

In this Issue

The five articles in this issue share certain topical and thematic resonances in spite of their diversities. Colonialism and its varied aftermaths play a prominent role in the articles by Brook, Morris-Suzuki and Peluso and Vandergeest, and an important, if less explicit, role in the work of Dent and Howell. Morris-Suzuki and Peluso and Vandergeest show, in very different ways, the centrality of place to the construction of social identity. Brook, Morris-Suzuki, Peluso and Vandergeest, and Howell all write about the complex ways the past has made an imprint on the present, and show us ways in which that imprint is not always predictable. Dent and Peluso and Vandergeest are concerned with the construction of social and political frameworks, and the ways in which actors maneuver within those frameworks.

JULIA HOWELL's article on the Islamic revival in Indonesia since the 1970s clearly demonstrates that Sufism has not died out, but rather has enjoyed a resurgence, even among people most concerned with modernization, the urban upper and middle classes. Clearly the resurgent forms of Sufi devotion are not identical to the older forms, and Howell's essay shows the complex interplay between old and new.

TIMOTHY BROOK's article examines Radhabinod Pal's dissent from the majority judgment at the Tokyo Tribunal, restoring for his readers the judicial context in which Pal wrote. Brook's concern is not with discerning which version of events is right and which is wrong, but rather with demonstrating how those differing accounts fit into various narratives. Brook suggests that Pal's contribution to international law was the assertion that unilateral justice is an inadequate base for applying international law.

NANCY PELUSO and PETER VANDERGEEST trace the construction of "forest" as a political category in colonial Java, Dutch Borneo, the Malay States, Sarawak and Siam. Their comparative analysis shows ways in which forest practices constituted new forms of discipline which were essential to the colonial enterprise.

TESSA MORRIS-SUZUKI examines the question of identity in the Japanese settler colony of Karafuto, using films, fiction and photography. She is interested, as her title indicates, both in the making and the unmaking of a colonial identity, and in examining the question of what constitutes colonial identity.

CHRISTOPHER M. DENT examines trade between Europe and East Asian countries and suggests ways in which a changing Europe might form a changed relationship with East Asia.

As is now my practice, I sent all five articles in this issue to all six authors and asked them to read and comment on one another's work. My point is to begin in these pages a conversation about these articles and the ways in which they can be productively read across geographical and disciplinary boundaries that you, as readers of the journal, will continue. It was not particularly my goal to elicit from the authors a distillation of a common thread among these very different articles.

But both Timothy Brook and Julia Howell noted a common thread among all the articles, and most of the authors identified threads which linked several of them.

Brook identified the thread as “our mutual interest in the problem of how states (or other public actors) seek to establish public understandings of the way the world has been in the past and is now, so as to bring about effects favorable to their hegemony” (Brook, e-mail, 14 May 2001). Julia Howell noted a similar concern, though she couched it in somewhat different terms. She wrote:

I note first of all the weight of our concern with the processes through which people frame their understandings of the world, in other words, what Berger and Luckman (1991) have called the social construction of reality. This concern hovers over different aspects of the perceived world in each piece. Morris-Suzuki looks at how people wrestle to depict their place in the social world, via the notion of “identity.” Peluso and Vandergeest show us changed renderings of the environment in their genealogies of the “political forest.” And Brook is concerned with the moral meaning of large-scale violence. In each case, the framing of social life, essentially a subjective understanding or in Max Weber’s phrase, “interpretation” of social action, nonetheless is shown to be consequential. It is consequential at least for the individual’s subjective experience of personal dignity and meaning in life (Morris-Suzuki), but also for sustaining claims to territory (Morris-Suzuki, Peluso and Vandergeest), for justifying punishment or exoneration (Brook), and even for claiming divine justification for one’s path to redemption (Howell). (Howell, e-mail, 28 May 2001).

She goes on to write:

We also see, though not in the foreground of every essay, that these consequences include the constitution of social institutions—forestry departments, courts of justice, bodies of law, patterns of religious association and practice. In other words, we see the interplay in public space of interpretive understandings (themselves somewhat illusive and ephemeral) with structure (which captures our sense of perduring systemic constraints on social action.) Thus in these historical accounts of different realms of social life in several different parts of Asia we see demonstrations of the complex interplay of structure and agency that challenges so much contemporary sociological theory (cf. Archer 2000; Giddens 1984). (Howell, e-mail, 28 May, 2001).

