



ARI NEWS

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

MICA(P) 223/01/2006



Interrogating a historian

In June Anthony Reid will retire from NUS and end his formally employed career, which included a stint as founding Director of ARI (2002-7). Professor Reynaldo Ileto is also an established Southeast Asian historian with a particular interest in historiography, who has known Tony since the latter first recruited the former to ANU in 1974.

RCI: You have written about "alterity and reformism" (1981) as motives in the approach to Southeast Asia. How would you describe your own motivation for studying the other (as opposed to your own society)?

AR: New Zealand gave me the blessing of a conviction that wherever the centre of the world was, it wasn't here. Some early exposure to the US, Indonesia, Japan and Colombo Plan students in NZ no doubt made me more interested than most in the fascination of other cultures. Of course behind that 1981 article was an awareness that for myself both motives—understanding "otherness" but also doing something to change it for the better—were at work in the young Reid. Perhaps the mix changed gradually with age, in favour of alterity. In both respects Indonesia in the 1950s and '60s represented challenge: - the challenge of poverty and constant political crisis, but also the challenge of simple understanding.

RCI: You have moved from NZ to England for the PhD, and then to Malaysia, Australia, California and Singapore for your subsequent employment, with substantial intermezzos at Yale (1973-4), Indonesia and Europe. Have these moves changed your perspective on your subject? In particular, does it make a difference to look at Southeast Asian history from within SE Asia, as now?

AR: My dissertation was written at Cambridge in the dark ages of the early 1960s, when historians worked in (European) archives, not in the field. Moreover *konfrontasi* made Indonesia almost inaccessible. So I was in a hurry to get as close to Indonesia as I could. The job at the University of Malaya in K.L. was almost ideal, and changed

my perspective profoundly. As long as I was in Southeast Asia I was influenced primarily by the historical roots of what seemed its contemporary problems. Working on northern Sumatra and living in Malaysia had to raise questions about the differences. Why was Indonesia, including east Sumatra with its pre-war similarities with Malaya, so profoundly republican and unitary, while 1960s Malaysia was still rooted in an ideology of the *rajas* as central to Malay identity. Hence the involvement with the Indonesian revolution and especially its anti-monarchy "social revolution" manifestation in Sumatra.

RCI: Your first book, the thesis on the Aceh War (1969) appears conventionally based on colonial archives. What motivated that focus and approach, and how was your subsequent relationship to Aceh affected by that book?

AR: As mentioned, the thesis was necessarily an archive-based one, and when I finally managed to get to Sumatra in 1966-7 the changes to the eventual publication were very minor. Researching the social revolution book (1979) took me often to Aceh, but subsequent interests turned elsewhere and I visited little in the 1980s and '90s. Being in Singapore in the era of the tsunami and the peace process drew me back to Aceh (two books: 2004, 2006), feeling an obligation to give something back to this long-suffering region which had given much to me. Over the years I was uneasily aware that the Aceh independence movement (GAM) was strangely interested in that seemingly conventional thesis, though as long as violence was continuing I wanted nothing to do with it. The reasons have become clearer since the Indonesian version came out, and I had a chance to meet many of the activists. They in part arise from the decolonising spirit of those times that made Aceh the natural hero of my story, innocent victim of Dutch aggression. But simply by portraying Aceh as an equal diplomatic actor in the 19th century with Britain, France, Holland and Turkey, my story inadvertently contributed something to that historical pride which motivated many independence activists.

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RCI: *Your most influential book is the 2-volume Southeast Asia in the Age of Commerce (1988-93). Why did you write that book, with the scope it has and the issues it addresses?*

First teaching a course on early modern SE Asia in Kuala Lumpur raised some issues, which I tended to formulate in the 1970s as 'the origins of SE Asian poverty'. It was the hoary issue of the origins of capitalism, the 'great divergence' of later years. Once I decided there was a book to be written here, its own discoveries tended to change the agenda. Showing that Southeast Asia was an historic region with some key features in global terms, such as relative female autonomy, high mobility, and reliance on exchange, became a crucial task of the first volume, and understanding why the relative parity between (SE) Asia and Europe in the 16th and early 17th centuries gave way to imbalance thereafter that of the second. Reformism and alterity again did battle. I should say, too, that a work as ambitious as this would have been impossible without the amazing good fortune of a tenured position in a research institute, without at the time very demanding administrative responsibilities – these came later.

