the middle classes, the backbone of Hindutva’. Yoginder Sikand added that the weakness of the low-caste (Dalit) mor- ments made the state very fertile for communal vio- lence. An alliance between Muslims and Dalits in states like Bihar had prevented violence, he argued. An idea of who participates in communal violence is often rooted in the explanation of the chronic individuality of violence. A speaker from the audience argued that the middle class youth was more involved in rioting than Jan Breman admitted, claim- ing that hoobigam was for them an important motivation to participate. ‘You have to be initiated into using violence’, Bre- man answered. He believed that direct and actual participation in violence does not come so easy to the middle class.

Leaving history to trademen

“We historians need to break the artificial boundaries. We should not study a Hindu or a Muslim history, but we should simply look at the process of state-building.” Together with Shahid Amin, historian Barbara Metcalf broke a lance for a rethinking of Indian history. They emphasized how critical a historical narrative has become for the continuing of com- munal violence, and how dangerous it is to leave history to common sense. In colonial times, a narrative of Hindu–Mus- lim differences has come up to legitimate the English pres- ence in India. This version of Indian history has become national common sense and is repeated over and over again to widen the rift between Hindus and Muslims. ‘Just after independence, an Indian politician cautioned rightly that “we should not leave history to trademen”. An uncanny remark, given the nature of the current regime.’

A history of conquest and consequent suppression by Mus- lim invaders, Shahid Amin argued, is full of essentialist notions. A Hindu identity has become bound up with ideas of the ‘otherness’ of Muslims. ‘Hindus have inscribed in their collective psyche that the bigoted, fanatical Muslims have come to attack us.’

Instead, Shahid Amin believes, attention should be paid to the forms of Indian syncretism that have come up over the centuries. These syncretistic traditions should be written, which pay attention to the composite culture of India. Historians should write new versions of the encounter between Hindus and Muslims. ‘It is time to write professionally about the facts of our medieval past and memories of Muslim suppression. We cannot run away from it and leave it to the nationalists to give us the definitive history of Muslim conquest. Our nation can never be made habitable by running the dwelling in which Indians have lived together for centuries.’

What does the Gujarat violence hold for the future? Jan Bre- man recounted how he met a Muslim woman living in a Hindu neighbourhood. She worried that the nearby Muslim slum was going to attack her (Hindu) neighbourhood. Three days later, she was sent away by her Hindu neighbours ‘for her own safety’. The violence is segregating Indian society. Many young Hindus do not know a single Muslim, while Mus- lims make up 20 per cent of the population of cities like Ahmedabad. “When segregation goes too far”, Breman con- cluded, ‘there is no going back’. Shahid Amin remarked that although the Indian constitution reserves the right to propa- gate one’s faith to all Indians, in practice this right is only given to Hindus. Gitandri Shri stated that “[t]he Hindu-Muslim vio- lence is also a conflict between those who believe in a plural society and those who believe in a multicultural society.”

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.

Between Music, Dance and Ritual: Performing Arts at the Borneo Research Council Conference

The first panel entitled ‘Between Music, Dance and Ritual: Some Aspects of Kulintang in Sabah’, focussed on the kulintang gong- chime of Sabah. The four papers pre- sented in this panel were the result of a long-term study of the kulintang (from 1998 to 2000) to examine its repertory, music practices, distribution, function, and use in select Sabah- ban and Filipino societies. Jacqueline Pugh-Kittigian of Universiti Malaya, Sabah showed the widespread distri- bution of the kulintang 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 het- erogeneity of music practices and repertoires played on the kulintang along the east coast of Sabah. The use of the kulintang in relation to dance in village and court contexts was dis- cussed by Mohammed Anis of the Uni- versity of Malaya. Finally, Hanafi Hussin, a doctoral student in theatre at the University of Malaya, reported on his research on a spirit medium ritual (the magnum of the Babollian) and function of the kulintang music in that ceremony among the Tutama eth- nic group in the area of Kuala Penyu, Sabah. While the summaries of these papers are published by the BRC, the in- depth individual studies will be pub- lished as a collection by the group of researchers concerned.

The second panel on music and dance, “the change and continuity”, focussed on the research project “Reinvention in the Performing Arts of Borneo”, was meant to begin examining current trends in the per- forming arts of Borneo. Five presen- tators explored the state of music and dance performances in traditional set- tings, academic contexts, and public settings such as those arranged by the culture ministries, hotels, and private organizations. With a variety of view- points and approaches, the speakers 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 Matusyus of Central Michigan University set out some of the basic issues of the panel in a paper entitled ‘The Significance of Preservation’. To Save or Not to Save,? investigating why preservation and documentation is imperative when considering research in the traditional arts. The Dayak Cultural Foundation Ethnic Orchestra, a recent example of ‘modernization’ in the sense of incorporat- ing Western influences into originally Dayak music and dance, was discussed by Clara Brakel of Leiden University. Jacqueline Pugh-Kittigian showed var- ious, more or less satisfactory exam- ples of adaptation of traditional dance and music forms in Sabah and Mind. Anis Md. Nor used a live demonstra- tion to show how traditional Dayak dance patterns may change in various contexts. This very lively panel ended with an example of the adaptation of the long-dance-song (kelian dados), often considered one of the most attractive musical genres of the Kenyah communities in Sarawak, for urban audiences and students in government schools and institutions, by Claran Pek- lin, music lecturer at Maltakh Pergu- ran Batu Lintang, Kuching, Sarawak. The session of individual papers on performing arts encompassed both music and theatre. Nur Affah Vanitha Abdullah of the Universiti Malaya Sarawak spoke about the bangsunaw theatre genre in Sarawak. While lit- tle information exists on the history of this genre, an elucidation of the roots of bangsunaw in peninsular Malaysia and its dissemination throughout Southeast Asia might provide more research possibilities. Two papers dealt with tube zithers and gong-chimes in Sabah. Jacqueline Pugh-Kittigian explained terminology and perform- ance techniques on the tongkangos tube zither and the relationship to the bangsunaw orchestras from the Kadazandusun Culture of Tambunan in Sabah. In contrast, Jedel Dayou, also of the Universiti Malaya Sarawak, offered a technical description of the acoustic properties of the kulintang gong-chime of Sabah.

The general feeling was that continu- ous relevance of the traditional art forms in the more urban regions of Borneo was especially pressing in today’s world of global communica- tion, modern technology, and easy access to influences from the Western world. Therefore, presenters of per- forming arts papers at this conference intended to continue and expand the dis- cussion at the next BRC Conference in 2004 and beyond.

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Young students at the Dayak Cultural Foundation practising traditional Iban women’s dancing (nga- jat indai) in modern attire, while manup- ulating woven pua kambu cloths.

By Clara Brakel & Patricia Matusyus

The Forum on Violence in Gujarat was organized by Asian Studies in Amsterdam (ASA), University of Amster- dam (UvA). The ASA panel consisted of the sociolo- gist Jan Breman (UvA), the Islamist Yoginder Sikand (Institute for the Study of Islam in the Modern World, ISIM), historian Shahid Amin (Delhi University), historian Barbara Metcalf (University of California at Davis), novelist Gitandri Shri, and was chaired by the anthropol- ogist Peter van der Veer (UvA).

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Young music stu- dents at the Dayak Cultural Foundation practising with tradi- tional musical instruments (angkko-loy). On the table in front of them are two nutshell-organ (lagehu) and two one-stringed fiddles (larenan).