Monash University's Centre for the Study of Mothers' and Childrens' Health, Mina Roces from History, Central Queensland University, Viviane Lowe of Anthropology at ANU, Wendy Mukherjee and Christine Campbell of Asian Studies at ANU, Rosy Antons-Sutanto from Leiden University, Alison Murray of Human Geography at ANU, Barbara Hatley and Ignatia Hendrarti of Asian Languages and Studies at Monash, Gale Dixon of Geography at Monash and Lanita Indrus of Australian Catholic University. For more information contact Sue Blackburn or Barbara Hatley via the Monash Asia Institute.

◇ "Ideas of Freedom in Asia"
ANU, Humanities Research Centre
4-6 July 1994

This conference covered a range of disciplines across a broad cross-section of Asian countries. Philosophical, political, literary, and historical perspectives were included. Women's caucus members who participated included Vera Mackie [Imagining Freedom: Gender and Liberalism in Meiji Japan] and Mabel Lee [The individual and the meaning of personal freedom in 20th century China]. Any further information can be obtained from Tony Reid RSPacS, ANU (06) 249 2304 and David Kelly, Politics, Australian Defence Force Academy.

GRANTS

Δ AUSTRALIA-JAPAN PROGRAM Academy of the Social Sciences

"The Australia-Japan program was instituted in 1991 to foster understanding between Australia and Japan by research in the social sciences. The program provides grants to enable younger Australian scholars to undertake research, especially at the post-doctoral level, in Japan. Funding is limited to individual research rather than for conference or other group activities. Financial resources are very modest and application are sought from selected social science disciplines in particular years." (ex: *ASSA Annual Report* 1994, pp. 42-43)
Applications for 1995 program close on 16 December 1994. Contact: Academy of Social Sciences, ANU.

JOB VACANCY

◇ Lectureship/Senior Lectureship in Chinese or Japanese Politics. Auckland University, Department of Political Studies.
Vacancy: UAC.526.
Closing Date: 1 March 1995
Contact: Academic Appointments Office, The University of Auckland, Private Bag 92019, Auckland, New Zealand. Fax (64 9) 373 7023.

NEW SOUTH WALES

🍏 Report by Fiona Miller RIAP, SU

Sydney University's Research Institute for Asia and the Pacific hosted a meeting between Ms Oidovyn Enkhutya and Women's Studies Academics at SU. Ms Oidovyn Enkhutya is one of the first women to become a member of the Mongolian parliament and she met with Dr Barbara Caine (History Dept. and Head of Women's Studies Department), Dr Jan Larbalestier (Social Work and Social Policy), Gretchen Poyner and Dr Lily Lee (School of Asian Studies). At the meeting Ms Oidovyn and those present discussed various issues relating to the status of women in Mongolia (and Australia) and the Mongolian women's experience of change in relation to the political and economic reforms now occurring in Mongolia. Ms. Oidovyn was very interested in Sydney University's experience of setting up a Women's Studies Department, as she is intending to establish the first Women's Studies Department in Mongolia. We also discussed the Women's Studies Department's influence on government policy and the political process.

QUEENSLAND

🍏 Professor Bonnie McDougall of Edinburgh University presented a paper titled "The Disappearing Woman: Cross-dressing in Chen Kaige's Films" to the Dept. of Japanese and Chinese Studies at the University of Queensland in September.

🍏 Donna Weeks has been appointed half-time lecturer in Japanese studies at UQ's Japanese and Chinese Studies Dept.

🍏 UQ PhD Student Jenny-Ann Lee has won the inaugural Sir Edward "Weary" Dunlop Asia Fellowship. She is researching pig production in the Philippines and was awarded \$15 000.

🍏 Enid Wylie's PhD "Economic Change and Disease in Malaya c.1820-1920: A Study in Human Ecology" has been conferred by Griffith University.

VICTORIA

🍏 Antonia Finanne has been awarded a large ARC grant (\$67,000) for a project titled "Land, People, Politics 1850-1949" in Chinese history.

🍏 On the 28.6.94 Ratna Sarumpaet, an Indonesian women playwright and actor was at Monash University to present a seminar and a performance of her play, *Marsinah's Song From Beneath The Grave* about the brutal murder of Indonesian labour activist Marsinah. Marsinah had been one of the leaders in a strike demanding better conditions and treatment in a watch factory in East Java. Marsinah's homicide focussed a great deal of attention on the plight of women workers in Indonesia. Initially nine people were charged in conjunction with the abduction and murder of Marsinah, but only three co-workers have been tried and sentenced (each receiving 12 years imprisonment). The Marsinah case continued to be controversial as KOMNAS (the National Committee on Human Rights) has confirmed the earlier allegations of defence lawyers and human rights activists of irregularities in the treatment of the defendants, including physical and mental torture. Ratna returned to Indonesia to present the play in September, taking on the role of Marsinah to considerable acclaim.

