



## Introduction

*By Paula Pannu*

I am pleased to present this special edition on colonialism. In this volume, we have gathered various papers surrounding the theme of 'colonial and post-colonial subjectivities' which focuses on the impact of the colonial project upon the colonized citizen. The established field of colonial studies have focused centrally upon the colonial project and its hegemonic forms of domination upon the colonized. In this edition, we are following a new vein of scholarship that calls for a closer study of how the colonial subject actively engaged and interacted within the matrix of these policies. The works surrounding the subjection of the colonized has been painted in broad strokes in the past which masked the intricate complexities involved as the colonized negotiated within the boundaries set by the colonizer.

This edition consists of six papers which had been delivered at a conference conducted at Copenhagen University entitled 'Processes of Subjectivation: Colonial and Post-Colonial Perspectives' in August 2010. Geographically, these case examples present a wide range from Andaman Islands, Australia and Africa to Malaya, Greenland and India.

Philipp Zehmisch's paper on the Andaman Islands has brought to light how these islands which traditionally housed deported criminals became an important site of the Indian freedom struggle as middle class revolutionaries were imprisoned there. The islands were transformed epistemologically as a site of anti-colonial resistance and heroic battle. The history of various migrations of people to the Andamans was negotiated within appropriations towards a common subjectivity of the history of the freedom struggle.

Ben Silverstein's work on the subjects of the 1939 New Deal in Australia's Northern Territory examined how colonial governmentalities strove to produce a certain kind of colonial subject but failed to capture the novel adaptations of these subjects who defined their own narrative within this process. The classification of the aboriginals as primitive in a linear narrative of primitivism to civilization was disrupted by the conduct of the aboriginals and their newly articulated subjectivities.

Heidi Bojsen's work takes us to Africa where she uses the novels produced by African writers such as Kourama and Hampate Ba to demonstrate how

differentiated and dynamic responses were amongst the colonized subject to the structures of colonial rule. In her paper, she brings to light that the colonial project was not an all-encompassing structure that defined the subject but rather subject to the agency of the subject who negotiated resistances while being complicit in the structure. This is the implicit paradox of the colonial regime it created impositions on the colonized which could lead to contradictory reactions. The works of Kourama and Hampate Ba shows us the complex processes of subjectivation that moves out of the traditional power binary of colonizer and the colonized. My own paper on Malaya centers around how the Malay subject negotiated notions of race which were introduced to them through the administrative procedures of the colonial census. The introduction of race theory to the Malays has been depicted as an epistemological invasion as it overhauled earlier constructions of the Malays as a people in favour of racial categories. However, this has not taken into account the degree to which the Malays demonstrated self-definition in the process. Their articulations of race were very much influenced by their personal backgrounds, their schooling, their interactions with the colonizers and developments from the Middle East. I use the writings of three Malay nationalists to demonstrate how notions of race were not homogeneously internalized by the colonized but rather subject to contestation and debate.

Inge Seiding's paper on mixed marriages in Greenland shows us the kind of ambiguities and anxieties surrounding the colonial intimate encounter. The blurring of boundaries between colonizer and colonized through marriage represented a challenge to colonial regulations that strove to maintain control through classification and separation of the two civilizations.

Shalini Jain's work looks at the fictional account of colonial subjects in Amitav Ghosh's 'Sea of Poppies' centered in the Indian subcontinent. The characters of the novel demonstrate ingenious counter-actions towards colonial acts of violation upon their lives. A site of their resistance is centred upon an embracement of post-humanist principles of human equality that transcends notions of race and culture.

The thread that ties all of these papers together is the remarkable demonstration of the ingenuity and



resilience of the subject under colonial rule. While the colonial project sought to produce a particular kind of citizen, the goal was not often carried through due to the complexities surrounding how the subject engaged with colonial processes of rule.

I hope this edition will prove to be an enjoyable read. On behalf of *Kontur*, I would like to thank the contributors towards making this special edition on colonialism possible.

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