Peluso articulates a concern with practice and the interplay between practice and institution as being central to four of the articles under consideration:

Brook, Howell, Morris-Suzuki, and Peluso and Vandergeest all deal with the ways practices of some sort “normalize” discourses and institutions. . . .

Brook talks about the practice of law in terms of judicial procedure and the debates over procedure that challenged an effort to create “truth” and “justice” in one of the earliest trials for war crimes and crimes against humanity. What was the context for dissent, he asks, and how was this handled in these trials? He reexamines the materials from the Tokyo Judgment, and focuses on the extensively documented dissenting opinion of the Indian judge, Radhabinod Pal. Julia Howell shows how practices that emerge as ideas in one period can be translated through new institutions into another historical period, even when the historical contexts are constituted by considerably different contexts, constraints, and political settings. Like Brook, and like Peluso and Vandergeest, she shows the ways particular historical outcomes do not always emerge as expected. Sufism, for example, was predicted to disappear by the end of the twentieth century in Indonesia, and then emerged even stronger through the institutionalizing efforts of individuals intrigued with it for a variety of new reasons. (Peluso, e-mail, 18 June 2001)

Peluso goes on to alert us to the importance of the idea of the forest in the work she has done with Vandergeest, and suggests that “the conditions created in the postwar period strengthened the idea of [the political forest], while international forces bolstered the institutions meant to practice it.” She continues, writing about the enactment of ideas in other essays:

Morris-Suzuki examines another way that ideas can become or are meant to become accepted “realities”—through film. By examining films made about the Japanese colonial experience in Karafuto, she illustrates the ways experience and knowledge or understanding about a place and its connection to a colonial power contributes to the shaping of colonist identities. What, in such a case, does nationalism mean as a form of belonging?

Similarly, Brook addresses questions of how internationalism comes to be an accepted mode of interaction, and how power relations even in courts of international law meant to follow unbiased judicial procedures can be tainted by changing power and political relations. (Peluso, e-mail, 18 June 2001)

Both Brook and Morris-Suzuki deal with issues surrounding Japanese colonialism and its aftermath, and, not surprisingly, each finds resonances in the work of the other. Brook writes of Morris-Suzuki:

I found an immediate link with Tessa Morris-Suzuki’s analysis of Japanese attempts in the early 1940s to turn Japan’s colonial presence in Sakhalin into positive public knowledge that could efface the oppressions of colonialism and submerge difference into a unified national identity. Japan’s military conduct in China was similarly presented during the war to Japanese back home in such a way that colonial violence disappeared behind a natural racial commonality between Chinese and Japanese. As Morris-Suzuki notes, once the colonial era ended in 1945, Japanese were invited to forget their colonial past and affirm a Japaneseness shorn of all traces of the unsettling hybridities that colonialism had engendered. Postwar Japanese were encouraged similarly to forget their participation in the violence of colonial control in China, and subsequently to doubt the probity of the Tokyo trial. If the Japanese right has found it useful to praise Radhabinod Pal for dissenting from the majority opinion at the Tokyo trial, it is because he and they both regarded what Japan did before and during the war as a legitimate struggle against Western imperialism. Pal refused to see Japanese violence in China as colonialism. His dissenting opinion was thus conveniently free of the echoes of colonial memory that some Japanese preferred not to hear. On the other hand, it drove him to search for judicial standards that could stand free of political taint. (Brook, e-mail, 14 May 2001)

Morris-Suzuki writes that she found the discussion of Pal’s role in the Tokyo trial “fascinating and timely,” and notes that she was:

intrigued by the rather fleeting reference to the Filipino judge, Delfin Jaramilla, whose very different view of the trial has received much less attention than Pal’s. Particularly in the context of contemporary Japanese discourse, where Judge Pal’s views are all too readily taken up by the Right as a means of diverting the question of war responsibility, I felt it would be fascinating to have a comparative study of Pal’s and Jaramilla’s approaches to the trial, and the reason for their differences. (Morris-Suzuki, e-mail, 12 May 2001)

Both Morris-Suzuki and Brook noted the commonalities between their articles and what is, on the surface of it, the very different article by Peluso and Vandergeest. Brook writes:

