

## 20th European Conference on Modern South Asian Studies

### Panel 34

### Re-use: The Art and Politics of Integration and Anxiety

#### List of Abstracts

Conveners: Julia A. B. Hegewald, University of Manchester, and Subrata Mitra, University of Heidelberg

1. Julia A.B. Hegewald, University of Manchester and Subrata K. Mitra, University of Heidelberg

#### **The Past in the Present: Jagannatha and Jain art - two cases of re-use from India**

Based on the analysis of the evolution of the cult of Jagannatha (Orissa), and of temples from north and south India which have been converted either by the Jaina or the Lingayat communities, the paper examines the processes of *re-use* of sacred sites and material, and the use of such hybrid sacred objects in the making of traditions and rituals of art and power. Re-use refers to the attempt by conquering groups to appropriate the sacred sites, buildings and images of those who have lost power, and transform them in a manner in which they could serve as symbols of their power. Dominant groups - as holders of the 'monopoly of legitimate violence' - need such symbols to economise the use of power. Non-Indic cases (eg. the Dome of the Rock in Jerusalem) show the generality of the concept of re-use, and the scope for its use in comparative and historical studies.

2. Prasanna Kumar Nayak, Utkal University, Bhubaneswar, Orissa

#### **Politics of Art and the Art of Politics: Re-use of 'tribal' arts and artifacts in modern Orissa, India**

Drawing examples from Orissa, India, the paper intends to bring to light some of the less talked about aspects of the politics of art and the art of politics espoused by the little kings of the feudatory states in Orissa and the mutations these have undergone under a modern democratic dispensation. It seeks to demonstrate how these cut across regional distinctions and boundaries. In the globalization process, global marketing of tribal arts and artefacts have enabled many government and private agencies and organizations to popularize and propagate tribal cultural products. These agents of promotion of tribal art and artefacts, in the process of competing with one another, affect the interests of tribal artists and artisans adversely. As a result, the purpose of the tribal development programmes and strategies gets defeated. In the end, using the weaker sections to gain political leverage leaves these sections even more vulnerable.

3. Atillio Petruccioli, University of Bari, Italy

#### **The Holy Landscape around Lake Dal, Kashmir**

The landscape is a palimpsest on which every culture leaves the signs of its presence and the monuments of its memory. At the same time the newcomer tries to neglect or erase the memory of the precedent. In vane: under the marks of the last writing appear the pale signs of the former. This paper on the Srinagar's valley shows the continuity of the transformation of the landscape. This essay is not intended to be yet another description of Mughal gardens in Kashmir, on which an extensive literature already exists, albeit based on the original work by Villiers-Stuart. Rather, the intention is to suggest a new perspective (susceptible to further study), based on two principles: 1) in spite of cultural and religious differences in the management of the Srinagar valley, there is a substantial continuity between the Hindu and

Moslem dynasties; and 2) the appropriation of the territory takes place through a ritual refounding which goes through a process of resacralization of the place.

4. Tiziana Lorenzetti, independent scholar, Rome, Italy

#### **Indian Contemporary Painting and the Re-use of Ancient Pictorial Traditions**

In the 19<sup>th</sup> and the 20<sup>th</sup> centuries, the Indian painting shows clear Western influences as for taste, subjects and techniques (e.g. lithography, aquatint engraving). This tendency was brought about not only by the development of global communications, but especially by the stability of the British rule all over the Subcontinent. However, many Indian artists during the so called 'nationalism interlude' and especially after independence, tried to bring back the 'Indianness' into their works in order to regain and reaffirm their identity.

This paper analyses the solutions adopted by some Indian artists to conceive new forms of language and patterns, so as to establish a more direct continuity between their past and the present. Particular emphasis will be laid on some ancient traditional and less known pictorial techniques, till a short time back restricted to a small elite of artists, which today are becoming very popular and successful.

5. Nick Barnard (curator, South and Southeast Asian Department, V&A, London)

#### **Indian Jewellery and Victorian Britain**

The exchanges of influences around Indian jewellery in the Victorian period, seen through European influences on Indian jewellery and the impact of Indian jewellery in Britain, reflect elements of integration as well as force and destruction. Indian gemstones looted at Seringapatam had been re-set in British jewellery and Queen Victoria was given the Koh-i-Nur diamond, displayed with enormous public interest at the Great Exhibition of 1851, after the annexation of the Punjab. It was subsequently recut to meet the European taste, and was set in European mountings. By the late 1870s Indian jewellery had for various reasons become widely popular in Britain. Meanwhile in India, European techniques and styles were being assimilated, partly due to the loss of patronage for traditional jewellery as the Indian courts were displaced or began to adopt European styles, and indeed hybridised jewellery was prominent among the types most commonly bought in England.

