

Preface and Acknowledgements

Citizenship is an evocative term. The very mention of this concept brings back a trail of historical memories. One finds citizens in the rampaging crowds of the Parisian *sans culottes* of July 1789, the agitating *suffragettes* of nineteenth century London, the irate American colonists of the Boston Tea Party (1773), protesting against the British Crown, and closer home, in the violent mob of Chauri Chaura (1922), and in the disciplined little band of *satyagrahis* following Gandhi on the Salt March (1930), from colonial India. Nor is the citizen missing from the contemporary sites of struggle, such as among the tribal protesters of central and eastern India, and, in the secessionist movements in Kashmir and North East India. Public grievances and citizenship appear to be historical bedfellows. The universal desire to protest against unjust treatment by the authorities and the right to equality and dignity unites a motley crowd of historical and contemporary actors under the label of “citizens.” As an analytical category, however, the term remains deeply problematic. “Citizens,” in terms of their social origins, geographic locations, ideological orientations, or the very specific grievances that unite them, are radically different from one another—to the point where one might have qualms of methodological conscience about lumping these people together in the same bag. Even conceptually the uneasy balance of rights and obligations makes “citizens” as a social group awkward, unstable, and incoherent. The enraged “citizen” of Kashmir, just as the protesting students of Tiananmen Square (1989), militating against the armed forces of the state to assert their civil and political rights, nevertheless expected the same state to protect them against the high-handed reaction of the forces of state security!

The conceptual inconsistency and empirical incoherence of citizenship as a category points towards “aliens”—the antonym of citizens—as yet another useful but problematic concept. Just as the ideal type citizen conflates rights and obligations to defend those very rights, aliens are devoid of both basic rights, and the obligation to defend that state that vouches for them. The citizen-alien conceptual scale provides the space in which to rank the actual status of people living within a specific territory.

In addition to the conceptual disarray that marks citizenship, the task of citizen making, held by many post-colonial states and transitional societies as one of their central tasks, poses a difficult problem for the makers of public policy. Turning subjects, aliens, and rebels into citizens is a complex process whose pace has been quickened by new technologies of rapid mass communication and the global flow of knowledge. The multiple nodes and contradictions of citizenship—such as the groundswell of support that one finds for Chinese dissidents, forcibly displaced Indian tribals from their ancestral abodes, and peasants from their lifestyles, or in the enraged denizens of the contemporary United States, participants of the “Tea Party movements,” protesting against the distant and dominant state identified as the Washington elites—show that the concept is still unfolding; its script has so far been only partly written.

The complexity of the path to citizenship—context-dependent at the best of times, varying radically between outright violence and peaceful, legitimate participation—matches the intricacy of the concept of citizenship itself. In practice, it is difficult to advance an exhaustive list of strategies of citizen making. Manifestly, the constitution—the fountainhead of all rights—can only lay down the necessary conditions of citizenship, leaving it open for the state and individual to negotiate the terms of citizenship in a given context. Delicately suspended between imported concepts from Europe and indigenous notions of selfhood, between asserting rights and requiring the protection of the state, citizenship is a function of many variables. A full treatment of this concept—in terms of its etymology, social history, ideological depth, and empirical stretch—is beyond the remit of this book. Instead, the 11 essays that form this volume provide entry points to the larger, transdisciplinary debate.

In the course of putting this volume together, I have acquired many debts. First and foremost, I would like to thank the German Research Foundation (DFG) whose support of the Cluster of Excellence “Asia and Europe—Shifting Asymmetries in Cultural Flows” at Heidelberg University, has brought together talent, wide ranging scientific questions, and scholars from around the world to create the most exciting project of which I have been a part in my entire academic career. I am grateful to Professors Madeleine Herren, Axel Michaels, and Rudolf Wagner—the directors of the cluster, and particularly to Madeleine Herren, for taking the time off her busy schedule to write a foreword for this book, and to Andrea Hacker for critical editorial suggestions throughout the publication process. I would like to thank the South Asia Institute of Heidelberg University, my academic home for the past 16 years, and the Centre for the Study of Developing Societies, Delhi, for valuable help with the fieldwork in India.

I would like to thank the members of the citizenship project—Barbara Harriss-White, Julia A. B. Hegewald, Marie Lal, Jong Hee Lee, James Manor, Prasanna Nayak, Frank Pfetsch, Markus Pohlmann, Jivanta Schoettli, Clemens Spiess, and John Zavos who have laid the course that we set ourselves in Heidelberg in 2008. The home research team consisting of Clemens Spiess, Jivanta Schoettli, Sergio Mukherjee, Lion Koenig, and Markus Pauli has been a source of solid academic support, data management, and helped in the coordination of a far flung research

network. The papers brought together in this volume were initially presented in a series of workshops. Generous support was provided by Heidelberg University, Seoul National University, Sungkyunkwan University, the Korean Sociological Association, the Korean Association of Political Sociology, and Utkal University (Orissa, India) for these meetings. The team owes a special debt to Jivanta Schoettli who has organized the meetings in Heidelberg, and Bhubaneswar with great skill and imagination. I would also like to thank Jonghee Lee and Markus Pohlmann for their contributions to the organization of the conference in Seoul, Lion Koenig, Kai Fürstenberg and Dominik Frommherz who have processed the manuscript in its final stage.

The chapters emerging from the citizenship project were initially put together as a book under the title *Citizenship and the Flow of Ideas in the Era of Globalization: Structure, Agency and Power* by Samskriti publishers, Delhi. I would like to thank Madhu Sengupta and Surit Mitra, for their valuable help with the earlier publication. For this publication by Springer, the text has been substantially revised and a new title has been added. Our collective thanks to Dr. Andrea Hacker for making this possible.

Finally, I would like to thank members of the Excellence Cluster, Heidelberg, for the stimulating environment. Their empathy and conviviality have made it possible for my coauthors and me to see Asia and Europe in terms that are “at once clear and fluid.” The book is dedicated to them.

Heidelberg, September 2012

Subrata Mitra



<http://www.springer.com/978-3-642-34567-8>

Citizenship as Cultural Flow

Structure, Agency and Power

Mitra, S.K. (Ed.)

2013, XVI, 283 p. 23 illus., Softcover

ISBN: 978-3-642-34567-8