



ARI NEWS

A newsletter of the Asia Research Institute,
National University of Singapore

MICA(P) 223/01/2006

Understanding Trends in Asia through ARI's ASIA TRENDS

A SIA TRENDS, one of ARI's flagship events, was organised on 11 September 2008 under the theme 'Chineseness Unbound: Boundaries, Burdens and Belongings of Chineseness outside China'.

As noted in the conference abstract, "in an increasingly integrated yet diverse world, the simplicities of national identity are being questioned ... Identity politics have not subsided in this shifting world, but have taken on an increasingly international character ... 'Chineseness' has also become a global category, detached from its historic associations with empire, territory or language. Yet, the return of political China to a place among great powers ... suggests also an opposite trend, where pride in a successful 'homeland' again conflicts with local and global identities. The potential collision of these two trends with each other and with local contexts makes this topic timely...". Seven papers explored the subthemes of 'Chineseness Rescued from the Nation, or Civilization and its Discontents', 'Contested Southeast Asian Identities and Subjectivities', 'Ethnicity in the Local Politics of Place: Cultural Illusions of Greater China', 'Chineseness as Cosmopolitanism in a Globalised World?', 'Education for Assimilation or Cultural Maintenance', and 'Labelling Identity and the Overuse of Categories'. Professor Anthony Reid, co-organiser of the conference with Professor Chua Beng Huat, contributing the following about the conference:

"It is trendy to be a little bit *chi-na*", says the protagonist Ah Ben in a Singapore song analysed by speaker Qua Sy Ren. The same sentiment was identified in Thailand and Indonesia as China's rise since the 1990s made "the hitherto Chineseness-shy *lookjins* come out of the closet" (Speaker Kasian Tejapira).

The seven speakers debated the question whether Chineseness could or should be "unbound" from a particular state (the People's Republic of China) or race (the Yellow Emperor's seed). The speakers ranged from the unproblematically Chinese (Wang Gungwu - "my father was Chinese [-born], my mother was Chinese [-born] so I am Chinese, with no choice"), to the unproblematically non-Chinese (Anthony Reid - grateful "not to have to worry about my Chineseness"). The other speakers in between did not find it so easy, though all possibilities of definition were tried. Yao Souchou (*Being Essentially Chinese: What is It to*

Us?) offered a critique of three types of ending he received to the statement "I am Chinese because___", around the themes of race, culture and politics. The racial and the government-official ("I am Chinese because the PAP [the ruling People's Action Party in Singapore] says I am") have a relatively fixed and essentialised quality, whereas the culture of "performing Chineseness" through language, rituals, food and related activity has the great merit of being voluntaristic - one can opt in or out of this Chineseness. But Yao drew the line at performing 'pretenders'. "A rice eating, kungfu sparring Eddie Murphy does not a Chinese make."

Wang Gungwu (*Chinese History Paradigms*) and Anthony Reid (*Escaping the Burdens of Chineseness*) both took a historical approach, pointing to the radical changes in the boundaries and essences of Chineseness. For Wang, it was the Chinese outside China who defined Chineseness, but each generation was differently "bounded". For the earlier *huasheng* (merchants) it was their desire to return; for 20th Century *huaqiao* (overseas Chinese) it was "tighter modern bonds of ethnicity and nationhood"; for modern *huayi* (ethnic Chinese descendants) it was some complex mix of identities, with some bonds "so intangible that they survive unseen among those who say they are no longer Chinese". Kasian Tejapira's (*The Misbehaving Jeks: The Evolving Regime of Thainess and Sino-Thai Challenges*) historical time-frame was the past century, beginning with the "Jews of the Orient" racial hostility, through the speaker's youthful school battles with "Thai Deficiency Syndrome" in the 1960s, and attempts to reinvent Thainess as a plural, secular cosmopolitanism in the 1970s, to today's "apparently irresistible naturalisation of Chineseness" in which both sides of the political standoff can flaunt their Chineseness as part of their Thai patriotism.

Lynn Pan and Quah Sy Ren, on the other hand, shed a sharper light through the prism of cultural manifestations. Pan (*Of Shanghai and Chinese Cosmopolitanism*) explored the work of cosmopolitan exemplars such as I.M. Pei, Zhao Wuji and Ang Lee. She shared the pleasure/pain of the English poet Philip Larkin as a cosmopolitan returning to a "home" (Shanghai in her case) where "no elsewhere underwrites my existence." Quah (*Performing Chineseness*

*Picture shows speaker Quah Sy Ren explicating generational change with reference to a fictional sequence of obituaries by Xi Ni'er.

Continued on page 3

WORD FROM THE DIRECTOR

Professor Lily Kong



I would like to focus on three ARI initiatives, which exemplify the relationships and linkages that ARI would like to maintain and build in the years ahead.

The first is our links with the international scholarly community. There are many ways in which these

links can be developed. Indeed, ARI has done very well in the last several years in this respect. In the main, this has been accomplished through hosting visiting researchers, including some of the very best in their fields, and organising workshops and conferences which have brought in many experts from around the world.

Developing a book series with ARI's imprint is perhaps a natural extension of these many international linkages, allowing ARI to draw in and speak to the international academic community via the written word. It is a lasting way of informing and reminding the international scholarly community of ARI's place in research on Asia. By the time this newsletter is in print, ARI would have inked an agreement with the leading publisher Springer to bring out an *ARI-Springer Asia Series*, beginning with three sections, on cities, migration, and religion. Books that do not fit within these themes will still be considered as part of the general Asia series. I am grateful particularly to Deputy Director Robbie Goh and Publishing Editor Evelien Bakker at Springer, who have spent much time on this project and brought us to the point where we can begin to solicit manuscripts with much enthusiasm and excitement. The series welcomes proposals and manuscripts from anyone, whether or not you are linked to ARI. I welcome conversations about ideas. The only criterion is high quality work.

The second area that I would like to elaborate on is our commitment to sharing research knowledge with the Singapore community. ARI's flagship effort in this regard has of course been the annual Asia Trends and the revamp for 2009 has now taken definite shape for 20 May next year, thanks especially to Senior Research Fellow Lai Ah Eng. It will be held within NUS rather than at a downtown hotel, and it will feature researchers from NUS and around the world to speak about key trends in Asia pertaining to migration, religion, cultural industries and sustainable cities. Speakers include Noeleen Heyzer (UNESCAP) and Stephen Castles (Oxford) on migration, Wang Jing (MIT) (and me!) on cultural industries, Julian Millie (Monash), Justin McDaniel (UC Riverside) and Mathew Mathews (NUS) on religion, and Peter Rowe (Harvard) and Zheng Shiling (Tongji University) on sustainable cities.

