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What made the modern world hang together: socialisation or stigmatisation?

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Contrary to what is often assumed, norm-internalisation does not always lead to compliance. Normative judgements may be simultaneously internalised and outwardly rejected. Non-compliance is at times a result of hyper-awareness of the particular origin of norms, rather than an unwillingness of the would-be-recipients to do 'good' deeds, or their inability to understand what is 'good'. Such is often the case for non-Western states, as I demonstrate in this article by utilising the sociological concepts of *stigma* and *stigmatisation*. In its inability to acknowledge this dynamic, which has its roots in the colonial past of the international order, the constructivist model of norm-diffusion commits two errors. On the one hand, it falls short as a causal

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explanation, conflating internalisation with socialisation, and socialisation with compliance. On the other hand, it reproduces existing hierarchies in the international system, treating only non-compliance as endogenously driven, but compliance as a result of external stimuli. As there is a great deal of correlation between non-compliance and political geography, such a depiction, coupled with the fact that most norms under scrutiny are 'good' norms, once again casts non-Western states as having agency only when they commit 'bad' deeds.

Keywords: socialisation; stigmatisation; norm; internalisation; compliance; non-Western

In this article, I use the sociological concept of *stigma* (Goffman 1963) to critique the norms literature in 'mainstream'[15] constructivism.[16] As I will demonstrate, constructivist models of norm-diffusion implicitly assume the pre-existence of a rather thick international 'society'[17] that has already constituted the principal actors in rather homologous, mutually intelligible, and 'modern' ways. Such an international society does exist now, but it did not exist in most of the world before the nineteenth century, at the earliest. However, even now the actors in this international society are not quite the interchangeable, rational agents open to persuasion that they are assumed to be in the ethnocentric models of norm-diffusion, but rather people and institutions carrying *similar* historical and emotional baggage stemming from the traumas of colonialism (in all of its variations, including the threat thereof), which, nevertheless, manifest in very *particular* ways. Modern international society was built on a dynamic of *stigmatisation* – many, but especially non-Westerners – whether they escaped formal colonisation or

[15] By 'mainstream' constructivism, I mean the body of work identified by Jennifer Sterling-Folker (2000) as essentially parallel to neoliberal institutionalism. The tendency of the discipline to associate constructivism with its more liberal variants has been well acknowledged (in addition to Sterling-Folker 2000 and Steele 2007, especially 28–30, see also Barkin 2003, 2010). Constructivist work with a strong liberal bent is more likely to be reviewed favourably, and more likely to published in 'top' IR journals (Zarakol 2014), contributing to the 'mainstream' effect. Obviously, constructivism is a much bigger tent that also could and does accommodate more critical approaches (see, e.g., Steele 2007 for a review). However, these more critical variants of constructivist scholarship neither use the language of norms nor are as equally well represented in 'top' IR journals or top IR departments (Zarakol 2014).

[16] For another application of Goffman's stigma theory to IR, please see Adler-Nissen (2014).

[17] I do not mean this in the English School sense, but rather in the sociological sense. Space does not permit me to engage in a critique of classic English School analyses, but suffice it to say that classical English School had both a very formal and an idealised definition of society. For an extended discussion, see Zarakol (2011). For excellent critiques of traditional English School by the next generation of practitioners, see, for example, Keene (2002) and Suzuki (2009). Hobson (2012, Ch. 9) also offers an insightful criticism of the Eurocentricism implicit in the original English School.

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not, joined it at a disadvantage, and the various pathologies of *stigmatisation* have been incorporated into modern national narratives and state identities. This means that it is *stigmatisation* that still drives many instances of both norm-*compliance* and norm-*rejection* by non-Western states,[18] rather than any kind of friendly persuasion by norm-entrepreneurs or a pervasive stubbornness to see what is supposedly the better, more rational, or humane course of action.

Norm-internalisation does not always lead to socialisation. Normative judgements may be simultaneously internalised and publicly rejected. Emulation and non-compliance are at times the two sides of the same coin. Non-compliance is often a result of a hyper-awareness of the particular origin of norms, rather than an unwillingness of the recipients to do 'good' deeds, an inability to understand what is 'good' or a refusal to be persuaded by rational arguments. Such is often the case for non-Western states, as I will explain in this article. In its inability to see this dynamic and the messy history of the international system that gave rise to it, the typical constructivist study of norm-diffusion commits two missteps. On the one hand, it falls short as a causal explanation, conflating internalisation with socialisation, and socialisation with compliance. On the other hand, it reproduces existing hierarchies in the international system, treating only non-compliance with a norm as an endogenously driven decision, while attributing compliance to supposedly benign exogenous drivers. Coupled with the fact that most – and mostly 'good'– norms studied in this literature originate in the Western core of the international system, the endogeneity explanation for norm-breaking behaviour paints a picture wherein the 'good' things that happen outside of the West are exogenously driven whereas non-Western agency is used only for 'bad' behaviour.[19] Others have criticised the excessive focus on 'good' norms (e.g. Barkin 2003, 355; McKeown 2009) and Western countries (e.g. Acharya 2004, 2009, 2011; Johnston 2005), but not enough attention has been paid to the structural and relational dynamics behind non-compliance or norm-rejection.

Stigma

Goffman (1963) explained that 'society establishes the means of categorising persons and the complement of attributes felt to be ordinary and natural for

[18] Including Russia.

