



ASIA IN THE 21ST CENTURY - *NEW PERSPECTIVES* -

Festsalen, University of Copenhagen

16 September 2008, 13.30-17.30

Professor Gayatri C. Spivak

Professor Spivak is the Avalon Foundation Professor in the Humanities and the Director of the Institute for Comparative Literature and Society at Columbia University. Her research covers feminism, marxism, deconstruction and globalization.

The Subject of an Asian Culture

This paper will comment on the contemporary inflation of the word "culture." The suggestion that people from a named space share a culture allows us to ignore differences of class, ethnicity, and gender. To extend this sharing to metropolitan migrants from that space not only exacerbates the problem but also ignores the difference between North and South. The paper will further discuss "Asia" as a common name and relate it to the tradition of European Orientalism. The latter emphasized China and India and their spheres of cultural and historical influence. To suggest a unified cultural subject for Central Asia today is to complicate that tradition by entering into post-Soviet politics of identity-formation. The Caucasus, Transcaucasus, and Turkey mark the crumbling of boundaries between Europe and Asia, as well as a new role for the US. How do cultural considerations fit in here? To understand West Asia "culturally" is to bring in the brutal politics of the Abrahamic. The paper will conclude with a consideration of problems specific to gendering. What relationship do these diversities sustain with the uniformities of globalization?

An abstract geometric diagram consisting of several overlapping circles and lines, extending from the right side of the text area towards the bottom right corner of the page.