It was a grim mood that hung over the ASiA panel of the Forum on Violence in Gujarat; after the projection of the documentary *In the Name of God* by Anand Patwardhan, the panel engaged in analysis of the violence in Gujarat with one recurrent feeling: a deeply felt uneasiness about the direction that Indian society is taking. ‘I’m sorry to end with such a sad note’, were the closing words of Yoginder Sikand’s contribution, ‘but I see really little hope’.

‘The same environment that frightens me a lot, gives a lot of confidence to others. Many middle class people feel the need to assert their identity. They say things like “we are Hindus, why are we not allowed to say that?”’ Gitandra Shri had visited the burned train in Godhra, which had sparked off the violence in Gujarat. ‘When I entered the train, I heard a middle class Hindu couple remark: “they should show this to the human rights people and secularists. There is really no place for Muslims in this country”. The sight produces an entirely different reaction in me.’

‘How come this middle class feels so insecure?’, asked a lady from the audience, adding that ‘over the last years, they have done better than ever before’. This might be due to the many changes in Indian society, Jan Breman argued. The increased assertiveness of the lower castes has threatened the interests of the Hindu middle class. ‘They have the feeling it is not their society anymore. They assert their identity by distancing themselves from “aliens”. I believe some parallels with recent developments in Holland can be made here.’

Gitandri Shri remarked on how many people are insensitive to what is happening next door. She believes that the middle class is untouched by the suffering because the affected people are from another class and have a completely different lifestyle. ‘They pass by a slum and feel that the inhabitants are not humans anyway.’

This might help explain the complete lack of remorse or shame about the violence. Jan Breman quoted the chairman of the Hindu-nationalist organization VHP as saying ‘[t]he Muslims had it coming. Our boys had to do it’. Breman had visited the relief camps for the victims of the violence and noted that the Hindu camps had been visited by numerous politicians, and that the camps for Muslim victims were in poor condition. State relief had not reached them, while 98 per cent of the victims of the violence were Muslims. Yoginder Sikand came across the same attitude when he tried to raise money for the victims. He was shocked by the indifference and hostility he met.

A new, distressing feature of the violence in Gujarat was the extent of involvement of the Indian state in the rioting. The police facilitated and supported the violence. They did nothing to stop the violence and in some cases even pointed out where the victims were hiding. According to the panel, the ruling BJP wants to capitalize on the violence. BJP politicians are thinking about holding elections now, because they hope that the riots will help them to regain the Hindu vote. ‘This is not a simple Muslim-Hindu riot’, Gitandra Shri concluded, ‘this is a shrinkage of democratic space: an attack on the space of freedom’.

The violence even had its repercussions in the Netherlands: before the elections the Dutch VHP advised its members to vote for Pim Fortuyn. According to Breman, this was because of the anti-Muslim stance of Fortuyn. After this announcement, VHP members in the Netherlands received letters with death threats, signed by ‘al-quaeda’.

**Dalits?**

Low-caste people, Breman believes, have done the killing. ‘There has been a structural shift in caste relations. Hindu parties have been playing down the differences between high and low caste people, including all groups in the Hindu “family”. The low castes have to pay the price for that. The price for their inclusion is to distance themselves from the excluded: Muslims.’

He argued that low-caste Hindus have been employed by the middle class to do their dirty work. Economic changes have made this possible: Ahmedabad had a lot of textile mills, employing 160,000 workers. These mills have been closed down, sending people to the street, where they have been living in terrible conditions. In the era of globalization these people have nothing and they can be recruited to do work for...
Between Music, Dance and Ritual: Performing Arts at the Borneo Research Council Conference

The Seventh Biennial International Conference of the Borneo Research Council (BRC) focused on issues in development in twenty-first-century Borneo and for the first time featured two major panels on the performing arts, in addition to a separate session of individual relevance of the traditional art forms of Borneo were among the issues discussed by a number of specialists in the performing arts who had come from Borneo, Malaysia, Europe, and the USA. It is to be hoped that at future BRC Conferences this forum will also feature local Dayak researchers.

The first panel entitled ‘Between Music, Dance and Ritual: Some Aspects of Kalintangan in Sabah’, focused on the kalintangan gong-chime of Sabah. The four papers presented in this panel were the result of a long-term study of the kalintangan (from 1998 to 2000) to examine its repertory, music practices, distribution, function, and use in select Sabah, Sarawak and Filipino societies. Jacqueline Pugh-Kittigan of Universiti Malaysia Sabah showed the widespread distribution of the kalintangan among ethnic groups throughout the state of Sabah, with particular reference to Dusunic cultures, while Sunetra Fernando from the University of Malaya, Kuala Lumpur, spoke about the heterogeneity of music practices and repertoires played on the kalintangan along the east coast of Sabah. The use of the kalintangan in relation to dance in village and court contexts was discussed by Clara Brakel of Leiden University. Jacqueline Pugh-Kittigan showed various, more or less satisfactory examples of adaptation of traditional dance and music forms in Sabah and Mindan. Nor used a live demonstration to show how traditional Iban dance patterns may change in various contexts. This very lively panel ended with an example of the adaptation of the long-dance-song (belian daadu), often considered one of the most discussed examples of innovation of the traditional arts in Borneo, addressing modernization versus preservation in the music, songs, and dances of Sarawak and Sabah.

First, Patricia Matusky of Central Michigan University reported on his research on a spirit medium ritual (the mognian of the Boboizan) and function of the kalintangan music in that ceremony among the Tatanua ethnic group in the area of Kuala Penyu, Sabah. While the summaries of these panels are published by the BRC, the in-depth individual studies will be published as a collection by the group of researchers concerned.

The second panel on music and dance explored the change and continuity in the Performing Arts of Borneo, was meant to begin examining current trends in the performing arts of Borneo. Five presenters explored the state of music and dance performances in traditional settings, academic contexts, and public settings such as those arranged by the culture ministries, hotels, and private organizations. With a variety of viewpoints and approaches, the speakers discussed attractive musical genres of the Kenyah communities in Sarawak, for urban audiences and students in government schools and institutions, by Clara Brakel, music lecturer at Mahakat Perguruan Ratu Lintang, Kuching, Sarawak. The session of individual papers on performing arts encompassed both music and theatre. Nur Alfiah Vanitha Abdullah of the Universiti Malaysia Sarawak spoke about the bangsawan theatrical genre in Sarawak. While little information exists on the history of this genre, an elucidation of the roots of bangsawan in peninsular Malaysia and its dissemination throughout Southeast Asia might provide more research possibilities. Two papers dealt with tule zithers and gong-chimes in Sabah. Jacqueline Pugh-Kittigan explained terminology and performance techniques on the tongkangon tube zither and the relationship between the bangong-gong orchestras from the Kadazandusun Culture of Tambunan in Sabah. In contrast, Jedil Dayou, also of the Universiti Malaysia Sabah, offered a technical description of the acoustic properties of the kalintangan gong-chime of Sabah. The general feeling was that continued relevance of the traditional arts forms in the more urban regions of Borneo was especially pressing in today’s world of global communication, modern technology, and easy access to influences from the Western world. Therefore, presenters of performing arts papers at this conference intent to continue and expand the discussion at the next BRC Conference in 2004 and beyond.

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