Buddhist-Muslim Tensions in the Bay of Bengal

Tempe Campus
West Hall 135

9 October, 2014

9:00 - 9:15  Welcome
George Justice
Dean of the Humanities

Introductions
Juliane Schober
Center for Asian Research

9:15 - 10:45  Panel 1: Local Histories of Conflict and Resolution

Politics in the Bay of Bengal: Curbing Violence, Enhancing Harmony

Chandra Muzaffar
President of the International Movement for a Just World (JUST),
Professor Emeritus of Global Studies, Universiti Sains Malaysia, Penang

Anti-Muslim Violence in Burma: Why Now?

Min Zin, Political Science, UC-Berkeley

Discussant: Yasmin Saikia
Professor of History, Hardt-Nickachos Chair in Peace Studies
Arizona State University

10:45 - 11:00 Coffee/Tea Break

11:00 - 12:30 pm  Panel 2: Constructions of Regional Belonging
The Localized Identities of Buddhists and Muslims in Arakan/Rakhine State (Myanmar): calls for exclusion and competing for power at the regional margins

Jacques Leider
Ecole française d'Extrême-Orient

Interlinked Buddhist-Muslim Violence in the Bangladesh-Burma Borderlands: the Chittagong Hill Tracts conflict, forcible expulsion of the Rohingyas and destruction of the Ramu temples

Shapan Adnan
(Affiliation)

Discussant: Richard Eaton
Professor of History
University of Arizona

12:30 to 1:45 pm Lunch

1:45 to 3:15 pm Panel 3: Buddhist Nationalism and Religious Minorities

A Religious Grammar to Sectarian Violence in Sri Lanka

John Holt
William R. Kenan Jr. Professor of the Humanities in Religion and Asian Studies
Bowdoin College

Social Difference and the Buddhist Discourse of Violence in Myanmar

Juliane Schober
Professor of Religious Studies

Discussant: James Rush
Professor of History

3:30 to 5:00 pm: Summation and Discussion

Yasmin Saikia, James Rush, Richard Eaton,
Participants

Shapan Adnan (PhD, University of Cambridge, 1984) is currently an independent academic who has taught in the South Asian Studies Programme of the National University of Singapore, as well as in the Universities of Dhaka and Chittagong. He was a visiting research fellow at the University of Oxford and continues to be an Associate of its Contemporary South Asian Studies Programme. His research and publications cover topics in political economy, sociology, politics and development, including agrarian structure and capitalist development, land grabs and primitive accumulation, peasant societies and village studies, power structures and resistance, indigenous peoples and ethnic conflict, forced migration and human fertility.

Richard Eaton is Professor of History at the University of Arizona. His research focuses on the social and cultural history of pre-modern India (1000-1800) and especially on the range of historical interactions between Iran and India, and on Islam in South Asia. He published monographs on the social roles of Sufis (Muslim mystics) in the Indian sultanate of Bijapur (1300-1700), on the growth of Islam in Bengal (1204-1760), and on the social history of the Deccan from 1300 to 1761. Most recently, he co-authored a forthcoming book entitled Power, Memory, Architecture: Contested Sites on India's Deccan Plateau, 1300-16. These historical monographs employ as analytical tools, respectively, Weberian social thought, Annales School methodology, biography, and architecture.

John Clifford Holt is the William R. Kenan, Jr., Professor of Humanities in Religion and Asian Studies at Bowdoin College in Brunswick, Maine. He is author or editor of ten books focused on Buddhist religious culture in Sri Lanka and Southeast Asia. He is currently finishing a book on ritual cultures in the Theravada Buddhist world and beginning a study of Buddhist/Muslim tensions in Sri Lanka and Burma.

Jacques P. Leider is a historian of Arakan and early modern Southeast Asia. He is a past Director of the research center and library of the Ecole française d’Extrême-Orient (EFEO, French School of Asian Studies) in Chiang Mai (2008-2012) and the founder of EFEO’s center in Yangon, where he lived from 2002-2006. He has done research on early modern Myanmar history and published extensively on the pre-colonial and colonial history of Rakhine/Arakan. He is currently based in Bangkok and a counsellor with the Embassy of the Grand Duchy of Luxembourg.

Min Zin is a PhD candidate in Political Science Department at University of California, Berkeley. He is also a regular contributor to The Foreign Policy’s Transition Blog. He serves as country analyst of Burma/Myanmar for several research foundations including Freedom House. He took part in Burma’s democracy movement in 1988 as a high school student activist, and went into hiding in 1989 to avoid arrest by the junta. His underground activist-cum-writer life lasted for nine years until he fled to Thai-Burma border in August 1997. His writings appear in Journal of Democracy, Journal of Current Southeast Asian Affairs, The Foreign Policy, The Irrawaddy, The Bangkok Post, Far Eastern Economic Review, Wall Street Journal, The New York Times, and other publications.
Chandra Muzaffar, Professor of Global Studies at Universiti Sains Malaysia (2007-2012), is the President of the International Movement for a Just World (JUST), an international NGO based in Malaysia that seeks to critique global injustice and to develop an alternative vision of a just and compassionate civilization guided by universal spiritual and moral values. He is the Chairman of the Board of Trustees of the 1Malaysia Foundation and serves on the board of a number of international NGOs concerned with social justice and civilizational dialogue. Chandra is the recipient of a number of international awards related to his scholarship and social activism. He has published extensively on civilizational dialogue, international politics, religion, human rights and Malaysian society and is the author and editor of 29 books in English and Malay. His most recent publications, A World in Crisis: Is There a Cure? and Whither WANA? Reflections on the Arab Uprisings, can be accessed at www.just-international.org.

Yasmin Saikia is the Hardt-Nickachos Chair in Peace Studies at the Center for the Study of Religion and Conflict and a Professor of History in the School of Historical, Philosophical and Religious Studies. She is author of Fragmented Memories: Struggling to be Tai-Ahom in India (Duke, 2004) and Women, War and the Making of Bangladesh: Remembering 1971 (Duke University Press, 2011). Her research and teaching interests invoke a dynamic transnational and interdisciplinary dialogue situated at the intersection of history, culture, and religion. With a specific focus on contestations and accommodations in South Asia between local, national, and religious identities, she examines the Muslim experience in India, Pakistan, and Bangladesh, and the discourse of nonviolence alongside the practice of violence against women and vulnerable groups.

Juliane Schober is Director of the Center for Asian Research and Professor of Religious Studies at Arizona State University. As an anthropologist of religion, she works on Theravada Buddhist practice in Southeast Asia, especially Burma/Myanmar with a thematic interest in material culture, ritual, modernity, postcolonial theory, sacred biography, and religion and politics. She authored Modern Buddhist Conjunctures in Myanmar (University of Hawai‘i Press, 2011), edited Sacred Biography in the Buddhist Traditions of South and Southeast Asia (U. of Hawai‘i Press, 1997) and co-edited Buddhist Manuscript Cultures (Routledge, 2008).