

## In This Issue

The five articles in this issue—three on China, one on the Philippines, and one on Indonesia—are interested in exploring questions of identity and locality, questions of the nature of state power and civilizing discourses, and whether those discourses come from western missionaries or the centralizing Chinese state. The articles by Sara Friedman, John Flower, and Mayfair Mei-hui Yang were originally presented at a single conference; they were written in dialogue with one another. The articles by James Eder and Rita Kipp deal with some of the same issues, particularly ethnicity and analyzing discourses.

RITA SMITH KIPP looks at the work of two Dutch missionary women writing on the Minahasa, a people in Sulawesi (Indonesia) among whom missionaries had remarkable success. She finds substantial differences between the two writers, which she attributes to a number of factors, one of which is the changing attitudes of the Dutch Reformed Church to the relationship between the trappings of Western culture and the essence of Christianity. She critically examines the lenses through which her informants see the Minahasa in order to see both her informants and their subjects more clearly.

JAMES F. EDER examines the question of ethnicity among the Cuyonon, a group of lowland-dwelling Hispanicized people living in the Philippines. He is fundamentally interested in questions of identity, the interplay between the local and the modern, and the ways in which Cuyonon culture is now produced in transnational spaces.

SARA L. FRIEDMAN examines the figure of “the Hui’an woman,” treating both the representations and the lived experience of women in the pseudonymous village of Shanlin in Fujian Province, China. The discourses she addresses focus on women’s dress (particularly headcoverings and hairstyles) and the meanings attributed to that dress by both the Chinese state and villagers themselves. Friedman concludes her article with observations about symbolic citizenship and the ways that meanings of citizenship and civilization are being reworked in the context of the market economy.

JOHN M. FLOWER discusses the building of the North Road, a rural highway in Ya’an County in Sichuan, China. The road is a metaphor for connection with the state, but it is also a means for negotiating that connection. He is interested in exploring the changing balance between local knowledge and state power as shown in the history of struggles over the road.

MAYFAIR MEI-HUI YANG examines contests for control of space in Wenzhou in Zhejiang Province, China. The central dynamic which interests her is control of religious space. She uses (and modifies) Henri Lefebvre’s concept of representational spaces to look at the intricate ways in which power is constructed at the micro level.

As is now my custom, I sent out all the articles in this issue to all the authors and asked them to comment on resonances that they noted between their own work

and other articles. Flower commented on how struck he was by the commitment to the local in all the articles; indeed, as I was typing the first sentence of this piece in which I named the nation-states in which these stories happen, I was struck by the half-truth of what I was writing—these articles are not *on* China or the Philippines or Indonesia. Rather, part of the problematic of the articles deals with the relationship of particular local sites to the nation-state.

Several of the authors noted strains of commonality running through the articles. Flower observes that the articles all “reveal the often-contradictory positions of power that underlie the discursive construction of identity as well as the conflicting grassroots interests that inform the negotiated boundaries of belonging. In broaching the (apparent) contradictions and hybridity of identity, the articles also speak to the issue of tradition in modernity, to how tradition ‘speaks back’ to and challenges the inevitability of modernity” (e-mail, May 16, 2004).

Friedman sees the commonalities as revolving around questions of civilization and modernity. She writes that the different foci of the articles “reflect the various sites of conflict and wide array of actors engaged in diverse civilizing projects across time and space.” She continues:

Read together, the articles enable us to trace the conceptual and practical linkages between civilization and modernity, beginning with the Dutch colonial missionary effort in the East Indies discussed by Kipp and the Chinese imperial network of roads, temples, and officialdom analyzed by Flower. Yang and, to a lesser extent, I explore the consequences of Western colonial legacies in the more recent civilizing projects of socialist and late-socialist China, where attacks on feudal superstition and feudal practices more generally bear striking similarities to the outcry against poverty and ignorance found in some of the writings by women missionaries in the Dutch East Indies. Eder offers insights into how civilizing ideals inform ethnic identity claims among the Cuyonon. He and I illustrate the contradictory and often conflicting nature of such claims on the part of those most committed to displaying the markers of modern or civilized status.