ARI researchers are also in dialogue and/or collaboration with local bodies such as the Council for Third Age (an independent body that encourages active ageing), Singapore Heritage Society (a non-profit, non-governmental organisation that deals with heritage issues), MUIS (the Islamic Religious Council of Singapore), the Ministry of Community Development, Youth and Sports (particularly the Family Research Network), National Heritage Board (on heritage awareness), Urban Redevelopment Authority (on conservation and sustainability), and the Ministry of Information, Communications and the Arts (on cultural/creative industries). Speakers at ARI's conferences, seminars and roundtables have included the Minister, Prime Minister's Office (Lim Boon Heng), the Minister of State, Prime Minister's Office (Heng Chee How), and Permanent Secretary at the Ministry of Trade and Industry (Ravi Menon). ARI is actively engaging with the community in which it exists.

The third area I would like to celebrate is our growing links with Faculties, Schools and other research institutes within NUS. I think we can quite safely say that NUS has one of the biggest, if not the biggest, concentrations of scholars in the world who work on Asia. A large range of disciplines are represented too, from humanities, social sciences, business, law, design, and public policy to public health and communicable diseases. The combined efforts of the entire range of units and individuals at NUS make for a very strong profile internationally.

Through joint seminars, workshops and conferences as well as joint appointments and collaborative projects, the overall impact can be greatly enhanced. Recent examples of such collaboration are: a jointly hosted conference on Autonomy and Armed Separatism in South and Southeast Asia (ARI and the Lee Kuan Yew School of Public Policy), a new book on low fertility coming out of the collaboration between ARI and Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences colleagues, a forthcoming conference on heritage and sustainable issues between ARI and the School of Design and Environment, and a forthcoming series of workshops on Religion, Ethics and Law (involving ARI, the Political Science Department and the Faculty of Law). These are just examples. There are others yet in the pipelines, and they deserve every support.

ARI thrives on linkages and networks. It has always been intended as a centre of knowledge and activity, drawing in and reaching out to the larger Singapore community, the regional academic community, as well as the international scholarly community. ARI remains committed to these relationships, which will be further nurtured and developed in the months and years ahead, further cementing ARI's role and reputation as a world leading hub for research on Asia.

FORTHCOMING EVENTS

5th Great Asian Streets Symposium 2008 on FUTURE-ASIAN-SPACE

5 – 6 December 2008

This event is jointly organised by the Asia Research Institute and Department of Architecture, National University of Singapore.

The rapid urbanisation of the urban periphery has resulted in the unprecedented rise of megacities with populations of more than eight million people each. At the turn of this century, there are about 28 megacities, the majority of which are in developing nations, and half of them are in Asia. Nation states are increasingly aware that the impacts of globalisation on their cities are uneven, and that Asian cities have become competing entities in the global arena.

Foremost of the changes have been the unprecedented rate of urbanisation and urban projects, including the revitalisation, renewal and building of mega-projects in existing city centres, as well as urbanisation of the periphery. Rural-urban migration and the resulting population pressure in these cities have also spawned the need for the rapid output of urban housing as well as growth at the cities' peripheries. Regionalisation and globalisation and the opening up of new Asian economies have engendered the need to understand Asian cities in new ways and to assess the tools and methods adopted.

Spatial processes, influenced by accelerated change and international economic and financial relationships, have put pressure on local ecosystems and natural resources, as well as local cultural heritage - and have raised issues of design, experience and sustainable urban development in Asian cities. Competition has also resulted in changing forms, use and dynamics of limited urban public space, and processes of reclamation of space for public good. Furthermore, new technologies have drastically changed the landscape of the city, such that we can even question if there is such an entity as the Asian city, or if more pluralistic concepts of the city in Asia has to be interrogated.

The conference has the following sub-themes: **Design: Future Space** - Urban Forms / Urban Space, Urban Patterns, Shaping Space, New Development, Housing; **Experience: Asian Space** - Global Space / Local Space / Asian Values Time / Place / Non-place, Urban Life / Urban Culture / Urbanity, Urban Chaos; **Sustainability: Future Cities** - Environmental and Cultural Sustainability Eco Urbanism, Compact / Congested, Mobility.

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International Conference on Heritage in Asia: Converging Forces and Conflicting Values

08 – 10 January 2009

Rapid economic and social change across Asia today means the region's heritage is at once under threat and undergoing a revival as never before. Expanding infrastructures, increasing incomes, liberalising economies and the lowering of borders, both physical and political, are all converging as powerful forces transforming Asia's social, cultural and physical landscapes. But as the region's societies look forward, there are competing forces that ensure they re-visit the past and the inherited. In recent years the idea of 'heritage' – both

Continued on page 4

Continued from page 1

in Multicultural Singapore: A Discourse on Selected Literary Writings and Cultural Texts) provided theatrical glimpses of the torn-ness of Singapore identities, but kept returning to "China...a recurrent image ...which one has to confront and negotiate."

One did not seek for consensus in this world of shifting boundaries, but there were recurring themes. Perhaps the most striking was the poverty of language that makes "China" and "Chinese" in languages such as English (or Malay or Thai) serve so many diverse and contradictory purposes. Each speaker had their own way of dealing with this inadequacy, from using the fuller variety of Chinese terms (Wang), to an insistence on a local vernacular to define a local identity. When Reid insisted on *peranakan* for Indonesia, and Chua Beng Huat (*Being Chinese under Official Multiracialism*) on *huaren* for Singapore, they were still consciously swimming against the "Chinese" current. But in Thailand Kasian could claim that the reformers have more or less prevailed, so that Thai-born Chinese at last have a recognised identity as *lookjin*.

(Contributed by Anthony Reid)

This year's ASIA TRENDS is the sixth in the annual series started soon after ARI's set up. The inaugural event was held in 2003, with the title *'Babel or Behemoth: Language Trends in Asia'*. In the following years, conference themes varied from *'(Un)tying the Knot: Ideal and Reality in Asian Marriages'* (2004), to *'Asian Migrations: Sojourning, Displacement, Homecoming and Other Travels'* (2005), *'Violence in Contemporary Asian Films'* (2006) and *'Women and Religion in Asia'* (2007).

