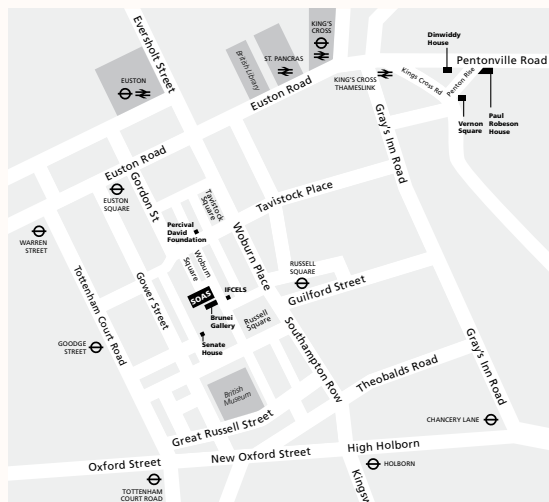




Photographer Robert Wallis's work on environmental, social and economic issues in Asia and other parts of the world has been widely published. For media queries contact Panos Pictures: Tel. 44 (0)20 7253 1424 www.tinyurl.com/jharkhandfeature

The Tribal Women's Artist Collective (TWAC) from Jharkhand, India preserves artistic traditions passed down from mothers to daughters. It also campaigns to protect the Jharkhand environment and ancient archaeological and rock-art sites across the state threatened by mining. www.karanpuracampaign.com

**School of Oriental and African Studies,
University of London**



Free Public Seminars
Thursday 14th April - Room B102, Brunei Gallery, SOAS

3:00-5:00 pm: Art, Ancestry and Tribal Identity
Adivasi religious beliefs and art, and their connections to their ancestral lands and the natural world, introduced by Bulu Imam, Director of the Tribal Women's Artist Collective.

6:30-8:30 pm: Mining, Displacement and Resistance in India's Tribal Lands.
The impact of mining on tribals and on the environment, the growing resistance to mining from various sectors and the Indian government's response to the resistance.

For information on seminar speakers and related events:
www.soas.ac.uk/gallery

The Brunei Gallery will be open until 9:00 pm on Thursday 14th of April.



Changing Ideas

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Thornhaugh Street
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Open: Tuesday - Saturday: 10.30 - 17.00
Closed: Sundays, Mondays and Bank Holidays
ADMISSION FREE
Tel: 020 7898 4046 (Recorded Information)
Fax: 020 7898 4259
Email: gallery@soas.ac.uk
www.soas.ac.uk/gallery

A Disappearing World

14 April – 25 June 2011

The Brunei Gallery, SOAS



Ancient Traditions Under Threat in Tribal India

Photographs by Robert Wallis

Artwork by Tribal Women's Artist Collective
Jharkand, India

The New India



In the early 21st century, India is experiencing unprecedented economic growth. The middle class is becoming more prosperous and numerous, the cities are rapidly expanding. But to fuel this economic boom, raw materials are being extracted by mining corporations at an ever-increasing rate from states in north-central India inhabited by people who can claim to be the oldest dwellers on the land.

These non-Hindu tribal groups, known as Adivasi, have traditionally worshipped nature and maintained spiritual connections to the ancestral

territory where they have lived for thousands of years. Yet few Adivasi hold paper deeds to their land. As mining spreads, Adivasi are being displaced into resettlement camps or urban slums where they lose all links with their old way of life.

A growing economic gap between urban and rural India, and the impact of mining and other industrial projects on agricultural life, are leading to militant insurgency in the countryside and prompting debate within the government and beyond. Should India continue on its centralised model of development? Can the rights of the Adivasi to continue to live according to their ancient traditions be accommodated in the new India?

Jharkhand's ancient traditions

While tribal groups live all over the subcontinent, some of the largest numbers reside in the state of Jharkhand, north-east India. They have traditionally depended upon their environment for their livelihood, hunting and gathering in the once-abundant forests and farming on open land. They worship the trees, rivers and mountains and also their ancestors whose burial stones and ancient rock-art paintings dot the landscape.



After every monsoon, the women decorate the walls of their mud houses with vibrant figures of men, animals and flowers, symbols which have been traced back to the earliest artistic traditions found in rock-art sites and reflect a deep connection to the natural world.

Rich land, poor people

Approximately 40% of India's mineral deposits lie beneath the soil of Jharkhand. While the state was established in 2000 with the hope of giving more autonomy to Adivasi, out-of-state corporations and national mining companies have rushed in to exploit the rich natural resources. Open-cast mining of coal, iron ore and bauxite is devastating the Jharkhandi landscape. Underground coal fires burn out of control. Elsewhere, rivers are being dammed for hydro-electric projects to provide power for distant cities and for industry. Dispossessed of their heritage and bearing the brunt of the environmental destruction caused by industrial development, many Adivasi become scavengers on the periphery of mines where they once hunted and farmed. As in other countries, the "resource curse" of a rich land but poor people has been visited on the original inhabitants of Jharkhand and India's other mining states - with devastating consequences.

