

THE LEVERHULME TRUST PROGRAMME ON GENDERED CEREMONY AND RITUAL IN PARLIAMENT

ANNUAL REPORT

2007- 2008



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Introduction

This report covers the first year (1 October 2007 - 30 September 2008) of the Programme on Gendered Ceremony and Ritual in Parliament (GCRP).

This has been an exciting and productive period for the Programme. During this period:

- Seven appointments were made
- Two workshops were convened, one conference was organised
- We were invited to an external conference to present papers on the work of GCRP
- We were also invited to and have agreed to edit a special issue of the prestigious *Journal of Legislative Studies* on 'Ceremony and Ritual in Parliament'
- During this period we developed a comprehensive website together with our own logo, (which was supplied by the advertising company, J. Walter Thompson) and a vibrant web design which allows us to work as a research group as well as present our work online.

The Programme team numbers eleven, with four academics, three Postdoctoral Fellows, three PhDs and one Administrator. The Programme, which is divided into three Research Teams on India, South Africa and the UK, is led by the Director and the three co-Directors. Prof. Shirin Rai heads the India Research Team, Prof. Joni Lovenduski, with Dr. Sarah Childs, the UK Team and Dr. Georgina Waylen, the South African Research Team. As Director of the Programme and to ensure consistency of approach, Prof. Rai was involved in all the appointments made to the Programme. Research Team leaders are responsible for the everyday working of the Team, supervision of Postdoctoral Fellows and the PhDs, as well as for the strategic direction of the Programme.

Perhaps the most important message of this first annual report is that, despite the inevitable challenges of organising multi-site research, the Programme is generating considerable interest in the academic and wider community in the area of ceremony and ritual in parliament and that we feel confident that a new field of research into parliamentary institutions is being opened up by our work.

Appointments

In the first three months of the Programme three Postdoctoral Fellows, three PhD students and one Programme Administrator were appointed. Excellence of record and a commitment to the objectives of the Programme were criteria used in making these appointments.

The GCRP Working Team

- The three Postdoctoral Fellows - Faith Armitage (Birkbeck College, University of London), Surya Monro (Sheffield University) and Carole Spary (Warwick University) - were appointed at the start of the programme. Given the academic year start and the start of the Programme grant, the Fellows could commence work only in December 2007/January 2008. As a result of this, a three month extension to the Programme, without any extra funding, was sought and obtained
- Three PhD students were also recruited - Ms. Victoria Hasson (Sheffield University), Ms. Rosa Malley (Bristol University) and Ms. Bairavee Balasubramaniam (Warwick University). The latter could start only at the end of November 2007 because of delays in interviews, visa applications and travel from Malaysia
- The Programme Administrator, Mrs. Kala Williams, was appointed in October 2007.

GCRP Advisory Board

We also successfully recruited the Programme's Advisory Board: Mrs. Margaret Alva (Advisor to the Bureau of Parliamentary Research and Training, India), Dr. Molly Andrews (Co-Director, Centre of Narrative Research, London), Dr. Emma Crewe (Director of ChildHope and the author of *Lords of Parliament*), Ms. Oonagh Gay (House of Commons, UK), Prof. Niraja Gopal Jayal (Director, Centre for the Study of Law and Governance, Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi), Prof. Shireen Hassim (University of Witwatersrand), Professor Robert Hazell (Director of The Constitution Unit, University College London) and Prof. The Lord Philip Norton of Louth (Professor of Government, University of Hull).

We are sure that this strong team of Advisors will provide us with guidance, as well as help with access to parliaments and parliamentarians, in the course of our work.

Programme Associates

As we realised that there was strong interest in our work within the academic community, we decided to widen the contacts that we could have and the support that we could generate by inviting colleagues from across a range of academic interests to join us as Programme Associates. We now have fifteen such Associates from different UK and international universities who participate in our workshops, give us feedback on our papers and presentations and provide also a multi-disciplinary perspective to our work (see Annex 1).

Research Design

A successful research programme requires a strong research design. Most of our energies have been channelled into producing research designs that are appropriate for the individual research sites as well as open to comparative analyses (see Annex 2). After much discussion the team agreed to focus on four key areas of research in the three research sites:

- Spectacle and performativity
- Space and architecture
- Identity and representation and
- Inclusion and legitimacy.

These axes of research will allow us to examine specific and historically embedded ceremony and rituals in parliaments in India, South Africa and the UK, while at the same time to make comparative analyses that would allow our research to speak to a much wider audience.