In 2009, ASIA TRENDS will take on a new format in which several ARI research clusters will each host a panel that focuses on a theme relevant to their respective fields. Panels planned include *'Does "More Open Borders" Make Sense in Asia?'* (Asian Migration Cluster), *'Evangelising Asia: Competition and Conflict among Religions in Asia'* (Religion and Globalisation Cluster), *'Culture Industry in Asia'* (Cultural Studies Cluster), and *'Sustainable Cities, Asian Perspectives'* (Sustainable Cities Cluster). Do look out for this exciting event on 20 May 2009!

FORTHCOMING EVENTS

Continued from page 3

natural and cultural – has come to the fore across Asia, driven by a language of identity, tradition, revival, and sustainability. For some, heritage has become an effective means for protecting those landscapes, rituals, artifacts or traditional values endangered by rapid socio-economic change. For others, it has emerged as a valuable resource for achieving wider goals such as poverty alleviation, the legitimisation of narratives of place and past, nation building or the cultural profiling of citizens. And yet for others, heritage protection is an obstacle inhibiting progress, national unification, or the shedding of unwanted memories.

To date much of the analysis of heritage in Asia has relied upon inherited or borrowed conceptions and assumptions about what should be valued and privileged. The legacies of colonialism, state-centric agendas, social inequality, and the uneasy management of pluralist populations all conspire to stifle open and innovative discussion. There is little doubt that over the coming decade the contestations surrounding heritage in Asia will continue to intensify, whereby converging forces and conflicting values are the norm. In response, suitable theoretically informed platforms for understanding and mediating these forces and values are much needed.

Hosted in Singapore, *Heritage in Asia: Converging Forces and Conflicting Values* examines heritage in relation to the broader social, environmental and economic changes occurring across Asia today. Moving beyond sector specific analyses, we define heritage in holistic terms and include the natural and cultural, the tangible and intangible. The conference provides the interdisciplinary platform necessary for making sense of the broader contexts and forces surrounding heritage in Asia today; and, in so doing, offers an innovative look at the rapid and complex socio-cultural changes now occurring across the region. Proposed themes are: *Heritage in Cosmopolitan Urban Spaces; Heritage, Reconstruction and Reconciliation; Economies of Heritage; Heritage and Diversity; and Heritage and Modernity*. Confirmed keynote speakers are Prof William Logan, Dr Nobuko Inaba, and Dr Johannes Widodo.

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Race and Nation, Family and Economy: Malayness and Its Debates

20 – 21 January 2009

In the last two decades, there has been a proliferation of academic works that seek to examine 'Malayness': its origins, evolution, propagators, opponents, inheritors and victims in the Southeast Asian context. From the highly-influential writings of Shamsul Amri Baharuddin and Ariffin Omar to the more recent and insightful collection of articles published by the Singapore University Press (Barnard, 2004; Kahn, 2006), Malayness will, for certain, persist as a topic of scholarly interest and debate in the many years to come.

In Malaysia more notably, Malayness has been attributed to an inchoate yet at the same time hegemonic political project. But its deconstruction has barely started. Political and religious underpinnings are either driving or obstructing the debates on Malayness. In many instances, these factors can also come in the way of achieving a 'normal', 'stable' or even secular nationhood.

The meaning of race and nation carries its own enigma in a country like Malaysia which is still coming to terms with ideas of a shared and tolerant plurality. What lies beneath and beyond narratives of *ketuanan Melayu* (Malay dominance)? Is the idea of 'Malayness' potent or ambiguous? Is it a racist assertion or theatrical rhetoric? What is behind the political stridency of race and why is the notion of nation still arousing compelling debates despite its seeming conclusiveness?

More analysis needs to be done to uncover the multi-faceted underpinnings and factors that are shaping the discourses on Malayness. The tensions between the abstract ideas of 'race' and 'nation, in contrast to the more intimate and palpable experience of family and its economy, need to be more researched. There have also been sparse attempts to examine social collectives, textual materials, memoirs, biographies and personal conversations that lay beyond the orbit of political activism in the understanding of this problem.

This workshop seeks to redress the above lacuna by examining how Malayness is inextricably tied to the grand and modern notions of race and nation as well as through its ancient and familiar ideology of family and everyday economy through the following themes: Personalities, Texts, Collectives, and Family Life.

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Workshop on Creating Islamic Lawyers and Judges: Islamic Law in the Law Schools and Judicial Training Academies of Muslim Southeast Asia

5 – 6 Feb 2009

Over the past decade Muslim Southeast Asia has experienced a dynamic and multi-faceted Islamic religious revival, including significant legal developments in Indonesia, Malaysia and, to a lesser extent, in Singapore. In each of these countries, new statutory instruments have been issued which empower Islamic courts to apply Islamic law in an increasing number of legal disputes. Islamic law has also come to play an indirect role being cited in court cases as a source of rules to govern situations where statutes are silent or ambiguous. The ability of academics and policy makers to productively analyse trends in the Islamic sectors of contemporary Asian legal systems has been hampered by incomplete information about the institutions and individuals who are today implementing the new Islamic laws. Scholars have also spent very little time to date studying the judiciaries who are actually entrusted with the task of interpreting and applying Islamic law in state courts. Neither have they studied the lawyers who will mediate between judiciaries and the public at large. This is quite surprising for it is these judges and lawyers who will

determine what Islamic law means to citizens who are subject to such laws in contemporary Southeast Asia.

Developing a picture of changing Islamic legal education for legal professionals in the region is a necessary first step toward understanding how Islamic lawyers and Muslim judges view their own social roles and how Muslim judges formulate their decisions.

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International Conference on Aceh and Indian Ocean Studies II

Civil Conflict and Its Remedies

23 – 24 Feb 2009

A very successful first International Conference of Aceh and Indian Ocean Studies was held in Banda Aceh in February 2007. The attendees supported the establishment of an International Centre for Aceh and Indian Ocean Studies in Aceh, which is now being realised. That Centre will join with the Asian Research Institute of NUS, Singapore, and an Aceh-based institution to host this second conference in February 2009.

Research papers on Aceh and its connections and comparisons with Southeast Asia and the Indian Ocean regions will be presented at this conference. Its theme will be civil conflict and its remedies. Aceh's long-running conflict with the Indonesian government since 1953 gave it a painful place in the literature of conflict studies; the apparently successful resolution of that conflict through the Helsinki peace agreement of 2005 has given it a more optimistic and prominent place in the chequered history of conflict resolution. Prominent keynote speakers will be invited to address these themes comparatively. Theoretically, there will be panels addressing the Aceh case in comparative perspective.