ACT

🍏 Dr Rosemary Haddon has taken up a Visiting Postdoctoral Fellowship at ANU (China and Korea Centre/RSPaS. Her research focuses on Gender, Colonialism and Postcolonialism in the Literary Culture of Taiwan. A graduate of University of British Columbia, Rosemary presented part of her research at the ASAA conference in July.

SOUTH AUSTRALIA

🍏 Dr Jane Elliot of Adelaide University's Dept. of History was awarded a 1994 Academy of Social Science Australia-China Exchange Award to "explore available materials relating to the Boxer movement and in particular, representations of that movement through images in cartoons, film, drawings and photographs."

FORTHCOMING CONFERENCES

- "Towards Beijing 1995: Women, Environment and Development in the Asian and Pacific Regions." Melbourne, Department of Social and Cultural Studies, Victoria University of Technology.
Contact: Dr Helen Hill, CAPS, VUT, PO Box 14428, Melbourne Mail Centre 3000
FAX: (03) 688 4883; Tel (03) 688 4882;
E-Mail Helen=Hill@vut.edu.au

Members interested in receiving regular information about the Beijing Conference can write to DAS Distribution, PO Box 655, Fyshwick, ACT 2609, tel (06) 202 5536, fax (06) 202 5696 for free information (1995 Infosheets and the Infokit)

- "Third National Roundtable on Libraries and Asia" Canberra National Library of Australia. 16-17 February 1995.
Contact: Andrew Gosling, Asian Collections, National Library of Australia, Canberra, ACT 2600. Tel (06) 262 1286, Fax (06) 272 4327, E-mail agosling@nla.gov.au
- "Peacemaking Initiatives for East Timor." ANU Department of Political Science and the Arts Faculty. July 10-11.
Contact; Sharon Merten, Dept. of Political Science, Faculty of Arts, ANU, ACT 0200
Tel (06) 2492659; Fax (06) 249 5054
OR Dr Michael Salla
E-mail michael.salla@anu.edu.au
- "European Association for South-East Asian Studies (EUROSEAS) Conference" Leiden, The Netherlands. 29 June-1 July 1995.
Contact: EUROSEAS, c/o KITLV, PO Box 9515, 2300 RA Leiden, The Netherlands.
- "Eleventh New Zealand Asian Studies Conference" Auckland University, Auckland, New Zealand. 1-4 July 1995.
Contact: Conference Secretary, Professor Paul Clark, Dept of Asian Languages and Literatures, University of Auckland, Private Bag 92019, Auckland, New Zealand.
Fax: (64 9) 373 7411

- "Third International Bali Studies Workshop" Sydney University, Sydney. 3-10 July 1995.

Contact: Peter Worsley, School of Asian Studies, University of Sydney, NSW 2006.

Tel (02) 69 3038

Fax (02) 692 3173

E-mail peter.worsley@asia.su.edu.au

- "Twenty-eighth Congress of the Australasian Universities Language and Literature Assoc." University of New England, Armidale. 6-10 Feb 1995

Contact: Professor Chris Gossip, Sept. of French, UNE, Armidale, NSW 2351.

Tel (067) 732700

Fax (067) 733740

E-mail cgossip@netz.une.edu.au

ORGANISATIONS

◊ "Asia Pacific Women's Network" [APWN] has opened a new Centre at 171 Collins Street in Melbourne. The centre has administration facilities, access to training and functions rooms, resource library and reception area. APWN also publishes a bulletin of events and information.

Contact: Shirley Poon Ma (President) on (03) 604 4760 or Lily Ong (Secretary) (03) 602 2277.

◊ The Northern Territory Museum has established a new group called the "Asian Arts Society of the Northern Territory." Further information about this group can be obtained from the Museum itself. [Sorry I have no phone number for this one—ed.].

The following document issued from the “Women, Power and Cultural Difference” conference held in July this year. See CONFERENCE REPORTS for Renuka Sharma’s discussion of this event.

MELBOURNE DECLARATION
ON FREEDOM OF SPEECH FOR WOMEN WRITERS IN NON-WESTERN COUNTRIES

29 July 1994

We the participants of the International Conference on Women, Power and Cultural Difference: Negotiating Gender in South Asia (Melbourne, Australia, July 1994) protest against the silencing of women’s dissenting voices, particularly those of the Bangladeshi writer Taslima Nasreen and Mauritian writer Lindsey Collins.

We note with concern that all over the world the voices of women who dare not speak out against fundamentalism and fundamentalist regimes are being increasingly silenced with threats to their lives and liberty.