[19] Cf. the newfound desire in the norms literature to explain in detail why 'liberal' states sometimes resist or undermine 'good' norms (see Percy 2007, 383–85; McKeown (2009). The point is not that such efforts are misplaced, but rather that such a question is rarely asked outside of the West.

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members of each of these categories' (p. 2). This leads members, without much thinking at all, to anticipate certain behaviours as *natural*, *normal*, or *ordinary*, and as such, everyday unconscious anticipations are transformed 'into normative expectations, into righteously presented demands', especially in instances when they are not met. The person who has an attribute that makes him not what is anticipated (and therefore implicitly demanded) carries, in effect, a *stigma*, an attribute that reduces him to be 'different from others in the category of persons available for him to be, and of a less desirable kind' (Goffman 1963, 3). *Stigmatisation* has all sorts of consequences for the *stigmatised* actor. Goffman notes it is often accompanied by a 'stigma-theory, an ideology to explain his inferiority and account for the danger he represents'. A wide range of imperfections is imputed to the *stigmatised* individual 'on the basis of the original one' and his life chances are reduced by the discrimination he faces as a result.

It is important to realise that it is not the attribute itself that causes the *stigma*, but rather the context or the relationship. A short green humanoid would be *stigmatised* in most terrestrial communities but not on Mars. This is a most crucial point, with serious implications for international relations. Another way a person may escape *stigmatisation* is if they are not aware of their *stigma* and/or do not share in the same societal belief system that *stigmatises* them. If they do share the same value system, they cannot but be aware of their *stigma* (even though what individuals do with that awareness varies). This is the second crucial point. *Stigma*, therefore, is a *shared* social ground between the 'normals' and those who are labelled as different, as abnormal: 'The stigmatised individual tends to hold the same beliefs about identity that we do' and 'the standards he has incorporated from the wider world equip him to be intimately alive to what others see as his failing, inevitably causing him, if only for moments, to agree that he does indeed fall short of what he ought to be' (Goffman 1963, 6). *Stigmatisation* can be said to have occurred when a particular actor has come to see themselves through the eyes of another, as failing 'normal' expectations. Discrimination, condescension, exclusion, etc. may be bad things in their own right, but they do not become *stigmatisation* unless the actor at the receiving end understands why he gets this treatment to some extent. *Stigmatisation* is the *internalisation* of a particular normative standard that defines one's own attributes as undesirable.

The concept of norm 'internalisation' is invoked frequently in the IR literature, where it is associated with a type of constructivism and the notion of 'socialisation'.[20] For example, in an article about how norms are

[20] See also Epstein (2012) for a review of this literature and a parallel critique.

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sometimes abandoned, McKeown's literature review concludes that according to the existing constructivist literature on norms: 'some norms may emerge and not cascade, while others will not be *internalised*. Once *internalised*, however, norms become so powerful that they are never questioned' (2011, 8, italics added). An even more typical example of the association of internalisation with constructivism may be found in a 2010 essay in *International Studies Quarterly* entitled, 'The company you keep: international socialisation and the diffusion of human rights norms'. Here, Brian Greenhill contrasts a mechanism involving 'an instrumental calculation' with a mechanism involving 'the state improving its human rights performance after having *internalised* the more progressive norms of its interaction partners' (2010, 141, italics added), and calls the first mechanism rationalist and the second constructivist.

It should not be controversial to state that Greenhill's characterisation rings true about the general IR literature about how states respond to new norms. This literature argues one of two[21] things: states will either rationally go through the motions of norm-compliance without internalisation because of material incentives (either fear of punishment for non-compliance[22] or because compliance brings rewards[23]) or they will 'genuinely' change their behaviour because they (usually the elites) have been persuaded about the substantive value of the norm in question and have come to internalise those values (e.g. Finnemore and Sikkink 1998; Checkel 2005; Johnston 2005). More recent studies even combine these arguments to find that instrumental adoption of a norm may be indeed followed by internalisation.[24] Left unaccounted for in this literature is a scenario wherein internalisation has occurred but compliance has not followed (either because what was asked was not possible or

[21] A third possibility is that states only endorse international norms that overlap with domestic norms (see, e.g., Hooghe 2005). This, argument, too, has interesting and unacknowledged geographical and historical dimensions.

[22] For example, realists may argue that fear of punishment drives socialisation (Alderson 2001, 421, see also Axelrod 1986, 1105), or that the anarchic nature of the international system compels states to become 'like units' (Waltz 1979, 118, 128).

[23] For example, neoliberal institutionalists may emphasise the hegemon's ability to create incentives or institutions that change the cost/benefit calculations of secondary states (see, e.g., Ikenberry 2001; Ikenberry and Kupchan 2001; Kupchan 2010; see also in international political economy, Krasner 1983; Keohane 1984; Oye 1986).

[24] For example, Zurn and Checkel (2005) argue for combining rationalist and constructivist mechanisms to explain socialisation (see also Greenhill 2010). One could argue that this assumption of internalisation following naturally from instrumentalist mimicry is also implicitly built into the socialisation models described by both Finnemore and Sikkink (1998) and Waltz (1979).

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what was attempted was judged to be not 'compliance'), or both internalisation *and* a degree of compliance exist but with a high dose of resentment.[25] In other words, the existing literature on international norms assumes that if there is compliance there may or may not be internalisation but does not at all consider there may be internalisation in the absence of 'compliance'. In effect, internalisation is treated as synonymous with socialisation, socialisation with compliance, and compliance with progress.