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Translation in Asia: Theories, Practices, Histories

05 – 06 March 2009

Translation has, no doubt, been a powerful force throughout human history. It has allowed scientific, technological, linguistic and literary forms of knowledge to spread across vast geographical and cultural distance. One of the realms in which the force of translation is most evident historically is religion: translations of scripture have initiated and sustained the spread of religions far from their place of origin, in the process altering societies' ways of life and understanding of the human and divine.

For many years translation was relegated to the margins of academic discourse just as translators' names were barely visible within the pages of the books they translated. Translation was often viewed as a technical act of transformation, a necessary step on a text's path to a new

language and a new market. Gradually, questioning such an approach and perceiving translation as a site where issues of power, ideology, poetics, creative expression and technique converged, scholars in the fields of literary studies, history and religion, among others, began examining more closely the ways in which translation has been conceptualised and practised throughout history.

What gets translated in a particular society, and why? Who decides, in any given period and place, what translation entails and who carries out those decisions? How do these parameters shift with the passage of time within and across societies? What are the forces that encourage and resist translation? The field of Translation Studies, which has emerged in recent times, is an interdisciplinary field of inquiry that centres on such questions, seeking to understand translation as it was understood and practised in diverse, yet particular historical circumstances.

This conference seeks to convene scholars from the region and beyond who are working on various aspects of the study of translation across Asia. In particular it will focus on attempts to better understand and theorise how translation – as an ideological act, as an artistic endeavor, as an opening to unknown terrain – was understood and practised within Asian societies during particular historical moments.

Themes that are of particular interest include but are not limited to:

Theorizing translation in Asian contexts; The interplay between vernacular and cosmopolitan languages in translation; Practices and techniques; Translation movements and their histories; Training translators: translation academies, translation manuals; Translation prefaces; Translators' patronage systems; Ideology and translation; Poetics of translation; Translations and the development of languages and education; Cultures and canons: what gets translated? Explicit and implicit in translation traditions; Translation in Asia in a comparative perspective; New directions: what can exploring translation in Asian contexts contribute to wider debates about translation?

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The Cold War in Southeast Asia

24 September 2008 – 27 May 2009

The National Library

There is much about the Cold War in Southeast Asia that still remains shadowy and yet strangely compelling. Was the 'domino effect' overblown, or was there a real danger that the Southeast Asian states would fall to rampant communism after the Second World War? What should and could the rest of the world do to assist those who didn't want to trade one form of colonial rule for ideological domination? This fascinating topic is the subject of a new public lecture series (held from Sept 2008 – May 2009) in which a number of distinguished international experts will consider various aspects of this overarching theme, such as new approaches and findings and the involvement of various colonial and superpowers and Southeast Asian nations (some in the making during the period). The series is jointly organised by the Asia Research Institute, the National University of Singapore and The History Channel (A&E Television Networks).

RECENT ARI EVENTS

The Third Singapore Graduate Students' Forum on Southeast Asia Studies

28 July – 29 July 2008

This forum organised by Dr Chee Heng Leng, Dr Wasana Wongsurawat and Dr Patrick Daly entered its third year, as PhD students again gathered to present their work and to network with each other.

A total of 77 graduate students presented papers in 26 panels running in four parallel sessions. Representing the whole range of social science and humanities, the papers were organised under themes such as 'Religion and Modernity', 'Identity and Diversity', 'Spaces: Connections and Construction', 'Migration, Work and Citizenship', 'Remembering Violence', and 'Gender and Marginalization'.

Prof Lily Kong, Director of ARI, gave the welcome address, while Prof Dewi Fortuna Anwar, Research Professor at the Indonesian Institute of Sciences (LIPI), and Professor Chua Beng Huat delivered keynote speeches on 'Political Developments in Southeast Asia and Issues for a Research Agenda' and 'East Asian Pop Culture: Tracking a Transnational Cultural Industry' respectively. The final keynote address - 'Civil Islam Revisited: Prospects for and the Meanings of Muslim Democracy, in Southeast Asia and Beyond' - was given by Prof Robert Hefner from Boston University, who is currently the Inaugural Lee Kong Chian Nus-Stanford Distinguished Fellow. A final panel on 'There is a life after graduate school' provided some practical tips for graduate students who intend to begin life in academia.

Return Migration in Asia: Experiences, Ideologies and Politics

31 July – 1 August 2008



Return is an integral part of any migration system, and large-scale return is almost always related to significant social changes. This workshop brought various streams of return migration to light, opening up the concept of "return" as a strategic moment redefining economic, social and political relations in the region. "Return" is thus interrogated not only as an important phase of the migration phenomenon, but also as a powerful social political and ideological notion.

About forty papers across a wide range of disciplines in the social sciences and humanities were presented. The subject matter covered was unusually wide ranging, including ethnic return migration to Japan, policy constraints against return to colonial Surabaya, the return of "trafficked" Filipinas,

and the deportation of second generation Cambodian refugees from the USA. Overall three themes emerge from the two days' discussion. First, on the macro level, return migration is constitutive of the project of nation building and the establishment of the nation-state centred global order. Second, at the meso level, return migration poses the question of what return means for the community of origin. Third, at the individual level, return constitutes a defining moment in a migrant's life cycle and in his/her relations to the sending and receiving societies. The discussion was also greatly enriched by literary analyses that shed light on how and why "return" becomes a recurrent theme in novels and poetry.

Drawing participants primarily from Asia, Australia and the USA, the workshop provided a glimpse of complex, entangled threads woven into narratives of return migration, with significant multi-level implications for the shape of Asian states and societies in an increasingly mobile world. Selected papers will be published in due course. This workshop was organised by Xiang Biao, Mika Toyota and Brenda Yeoh.

'How Fares the Family?' Conference on the Resilience and Transformation of Families in Asia

4 – 5 August 2008



This conference was organised by Bina Gubhaju and Lai Ah Eng. Amidst various macro-level structural changes - globalisation, urbanisation, increased migration, demographic trends - and state-level government policies aimed at maintaining the family, it is important to understand and acknowledge the micro-level processes and patterns of family change that are occurring in response to the documented and better understood larger trends. We know very little of how families are responding to and coping with these changes. In response to this gap in the literature, this conference brought together scholars from various disciplines to examine the resilience and transformation of families in Asia. The conference sought to answer the question of how families are faring in the midst of change and, often, adversity.