To my great surprise, I found even closer analytical resonance with the essay in which Nancy Lee Peluso and Peter Vandergeest analyze the process by which colonial forestry produced what they call “political forests” and thereby elaborated new forms of state discipline. By analogy, this is precisely the process by which the Allies during the Second World War generated a body of international law and procedure governing war crimes. Violence against civilians was hardly unknown in previous wars, but the emerging discursive legal regime reconceptualized it as a “crime against humanity.” So too aggressive war came to be redefined as a “crime against peace.” The invention of such crimes—just like the invention of forest crimes—led to the formation of new institutions, first at Nuremberg and Tokyo, and most recently at the International Criminal Court. Has this been a progressive development? In the realm of forestry, Peluso and Vandergeest are doubtful, based on their awareness of the gradual encroachment of colonial states over regional populations. Their doubt is shared, in the realm of international law, by Radhabinod Pal, who saw the creation of these new crimes not as steps toward a more civilized world, but as devices favoring the perpetuation of Western imperialism in postwar Asia. Whether this genealogy compromises the Tokyo judgment is a political rather than a legal question. Given our extraordinary capacity to clear-cut both, people, like forests, seem now to benefit from state protection. Pal’s concern was that all people benefit equally. (Brook, e-mail, 14 May 2001)

Morris-Suzuki too finds resonances between her article and the Peluso-Vandergeest piece.

Although the topic is far removed from mine, in terms of underlying approach (what is called problem-consciousness in Japan) my article seems to me to have particularly strong resonances with Peluso and Vandergeest’s study of customary rights. Both articles seemed to discuss how particular places (whether forests or geographical locations like “Karafuto”) are understood, named and reinterpreted, and how practices of naming and interpretation relate to identity. (Morris-Suzuki, e-mail, 12 May 2001)

Peluso also notes the importance of naming and identity, and the processes which constitute naming and identity, to these pieces. She writes:

Naming is another important practice that influences all these studies. Which historical figures were Sufi, and which were not? What is a “forest” and what does its legal definition mean for the people who depend on it and those who would “rule” it? What are the conditions by which certain practices become internationally acknowledged “crimes against humanity” while other sorts of atrocities are not? Was Karafuto Japanese or Russian or something else, and what did this mean to and for the Japanese settlers who lived there and had to leave there before and after World War II? How, then, for all of these pieces, are colonial, religious, national, and international identities and senses of belonging formed? All of these authors show how the impacts of international forces are deeply affected by the specific local histories with which they intersect. (Peluso, e-mail, 18 June 2001)

Vandergeest sees a similar connection, but he frames it in terms of history and forgetting. He writes:

Although the subject matter is very different (forests versus identity), I found that both “Northern Lights” (Morris-Suzuki) and “Tokyo Judgment” (Brook) resonated with our paper in a number of ways. We are all engaging with how rule was constituted in the late colonial period, and how history of that rule has been told in the postcolonial period. In doing so, we both highlighted what has been left out of

the way that these colonial histories are often remembered, and how this forgetting works through stories which try to draw clear and distinct lines between identities (in the Karafuto case), and between different types of landscapes, also tied to identity (in our case). In the case of Karafuto, Chinese and Korean laborers were excluded from dramatic portrayals of the colonial situation, while ambiguity was eliminated in stories about the colonial situation through the use of the image of disguise. This image imposed a clear distinction between the mask and the real self, or the colonized and colonizer, which was in practice difficult to maintain. In the Rape of Nanking, the Tokyo Judgment left out the larger story of European imperialism in Asia, although the dissenting opinion by Pal put on the record an opinion which did not silence this larger context. In our study of forest history in Southeast Asia, we similarly found that ambiguity was resolved through the resolution of legal access rights into either political forests or state-defined Customary Rights, which often contributed to the colonial policy of defining clear boundaries between racialized groups. This hides the myriad of more ambiguous practices which we call "customary practices," through which people access and use forests. As in the Karafuto case, however, these hard and clear distinctions have often been difficult to maintain in practice. (Vandergeest, e-mail, 12 June 2001)

Dent's article, both in method and subject, stands somewhat apart from the other four. But Howell sees ways in which it can productively be read in conjunction with them, by underscoring the significance of institutions to the project of all the articles. She writes:

[Dent] is concerned to assess the changing significance of institutions (state and non-state) that promote international economic exchange (especially between East Asia and the European Union), the patterns of actual exchange, and structure of relationships among states that may emerge from patterns of production, trade and investment. However . . . a concern with institutions and social structures is also evident in the other essays. All those studies of hegemonic or rival constructions of the social world actually require analysis of the institutional and structural contexts in which claims are contested. Those institutions and structures constitute assets for, and impose restraints upon, the negotiation of public understandings that are the concern of subjectivist studies [such as the other four essays]. Dent's paper reminds us that the arenas of power contestation extend beyond the borders of states; they include international relations conducted by the explicitly political institutions of states and transnational activities of individuals and firms. Dent also points to enduring structured inequalities amongst nation-states. Brook's paper provides an example of how power in the international arena can be contested not only through war, diplomacy and trade, but through a contestation of meanings addressed to both a specific court and the "court of international opinion." The subject of my own paper, changing and contested expressions of Indonesian Islamic religiosity, has as a vitally important backdrop the transnational community of the Islamic faith, the *ummat*, with its many organizational networks, patterns of pilgrimage, financial flows and internet chatrooms. With that, however, we would be launched into other papers! (Howell, e-mail, 28 May 2001)

Peluso noted the ways that all of the articles deal, albeit in very different ways, with international institutions "as sources of modifying or transformative ideas and practices which take unique forms in the sites of each of these case studies." Vandergeest finds resonances between his work and Dent's article and suggests ways of reading the articles in juxtaposition which highlight historical change. He writes:

Dent's paper, like ours, deals with Asian states in terms of their relations with Europe. There is an obvious differences in emphasis: Dent focuses entirely on interstate

relations, while we are more concerned with state formation and the state's relationship with the peoples populating their territories. But what struck me most in reading Dent's paper on Euro-Asian relations today is just how much has changed since the period that we describe. During the colonial period, relations with Europe were obviously central to understanding state formation: it was European colonial foresters, working through Empires centered in Europe, who created the basic institutions of the state which survive to the present. But today, it seems, it is relations with the United States and with multilateral institutions like the WTO which are most important to Asian states; Europe has receded from the picture, and is involved in the region largely through the multilateral institutions. The story of this withdrawal of direct influence and re-engagement through multilateral institutions has its parallels in forestry, where the dissolution of the colonial Empires during the 1940s and 1950s was accompanied by the increasing influence of the FAO, particularly in states where forestry was relatively weak during the colonial period. It was through the FAO that colonial forestry practices and their associated new categories of forest crimes were redefined and deepened throughout Southeast Asia. The Tokyo Judgment can also be understood as central moment in this shift, signaling as it did the emerging influence of the United States as well as the future formation of international criminal courts which have defined new kinds of criminal practices. (Vandergeest, e-mail, 12 June 2001)

Timothy Brook notes another kind of resonance with both the Dent and the Howell essays, in terms of the varied ways an East-West dichotomy is formulated and plays itself out in various scenarios.

With the essay by Christopher Dent, I detect a significant parallel with regard to the politics of East-West ideology. He notes that civil-society opposition in the West to globalization is seen by East Asians as working against their interests. By strengthening the rules of compliance governing accession to multilateral regimes such as the WTO, civil-society activism ironically is seen as conferring a trade-balance advantage to the West. By the same token, some Japanese perceived the invocation of international law at the Tokyo trial as a device for enhancing Western power in Asia, not for establishing justice. This polarization of East against West, by which the disadvantage of one becomes the advantage of the other, is precisely the point of departure from which Radhabinod Pal assessed Japan's non-responsibility for the war, and became the basis for his refusal to condemn any Japanese leader for the Rape of Nanking. Brook, e-mail, 14 May 2001)

Peluso and Vandergeest's article suggests ways in which early environmental movements in Southeast Asia were seen as one more instrument of colonial oppression.

Brook notes the East-West dynamic operating somewhat differently in the case of Howell's article:

In her essay, Julia Howell shows that the same old East-West dichotomy continues to have political resonance in the Indonesian public realm, where devotional Islam is regarded positively in part because it provides a counterweight to what is perceived as Westernization. The turn to Sufism accords with Pal's advice to Japanese in 1966, that they should draw on their ancient civilizational traditions to distinguish their East from the West and so to resist Westernization. This ideological move favors a conservatism that has power to blunt neocolonial pressures, yet produces the more potent political effect of buttressing the existing political order and the elites that benefit from it. The "West," for Pal as much as for Abdurrahman Wahid, has as many discursive purposes as there are political and economic advantages to be gained from the contexts in which it can be negatively invoked. But this is true on both

sides of a dichotomy that we seem constantly to reject but just as constantly reconstruct. (Brook, e-mail, 14 May 2001)

These articles resonate with one another in several registers, some of them unexpected—the processes whereby people frame their understandings of the world, the relationships between structure and agency, and the ways in which domestic processes are constrained by the international arena. Many of the articles are also about history, about processes of remembering and structures of silence, and the ways in which the past remains in the present and the future. Read them with pleasure.

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