RCI: *Some of your critics think of you as a 'mere' empiricist, piling up sources to create a narrative (or in Age of Commerce a portrait), rather than interrogating those sources with regard to contemporary concerns over the production of knowledge. How would you respond to those critiques?*

AR: I am not good at conducting debates, preferring always to get on with the next task. But yes, *the Age of Commerce* does draw on a great many sources, asking quotations or references from different places, and somewhat different periods, to fill in a large-canvas picture. This method of assemblage for a broad range of subjects did not give me the luxury of dwelling at length on any particular source. Some critics have felt that writing this way was premature, before more careful monographs and textual studies have adequately secured the foundation. Since SE Asian studies is a field strong on cultural studies and weak on economic ones, even my modest degree of quantification to make comparisons possible with other parts of the world in population, trade and welfare jars with some colleagues, who find this inherently positivistic, conveying false exactness. I can only say I felt it important to enable the Southeast Asian experience to be seen as a distinctive and important one, and to play its part in wider debates. Though I do attempt to cover an ambitious range of issues from material culture and health to religion and power, these elements were all necessary, in my view, to the case I was building.

RCI: *The last decade appears to have taken you into bigger-picture speculation, issues of nationalism and cosmopolitanism, as well as concerns with the state of the field, with the Chinese diaspora, religion and identity. Is this part of the maturation of a historian, or driven by pragmatic responses to the situation?*

A little of both perhaps. Maturation brings responsibilities that leave little time for the front-line investigative research, and at the same time provides expectations, and a thicker skin, to allow the occasional broad sweep. Pragmatically, an increasing proportion of writing time has to be devoted to keynote lectures which usually work better in tackling a broad issue. Some of these issues are those I care most about, and naturally choose to discuss in a historical framework. Increasingly in this globalising world a balanced and cosmopolitan history appears the only responsible option, and nationalist or partisan history of any kind the greatest danger for our profession.

RCI: *Your new book Imperial Alchemy, product of the Singapore years, is due from Cambridge this year. Is it going to be a continuation or fulfilment of the issues discussed earlier? Does it mark some kind of disenchantment with the decolonising mood, the empathy with SE Asian nationalism, of your younger days?*

It certainly is concerned to understand nationalism in Asia. Perhaps the empathy of the 1950s and '60s, that assumed these emergent nation-states were on the progressive side of history and should be given the benefit of the doubt, has been replaced by a certain scepticism and wariness. Since the 1990s I have been trying to make sense of nationalism, and also of the pre-colonial state in Southeast Asia, which several of us are beginning to understand as something very different from the legal-bureaucratic state of normative modern literature. Taken together, these two strains of thought lead to a still greater wonderment that state nationalism in countries such as Indonesia has been so brilliantly successful in turning reviled imperial structures into sacred and unquestioned nation-states, perhaps precisely because of the shallowness of state history in legal-bureaucratic terms. Although the book sets out with sceptical questions about Asian nationalisms, in other words, it ends by concluding qualified success, on a strikingly different basis from the nationalisms of the west.

RCI: *After that, what should we look forward to?*

AR: I would love to say I will smell the roses, read vastly more, experiment with that novel and try to amuse my granddaughter. But I fear the workaholic habits are too deep, and the deadlines of unfulfilled promises still unmet. The most demanding obligation is a broad history of Southeast Asia, which has gradually changed in shape as I have guiltily pushed it further down the pile of commitments. I now see it as differing from its predecessors mainly in seeking somehow to do justice to the stateless or state-ignored peoples who have formed the majority of Southeast Asia's population at most times in the past. That's a challenge. I will debate further with myself when is the right time to write a short history of Aceh. And for lighter relief, I will try to pursue in obscure archives (preferably in warm elegant cities with good food and architecture) an interest in the renegades and boundary-crossers of the Southeast Asian past.