The Postdoctoral Fellows are also engaged in early scoping work, initial field work and early stage interviews in order to develop a strong base for further investigations and analyses based upon the research designs. The co-Directors are supervising PhD students and advising Postdoctoral Fellows on their work, ensuring access for their fieldwork and developing networks for each research group to be able to use.

Outputs

GCRP Workshops and Conferences

During the first year of the Programme we held two GCRP workshops and one conference.

- The first workshop was held at on February 21st 2008 at Birkbeck College, University of London. It was attended by the full GCRP team and was foundational to the effective working of the Programme. We discussed issues leading to establishing norms of working together, schedules and timetables, financial reporting mechanisms etc. One of the most important features of this workshop was to build good and transparent working relations among individuals and institutions. That this has been successful can be seen in the work that the three research teams have been able to do on developing their research designs and also the work that has been done across institutional boundaries in constructing comparative research designs (see Annex 2).

Colleagues have been supportive of each other, have read and commented on the work produced by members of different research teams and have worked hard to develop mutually interesting and rewarding research agendas. There is growing ease and trust between Programme members and the lines of communications are open, respectful and productive.

- The second workshop was organised by the Birkbeck College team on the 12th June 2008 in London. It was the first time that members of the Programme - all the three Postdoctoral Fellows - presented their work to an external audience. We were also able to hear papers from two of our Advisory Board members - Andrews and Crewe - and to benefit from their expertise (see Annex 3). The workshop was exceptionally successful and generated good discussion and much enthusiasm from colleagues outside the Programme.
- The first **GCRP conference** was held at Warwick University on 23rd-24th October, 2008. It had a strong research driven programme (see Annex 5), combining a focus on critical issues of representation, rhetoric and performance with an attention to the challenges faced in studying ceremony and ritual. The innovative element of the conference programme was not only its multi-disciplinary approach (we had academics from departments of Cultural Studies, English and Sociology, together with Politics and Government) but also the fact that we secured speakers from within the parliamentary system - Lord Prof. Anthony Giddens and Baroness Haleh Afshar - to reflect upon their experiences of ceremony and ritual in the House of Lords as they were socialised into its working as new members. It was an international conference with colleagues from all the three research sites represented.

GCRP Advisory Board met during the conference and we had productive discussions about various aspects of the running of the programme. (see Annex 6)

- The Programme team presented its work to the Board and got useful feedback, particularly on the empirical and the comparative components of the project.
- The Board also discussed and approved the Annual Report.

Participation in External Conferences

Together with organising our own workshop, GCRP members have also participated in important external conferences.

- We were invited to participate in the Eighth Workshop of Parliamentary Scholars and Parliamentarians, Wroxton College, Wroxton UK, 26-7 July 08. The conference was by invitation only, with around 30 national and international attendees and a mixture of academics and parliamentarians. Our Postdoctoral Fellows presented papers on a panel on Ceremony and Ritual in Parliament that was chaired by Dr. Sarah Childs. The papers were: *Contesting the neutrality of the Speaker: Gender, Power and Ceremony in the British House of Commons* (Dr. Armitage), *Symbolising the Rainbow: Glimpses of South African Parliament* (Dr. Monro), and *Disrupting Rituals of Parliamentary Debate in the Indian Parliament* (Dr. Spary). This was a good opportunity to publicise the programme, to present initial findings and to elicit feedback; the papers were well received. The Postdoctoral Fellows also made important research contacts, with politicians and academics from a variety of countries, including UK, India and Canada.
- The GCRP Director was invited to give a presentation on gender discourses and equality in parliaments at a conference on enhancing the “*Effectiveness of parliaments: Challenges and opportunities*” on the 27-30 October, 2008 at Wilton Park. Parliamentarians, policy-makers and senior parliamentary staff from many countries were present at the conference, including from our research sites and expressed interest in and willingness to help with facilitating our research.
- Members of the Programme will also be presenting papers at the first European Consortium of Political Research (ECPR) Gender and Politics Conference in Belfast in January 2009, the Political Studies Association Conference in Manchester in April 2009 and the 5th ECPR General Conference in Potsdam from 10-12 Sept 2009.

Publications

During the first year of the Programme several publications have been produced:

- Six GCRP Working Papers (see Annex 4)
- Several conference presentations.

