

Preface

Local and global processes are multilayered and interrelated: cultures, traditions, languages, and histories are in a continuous dialogue. Post-colonial theories look beyond the dichotomies of local and global, emphasizing change and continuity. In order to understand local and global encounters, we need multidisciplinary research open to different interpretations of global processes at local levels and mindful of the impacts of the local on global flows. While part of global transformations, many political, economic and cultural processes are connected to local differences that bring new elements to global, interconnected processes.

In order to discuss the relations between local and global, the University of Helsinki SYLFF Association hosted a seminar under the title ‘Global and Local Encounters’ in September 25, 2008. SYLFF stands for the Ryoichi Sasakawa Young Leaders Fellowship Fund, a multidisciplinary fellowship program of the Tokyo Foundation. Since the launch of the program in 1987, SYLFF has supported the studies of more than 10,000 students in social sciences and humanities in 44 countries. The University of Helsinki is one of the 68 universities enjoying SYLFF funding, and since 1991, three researchers annually have received funding to work on topics related to International Relations, Social and Cultural Anthropology, and Asian and African Studies. The scholarship program has enabled their full-time research during one year, as well as networking activities with other fellows in Finland and abroad. SYLFF fellows work for social change transcending national, political, religious, ethnic, and other boundaries.

All contributions in this volume come from SYLFF fellows in different academic disciplines, who have each received a research grant at the University of Helsinki. Six of the papers were presented in the seminar, complemented by two invited contributions. What they share is a look at local and global encounters and systems of references from different points of view. The papers explore human rights in Uganda and among the Arctic Peoples; secularization in Tibet; Tibetan settlements in India; indigenous education in Ecuador; Amazonian native youth cultures in Brazil; development co-operation in Vietnam; and healthcare policy in Kenya.

We would like to thank the Tokyo Foundation for their financial support that made the publishing of this book possible as well as for bringing together the contributors of this

volume. We thank the Confucius Institute and especially its director Dr. Kauko Laitinen for providing us with a seminar venue and for valuable practical support. We are also grateful to the Renvall Institute for Area and Cultural Studies for co-operating and contributing to the publication of this book.

Helsinki, February 2009

Tuija Veintie and
Pirjo Kristiina Virtanen
Editors