These are indeed very different things, as social theories of *stigma* point out. A *stigmatised* person will have internalised the norms that find their attributes lacking, and will be worried about acceptance. Yet, 'socialisation' in the way that is understood in the IR literature does not necessarily follow.[26] There may indeed be some cases where a *stigmatised* individual will attempt to respond by correcting what is 'causing' the *stigma*. Yet, even in cases where such correction (or 'compliance') has occurred, 'what often results is not the acquisition of fully normal status, but a transformation of self from someone with a particular blemish into someone with a record of having corrected a particular blemish' (Goffman 1963, 9). One *stigma* is traded with another. Attempts at compliance do not equal progress, unless progress is defined as being doomed to a fate of always having to fall short of a moving goal post.[27] The *stigmatising* dynamic is modified, but it essentially remains intact. Alternatively, the *stigmatised* individual may attempt to compensate for her *stigma* by achieving mastery in other areas (p. 10). A third strategy, Goffman says, is for 'the person with a shameful differentness [to] break with what is called reality, and obstinately attempt to employ an unconventional interpretation of the character of his social identity' (p. 10). He may even come to see what sets him apart as a

[25] Especially the latter omission is somewhat surprising given the fact this has been a well-observed phenomena in the non-West, for example '[Eastern Nationalism] is imitative in that it accepts the value of the standard set by alien culture. But it involves a rejection: "in fact, two rejections. Both of them ambivalent: rejection of the alien intruder and dominator who is nevertheless to be imitated and surpassed by his own standards and rejection of ancestral ways which are seen as obstacles to progress and yet also cherished as marks of identity"' (Plamenatz 1976, as discussed in Chatterjee 1986, 2).

[26] As Zurn and Checkel (2005) admit, norm-constructivists have modified the sociological concept of socialisation at the altar of operationalisation, at least to some extent. Unfortunately, it is precisely this desire to draw an empirically discernible line from point A (internalisation) to point B (socialisation) to point C (compliance) that collapses distinct sociological phenomena onto each other.

[27] Both Bauman (1991) and Bhabha (2004) posit similar reasons as to why emulation/ mimicry is not a safe route to 'normalcy' – by exposing the constructed nature of the order, imitation ultimately threatens the 'normals'. It could be argued that this is why normative goal posts are never fixed. Bourdieu has a similar observation about elite taste in *Distinction*.

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'blessing in disguise, especially because of what it is felt that suffering can teach one about life and people' (p. 11).[28]

In general, however, *stigmatisation* is accompanied by a certain degree of defensiveness: a *stigmatised* actor 'is likely to feel that to be present among normals nakedly exposes him to invasions of privacy', and 'he may anticipatorily respond by defensive cowering' or 'hostile bravado', and often vacillate between these two reactions. In other words, recognition of the *stigma* dynamics underlines the reality that successful socialisation followed by compliance is only one possible consequence of norm-internalisation. When *stigmatisation* is present, the response is much more likely to be failed attempts at correction, overcompensation or a stubborn denial that a problem exists. Unfortunately, this is not a problem that plagues only individuals or groups in domestic society. *Stigmatisation* does also exist in most normative relations in the international system (Zarakol 2011), and characterises normative diffusion to a much greater degree than persuasion ever did.

Stigmatisation and the modern international order

Let me illustrate what I mean by turning to the seminal article that launched the proverbial thousand ships on the topic of norm-diffusion: Finnemore and Sikkink's 'International norm dynamics and political change' (1998). This was not the first article by constructivists on norms, but, nevertheless, a critical reference point for what came afterwards as it defined the norms research agenda in constructivism. Finnemore and Sikkink highlighted the prior work on norms (e.g. Johnston 1995; Katzenstein 1996, etc.) and advanced a model of norm-diffusion and socialisation in the international system that perfectly captures most of the driving assumptions of the 'norms literature' in constructivism. In the intervening decade, the literature on norms has grown considerably (see, e.g., Checkel 1999, 2003, 2005; Risse 2000; Gheciu 2005; Lewis 2005; Santa-Cruz 2005; Percy 2007; Gillies 2010, etc.) of course, but even the more critical among that literature have mostly supplemented the Finnemore and Sikkink model – that is by focusing on norm-collapse (see, e.g., Cottrell 2009) or norm-regress (McKeown 2009) or Third World norm-subsidiarity (Acharya 2011) – and have not challenged its fundamental assumptions about the relationship between internalisation, socialisation, and progress, nor the assumptions

[28] See Zarakol (2010, 2011, 2013) for a discussion of strategies states use to combat *stigmatisation*. This work is focused on countries with imperial legacy. See Subotic and Zarakol (2013) for a discussion of responses to stigmatisation dealing with a modified universe of cases, for example, in the context of former Yugoslavia.

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about what drives non-compliance. Therefore, in the following, I use this classic article[29] by Finnemore and Sikkink to illustrate my criticisms about the obfuscation of the *stigmatising* dynamics of modern norm-diffusion in much of the non-Western world. I do this by drawing contrasts between the model proposed by Finnemore and Sikkink and how 'internalisation' was actually experienced in two contexts outside of the West in the nineteenth century.