(e-mail, May 13, 2004)

Kipp also sees the theme of civilizing running through all five articles and notes the ironies of the similarities of the projects of Christian missionaries and the socialist Chinese state. She writes:

As both Flower and Friedman explain, *spiritual* civilization is a concern of modern Chinese bureaucrats as it was for turn-of-the-century missionaries. It is ironic to compare the Chinese state and missionaries, since the latter placed religion at the center of their civilizing mission, while the former tolerated religion only as an improvement over superstition. (One of the missionary women whom I described wrote extensively about Minahasan superstitions to demonstrate their spiritual poverty in comparison to Christianity.) Still, I question Yang’s assertion that China’s missionary traditions should be blamed for the state’s hostility to popular “superstitious practices.” More immediate than having internalized the perspective of the colonial missionary other, I would guess, is the Marxian tradition that regards any kind of supernaturalism as premodern or feudal.

(e-mail, March 31, 2004)

One of the first things that struck me as I read these articles side by side is the ways in which they deal with questions of identity in groups that are not quite ethnic minorities. Eder does it most forthrightly—the question of whether or not the Cuyonon have status as an indigenous people is genuinely ambiguous. The people of

Shanlin whom Friedman studies are formally categorized as Han, but they bear many of the markers of ethnic minorities. The Wenzhou that Yang studies is also marked by difference and separation from the rest of China—long geographical separation led to the development of distinctive dialects. In some ways, one of the issues that all these authors are grappling with is how to conceptualize local identity in cultures where the roads (to use Flower's metaphor) are in a constant process of construction and reconstruction and how to conceptualize local identity when difference is not formally labeled as "ethnicity."

Flower notes that identity is a central aspect of the analyses of all the articles, which play in different ways upon the interrelations between body and place. He writes:

The authors' approaches to the overarching theme of identity seem to fall along the two analytical axes of body and place. . . . Cleanly dividing the articles along these axes is a bit misleading, however, since to varying degrees they all explore the *interrelation* of body and place. Kipp, for example, shows that early descriptions of the poor, naked bushnative associated her with a landscape of privation and wilderness, a historically contingent construction reflecting the fear of poverty in the colonial center, which from a different historical vantage point gave way to the naturally naked Minahasan body in a land of abundance. Friedman argues that the hybrid figures of women in Huidong embody the ambiguities of the national space itself, since their unclear ethnic presence defies positioning as either the progressive urbanite of the "open, burgeoning Han coastal core" or the "poor, 'uncivilized' peasant of the interior." In a similar vein, my article raises the conflation of "backward" mountain areas and "underdeveloped" peasant bodies in development discourse, as well as the local re-membering of the community in particular sites in the landscape. Yang's discussion of absolute space, where "rituals propel bodies to spatialize and cause space to be embodied" goes furthest in illuminating the intertwined dialectic of body and place. Thus, there is a sense emerging from the articles that body and place, the geo-body, are interpenetrating fields of identity formation.

(e-mail, May 16, 2004)

Friedman also notes the way in which the articles, in their various ways, "highlighted the inadequacy of dichotomous categories when seeking to comprehend the hybrid condition of the people and places that they discussed." She continues:

Eder unpacks the multiple bases of ethnicity in the lowland Philippines by showing how ethnicity is crosscut by class and place and by demonstrating the weak explanatory power of binaries such as upland and lowland or migrant and local. Kipp's analysis of the writings of two Dutch missionary women reveals how the transformations in colonial rule and missionary ideology over the course of the nineteenth century destabilized colonial representations of the Other premised on fixed oppositions between colonizer and native, civilized and uncivilized, or even Christian and heathen. Yang's concept of the "postcolonial complex" further interrogates this division between the West and its Other, here emphasizing the degree to which Chinese have themselves internalized and reworked the evolutionary progress narrative that underwrote Western imperialism and nationalist models. The hybrid product of this complex is perhaps less a unified cultural Self than one further fractured along lines of regional, ethnic, gender, and class difference, as shown in both Flower's and Friedman's articles. The simultaneous pursuit of "material" and "spiritual" civilization in post-Mao China reveals the traces of dichotomies between the West and China, even as it subsumes them under tensions between market capitalism and socialist egalitarianism. Together Flower, Yang, and I show how these

tensions manifest themselves in specific bodies and landscapes where people are forced to live the contradictions of hybridity in their everyday lives.

