

ASIA/ASA
Sociology/Anthropology
Dowling College, Oakdale, NY 11769

To: ASA Members

From: Ashakant Nimbark, Acting Chair, Section on Asia and Asian America

Date: January 9, 1984

Re: Appeal to Join the New Section by Paying Dues, and Call for Papers.

Welcome to 1984!

This letter conveys a good news and a special appeal. The good news is that following concerted efforts since 1978, we have been approved as a new section within ASA. We feel that Asia deserves American and world attention for fresh analysis, fruitful research and cooperative undertakings. The special appeal to you all is for sending in your five dollars annual dues to the ASA Office if you have not already done so. Would you also please urge your colleagues and friends to do the same. We need a minimum of 250 dues paying members now in order to have programs/sessions/meetings of this section at the Annual meetings. We are grateful to those of you who have signed the petitions to form this section, but now, right now, we need a concrete action: a membership drive. Only through sufficient dues paying membership, can we put Asia on the world sociological map. With your prompt cooperation we will continue having significant events at the ASA meetings.

A group of sociologists (ranging from 50 to 200) have been scheduling special meetings, panels, seminars and informal gatherings on a regular basis since 1979 (Boston) ASA meetings. It has been publishing a Newsletter and envisions continued activities within ASA.

The major justification for having a section on Asia is monumental size and bulk of humanity Asia represents. Asia covers over 8,000,000 sq. miles and contains over half of the world's population. It includes South Asia (India subcontinent), southeast Asia, Far East and the Middle East. Asia encompasses wide ranging racial, ethnic, cultural, political and economic variations. Despite these heterogeneities, Asia, as a continent, has some common characteristics: ancient civilizations, impact of Western colonialism, recent changes and growing number of intra-Asian activities and Pan-Asian movements. Asia, inhabited by mixed racial and ethnic groups of mainly brown skinned people, can be differentiated from predominantly White Europe and North America, Latin America and Black Africa.

Although ASA has a section on racial and ethnic minorities, that section's activities and concerns largely pertain to the blacks, Puerto Ricans, American Indians and Chicanos. It rarely involves Chinese, Japanese, Koreans, Asian Indians and South East Asian scholars or "oriental" and "pacific" cultural topics.

Those sociologists who have developed special academic interest in Asian and Asian American societies see a need for a forum within ASA where they can develop panels and sessions on topics such as social, economic, political and technological changes in Asia; impact of mass media (e.g. satellite TV) on Asia; Asian events such as the Asiad games, resurgence of Asian women; Asian immigration; nonaligned movement and Asian influence in the rest of the world.

The section on Asia may remain as "Asia", but a number of sociologists, who have been participating in this group's activities, feel that "Asian American" , should be included because (a) it deals with a specific type of ethnic group in America which seeks to retain its cultural identity while being structurally assimilated; (b) it emphasize its linguistic and philosophical heritage some of which is even strengthened despite structural assimilation; (c) it maintains close ties with its cultural "roots" despite geographical distances through visits, interchange, cooperation and media. Thus, as a community, Asian American represent a distinct human category, neither Asia, their original base, nor America their current professional base, but a mixture of the two. This category affords distinct problems, action programs and sociological studies of paradoxical integration, cultural dualism, marginality, and a variety of other related issues. (For instance, an interdisciplinary journal, called AMERASIA, is being published from UCLA).

Despite Asia's vast size, huge population and cultural richness, it has been grossly misunderstood, misrepresented and underrepresented in American texts. (A report by Asia Society on this topic a few years ago made some startling observation on this). The section would thus envision activities designed to enhance cooperation between Asia, Asian America and the rest of America through scholarly activities, publications and the like.

Thank you again for your cooperation. We look forward to meeting you, celebrating the formation of our section, and working with you and your colleagues on August 27-31, 1984 at the Convention Center, San Antonio, Texas. We are sure that you have renewed your ASA membership and are going to preregister for the ASA's Seventy-ninth Annual meeting. ASA ruling specifically requires pre-registration by ASA members, otherwise their names are not included in the program.

Please note: At the next ASA convention, our section program on Asia and Asian America is scheduled on Tuesday, August 28, 1984. During the two-hour session we will have 3 or 4 papers, two of them are already submitted. If you propose to submit a paper on any aspect of Asia, please contact me before 1/31/84. We will also have a two-hour Business meeting for the Section which will be mentioned in the Preliminary ASA program. While submitting your paper, please follow the same rules as regular ASA Program Session.

Best regards,

A. Nimbark

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