The themes explored were: Intergenerational relationships and elderly care; Migration and the emergence of new family forms; Changes in family structure and living arrangements; Changing meanings and forms of parenthood; Balancing of work and family life; and Emerging meanings and new forms of "family".

With a total of 19 papers from various countries in Asia - Bangladesh, Cambodia, China, India, Indonesia, Philippines, Japan, Malaysia, Singapore, South Korea, Taiwan, Thailand, and Vietnam - the conference provided a much needed and insightful comparative perspective of family resilience in Asia. Selected papers are being put together for an edited volume.

New Directions in the Study of Material Religion in Southeast Asia

14 – 15 August 2008



This workshop was organised by Dr Julius Bautista, and jointly funded by the Religion Cluster of the Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences, NUS, and ARI's Religion and Globalisation Cluster in response to the need for an analytical framework of religious materials/spaces that goes beyond the mere identification of their style, provenance and production. Speakers from reputable universities and museums in Asia, Europe, and the US presented papers. All sorts of materials – statues, objects of offering, artistic media, relics, and architecture — manifest not just the religious sensibilities of the faithful, but their historical, political, cultural and economic vicissitudes as well.

The outcome of this workshop, an edited volume titled "New Directions in the Study of Material Religion", aim to demonstrate the various ethnographic, discursive or historical frameworks that scholars might utilise in order to understand the broader context in which faiths are objectified. The focus on the physical, tangible 'stuff' of religious devotion, as opposed to abstract 'symbols' or 'representations', is the heuristic strategy through which the contributors of this volume show that faith in the region is an embodied, dynamic experience that has always involved acts of exchange, movement and mobility. The volume will be published in late 2009.

Disrupting Hegemonic Liberalism: Singapore in Question

23 August 2008

This public lecture by Prof Chua Beng Huat was jointly organised by the Asia Research Institute, National University of Singapore and Malaysian Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society (MBRAS). The following is a summary of the lecture:

By the end of the 20th century, the presumption of the West is that liberal-democratic-capitalist society would be 'the end of history'. The 'universalizing' desire of liberal democracy has been disrupted in East Asia, where liberalism has very shallow roots. In the post-colonial and post-semi-colonial new nations, the ideological trajectory and practice of liberalist individualism is potentially destabilising to a 'nation' that remains an insecure object-in-the-making. The new nations therefore tend to emphasise the 'social', 'collective', i.e. communitarianism as the 'national' ideology. Conceptually, this is a social realist position that does not need to rely on invented 'traditions' for its justification; the 'social' as a given would suffice. Without the wellbeing of the

social, individual well being would be jeopardised. A second disruption is the development of successful state capitalism with market-driven, profit-making state-owned enterprises against the demands for privatisation in liberal capitalism. Profit generated from state capitalism remains in the public purse, available for social redistribution when necessary. The third and final disruption is in the polity. Once elected, a government is compelled to translate its mandate into a 'government for all' rather than for those who elected it.

All three disruptions can be illustrated by the PAP government in Singapore. National economics provides the discursive space for the Singapore government to champion an alternative discourse to liberalism. The actual political authoritarianism of the PAP is not an essential feature of a communitarian, state-capitalist electoral polity, but a contingent development in the actual history of Singapore as an island-nation.

ARI Asia Trends 2008

Chineseness Unbound: Boundaries, Burdens and Belongings of Chineseness outside China

11 September 2008

In this conference organised by Anthony Reid (ARI) and Chua Beng Huat (ARI), scholars from China, Thailand, Australia, and Singapore spoke on Chinese history and Chineseness and cosmopolitanism, and being Chinese in China, Thailand, Singapore, and Indonesia. For details of this conference, see front page story.

Workshop on Migration and Diversity in Asian Contexts

25-26 September 2008



The increasing scale and pace of transnational mobility has brought about new forms of social diversity in societies and communities in many parts of the world. Yet, in contrast to the large body of scholarship in western contexts, there is relatively little attention given to growing diversity in Asia. This workshop, organised by Dr Lai Ah Eng and Dr Francis Leo Collins from the Asia Research Institute, and Professor Brenda Yeoh and Professor Robbie Goh from the Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences, National University of Singapore, addressed this gap by bringing together scholars from within and beyond the region to discuss the ways that migration and diversity are emerging in Asian contexts.

Participants discussed the experiences of diversity in countries such as Singapore and Malaysia that have a history of intercultural relations as well as countries like Japan and

Continued on page 9



Joanne Punzo Waghorne
Visiting Senior Research Fellow,
Asia Research Institute
1 August 2007 – 31 July 2008
Professor of Religion, Syracuse University

Global Gurus and the Uneasy Position of Religious Studies in Asia¹

During my last week in Singapore after a full year of research at ARI, I found yet another worldwide guru-centered spiritual movement. This gathering, held in the classroom of a small business school, resembled so many others that I have attended throughout the year here: a classroom atmosphere, a data video projector carrying the guru's message preceded by a period of carefully prescribed meditation techniques, *kriya*, and followed by general discussion. This ethnically mixed group appeared to share common education and professional qualifications (the young man who led the session worked in high tech programming for financial institutions).

I saw this format of a "course of study", sometimes combined with features of a convention—registration, fees, books for sale—extending into what seems unlikely spiritual organizations in Singapore. An increasingly popular Tamil *Siddhar* ("wizard", yogi with physical-psychic powers called *siddhis*) from Malaysia, whose predecessors would have likely worn those "exotic" costumes that so intrigued British sketch artists, appears for his "empowerment sessions" in a business suit and tie, as do his closest disciples. The organization holds monthly sessions attended by more than a thousand people, at a convention center in Johor Baru, with giant screens projecting videos and PowerPoint presentations during the daylong event. I became fascinated by this embracing of academic models and discourse with terms like "study", "research", "course", and even "education" used liberally throughout many of their meditation-yoga sessions.