Finnemore and Sikkink (1998) describe what they call the 'norm "life cycle"' as a three-stage process: 'norm-emergence', followed by broad norm-acceptance, which they call a 'norm-cascade', and finally, 'internalisation' (p. 895). As the authors openly admit, much of the logic and some of the terminology of this model are borrowed from American legal scholarship on domestic norms (Finnemore and Sikkink 1998, 893, 895). This is important to note because much common ground is created in (most) domestic societies by the exposure of individuals to similar educational curricula up to a certain age as well as national news coverage, not to mention shared pastimes. In other words, the domestic norm-diffusion models in American legal scholarship inevitably presume the existence of what some sociologists would call *habitus*,[30] that is, shared 'perceptual structures and embodied dispositions which organize the way individuals see the world and act in it' (King 2000, 423).

Habitus does not determine any particular course of action, but it does determine to some degree an individual's perception of available and acceptable choices because it shapes the way they see the world. An American individual, for instance, may hate baseball, but certainly has an awareness of it, unlike, say, cricket.[31] *Habitus* can be thought of as a baseline consensus on what the world is made of (and what is possible in that world), rather than a predictor of specific actions within it. This consensus is not achieved by consent: 'an agent's habitus is an active residue or sediment of his past that functions within his present, … [consisting] in dispositions, schemas, forms of know-how and competence, all of which function below the threshold of consciousness' (Crossley 2001, 83).

[29] A caveat: I am targeting my criticisms on this model of norm-diffusion by Finnemore and Sikkink (1998) not because it is the only one deserving of criticism but because it is one of the most representative of mainstream constructivist work on norms. McKeown (2009), for instance, establishes a very strong association between Sikkink's body of work and what is considered to be constructivist contribution to the scholarship on norms.

[30] Bourdieu (see e.g. 1984) used the term 'habitus' to refer primarily to social classes, but there is an established tradition in sociology of using the term to apply other social groups, such as nations (see, e.g., Elias, 1996 [1989]). The important point is that members of a group share a common perspective regarding ontology.

[31] Recent immigrants may not fit this generalisation.

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Naturally, whether interacting actors already share a common *habitus* or not will have an enormous impact on the dynamics of norm-diffusion. To begin with, it would shape language, as well as how we describe and understand situations. For example, someone who shares in the American *habitus* will 'naturally' understand rhetorical appeals based on baseball metaphors such as 'ballpark figures', 'covering all the bases', 'dropping the ball', 'hitting a home run', 'stepping up to the plate', etc. Imagine trying to persuade a Martian to change his behaviour using these terms: not only is there no guarantee that such terms could be translated, there is also no guarantee that the values of baseball would work as intelligible metaphors within the Martian *habitus*.

Early on in their article, Finnemore and Sikkink observe that 'We recognise norm-breaking behaviour because it generates disapproval or *stigma*' (892, italics added). Yet, as discussed in the previous section, whether a particular behaviour is *stigmatising* or not is entirely context dependent. It is a 'modern' luxury to assume that there is enough of a commonality between worldviews, enough of a shared *habitus* between international actors, that they would be *stigmatised* automatically understand the logic behind their *stigmatisation* by 'norm-entrepreneurs' even if they do not at first adopt the norm. Before the nineteenth century what Western 'norm-entrepreneurs' found inappropriate or ab'normal' would not at all be apparent to most members of non-Western societies. I am not talking about mere disagreement as may arise in groups that share the same *habitus*, but rather a more severe difference of perception regarding the world, an ontological difference that would not even allow an argument to be made about appropriateness using any adjacency claims (cf. Finnemore and Sikkink 1998, 908). The following discussion of the illustrative example of Siam's incorporation to the modern state system will demonstrate what a difference sharing a *habitus* makes in terms of persuasive arguments.

From interaction to stigma: nineteenth-century Siam

Consider the 1840 encounter between Frederick A. Neale, an Englishman, and the Siamese king. In the scene described (Neale 1852, 54, also discussed by Thongchai 1994), the Siamese king asks the European visitors to look at a map drawn by his prime minister to consult about a boundary question between Siam and Burma. This is Neale's reaction:

> We were, however, very nearly outraging all propriety by bursting into fits of laughter, and very painful was the curb we were obligated to wear to restrain our merriment. The inclination to simile, too visibly depicted in our faces to be mistaken, was, happily, by his Majesty, construed into

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> delight and admiration into the beautiful work of art set before us to dazzle our eyes with its excessive brilliancy of color (Neale 1852, 54, as cited by Thongchai 1994, 34).

In other words, the European delegation finds the traditional Siamese cosmological maps ridiculous, with their bright colours depicting Siam as a celestial domain and Burma as a domain of demons. The Siamese king is oblivious to this fact; he takes their condescending bemusement as a sign of admiration. In order for the Siamese king to understand that the maps of Siam are 'inappropriate' in their lack of correspondence to physical 'reality' he has to see his country's maps as the European visitors see them. Once he does so, however, the memory of what from his point of view was a pleasant encounter will be immediately tainted. The Siamese king cannot study modern astronomy and map making without also realising that his European visitors were previously laughing at him and his quaint maps. As a result, for the Siamese king, as for many around the world, 'modernisation' – the very thing that makes him susceptible to persuasive arguments about norms in the manner Finnemore and Sikkink and other norm-constructivists describe – will inevitably be tied to the feeling of shame.

