

CONFERENCE ON INTER-ASIAN CONNECTIONS III:

HONG KONG, JUNE 6-8, 2012

CALL FOR WORKSHOP PAPERS

DEADLINE: Friday, June 24, 2011

Workshop Title:

Just Society at Last? Ideals and Projects of the Common Good across Asia

Workshop Directors:

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What can address structural inequality in societies? How do various actors in Asia imagine solutions to poverty, injustice, or patronage? These are perhaps the most intractable problems, because they are deeply embedded in the workings of societies, where the majority perpetuates the deleterious states of affairs through perpetration, complicity, or acquiescence, so that responsibility may not be assignable solely to state leadership or elites. A “culture of corruption” pervades everyday economic and institutional activity that punishes non-compliance and resists efforts at reform.

In response to the long history of elite power abuse throughout Asia, various visions and movements have sought to enact notions of social justice. Some are religious: Islamic revivalisms, Christian millenarianisms, Hindu activisms, Buddhist reformisms, and other religious-oriented projects across Asia envision transcendental orders for societal problems. Other non-religious conceptions work from varieties of moral reasoning about the common good in opposition to elite exploitation. Environmental movements in Indonesia or Russia, citizen activisms in China or Iran, the growing support for socialist parties in South Asia, the “Color Revolutions” of the 2000s, and most recently, the popular uprisings of 2011 in West Asia (the Middle East) are some examples of this. The question is, can these ideals and projects actually ameliorate systemic injustice and inequalities of wealth or power when other approaches have fallen short? More often than not, these various efforts appropriate and critique liberal discourses of freedoms and rights, and Marxian discourses of class and power, offering compelling alternatives to neoliberal and state socialist conceptions of just society.

This workshop convenes scholars and experts that would take stock of ideas and action templates regarding just society across the Asia. We seek studies that examine conceptions about good society or good government, or movements that attempt to implement them. The workshop invites submissions that attend to how the utopian aspirations and models “catch on”, as well as in-depth cases of movements from across Asia that localize universal narratives. We welcome research from any time period (with emphasis on the 20th century – present), from any part of the Asian space (which we take to include the Middle East and Russia), and from diverse disciplinary approaches. Activists and professionals with sufficient conceptual grounding in their paper proposals are encouraged to apply.

Possible paper topics include:

- How socio-political critiques about inequality and elite excesses are articulated within moral narratives and with respect to class, ethnic, sectarian, and regional interests.
- The media or venues where such discourses are disseminated and the mobilization of people via internet, social media, TV, pamphlet, cassette, gatherings, etc.
- The activities or impact of such movements in societies, in areas such as education, welfare services, laws, politics, the economy, the environment, etc.

We are keen on proposals that look at actors engaging the specifically structural nature of these problems, who seek systemic rather than palliative remedies. Together as a workshop, our goal is to provide historical depth, geographical synopticism, and multi-methodological perspectives on novel ways of interpreting and responding to structural inequality and social injustice.

For additional details and application guidelines, please visit the Conference website:

<http://www.ssrc.org/programs/pages/interasia-program/conference-on-inter-asian-connections-iii-hong-kong-june-6-8-2012/>