But I quickly discovered that these shared styles and even terminology did not always translate into a deep respect for university education or educators beyond expediency. For example, when I first began my research a year ago, I presented my business card expecting my hard-won title of "Professor of Religion" in a "Department of Religion" to impress my potential "informants." Instead, repeatedly,

these well-educated people looked at my card and told me frankly that they liked neither my title nor the name of my department. Usually they launched into their own understanding of "Religion" as an adjunct or an aperture to higher spirituality at best or a danger to true spirituality at worst. After repeated incidents, I began to offer my card with an explanation that by "Religion" we also mean more than the "set of rules given to a section of the community to follow", and included the spiritual as "more of a personal basis, how you experience God for yourself" (as one young Indian engineer defined the difference to me). Nonetheless, I had several enlightening even if uncomfortable sessions when my interlocutors turned the tables and asked me to explain what I was doing at their gathering and what I could possibly have to "teach" about their spiritual movement if I did not approach the guru and the organization as a devotee or disciple. These issues never ended and I felt myself welcomed only as a potential member. Many times my status as a researcher also seemed understood and appreciated. However, at other key moments I realized myself misunderstood, misinterpreted or outright suspected as an academic.

The gurus themselves sometimes covertly or overtly argue that the current university systems fail to truly teach students. Disciples often heard that universities with their rationalism and intellectualism impel economic success in the world, but stifle their inner development as persons. Although there are many examples, the discourses of Sadhguru Jaggi Vasudev, founder of Isha Yoga, excel in the art of using and yet critiquing the academic world often within a single paragraph.² In *Mystic's Musings*,³ Sadhguru discusses the difference between philosophy—in this case Hindu—and his way of teaching:

There is a different kind of understanding in you. When you intellectually understand, it leads only to these deceptive states. When you experientially know, it is different... A philosophy like that will give you some semblance of balance in you life, but it does not liberate you from deeper karma... But slowly if a person does this philosophy... slowly they will become joyless. They will become reasonably balanced and stable; at the same time they will slowly become lifeless (2003: 185).

Enfolded into this paragraph the more classical forms of Indian intellectual pursuits, as well as the university's "intellectual" methods, are contrasted with a better epistemology (a term Sadhguru would not use)—*experience*. Often this emphasis on "experience" versus "intellectualism" (sometimes described as "book learning" in the discourses of many other gurus) melds "experiment" with "experiential learning", putting their teaching in consort with science. However, philosophy (and much of what we would call the humanities) are often glossed as joyless and stultifying pursuits or ignored completely.

Certainly in the technologies, applied sciences and in business administration the split between logical and intuitive education may seem accurate for those who experienced the extreme emphasis on pragmatic education during the rapid development periods of places like Chennai or Singapore in the last decades (and in the US during the

1980s and 1990s). However, at the heart of the American university—and increasingly in universities in Asia—a new or renewed emphasis on the Liberal Arts or the Humanities emerges, whose aim includes cultivating *empathy*: to invite students into the thoughts and actions of others, to feel both the similarities and the differences with their own experiences, and to begin to “know themselves”. Such study does expect some kind of personal transformation however modest. This strain of *phenomenology*, argues, much like Sadhguru, that we can feel with and for others because of our shared humanity, our shared bodily sensations, desires, and emotions. In the field of Religious Studies we sometimes go farther and affirm that humans also share a sense of infinitude along with a profound sense of the finite quality of our own lives.

However, the teaching methods of the university and the gurus differ. We can offer no pragmatic or immediate way to expand this consciousness outside of long processes of actual study. Perhaps this is why so many academic teachers of Religious Studies are also keen students of yoga. Issues of how to blend, borrow or synthesize these two forms of education are as yet unsolved but it is not a matter of university versus the ashram. The university, however, will remain committed to a certain critical distance, enough to both see into, to gain insights but also to see through all forms of knowledge with a cultivated critical facility—not in the sense of “criticize” but in gaining, as the gurus would put it, “clarity.” In this sense “Religious Studies” or “the study of Religion” by its very name perches uneasily between deeply embedded and widely held notions of “religion” and our own dual commitment to both descriptive analysis and understanding. For those building programs in Religious Studies, especially in major universities in Asia, this “in-between status” of our field could become potentially powerful in the future.

¹ This essay is adapted from my lecture “Global Gurus in Motion: Challenges for the Academic Study of Religion” for the Department of Religious Studies, Seoul National University, 25 June 2008.

² While many of his discourses remain on DVDs that are not available for public use or even quotation, many have been published in print or as DVDs.

³ New Delhi: Wisdom Tree, 2003.

Continued from page 7

South Korea, which until recently have viewed themselves as culturally homogenous. The discussions included a focus on region-wide questions of citizenship, migration and governance as well as the micro-details of diversity as it is encountered and practised in the schools, homes, streets and cafes of Asia.

Overall, the conference illustrated that while there are similarities in the manner that migration and diversity are articulated in Asia, particularly in comparison to western societies, there remain significant differences. These reflect not only the different approaches taken by governments but indeed the already existing social and cultural diversity of Asian societies that makes it difficult to sustain broad generalisations.

Twenty-one papers were presented and selected papers are currently being reviewed for a book based on the workshop. The conference also gave participants the opportunity to share experiences of researching diversity and it is hoped that it will serve as the basis for future collaborations.



Stephen Teo

**Senior Research Fellow, October 2005 - July 2008.
Currently Associate Professor, Wee Kim Wee
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CHINESE CINEMA? ASIAN CINEMA?

Over the past half year, I have been completing a book on Chinese martial arts cinema, with a specific focus on *wuxia*, the Chinese tradition of knight-errantry. A well known book on the subject was written by Professor James Liu, published back in 1967, focusing on the literary-historical texts of the tradition. In my work I have been focusing on cinematic texts, with some reference to popular literature and the historical tradition of the Chinese knight-errant stretching back to the Warring States period. In this sense, my work is a study of this specific genre as it has developed in Chinese cinema since its emergence in 1920s Shanghai. I take into account episodes including the banning of the genre in the early 1930s by the KMT (Kuomintang) government (a subject not usually dealt with in detail in standard histories of Chinese cinema) and the eventual transposition of the genre into the Hong Kong film industry.

Focusing on the 50s and 60s, I also pay attention to the genre’s development in Hong Kong cinema and then in Taiwan. It was in Hong Kong that the genre eventually flourished, just as the literary part of the genre had also flourished in Hong Kong with the emergence of the ‘new school’ (*xinpai*) writers such as Jin Yong (the pseudonym used by Louis Cha, founder of the Mingpao newspaper), and Liang Yusheng in the 1950s. This literary movement in turn influenced the cinematic renaissance of the genre in the mid-1960s under the Shaw Brothers studio.