That it was so is not a matter of conjecture: Rama III' son, King Mongkut (Rama IV) – the King fictionalised in the film *The King and I* (1956) – did indeed become the first Siamese ruler learned in both Western astronomy/geography and Thai astrology. It is reported that Mongkut afterwards claimed 'that he himself had already held such a view [regarding the spherical nature of the globe] fifteen years before – that is before the appearance of the American missionaries in Siam' (Thongchai 1994, 38). Both common sense and history tell us that Mongkut's claim could not have been true. Why did the great King Rama IV feel the need to 'lie' about such a matter? After all, he was one of the first in his society to study Western science, at a time when many around him believed in a flat earth. He seems, on the other hand, to have been sufficiently ashamed of his past knowledge system to go as far as to claim that he never believed it, dismissing his own 'progress' along with it. Mongkut's treatment of court astrologers after the full solar eclipse of 18 August 1868, offers us another clue about this mindset. The precise timing of the event had been predicted by Europeans and also Mongkut using modern instruments, but still was a shock because traditional Thai astrology held that a full solar eclipse was impossible. After the eclipse, the king:

> …issued a letter…, attacking those who did not believe him… He condemned them for *their coarse, plebeian minds and stupid statements* because of their negligence of his detailed prediction and *their inattention to measurement and calculation by modern instruments*… Moreover, the

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> way they watched the eclipse was *vulgar* – using hands to shade their bare eyes – and the clock they used was terribly unreliable: 'Only *temple people or old monks* still used [that kind of clock]' (Thongchai 1994, 47, italics added).

By 1868, then, the king of Siam was no longer someone who would mistake European derision with admiration. He had eaten the 'fruit of knowledge' and had realised he was naked – through his scientific learning he had come to see himself and his people through European eyes.

It is after that realisation that European judgement of inferiority becomes a *stigma* for the king, and later, through his hand, for the country.[32] We can assume that the court astrologers, who were ordered each to make a handwritten copy of Mongkut's letter, soon joined in him in this awareness about their *stigma*, as being scolded by the King could not be mistaken for anything but a very unfortunate situation in their shared *habitus*. Both Mongkut's initial pretence of having always known the world was round and his scolding of court astrologers are among expected responses to *stigmatisation*. The first is an attempt to 'pass' (Goffman 1963, 73–91) and the second is an attempt to distance oneself from the category of those similarly *stigmatised*: 'The *stigmatised* individual exhibits a tendency to stratify his "own" according to the degree to which their stigma is apparent and obtrusive. He can then take up in regard to those who are more evidently stigmatised than himself the attitudes normals take to him' (Goffman 1963, 107). To the extent that Mongkut intended his chastisement of the astrologers to result in them taking up 'modern' astronomy, this response can also be seen as an attempt at a correction of *stigma* – in other words, a process that had all the trappings of what constructivism has analysed as one of socialisation into the norms of modern scientific knowledge.

If we are to believe the typical accounts of international norm-diffusion, what was happening in Siam in 1868 (and all around the globe henceforth) was a 'good' thing.[33] After all, the pre-modern Siamese maps were 'wrong',

[32] This is not to imply that this was a process driven *only* by his hand, or that the outcome was driven just by ideational shifts at the top. I merely sketched a moment of encounter to make a larger point. Space does not permit me to explore the many other changes (economic, social, institutional, etc.) the Siamese society was undergoing during its encounter with the international system in the nineteenth century, nor discuss the other elites and societal groups (as well as institutions) involved in transmitting the sense of stigmatisation to the society at large, but I have explored these dynamics for the case of Thailand elsewhere (McCargo and Zarakol 2012; Zarakol 2013), and for contexts similar to Thailand in other work (Zarakol 2011).

[33] Early on in the article Finnemore and Sikkink (1998) note that all norms are good from the point of view of promoters, but in later pages seem to argue that there is something inherently good about liberal norms successfully diffused (see, e.g., p. 907). Others (e.g. Barkin 2003) have made similar observations about the assumptions in Sikkink's scholarship (see, e.g., Keck and

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'inaccurate', 'biased' – they did not even show the border demarcation between Siam and Burma. What can possibly be wrong with the diffusion of such an innocuous norm as proper, modern map making? Was this not 'progress'? To the contrary, how one understands and represents the world inevitably has serious political consequences,[34] and the consequences of modern map-making Southeast Asia can be labelled unequivocally as progress only from a purely Eurocentric perspective.

Previously, the Siamese had considered practical boundaries a local matter and not something that would at all concern the state (p. 75). The British, on the other hand, kept pressing the boundary issue between Siam and Burma because of potential mining operations. British efforts were initially met with puzzlement from Siamese officials precisely because they did not think of the world in the manner as represented by 'modern' maps: '[The Siamese Court indicated]…no boundaries could ever be established between the Siamese and the Burmese. But the English desire to have these fixed. Let them enquire from the old inhabitants…' (Thongchai 1994, 64; citing *The Burney Papers*). Furthermore, there was no conception of territorial integrity: 'Siam before the last decade of the nineteenth century was… a discontinuous, patchy arrangement of power units where people of different overlords mingled together in the same area… And those areas far from the centre of a kingdom might be generously given away for the sake of a friendship' (p. 79). There is no way to represent this arrangement in a 'modern' map.

