

32. Missionary Challenges in India since 1700: Histories of Cross-Cultural Communication, Confrontation and Consequence, Convener: Robert Eric Frykenberg
33. New Literary Histories for 19th Century India, Conveners: Stuart Blackburn, Vasudha Dalmia
34. Modern Regional Literatures, Convener: Jan Marek

The conference started with two plenary lectures by Tatiana Ya. Elizarenkova entitled "Contribution to the method of description of synonyms in the R̥gveda" and by Dietmar Rothermund on "The Role of the State in South Asia". Both lectures created a lively discussion which was continued in some panels. Despite their great specialisation and diversification the panels were well balanced between classical and modern topics. The time frame was generous and made it possible to participate in other panels as well as to enjoy the beauties of the historic city of Prague. It was proposed that the 16th European Conference on Modern South Asian Studies will be held in Edinburgh in the year 2000.

*Christian Wagner*

### **Plural Medicine: Orthodox and Heterodox Medicine in Western and Colonial Countries during the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> Centuries**

University of Southampton, 15-16 September 1998

The two day conference organised by Waltraud Ernst (Southampton) dealt with issues concerning medical pluralism from the early nineteenth century to the present day. Papers were focused on Asia, Africa and the West and covered historical and contemporary aspects. The first panel dealt with alternative medicine in the West. The first paper was by James Bradley (Glasgow) on hydropathy in Britain 1840-1860 and the second by Robert Johnston (Yale) on Anti-vaccinationism in North America. The conference then changed focus to Asia which was the central focus of many papers. David Arnold (London) and Sumit Sarkar (Delhi) spoke about homeopathy in nineteenth century Bengal. Then followed Poornima Sardesai (Hyderabad) who discussed the integration of traditional Ayurvedic practice with Western medicine. Claudia Liebeskind (London), who completed this section on India dealt with the scientific status of Western biomedicine compared with that of Unani.

The later afternoon session concentrated on Traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM), highlighting the diversity within TCM itself. It included a paper about the practice of TCM in Australia by Rey Tiquia (Melbourne) and Elisabeth Hsu's (Cambridge) discussion of the plurality of meanings behind TCM. The panel finished with Volker Scheid's (Cambridge) paper on the many ways of teaching Chinese medicine. The conference changed tack a little bit with the last paper of the day given by Ned Vankevich (Quincy) who looked at the denigration of alternative medicine on the web site 'Quackwatch'.

The second day focused more on medical pluralism in contemporary contexts, beginning with Africa. Rita Reis (Amsterdam) reported on medical pluralism in Swaziland. This was followed by Volker Roelcke and Walter Bruchhausen's (Bonn) development of a conceptual framework for the study of medical pluralism in Tanzania. Than Tricia Laing (Wellington) gave a talk on spirituality in New Zealand. The afternoon papers assumed a more eclectic format. Maarten Bodes (Amsterdam) discussed the Indian pharmaceutical industry. Gunnar Stollberg's (Bielefeld) paper then outlined a conceptual model of the hybridisation of knowledge systems to be developed and applied to Britain and Germany. The conference ended with a more anthropological focus on the West. Anne MacFarlane (Galway) gave a lecture on the use of complementary medicine in Ireland which was both historical and contemporary. This was followed by Kate Reed (Southampton) on the use of conceptual models of syncretism to look at the health beliefs and practices of British born South Asian mothers based on fieldwork in Leicester.

What came through as an overall issue was a continuing theme of 'The Society of the Social History of Medicine' (SSHM), namely whether we can speak about medical systems as such or talk only in a post-modern sense of plurality of discourses and discourses in which there is a transcendence of boundaries. These ideas were drawn together in the closing discussion where no firm conclusion was reached. However, it was suggested that an approach forward was to look at things in a dialectic sense. This recognises both commonality and difference but holds these in a dialectic. In the concluding discussion people outlined certain areas which had not been covered due to the usual conference constraints of time and finance, including issues relating to gender and work on medical pluralism in Latin America. Perhaps a focus on class, drawing on Subaltern Studies and contemporary debates on race, might be useful for future conferences.

On the whole, however, the conference provided a lively arena for debate and managed to cover a number of areas successfully.

*Kate Reed*