Generally, the purpose of this book is to provide an exploration of the genre as it has developed as part of ‘Chinese cinema’ in the film industries of Hong Kong, mainland China and Taiwan. This notion of ‘Chinese cinema’ as a marker of national cinema is of course muddled by the fact that it is constituted by three separate industries with quite different histories that developed under very different political regimes. In this context, I am also exploring the notion of the *wuxia* film as a genre in ‘Chinese cinema’ that typifies a continuity

Continued on page 10

NEW ARI MEMBERS

Ms Sharon Ong has commenced a 2-year appointment as Management Assistant Officer with effect from 7 July 2008. She has a Bachelor of Fine Arts in Gold and Silversmithing from the Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology. She was in the private sector for eight years handling events such as art exhibitions, product launches and gemmological talks. At ARI, she will be handling events and other administrative matters.



Prof Wei-Jun Jean Yeung commenced a 3-year joint appointment with ARI and the Department of Sociology with effect from 15 July 08. Prof Yeung is a principal investigator of the Panel Study of Income Dynamics, one of the longest running social science panel surveys. She serves as an international academic advisor to the Institute of Social Science Studies in Peking University. She is secretary/treasurer for the section of Children and Youth of the American Sociological Association. Her current research and teaching focus on intergenerational studies, family and children's well-being and policies, social inequality, and China's economic and demographic transition.



Dr Charles Leary has commenced a 1-year appointment as a Postdoctoral Fellow in the SEA-China Interactions Cluster with effect from 28 July 2008. Dr Leary received his PhD in Cinema Studies from New York University. His research interests include Hong Kong cinema, American cinema, performance for the moving image, and the history of film criticism. At ARI, his research project focuses on the political and aesthetic dynamics of Hong Kong film culture in the context of the Cold War.



Prof Anjali Gera Roy has commenced a 2-year appointment as a Senior Research Fellow in the Cultural Studies Cluster with effect from 4 August 2008. Prof Roy is a Professor in the Department of Humanities of Social Sciences at the Indian Institute of Technology Kharagpur. She has published essays in literary, film and cultural studies, translated short fiction from Hindi, authored a book on African fiction, edited an anthology on the Nigerian writer Wole Soyinka and co-edited another on the Indo-Canadian novelist Rohinton Mistry. At ARI, she would be examining Bollywood's transnational flows to focus on Bollywood cinema as a culture of globalisation.



Mr Gary Lee Jack Jin has commenced appointment as a Research Assistant with effect from 4 August 2008. He will be supporting an ARI research project on Commercially Arranged International Marriages in Singapore and Malaysia. He has previously studied the issues faced by low-wage Chinese immigrant workers in Los Angeles County, USA, while working as a research fellow at the Los Angeles Garment Worker Center. For his B.A. thesis, he studied the institutionalisation of urban poor housing programs in Phnom Penh from 1993-2006 and their transnational linkages. Mr Lee is interested in ethnography, Geographic Information Systems (GIS) technology, the sociology of human rights, community organising and development, and Chinese immigration.



Continued from page 9

of style and content, which 'unifies' the three cinemas or at least makes all three cinemas culturally coherent.

I have also been preoccupied with an ongoing project searching for a theory of Asian cinema. Does an Asian cinema exist as a valid cinematic paradigm that could function as an alternative cinematic space to Hollywood and European cinemas? Or is it just a series of national cinemas that are too diverse to cohere, with each national cinema striving to transcend Asian-ness even as it seeks to incorporate a certain view of shared cultural values? With such a subject, the whole area imposes a need to examine concepts of cultural identity, transculturalism, and national cinema. In part, the problem of speaking about a theory of Asian cinema is that it is not as yet politically acceptable to speak of Asia as a transcendent political entity (unlike Europe), and it is therefore much less viable to refer to an Asian cinema as an entity that transcends nationalism and ethnocentrism. The problem, then, is that as the idea of an Asian cinema is put forward, its insufficiency as a theoretical concept tied to a reality of Asia as a unifying political idea makes it too vague and its subordination to the concept of national cinema renders it elusive.

I think, however, that the vagueness of Asia is not a liability. Asia is constituted by many different races or ethnicities, cultures and languages and even dialects and accents within languages that are mutually incomprehensible. This makes it possible to claim a kind of split personality among Asians, which is that of the 'other' and the 'belonger'. Asians are others among themselves due to the fact that there are so many cultures and differences involved. On the other hand, Asians are clearly insiders and belongers within Asia. Could not the concept of Asian cinema be outside and inside, other and belonger, at one and the same time? Is this not the intrinsically transcendent nature of Asianness? To be Asian is to be put in a position of interactivity and connection, to be ready for any contingency of being – not just Asian, but inter-, pan-, and trans-Asian. To this end, I think Asian cinema is a useful theory that can mirror such a contingency of being.

NEW ARI MEMBERS

Prof Venni Venkata Krishna has commenced a 1-year appointment as a Visiting Senior Research Fellow in the Open Category with effect from 15 August 2008. He is a Professor in Science Policy, Centre for Studies in Science Policy, School of Social Sciences, Jawaharlal Nehru University (JNU), New Delhi, and has more than 23 years of research experience in the areas of sociology of science, science and technology policy and innovation studies and social history of science. He has published over 30 research papers and five books and is the founder-editor of *Science, Technology and Society* (Sage publications, an international journal devoted to S&T policy issues in the developing world). At ARI, Prof Krishna will be working on science, technology and innovation dynamics in Asia with a focus on India and China; and on the role of universities in knowledge based economies of Asia.



Dr Premchand Dommaraju has commenced a 1-year joint appointment as a Postdoctoral Fellow in the Changing Family cluster with effect from 1 September 08. He obtained his PhD in (Sociology) from the Arizona State University and his M.A. (Sociology) from University of Wyoming. His research interests includes social demography, nuptiality, reproduction, and child mortality. His areas of geographical focus are South Asia and Central Asia. He will be publishing journal articles from his dissertation "Demography, education and marriage age in India"; researching the role of marriage age on changing fertility patterns in India; and begin a new project investigating the trends, timing and determinants of men's marriage age in India.



Dr Pal Daniel Nyiri has commenced appointment as a Visiting Senior Research Fellow in the Migration/SEA-China Interactions Cluster with effect from 1 September 2008, till 20 December 2008. His research has focused on various aspects of contemporary Chinese overseas migration and tourism, in particular as they relate to Chinese views on modernisation and the nation's place in the world. In addition, he is interested in immigration policy and xenophobia in Eastern Europe, as well as in the political consequences of the current public obsession with cultural difference. At ARI, Dr Nyiri's work centres on the nexus between Chinese migration, investment and development aid in poor countries. He will also be working on an article on the pre-Olympic demonstrations by Chinese students overseas.