(e-mail, May 13, 2004)

All these articles are interested in rethinking the role of the state and, in the process, unpacking the various layers of state actors and state interests which interact with local society at different historical times. Friedman formulates the issue as follows:

Both the role of the state and how to conceptualize it emerge as points of concern in all five articles. The state appears in these works not as a unified entity existing above society, but as an internally divided array of forces, practices, and actors with multiple, often conflicting, aims. Eder and I directly question the role of the state as a causal factor in ethnic identification, noting that the Philippine and Maoist states affirmed ethnic categories while at the same time promoting policies and ideologies that contravened such distinctions. Kipp, too, refrains from attributing representations of colonial Others directly to the changing nature of the colonial state and questions the extent to which women missionaries spoke exclusively in the voice of colonial rule, noting the importance of class identities in shaping their images of the Other. The three China articles also interrogate the very nature of the state by elucidating the diverse array of actors that have made up the state apparatus at different points in time and by tracing the ever-changing contours of state-society relationships. They show how the socialist civilizing project has fostered a state apparatus that works not only through top-down disciplinary techniques but also (and perhaps more importantly) through cultivating specific kinds of subjects, bodies, landscapes, and spatial practices. The workings of state power have produced a series of contested negotiations conducted on the terrain of bodies and ritual spaces with highly variable outcomes for groups differently situated in a newly emerging hierarchy of place, identity, and economic development.

(e-mail, May 13, 2004)

Flower writes about some of these same issues in terms of looking at the ways that power is conceptualized in the articles and suggests that contests for power may leave space for individual agency:

All the articles confront the messiness of power relations in a variety of civilizing/modernizing discourses, highlighting strategies of negotiation (rather than simple resistance) on the part of the weak and generally showing sensitivity to the shifting ground of power itself. . . . What emerges from all the articles is that the discourses of civilization and modernity used by state and capitalist regimes of power open themselves to interpretation from within and without, leaving a contested place for individuals and traditional communities to exercise creative agency and assert their own alternative identities.

(e-mail, May 16, 2004)

Kipp conceptualizes the complexity of the state as discussed in these articles in the following terms:

That one hand of the state can campaign against feudal practices while another hawks them to tourists speaks to Eder's caution that, just as we have come to qualify our understandings about "culture," we need to be careful about "totalizing" views of the state (cf. the Lefebvre epigrams to Yang's article). States do not "speak with a single or consistent voice," Eder writes. It is more accurate to see the changes and resistances described in these articles as only partly directed by and against states. At one point,

Yang mentions the vague “power effects” of an amorphous modernity. As states promote development and modernity, some resist these campaigns while others embrace and even want to go beyond them. Young Hui’an women, for example, appropriate the rhetoric about feudalism to negotiate greater social freedoms for themselves. Quite apart from what states want and can control, modernity, with its promises of everything high speed and new personal freedoms, emits its own siren call.

Flower’s story of the North Road and the markets and temples that have existed in relation to it reveal how power has evolved in China. The better the roads and the greater the traffic along them, the more the “local” is exposed to those who define it as a backwater and the more those who live there come to see it that way, too. “Concrete embodiments of hope,” roads bear witness to leaders’ effectiveness and whether the state is responsive to local needs. Roads index and represent economic development, are both an object of development and one of its agents, but also bring the wealthy, who can afford to drive, in proximity to the people walking and standing at the roads’ edges. In this era when, as Friedman puts it, “the very meaning of socialism is increasingly uncertain,” the discussions about backwardness, feudalism, and spiritual civilization, according to Flower, give the state “ideological control over emerging social inequalities.”

