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DOI: 10.1355/sj29-1o

*Social Science and Knowledge in a Globalising World*. Edited by Zawawi Ibrahim. Petaling Jaya: Persatuan Sains Sosial Malaysia and Strategic Information and Research Development Centre, 2012. 499 pp.

How has globalization affected the social sciences? How has it changed the character of social science pursuits? Has it altered how the academe perceives and conceptualizes social phenomena, necessitated new constructs and discourses and social theories, and challenged — or even undermined — our academic and intellectual paradigms? In an excellent effort to compile the writings of twenty-three luminaries in the social sciences and humanities, Wan Zawawi has done yeoman's service to help us address these questions.

This hefty and finely edited book is deftly divided into four parts — "Epistemological challenges", "Social Science and Knowledge in Asia, Southeast Asia and Local Society", "Islam, Gender and Statism", and "Cultural Studies, Cultural Production and Agency" — with a total of nineteen chapters. Such a thematic treatment allows scholars to delve into particular sections that are of interest and for pedagogues to assign those sections of relevance to their courses. Getting through such a voluminous book would normally be a reviewer's nightmare but I have found reading many of the chapters a delightful experience, not just for their sharp prose but for the nuanced ideas contained therein. A book review such as this one can scarcely do justice to the rich content purveyed by the many prominent scholars featured in this volume.

Two keynote chapters, by Clive Kessler and Anthony Reid, address the debate on the epistemological role of social science in an era

of globalization. Kessler offers a sceptic's view that it is all déjà vu and that globalization itself isn't something entirely new. After all, Marxists and Weberians alike have already engaged with its previous hegemonic tendencies, although much work still lies ahead to lay to rest "the colonization of our human lifeworlds" (p. 49) by a new-fangled globalization of the current epoch. Reid takes the view that globalization has to be downsized and "provincialized" (p. 51). By this he means that scholars should attach more value to local discourses, knowledge, centres of scholarship and the like. This turn to the "local" would pluralize knowledge and blunt globalization's hegemonic tendencies in scholarly work. However, Reid concedes that Asian universities and scholars will have to build and allow local knowledge-making to thrive before tending to the task of reducing Anglo-American domination of the social sciences and humanities.

Contributing to the epistemological debate, Goh Beng Lan discusses the putative divide between the East and the West — a binary, she avers — that continues to drive scholarship and inflict damage particularly on Southeast Asian Studies. Following Reid, she argues that a valorization of local scholarship would naturally help in decentring "Eurocentric knowledge" (p. 82). Ien Ang contributes the view that, since cultural studies occupies a hybrid space in the epistemic terrain of the humanities and social sciences, it could also be the space for serious intellectual exchange between Western and Asian scholars in overcoming their respective biases.

In an insightful chapter, Benedict Anderson illustrates how the binaries of insiders-outsiders, of natives–non-natives, and implicitly of East and West, could be finessed by an enlightened social agency. Writing about the life and work of Indonesian *peranakan* journalist-activist Kwee Thiam Tjin, he shows how Kwee without setting a single foot abroad was nonetheless a quintessential cosmopolitan persona engaging cogently within a colonial regime during the rise of an incipient Indonesian nationalism. Such social agency drew on Western colonialism's own globalizing attributes to debunk its imperialism.

The book closes with a tribute to the late filmmaker Yasmin Ahmad, whose iconic films unravelled a deep cosmopolitanism

embedded in Malaysian society. Gareth Richards and Zawawi provide a deserving accolade to Yasmin, whose work is noted for its profound humanism and idealism. The multicultural themes in her films speak to a global trope that celebrates humanity's universal values as manifested in the everyday lives of ordinary people. Filmmakers like Yasmin show that the celluloid medium is capable of interrogating themes which are all too often opaquely analysed in scholarly journals.

An intriguing question surfaced for me as I read this book: has globalization blurred the distinction between the social sciences and the humanities? Zawawi did not venture into providing an answer to this question, but clearly the contributors to this volume, writing broadly on the same subject, come from different disciplines and different traditions, ranging from the more conventional social sciences and humanities to newer fields like cultural studies. Similarly, the writers themselves give no answers to the question of whether the disparate disciplines of the social sciences and humanities could be conjoined through some meta-theoretical framing or whether this is necessary. It is clear that the melding of disciplines, subjects and academic endeavours in the social sciences and humanities has been one of globalization's salutary effects. Moreover, the cross-fertilization of disciplines and knowledge, and thereby their pluralization — as many of the writers of this volume seem to imply — will be necessary in a world that is increasingly becoming homogenized by globalization.

Finally, our current epoch's shrinking of time and space horizons is thought by many writers in this book to be invidious to the academy. One could also take the contrarian view that time-space "distanciation", to borrow Anthony Giddens's term, could be empowering. By this Giddens means that space and time could be distant and yet conterminous for actors even without face-to-face interactions in our ultra-modern societies. It has sensitized academics to the need to contextualize better the pursuit of knowledge and to recognize what Derrida calls "*différance*", a matter inadequately addressed in erstwhile paradigms of the social sciences. The facticity

of globalization itself has propelled new scholarship, thus empowering scholarly agency in the very act of grappling with the beast.

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