It was not until the second half of the nineteenth century and after the honeymoon period between Britain and Siam were over that the Siamese came to see the world in 'modern' terms (p. 68). The learning of 'modern' science went hand-in-hand with increasing fears about colonisation, given what was happening elsewhere, together transforming the worldviews of the Siamese into one that was much more 'like' the Europeans. This is captured in neither the coercion accounts of rationalists (because learning was not inauthentic or simply utilitarian) nor the persuasion accounts of mainstream constructivists (because there was no communication nor persuasion, and the final result was far from a relationship successful

Sikkink 1998; Risse and Sikkink 1999, etc.), as well as of others who treat normative diffusion and/or normative persuasion as always emancipating (e.g. Risse 2000). This observation was seconded by others such as Jackson and Nexon (2004) and Steele (2007). Finnemore is generally less sanguine about liberalism and norms in her other body work, and more cognisant of power dynamics. Nevertheless, Hobson (2012) takes her to task (Ch. 9) for her assumptions about 'benign norms' (e.g. Finnemore, 1996, 2003) and her propagation of a liberal hierarchy in international relations.

[34] See also Branch (2011, 2012), Bartelson (2009), and Mitchell (1988) on the politics of maps, cosmologies, and exhibits.

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socialisation). A similar dynamic transformed the Siamese understanding of French colonial efforts over Siam tributaries such as Cambodia and Laos, which Siam had originally tolerated as a multiple sovereignty arrangement. Now, 'they realized that in order to counter the French claim, modern geography was the only geographical language the West would hear and only a map could make an argument' (p. 121). Yet, neither enlightenment (changing behaviour because they had seen what was right) nor fear (emulating without understanding what was going on) adequately describes what was happening to the Thai (elites). They did not copy the behaviour just because they had to; nor could they completely buy into the new belief system. They were simultaneously ashamed of their own local practices and relied on them to make the case that they too were a 'nation' worthy of recognition; the more they did so, the more attached they became to such practices (more on this in a moment).

The fact is there was no 'Thai-ness', no 'nation' per se to defend from European imperialism before European imperialism, before modern science and map-making (among other things). Not only is this tipping point (à la Finnemore and Sikkink) to 'being modern', that is, the moment[35] that the Thai state is constituted as *a state that can be socialised* (in the manner our discipline takes for granted), but it is also the moment it is constituted as a *state that can (and should) socialise*, which in the nineteenth century also implies a colonising power (albeit a weaker one than its European contemporaries). After all, what is nation building if not a type of 'internal' colonisation? The real loser from European imperialism was not the reconstituted, modernising Siamese state, but rather 'those tiny chiefdoms along the routes of both the Siamese and the French forces' and 'indigenous knowledge of local space' (Thongchai 1994, 129). This particular destruction is not remembered in Thai historiography (just similar losses have been forgotten all around the world), which instead focuses on the loss of 'Thai territory' to the French in 1893. Yet, Siam did not entirely lose its independence, the narrative goes, because it wisely 'reformed' and 'modernised'. Thongchai observes that this is a story that simultaneously projects the nation-ness, the territorial integrity of Thailand into the premodern past and also casts Bangkok/Thailand as an anti-colonial victim-hero as opposed to regional colonial, centralising power eliminating local traditions and authorities (p. 129). The trauma of 'losing' territories, the threat of Western imperialism and Thailand's *stigmatisation* then became cemented in the national psyche, reifying, legitimising, and idealising

[35] Obviously, none of this happened in one moment – the term should be taken metaphorically or in the world-historical sense.

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subsequent 'national' practices, including some that would have to be protected at all costs in the future, the supposed essence of 'the nation'.

Stigmatisation, 'backwardness', and 'norm-breaking'

I have dwelt on the Thai case at length not because it is unique, but because it is not. Thongchai's excellent account of Siamese modernisation is rather representative[36] of the non-Western encounters with European worldviews and how such peoples were often constituted as 'backward', 'atavistic', 'barbarous', 'uncivilised', and 'hard-to-socialise' *nationalists* as a consequence. Nowadays, much norm-breaking behaviour is undertaken or justified in the name of the nation and protecting a supposedly eternal way of life, but thinking about local practices in this way is a very 'modern' way to look at the world. Making a case against European hegemony in the nineteenth century (whether militarily, legally, or culturally) required first 'manufacturing' a 'national' culture worthy of its territorial sovereignty.[37] It further demanded making the argument that 'national' culture was 'civilised'. Later, after the Standard of Civilisation was formally abandoned,[38] the burden still rested with *stigmatised* peoples that to show that they were capable of self-rule, by constituting a 'nation' worthy of 'self-determination'.

This was an almost impossible task: 'to fashion a "modern" national culture that is nevertheless not Western' (Chatterjee 1993, 7). Local practices, *and especially those* that were not similar to Western practices, had to be reified and idealised in order to construct the nation, yet in fundamental issues such as statecraft, Western practices had to be emulated, to demonstrate modernity and sovereignty. Ironically, then, what made non-Western peoples into socialisable states in the manner Finnemore and Sikkink describe

[36] The fact that Siam was never formally colonised does set it apart from much of the so-called Third World. I have explored the consequences of this divergence of fate for countries such as Thailand, Turkey, Japan, Russia, and others in my previous work (Zarakol 2010, 2011, 2012, 2013). For the generalisability of the argument under consideration here, however, absence of formal colonisation does not really matter. If the so-called 'semi-civilised' polities of the nineteenth-century Standard of Civilisation were stigmatised, the supposedly 'savage' peoples, which the imperial powers had to colonise for their own good, according to the same logic were equally or even more so. My purpose is to both draw upon the vast literature dealing with decoloniality, postcolonialism subaltern concerns, etc. that tracks the specific traumas accompanying formal colonisation (see, e.g., Chatterjee 1986, 1993, 2010, 2012; Bhabha 2004; Mignalo 2011, etc.) and to contribute to it by demonstrating that such traumas were not limited to the formally colonised regions.