6. Katrin Binder, University of Tuebingen

#### **Re-use in and of the Yakshagana theatre of coastal Karnataka**

At the beginning of the 21st century, the Yakshagana music-text-dance theatre of coastal Karnataka is still a vibrant genre. This paper explores how the concept of „re-use“ may contribute to our understanding of continuity and change in this popular art form, notably in processes of legitimisation. In turn, concrete examples may help clarify the concept of „re-use“.

“Re-use“ in Yakshagana occurs on several levels both historically and at present. Given the scarcity of historical sources, „re-use“ of Yakshagana can only be examined from a contemporary perspective. While aiming at a broad overview of the many ways in which Yakshagana is a site of „re-use“, a number textual, performative and contextual (political) instances of „re-use“ are discussed, such as the adaptation of epic and pauranic material for the stage, the borrowing from Indian cinema and the use of Yakshagana as a visual icon e.g. for the state of Karnataka.

7. Edward A. Rodrigues, St. Xavier's College, Mumbai

#### **Buddhism and Collective Emancipation in Modern India: A sociological investigation of B. R. Ambedkar's reuse of Buddha's Dharma in the Dalit movement.**

On 14<sup>th</sup> October 1956, Dr. B. R. Ambedkar together with nearly eight lakhs Dalits drawn mainly from the Mahar caste converted to Buddhism. Notwithstanding its overt religiosity, the event was also of great political significance marking a watershed in the nearly century long anti-caste struggles of the Dalits. Within modern Indian society the Dalits comprise a stigmatized population of some 160 million. Even to this day many of them suffer from the dual disadvantage of social exclusion and economic impoverishment. Ambedkar was convinced that continued membership of Hindu society would only reproduce this exclusion and oppression by upper castes Hindus. Conversion to Buddhism was an entry in to a new religious, social, and moral world. By transforming Buddhism into an ideology of collective emancipation Ambedkar turned back to India's cultural past to seek out solutions to the tensions and conflicts that plagued Indian society in the present.

This paper attempts to understand Ambedkar's political and religious construction of Navayana Buddhism despite the fact that Buddhism in India had long since past its hey day as the religion of an empire and civilization in Ancient India. This was indeed a complex exercise that involved a series of different kinds of negotiations, reinterpretations, rejections etc. with existing traditions of Buddhists thought and practice. Additionally, this paper investigates how Ambedkar's own modernist world view played a crucial role in shaping his ideas, interpretations and practices of Navayana Buddhism. How did Ambedkar transform Buddhism from a doctrine of Individual salvation to a practice of collective emancipation? Why did he attempt to do this with Buddhism and with no other world religion? How did the re-use of Buddhism in this way impact the growth of the Dalit movement in Maharashtra in the past half a century? These are some of the important questions the paper seeks to address.

8. Sabine Scholz, University of Manchester

**'The Jain Way of Life': Modern re-use and re-interpretation of ancient Jain concepts**

The YJI was established in 2005 and aims at unifying young Jains from different Jain sects all over India. Its main mission is the promotion of the *Jain Way of Life* (JWOL) as a means for individual progress and a solution for the modern world's problems. Three basic Jain principles are used to describe the core of the JWOL: *ahimsa* (non-violence), *aparigraha* (non-possession) and *anekantvad* (doctrine of non-one-sidedness). While the first two concepts are included in the five-fold mendicant's and lay-man's religious vow, the latter forms an important principle in Jain philosophy and was earlier used as a polemical instrument in religious debates.

This paper aims at presenting the YJI's re-use and re-interpretation of these ancient Jain principles in order to promote Jainism as a dynamic modern life-style, rather than an ascetic tradition focused only on individual spiritual liberation.

9. Shubha Rao and Sadanand Shahi, BHU, Varanasi

**Integrative Participation and its Anxieties in Exclusionist Politics: With special reference to the Hindi belt**

Pre-independence India, locked in struggle with colonial Britain for freedom, needed an integrative political paradigm which might transcend the sectional or community interests. India needed a nationalist-libertarian agenda with a vanguard omnibus organization like the Congress, capable of marginalizing the divisive politics of identity and social justice. The success of this paradigm lay in allaying the fears of tenant-peasantry, landless workers, the urban proletariat, etc, that might remain unrepresented and therefore ignored in the shape of things to emerge after independence. Focused on the politics of North India, the paper analyses how the 're-use' of the older nationalist paradigm has led to the Other Backward Classes (OBCs) and former untouchables (Dalits) to compete for salience. We argue that Dr. Ambedkar's weakness lay in overplaying the exclusivist political card during freedom struggle; and Gandhi's strength lay in his near monopolization of the libertarians nationalist agenda.