We have also been invited to produce a Special Issue of the *Journal of Legislative Studies* on Ceremony and Ritual in Parliament. This issue will be published in 2010 and includes the work of not only the GCRP team members but also academic colleagues from outside the group. This Special Issue will be important in establishing interest in our work in the wider academic community.

Website

The Programme website is developing well is available for view on (<http://www2.warwick.ac.uk/fac/soc/pais/research/gcrp/>). The early phase of deciding upon a logo and the structure of the site are now complete. Through the site we are able to work within the Programme - the Workspace includes a Forum where Programme members can communicate with each other securely - as well as to disseminate relevant material to the wider audience. The Resources page includes bibliographies, audio-visual material as well as other useful links. As the research progresses, we anticipate that the use of the website will also increase.

Supervision and Management

Management of a multi-site research Programme has been a challenge in terms of co-ordination, but with the support of colleagues, it has not only been possible but successful. Each of the three research teams have been headed by experienced academics who have worked together effectively.

The early work done on communication, coordination and transparency has meant that the individual teams are working well and with every joint activity greater cooperation is developing between teams and individuals. For example, our Postdoctoral Fellows have regular telephonic conferences where they discuss their work and any other issues that might arise. Working papers are circulated between all GCRP members for comments and advice. The four co-Directors meet regularly as the Steering Committee to discuss matters of ongoing importance to the Programme.

Management of the programme is also sensitive to the particular and changing needs of the three research sites. For example, the South Africa team based at Sheffield University has had to revisit their travel and subsistence budget due to the unpredicted worsening of the political climate in South Africa. This resulted in a request for additional funds under their sub-contracted heading of *Post Doctoral Research Trip* which, after consultation with the Leverhulme Trust, was approved by the Steering Committee. The money was transferred across from the Warwick Travel and Subsistence budget to the University of Sheffield to use towards the Postdoctoral research trip.

Steering Committee

Regular meetings of the Steering Committee have facilitated communication, developing and reviewing programme strategy and problem solving. These meetings are informal and therefore not minuted, which allows for frank and open discussions about our roles, pressures of work, division of labour and the direction of the Programme. Face to face conversations through these meetings have been invaluable for the smooth and efficient running of the Programme.

Postdoctoral Fellows

Postdoctoral Fellows are crucial to the stability and the success of the Programme. Developing the careers of our Postdoctoral Fellows is one of the important responsibilities of the academics on the Programme. This is done through the integration of the Fellows in all the aspects of the work of the Programme - research design, fieldwork, organising of and participating in workshops and conferences. In terms of management, the Fellows participate in research team discussions as well as in the discussions with our Advisory Board. In terms of teaching, Monro and Spary co-supervise the PhD student based at Sheffield and Warwick and all Postdoctoral Fellows also participate in departmental teaching at the three institutions involved. Where departmental practices permit, they also attend and contribute to the discussions in departmental staff meetings.

Managing Administrator

The Administrator has settled in well. She has familiarised herself with the University of Warwick's financial systems, liaised well with the financial and research administration teams at Warwick and has kept clear and up to date records of expenditure. She has also set up systems of quarterly reporting, negotiated with financial administrators of the other universities involved in the Programme. Multi-site communications have been challenging and she is improving in developing these. The University of Warwick is supporting her further training on different Administrative training packages. Her first appraisal has been conducted and points of development identified.

PhD Students

The three PhD students are pursuing their research methodology courses as part of the first year doctoral training programmes at the Universities of Bristol, Sheffield and Warwick. They have attended all the workshops and will present their initial research at the annual conference in October. All three are progressing well in their work. Their supervision is done in accordance with graduate regulations of each of the universities where they are registered.

Looking Ahead

While the first year of the Programme has been very productive, much of the theoretical and empirical work that is needed to develop the insights and arguments on ceremony and ritual in parliament is still to be done. The first tranche of fieldwork will be done in the next phase of the Programme. Preparations are underway for this. We will also work on producing the *Journal of Legislative Studies* Special Issue and on producing more Working Papers. We will explore the possibilities for an edited collection on the subject of Gendered Ceremony and Ritual in Parliament.

This has been a productive and successful start to the Programme. We look forward to building on this success in the next year.

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Shirin M. Rai". The signature is written in a cursive style with a horizontal line underneath.

Prof. Shirin M. Rai
Director, GCRP

Dr. Sarah Childs
Prof. Joni Lovenduski
Dr. Georgina Waylen
Co-Directors, GCRP