[37] Chatterjee (1993) makes similar observations about nationalist movements opposing formal colonialism.

[38] See, for example, Simpson (2004), Bowden (2009), Hobson (2012), Zarakol (2011) for an extended discussion of the informal legacy of the nineteenth century of Standard of Civilisation.

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is also what makes them more likely to be norm-breakers on issues such as human rights.[39] These late nineteenth- and twentieth-century nationalist myths[40] over the importance of this or that particularity are often what stand in the way of more contemporary efforts of norm-diffusion.

The modernity of backwardness: the example of Japan

Consider Japan. In *Tan'itsu Minzoki Shinwa no Kigen – 'Nihonjin' no Jigazō no Keifu* (1995), Oguma Eiji documents the rise of the myth of homogeneous Japanese nation after Japan's encounter with Western science. In the late nineteenth century, when Japanese government first gave Western anthropologists leave to conduct research in Japan, the influential theory of the day was that the population on the island descended from a mix of early inhabitants and various conquering Asian nations (Oguma 2002, 3–6). The first Japanese anthropologists, by and large, however, rejected this 'Western' theory of a mixed and conquering nation, advocating instead an eternal and homogenous presence on the island symbolised by the Emperor: 'According to Naitō, this sort of heresy committed the "heinous crime of casting a slur on the national polity and the authority of the Emperor", and anyone who blindly followed Western scholars ought to be immediately put to death' (Oguma 2002, 9). However, it was not a failure of internalisation of Western norms that caused this response of clinging to – almost inventing, one may say –a notion of an eternal Emperor, nor was it caused by some innate hierarchical strain in Japanese culture (as it would be argued later – see, e.g., Benedict 2005 [1946]). To the contrary, people like Naitō – who was a professor at Tokyo Imperial University – were very much a product of the Meiji period, which had for its slogan *bunmei kanka* (Civilisation and Enlightenment) and its models the United States, Britain, and France.

Oguma Eiji describes the dilemma that faced the Japanese intellectuals of the time through the example of Kurokawa, who wrote what is now taken as a classic history of Japanese arts and crafts based on the catalogue of traditional craftwork Japan showed at the Paris Exhibition of 1878

[39] As Chatterjee observes about colonial national movements, but is also true of the 'semi-civilised' periphery, this is for two reasons. On the one hand, the newly manufactured national realm takes the air of the sacred, and what was sacred, in turn, becomes the property of the nation. The present-day debate about the oppressive nature of headscarves is a good example of the 'sacred' of the non-West is almost by definition at odds with the human rights concerns of the West, yet the attachment to such markers of identity is profoundly modern, and often nationalistic. Such practices become valuable precisely because they are not Western.

[40] The prevalence of which points to the greatest story of norm-diffusion (almost) never told – once there were no national myths, and now everyone has them. As Chatterjee (1986) notes, nationalism 'is wholly a European export to the rest of the world. It is also one of Europe's most pernicious exports' (p. 7).

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(see also Mitchell 1988 on the power of European exhibits). Japan could not decline to participate in this exhibit without hurting 'her prestige as an independent country' (p. 11). However, it could not exhibit any of the products of *bunmei kanka* that it had worked so hard to produce either, since they would look like pale imitations of their Western counterparts: 'As a small nation, well aware that she could not compete with the Western Powers in the area of modern civilisation, Japan chose to assert herself by accepting the indignity of placing herself within the Orientalist framework of the West' (p. 11). This choice is not as simple as it looks nor is it a simple utilitarian calculation with no lasting residue, because as discussed above, the *stigmatised* do come to see themselves as the 'normals' see them to some extent. Kurokawa wrote, for instance: 'Compared to various foreign countries, it must be said that Japan is not their equal in literature, nor in military strength, nor in architecture, nor in transport, nor in traditional crafts, nor in commerce' (p. 12). He argued that the only thing that made the Japanese superior to European nations was their loyalty to the Emperor. Stefan Tanaka (1993) has also detailed how much the Japanese came to accept the European view of history that defined Asia as Europe's past, challenging only Japan's placement among other Asian nations (and did so by putting down China).

Stigmatisation and norm-breaking

When a *stigma* is present, both the 'normals' and those who carry the '*stigma*' agree on the basic parameters of the situation. This is precisely the situation Siam, Japan, and other 'semi-civilised' states of the nineteenth century found themselves in at the end of that century, not to mention other territories under direct European rule. Where the 'normals' and the *stigmatised* differ is in what the presence of *stigma* implies for subsequent behaviour. Those without the *stigma* 'believe the person with a *stigma* is not quite human' and justify all sorts of unequal treatment on that basis (Goffman 1963; Elias 1965). This is exactly how European powers treated the non-West, most notably through the nineteenth century Standard of Civilisation, which divided the world into 'civilised', 'semi-civilised' (or 'barbarous'), and 'savage' spheres (see, e.g., Gong 1984; Keene 2002; Simpson 2004, etc.). 'Savage' peoples were considered to lack the mental and moral facility to rule themselves, and therefore, were to be colonised for their own benefit (see Keene 2002, but also Carr 1939). Treaties with 'semi-civilised' states did not have to be honoured, and the developing sovereignty principle did not apply to them because these states, while having developed some type of undeniable state-ness, were ruled by what was called 'Oriental Despotism' and therefore were not

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the equals of European countries[41] (see Keene 2002; Hobson and Sharman 2005; Zarakol 2011).