(e-mail, March 31, 2004)

Flower delineates the following similarities in the pieces:

Within the broad thematic lines sketched above, there are many specific intersections where I think the articles speak to each other quite directly. Friedman’s effective use of Michel de Certeau’s concept of “the bridge” to illuminate the destabilizing effect of hybrid figures that confound “categorical divisions” resonates with Eder’s focus on “category-confounding peoples” whose existence suggests that “the forging of national cultures and identities remains a tenuous and only partially successful project.” Eder further directs our attention to the fact that the complex choices about identity that these people make are a function of political economy and “very real (and often asymmetrical) relationships of class and political power.” My article investigates these asymmetrical power relations in the context of development discourse, looking at attempts to transform the Sichuan landscape in ways that make local people losers and at villagers’ counterstruggles to assert their own sense of place and their own local interests. Here, my account of memory and place dovetails with Yang’s analysis of the “popular reappropriation of space.” The many similarities in the narratives (too many, in fact, to index fully here)—even in two such apparently different places as the poor, “backward,” mountainous area of Ya’an and the coastal, progressive and prosperous Wenzhou—underscore the trend in contemporary China of what Yang terms “active engagements with larger historical forces of power to deflect and reterritorialize both state abstract space with its postcolonial complex as well as global capitalist abstract space.” The particularity of place defies abstraction; it is constantly shifting, re-created ground, accreting memory and meaning. Traditional places such as temples are thus relevant as a challenge to power dressed up as the inevitable progress of modernity. The two accounts “fit” in another way: the policy-driven regional inequalities that I describe are manifest in the migrant labor in Wenzhou, where for a day’s wage Sichuanese will readily tear down temples (it is not their place, after all), even as they see their homeplace as threatened by Wenzhounese real-estate speculators working hand in glove with corrupt state officials. As Yang points out, ties of place are not simply strategies of resistance; they can serve just as well to occlude class identity and abet injustice.

(e-mail, May 16, 2004)

Eder comments on ways in which Kipp's article raised new questions in his mind about his own work. He writes that her article made "me realize that there may well have been gender dimensions to the representational issues and choices about identity that I discuss in my own article, dimensions that I had left unexplored." Kipp's sensitivity to the interaction between ethnographer and subject raises another question in Eder's mind. He writes:

The general notion of "asymmetrical power" in the observer-observed relationship, discussed early in the article, helped sharpen my own understanding that not all Cuyonon are equally well situated to represent "Cuyonon-ness" to outsiders, and this is a cautionary flag for anthropologists such as myself who wish to study what that Cuyonon-ness consists of. Aspects of Kipp's article also reminded me of the discomfort that some urban Cuyonon seem to experience when reminded in conversations that I, an anthropologist, was somehow studying *them*—this because, in the Philippine context, anthropology is widely and in many understandings only associated with the study of *tribal* (primitive, indigenous, and so on) peoples, so the discomfiting implication is that I must somehow regard them in this fashion. This is an observation that I might profitably have developed in my own article.

(e-mail, April 29, 2004)

Eder also sees fruitful lines of comparison with Friedman's conclusion:

The opening part of the conclusion, regarding the "commodification of ethnicity," reminded me of the Cuyonon folk songs played daily in the arrival lounge at the Puerto Princesa City Airport. Tourism, both domestic and international, is important in Palawan's economy, and the success of a Cuyonon music ensemble (mentioned briefly in my own article) has proven useful to tourism authorities anxious to surround Palawan with a distinctive cultural persona. Few Cuyonon today identify with this music, of course, much less listen to at home. Here, I also thought about Yang's discussion (following Lefebvre) of "representational spaces." This is a bit of a reach and probably not what Yang (or Lefebvre) intended by the notion, but the airport music experience (which can get pretty tiresome if you fly in and out much!) reminded me that Cuyonon have few physical spaces that they can claim as their own: the city cathedral, perhaps, during the time that Mass is said in Cuyonon and then the airport arrival area when flights arrive (currently three daily).