WORD FROM THE DIRECTOR

Professor Lily Kong



The world is a difficult place at the moment. The global economy is at its worst since the Great Depression. All major regions of the world are in the midst of recession. Asia, and Singapore (with such an open economy) is far from immune. In his 2009 budget speech, Singapore's Finance Minister Tharman Shanmugaratnam said:

"Asia has not been decoupled from the decline in the advanced economies. Across the region, industrial production and exports have fallen dramatically in recent months. In China, industrial production towards the end of 2008 is estimated to have been below half the levels seen at the start of the year. Taiwan's exports contracted by 42% in December and Singapore's [non-oil domestic exports] by 21%. Korea's latest export data shows a decline of over 30%."

During such challenging times, universities have had to re-evaluate their spending and strategies, and graduates will have to confront difficult job markets. For example, Harvard reported investment losses of approximately 22 percent from July 1 through October 31 2008, and its planning for 2009-10 assumes that its endowment will have lost roughly 30 percent of its value in 2008-09. President Drew Faust called for a reduction of expenses, exhorting each School "to make choices among its strategic objectives in the context of reduced budgets, yet preserve our collective, institutional flexibility to make adjustments as conditions evolve". Caltech announced that it will lay off 100 employees, as well as freeze hiring for some unfilled positions, though it would continue to hire faculty at a reduced rate. In China, Peking University's president Zhou Qifeng commented that, as a state-funded college, state tax revenue affected by the crisis would have

implications for the university, while some private donors have expressed difficulties in delivering on their promises. It is also reported that the 6.5 million students graduating from Chinese universities this year will have difficulties securing jobs, adding to the 1.6 million graduates from last year who are still looking for positions.

Within this context, there are at least two responses that we at ARI must consider. The first is the ways in which we can be more efficient in our use of resources and responsible in our stewardship of them. Our overall budget is not large in the bigger scheme of things, but a consciousness of responsibility in our use of public funds is more important than ever now.

The second is the ways in which we as scholars can contribute to an understanding of major changes occurring in the world today. While ARI has not traditionally focused on economic issues, the implications of the global economic crisis have far wider ramifications than just economic ones, and there exists both the space and necessity for better understandings of the social, cultural and political implications of the economic crisis. For example, what roles do religion and family play in difficult times? What implications are there for religious revivalism? What of the role of women? How are foreign workers being viewed and treated as jobs become increasingly scarce? How will tourism in all its facets (educational, medical, cultural, eco etc) be affected? Will governments shrink, as is customary, in their support for the arts and culture? How will the social fabric be affected? Will birth rates decline? These are but some issues that deserve to be examined.

The question we ask ourselves is: Will we go about "business-as-usual"?

Professor Lily Kong, ARI Director & NUS Vice President (University and Global Relations) was appointed to the Public Service Commission (PSC) Board on 29 January 2009. At the age of 44, Prof Lily Kong is the youngest appointee to serve on the board of the PSC. Prof Kong and Ms Chua Sock Koong, SingTel group chief executive

are the only two women on the board. Prof Kong, Ms Chua and Mr Richard Magnus, former senior district judge, were sworn in by President S. R. Nathan at the Istana on 29 January. The newly elected members will be serving the PSC board for a term of five years.

FORTHCOMING EVENTS

ARI Asia Trends 2009 **20 May 2009**

ASIA TRENDS 2009, a flagship event of ARI, will be held on 20 May 2009. It will be the seventh in the annual series started soon after ARI's set up. Asia Trends aims to reinforce ARI's role and objectives of being a world-leading social sciences and interdisciplinary hub for research and education on Asia that attracts scholars, researchers and students from around the world, through research, conferences, lectures, seminars and graduate study. Several of ARI's research clusters will each host a panel that focuses on a theme relevant to their respective fields. The themes are:

Does '(More) Open Borders' Make Sense in Asia?
Asian Migration Cluster

This panel critically examines the possibilities, limits and consequences of '(more) open borders', relating these debates to issues of developing multilateral frameworks and economic integration; enhancing social integration and cohesion; and strengthening families and improving gender equity in the region.