The most dangerous trend is the kind of support the State has provided and continues to provide to fundamentalism particularly by enabling any and every fundamentalist group to issue direct threats to the lives of women who dare to speak out. This is true in the case of Taslima Nasreen as it is of Lindsay Collins whose work has been banned. In all of this no consideration is given to women’s feelings, their rights, their voices.

We demand that the governments of Bangladesh and Mauritius take active steps to remove the threat to Taslima Nasreen and Lindsey Collins and restore their democratic rights.

POSTSCRIPT BY RENUKA SHARMA
(Convenor—South Asian Women’s Study and Support Group)

A qualification to the above Declaration is being appended by the organisers on behalf of the sponsors of the Conference. It is that the phenomenon described particularly in the case of Taslima Nasreen needs to be contextualised in the following terms. The sensitivity around this issue comes from a longer tradition of indigenous ‘subaltern’ or grassroots women’s movement within Bangladesh, whose critiques are not necessarily couched in Western feminist frames or discourses alive in other regional areas such as West Bengal where Taslima has had most exposure and support. That she has been taken up by these expatriate groups has worried the Bangladeshi women’s movement on grounds of pragmatism and the elision of less vociferous voices. Taslima’s own obfuscations on her exact treatment of the *Qu’ran* in her writings and the levels of meanings and rhetoric at which the controversy has been carried out have tended to confuse the Bangladeshi women’s cause. The women in Bangladesh, though not all women activists, seek a disentanglement of the polemics of discourse and the recreation of a more effective space within which both the

debate and agitation about women’s rights and roles in Bangladeshi society could continue. The empowerment issue concerns not merely one individual voice but a whole larger movement which feels particularly grieved about the turn of events following the threats made on Taslima’s life. Her action could appear to be ahistorical and outside of grassroots Muslim women’s expressions, scholarship and support. That she did not work in tandem with the grassroots movements and took it upon herself to rally against the Muslim *shariat* has somewhat alienated her from potential support across gender, class, and subreligious groups, and a history of achievements within Bangladesh. The cause taken up by secular Hindu intelligentsia and Hindu fundamentalist groups on this issue reflects as much the stance taken in response to Muslim extremisms in India. The two need to be kept separate. It is feared that the *fatwa*, were it to be carried out, could unwittingly lead to the death of that more systematic dissent that has continued away from the chronicles of Calcutta. That is the paradox the women representatives from Bangladesh have been concerned to express at this conference and we feel it our duty to place this caveat on record.

Renuka Sharma (SAWSSG)

AGM MINUTES

Women's Caucus of the Asian Studies
Association of Australia
AGM Held at the ASAA Conference
Murdoch University
13 July 1994

Present: 16 people
Chair: Bev Hooper
Secretary: Sue Blackburn

1. Reports

Sue Blackburn reported on the Women in Asia Conference, 1-3 October 1993. There was discussion about the location and date of the next one, which is still to be determined. Volunteers will receive help from the previous conference organisers.

Sue Blackburn reported on the Women in Asia Publications Series published by Allen and Unwin. The fourth title in the series was soon to be released and offers of manuscripts are welcome.

2. Newsletter

A report by Antonia Finnane, the editor, on the Newsletter was read. Subscriptions stand at about 50 and the mailing list has been reduced to 150. The bank balance is healthy and Antonia was unable to continue as editor; she was thanked for her efforts.

Louise Edwards (Humanities, Australian Catholic University-QLD) and Anne Cullen (AIS Griffith University) agreed to take over the positions of editor and subscriptions handler respectively.

3. State contacts

The following people volunteered to act as state contacts for the Newsletter:

WA: Tamara Jacka, Humanities, Murdoch University, Murdoch, 6150

Vic: Barbara Hatley, Asian Languages, Monash University, Clayton, 3168

NSW: Pamela Gutman, Research Institute for Asia and the Pacific, University of Sydney, 2006

SA: Lesley Potter, Geography Dept., University of Adelaide, 5005

Tas: Nerida Cook, Asian Studies, University of Tasmania, GPO Box 252C Hobart, 7001 (nominated in absentia)

NT: Amanda Yorke, Art History, Northern Territory University, PO Box 40146, Casuarina, 0811 (nominated in absentia)

ACT: Helen Creese, RSPacS, ANU, Canberra, 0200

4. Dinner

The Dinner of the Women's Caucus would be held on Friday 15 July

5. Other Business

Sue Blackburn announced that a Workshop on Southeast Asian Women would be held on 29 September at the Centre of Southeast Asian Studies, Monash.

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Please send information for the newsletter to the state contact or directly to the Queensland Editor.

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**Reports, reviews and comments and
activities past and future are most
welcome. Contact your state
representative or the Editorial team—
Louise Edwards and Anne Cullen.**

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