(e-mail, April 29, 2004)

Eder is also interested in the dynamic of place and progress that is implicit throughout Yang's article. He writes:

Probably most provocative for me in Yang's article, however, was the notion that "place-based cultures" might somehow be obstacles to progress. I think that her emphasis here may be on states in general and socialist states in particular as entertaining such notions, but they are also wrapped up with more general and popularly held notions of modernity. This line of reasoning got me thinking about how Cuyonon are for many still primarily associated with one particular small and isolated place (Cuyo Island), and it is this ineluctable circumstance that leads some Cuyonon to eschew a Cuyonon identity. Put differently, it is the "place-based nature" of Cuyonon identity that explains why some find it too limiting and embrace alternatives. (I think I come pretty close to saying this in my article, but Yang's article makes me appreciate that I could have done more with the notion of "place" itself.)

(e-mail, April 29, 2004)

Eder also finds thinking about the ways in which Yang talks about urban and rural to be productive:

A related theme from Yang's article that also resonates with my own "case" has to do with rural and urban and the fact that if, as Yang suggests, "urban spaces come to be thought of through the imaginary of modernity," then for many or even most non-Cuyonon migrants to Palawan, Cuyonon are preeminently a *rural* people, and this too limits the appeal of a Cuyonon identity to those numerous Cuyonon who in fact live in urban and suburban Puerto Princesa City. Looking back on my own article now, rather than posing the challenge as whether one can be Cuyonon and modern at the same time, I might also have asked whether one can be Cuyonon and urban at the same time. . . .

(e-mail, April 29, 2004)

Kipp highlights the connections in the conception of ethnicity in the articles by Eder and Friedman and further elaborates on the tension between local and modern that she sees in these articles. She writes:

In a frontier region of the Philippines where migrants have been arriving in dribbles for decades, Eder observes that it is not clear anymore just what "local" or "indigenous" means. Ethnic identity is almost a nonissue in rural Palawan, but in the towns and cities where people of various origins mingle, people struggle to label themselves and others. Some prefer a newly minted regional moniker; others cling to the Cuyonon label, nostalgic for a time when they were "poor but happy."

Friedman's article also resonates with that of Eder in its attention to what an ethnic category means. If Hui'an residents are really Han, then why do they look and act in such peculiar ways? Hui'an local peculiarities are thus disconcertingly "backward" to other Han. Eder's discussion is more explicit than that of Friedman about how class standing and aspirations of mobility influence whether or not one dresses and acts in ethnically or locally distinctive ways. As roads and media bring Hui'an residents from margin to mainstream, they, like some of the urban Cuyonon, will no doubt find it increasingly difficult to claim both a Hui'an identity and a modern one.

(e-mail, March 31, 2004)

Let us return to place, from whence we began. Flower's conclusion is a fitting way to end this piece:

Finally, what was most striking to me is the common tone of engagement that I found in all the articles. It seems to me that we all take a stand and that we expose the complex power machinations underlying the construction of identity in order to oppose injustice. My present experience of place only convinces me that the inequalities and injustices lurking behind what Kipp terms the "mask of conquest" are only growing more severe. The road construction that I wrote about has paved the way for the accelerated development of infrastructure in the form of hydropower stations, literally submerging local interests under a rising tide of modernization and carrying the processes of exploitation that I describe in relation to roads to an even higher level. To take a stand is to identify with a place, in the case of our articles, to "put oneself in the other's place." It is commonplace in anthropology that this is hard to do, since we are all rooted in our own places or displaced from them to varying degrees, a point which is brought out more forcefully to me, perhaps, because I write this during fieldwork in China. Still, as both Eder and Kipp assert, the dilemma of representation should not stop us from taking a stand, and with that sense of engagement in mind, I am grateful to the *Journal of Asian Studies* for the timely publication of the articles in this issue.

(e-mail, May 16, 2004)