Evangelising Asia: Competition and Conflict among Religions in Asia
Religion and Globalisation Cluster

This panel will attempt to address such questions as: Does the modernisation and globalisation of religion mean some convergence toward 'evangelical' or 'conversionist' forms of religion? Do these developments also point to greater competition between religions in contemporary Asian societies?

Culture Industry in Asia
Cultural Studies Cluster

This panel examines the emergence of export cultural industries in Asia concentrated in the following areas: films, television programs, pop music, fashion and tourism. This includes a focus on integration of media industries in the region, greater awareness and 'knowledge' of the region, a sense of pan-Asianness, and a softening of attitudes towards each other as Asians.

Sustainable Cities, Asian Perspectives
Sustainable Cities Cluster

This theme is both the object of research as well as a goal, that is, how to build sustainable cities in Asia. The aim of this session is to focus on the themes of research within the arena of emerging practices on sustainable urban development and practices in the region.

Contact persons for further details:
Ms Verene Koh: arikohhk@nus.edu.sg;
Miss Sharon Ong: arios@nus.edu.sg

The 1965-1966 Indonesian Killings Revisited **17 – 19 June 2009**

This three-day conference on the regional dynamics and lasting effects of the mass killings in Indonesia in 1965-1966 will bring together scholars from a range of academic disciplines, including history, anthropology, political science and law, as well as practitioners in Indonesia. This initiative is being co-sponsored by the Asia Research Institute and the Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences, NUS, and has received generous support from the Australian Research Council's Asia Pacific Futures Research Network (APFRN).

The conference will include panels on the 30th of September Movement, the roles of the military and mass organisations in the violence, regional studies of detention and mass killing, communist resistance to the pogroms, the impact of the violence on women and families, and contested views of the past in contemporary Indonesia.

Contact person for further details:
Mdm Valerie Yeo: valerie.yeo@nus.edu.sg

International Symposium on Ethnic Minorities in Asia: Subjects or Citizens? **25 – 26 June 2009**

The engagement of Asian states with their ethnic minority populations normatively involves notions of citizenship and the applicability of universal human rights norms and values. Since the mid-1990s, some democratizing multiethnic Asian states have sought to accommodate ethnic minorities through the introduction of democratic reforms aimed at granting minority groups inclusive citizenship in the form of more equal or greater rights and freedoms. In many other Asian states, however, ideas of citizenship have been repressively standardized in the sense that uniform majoritarian nation-building projects have sought to delegitimise minority claims to cultural diversity and autonomy.

This international symposium explores the relationship between minority rights claims and citizenship in Asia. It considers important questions about the rights and responsibilities that the status of 'citizen' confers to Asia's ethnic minorities, and the extent to which minorities become 'subjects' when their civil and political rights may be implied but are subverted, or lack the legal certainty that citizens tend to experience. How are ethnic minorities in Asia transformed from subjects into citizens? Under what conditions are ethnic minority rights claims to citizenship justifiable? What are the duties and obligations of states to accommodate their ethnic minorities as citizens? How have the post-colonial ideologies of multiethnic Asian states, which were often constructed as political entities along arbitrary colonial borders, influenced their conferral of citizenship to ethnic minorities? And, how have the philosophies that Asian states and their ethnic minorities attach to citizenship changed over time, and in their interactions with each other?

Contact person for further details:
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RECENT EVENTS

Symposium on The Makers and Keepers of Singapore History

10 November 2008



The symposium was a halfway point for an ongoing project to rethink the basic premises of and methodological approaches to Singapore history. It had its precedent in a special journal issue published by the *Tangent* civil society group in June last year. The issue had comprised essays detailing personal journeys into Singapore's past by twelve researchers. The willingness of the Asia Research Institute, together with the Singapore Heritage Society, to host a conference for both the original *Tangent* authors and new contributors to the project, enabled broadly similar research experiences to be shared, explored and reviewed. The opportunity for a diverse group of researchers, including historians, social scientists, film-makers, and public intellectuals, to consider and critique each other's experiences was an invaluable one.

The symposium was both analytical and reflective. It examined the basic premise of how, in researching the history of our modern city-state, the makers of the past cannot always be easily distinguished from the gatekeepers of its historical sources and memories. The discussion explored experiences commonly shared by researchers of Singapore history, covering themes on the close connection between politics and history, gatekeeping of the official archives, and censorship of personal and social memory. It also earnestly broached the complex and significant ways in which political elites, ordinary people and even researchers themselves function both as makers and keepers of history.