Mr Wong Hoy Cheong has commenced a 3-month appointment as a Visiting Senior Research Fellow in the Cultural Studies Cluster with effect from 2 September 2008. His work is inter-disciplinary, involving areas such as drawing, installation,



theatre/performance and video. He was Visiting Tutor at Oxford Brookes University, Oxford (2004); Goldsmith College, London (1999) and Central St. Martins, London (1998); and artist-in-residence at Montalvo Arts Centre, California (2007), Pitt Rivers Museum, Oxford (2004); Gasworks, London (2002) and Canberra Institute of Art, Canberra (1992).

A/P Gabriele Marranci has commenced a 1-year appointment as a Visiting Senior Research Fellow in the Religion & Globalisation Cluster with effect from 23 September 2008. He is an anthropologist by training, working on religion with a specialisation in Muslim societies. His main research interests concern identity, Muslim migration/immigration, urban sociology, globalisation, fundamentalism, political Islam, secularisation processes, criminology, and anthropology of music. He has successfully started, as founding editor, the first anthropological journal of Islamic Studies, *Contemporary Islam: Dynamics of Muslim Life*, published by the international publisher Springer. While at ARI, A/P Marranci's research will focus on identity and family among the Muslim community in Singapore.



Dr Vu Thi Kieu Dung has commenced a 1-year appointment as a Visiting Research Fellow in the Migration Cluster with effect from 1 Oct 2008. Her main areas of research are urban studies, tourism development, migration, gender and health such as the patterns and dynamics of marriage and family formation and the linkage of family life and mental health. Special interests include the understanding of human trafficking and women's health including sexual and reproductive health. At ARI, she will join the research team on international marriage using matchmaking agencies (Singapore and Malaysia) with Professors Brenda Yeoh, Gavin Jones, and Chee Heng Leng.



Dr Jan Vig Perry Johansson has commenced a 3-month appointment as Visiting Senior Research Fellow in the SEA-China Interactions Cluster with effect from 2 October 2008. He holds degrees in Chinese studies as well as history. His research interests are just as his professional direction, hard to pin down by discipline. The change in focus from the relation between economics, politics and sexuality of his PhD. project to his recent book on the sinophilia connecting Swedish sinology, archaeology, and political activism indicates a shift of interest from Chinese cultural studies to the intellectual and political history of Chinese-European relations. At ARI, he will conclude a once abandoned post doc book project on beauty, nationalism and Chinese consumer culture, and complete two articles - one on Swedish Maoism, the other on western archaeology in China.



ARI RECOGNITION AND NEW BOOKS

Professor Anthony Reid was elected as a Corresponding Fellow at the prestigious British Academy on 17th July 2008. Corresponding Fellows are scholars habitually resident outside the UK who have "attained high international standing in any of the branches of study which it is the object of the Academy to promote". This election is the highest honour that the Academy is able to confer in recognition of scholarly distinction.

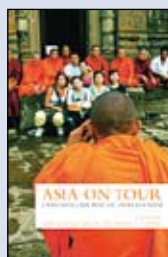
Professor Brenda Yeoh delivered a keynote address titled "Singapore's Changing Demography, the Crisis of Care and the Transnationalisation of the Reproductive Sphere" and 2 plenary speeches, one for the Australian Population Association 14th Biennial Conference, 30 June – 3 July 2008, Convention Centre, Alice Springs, Australia, and another titled "Love, Mobility and Vulnerability in the Age of Globalisation", at the 31st International Geographical Congress, 11-15 August 2008, Tunis.

Dr Lai Ah Eng was appointed Family Research Specialist for the Family Research Network, Ministry of Community Development and Sports, for the period 1 Sept 2008 – 30 Aug 2010.

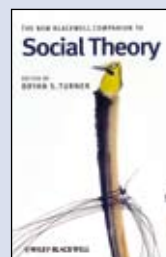
Professor Lily Kong has been awarded the Robert Stoddard Award for Distinguished Service to the Association of American Geographers' division of Geography of Religions and Belief Systems (GORABS). She is the third recipient of the Award "on the basis of (her) excellent contributions to geographies of religion, and - in particular - for (her) very rich theoretically-informed empirical research within this field over the last (almost) twenty years". The award will be presented to her at the March 2009 Annual Meeting of the Association of American Geographers.

Prof Kong was also appointed to the Editorial Board of *Professional Geographer* published by the Association of American Geographers, with effect from 2009, and appointed External Examiner, CUHK Dept of Geography and Resource Management. She is deputy chair of Research and Publicity Committee, Preservation of Monuments Board (2008-2009) and Governor in Singapore International Foundation (2008-2010). She is also Resource Person for 3 different bodies - Joint Counter-Terrorism Centre, Prime Minister's Office (2008-), Singapore Tourism Board (Singapore Food Festival) (2008), and Singapore Tourism Board & Chinatown Business Association (2008).

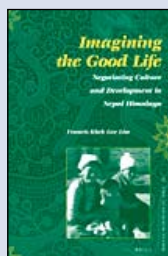
She also gave a plenary address at the Artepols2: Creative Communities and the Making of Place, International Conference on Urban Culture, 8-10 Aug, Bandung, Indonesia.



Asia on Tour: Exploring the Rise of Asian Tourism
Tim Winter, Peggy Teo, and T. C. Chang (editors)
London, Routledge
2008



The New Blackwell Companion to Social Theory
Bryan S. Turner (editor)
Oxford, Wiley-Blackwell
2008



Imagining the Good Life: Negotiating Culture and Development in Nepal Himalaya
Francis Khhek Gee Lim
Social Sciences in Asia, 20
(2008)



Rebellion and Reform in Indonesia: Jakarta's Security and Autonomy Policies in Aceh
Michelle Ann Miller
London, Routledge
2008

ASIAN METACENTRE NEWS

Recent Publications

"Asian Transnational Families in Transition: The Liminality of Simultaneity" — another special issue containing papers presented at the International Workshop on Asian Transnational Families held in February 2005 has been published. This collection of eight papers appears in *International Migration* (Volume 46, Issue 4, September 2008) and is guest edited by Shirlena Huang, Brenda S.A. Yeoh and Theodora Lam.



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