Finnemore and Sikkink make no mention of this defining principle of nineteenth (and early twentieth) century international law, despite their prevalent use of examples from exactly that period. For instance, in discussing norm-entrepreneurs, the authors note that norms are 'actively built by agents having strong notions about appropriate or desirable behaviour in their community' (p. 896), use examples from the nineteenth century such as the diffusion of the norm of female suffrage, and even call norm-entrepreneurship a form of 'moral proselytising' without nary an acknowledgement of 'civilising mission' undertones such work took in the nineteenth (and twentieth) century the moment (and because) it conceptualised the Other as a lesser being. There is no mention of colonialism in a discussion of late nineteenth and early twentieth-century cases of norm-diffusion. In discussing tipping and threshold points, for example, Finnemore and Sikkink note that 'although it is not possible to predict exactly how many states must accept a norm to "tip" the process, because states are *not equal when it comes to normative weight*, empirical studies suggest that norms tipping rarely occurs before one-third of the total states in the system adopt the norm' (901, italics added) and the example provided for this notion is the threshold point for women's suffrage in 1930 when 20 states had adopted the norm. There is no mention of the League of Nations mandate system, which was in effect at that time, and operated very much on principles similar to the Standard of Civilisation.[42]

In one way this omission is inadvertently prescient: whether the international order (and therefore norm-diffusion) is characterised by dynamics of *stigmatisation* has less to do with such principles are openly codified into international law. If such were the case, an argument could be made that Finnemore and Sikkink and other norm-constructivists would perhaps be justified in leaving the study of such matters to historians. Hobson (2012) observes that liberal-constructivism very much wants this to be the case but he demonstrates that in fact the echoes of nineteenth-century paternalist civilising mission are very easy to detect in present-day humanitarian interventions and their moral justifications such as the 'responsibility to protect' (R2P) project (see also Rao 2010). Hobson concludes that liberal constructivists contribute to this mission by naturalising humanitarianism as a benign norm in implicit contrast to the bad norms of the nineteenth century.

[41] Or colonies populated by white colonialists.

[42] Cf. Towns (2007) for an excellent analysis of the relationship between the spread of the norm of women's suffrage and international normative hierarchies.

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Conclusion

The whitewashed treatment international norm-diffusion gets from norm-constructivists obscures the *stigmatisation* dynamics I have been outlining, which also means that the peculiar experiences of the 'outsiders' of the international system get completely overlooked in these accounts.[43] The very glaring omission of this perspective from typical accounts of norm-diffusion, along with the empirical focus on seemingly 'good' norms is troubling because this distorts what is really a global story of coercion and *stigmatisation* into a narrative of doing good (see Kayaoglu 2010 for a similar critique of the entire discipline). Norm-diffusion is emptied of its particular and rather ugly history, which does remain pertinent to states' choices, even to this day.

It is not a small matter that much of what is considered to be endogenous to particular states is very much constructed by modernity and the pressures from the international system. Echoing Chatterjee, Rao (2010) observes: 'The greater the success in imitating the Western skills in the material domain, the greater the nationalists' need to preserve the distinctiveness of their spiritual culture. This suggests that as norms converge in the materialist sphere, we might expect to see elites emphasise pluralist cultural difference *more*, rather than less strongly' (p. 101). Non-Western states reject norms such as R2P (Rao 2010), refuse to apologise for past crimes (Zarakol 2010), or are sceptical of norms against child soldiers (Drumbl 2012) not because they are populated by people who do not understand what is 'right'. There is undeniably something in the structural logic of the modern order that casts certain geographies to those villainous 'roles'. This is not to say there is not much to criticise in the practices of non-Western states, but there is also something wrong with a narrative wherein the heirs of the people who were deemed suitable for lesser treatment a century ago because they were not civilised enough are somehow found to be suitable for lesser treatment today because they simply will not do what is right. This is the vicious cycle of *stigmatisation* that ahistorical models of norm-diffusion entirely overlook. Some may adopt norms just because they are Western,[44] and others reject them for just that reason. Ignoring this all too frequent dynamic in our causal explanations is both politically and epistemologically suspect.

[43] Acharya (2004, 2009, 2011) valiantly attempts to correct this omission, but leaves much of the assumptions of norm constructivism in place. Barnett's (2002) critique of Ayoob's attempts to reform realism in a more subaltern direction may also be levelled against Acharya's effort to make norm constructivism more sensitive to concerns of non-Western states. It ultimately does not go far enough.

[44] Space did not permit a discussion how *stigmatisation* drives emulation at times, but I have explored that dynamic at length elsewhere (Zarakol 2011).

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Chopping the world into bits: Africa, the World Bank, and the good governance norm

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This article explores norms as idealizations, in an attempt to grasp their significance as projects for international organizations. We can think about norms as 'standards of proper behaviour'. In this sense they are somehow natural, things to be taken for granted, noticed only really when they are absent. We can also think about norms as 'understandings about what is good and appropriate'. In this sense, norms embody a stronger sense of virtue and an ability to enable progress or improvement. Norms become ideal when they are able to conflate what is good with what is appropriate, standard, or proper. It is when the good becomes 'natural' that a norm appears

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