Since the symposium, the contributors have embarked on the final step of revising their papers for publication in an edited volume.

The 5th Great Asian Streets Symposium 2008 - Future Asian Space

5 – 7 December 2008



New spatial processes, influenced by accelerated change and the rise of new 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, re-negotiating the experience of the city and questions of creating sustainable urban development in Asian cities. Competing forces of development for limited urban space have also resulted in changing forms, use and dynamics of urban public space, and processes for the reclamation of space for public good. New technologies used in designing and conceiving the city, as well as new technologies in urban space, and how one communicates and negotiates within urban space have drastically changed the landscape of the city, such that we begin to even question if there is such an entity as the Asian city, or if more pluralistic concepts of the city in Asia have to be interrogated.

The initiative to organize such an event came from the recognition that there is a need for an Asia-based node of excellence on networks of ideas and results of research projects that focus on Asian cities. The conference was supported by the Asia Research Institute, the Department of Architecture, NUS, and the Architectural and Urban Design Excellence Programme (A*UDE) of the Urban Redevelopment Authority (URA) Singapore, and was attended by 135 delegates from all over the world. Forty-eight papers were presented and the conference culminated with a City Forum, in which our six invited plenary speakers deliberated on the theme of the conference with conference delegates and members of the audience.

Workshop on Changing Marriage in Southeast Asia, Singapore

12 – 13 December 2008



Over the past three years, ARI's Changing Family in Asia cluster has been coordinating research into marriage change in Indonesia, Malaysia and the Philippines, under a grant from the Jakarta regional office of the Ford Foundation. Seven separate research projects have been conducted under this grant, covering analysis of trends toward later marriage in the region and why this is occurring, as well as detailed studies on cohabitation, divorce, and polygamy. The research has emphasized the way poverty affects formation and dissolution of unions, and in turn how marriage patterns affect poverty. One key finding from the research is that union formation and dissolution is frequently less clear-cut than might appear from the categories of marital status – never married, married, divorced and widowed - typically used in censuses and surveys.

RECENT EVENTS

This workshop brought together the researchers from the project to discuss drafts of their papers and plan for a book that will bring together the key results from the study. The book will also incorporate some related studies by researchers in Indonesia and Singapore, and some of the emerging issues in international marriage affecting these countries.

Heritage in Asia: Converging Forces and Conflicting Values

8 – 10 January 2009



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

The main aim of this international conference, co-hosted by ARI and the University of Sydney, was to create a forum in which scholars could discuss the unique dynamics of heritage in Asia. This was to encourage the development of Asia derived from theoretical perspectives on the roles of the past in the present in the region. The rapid pace of modernity and development in Asia has created fertile grounds for re-thinking the nature of heritage, as the pre-industrial and post-industrial exist simultaneously in close proximity to each other. It has also created great challenges for managing heritage within a shifting landscape in which social, political and economic imperatives seek to harness heritage to best suit their agendas, leading to a range of inherent conflicts.

The conference benefited from over 80 speakers representing most parts of Asia. The topics ranged from urban heritage, issues of authenticity and conservation, post-conflict and post-disaster reconstruction, community development and diversity, post-colonial heritage, and heritage tourism. The keynote speakers were Professor Nobuko Inaba, Richard Engelhardt, Dr. Johannes Widodo, and Professor William Logan, all major international authorities in both research and policy related to heritage in Asia.

The conference culminated with three field excursions to Chinatown, Tiong Bahru, and Joo Chiat, organized in conjunction with the Singapore Heritage Society and Dr. T. C. Chang from the Department of Geography, NUS.

The conference organizers, Dr. Patrick Daly from ARI and Dr. Tim Winter from the University of Sydney are currently preparing an edited collection *the Heritage in Asia*.

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

20 – 21 January 2009



The purpose of the workshop was to bring together scholars from a multitude of scholarly disciplines, from philology to literature to political science, to present their analysis and works on the debates surrounding the conceptualization of 'Malayness', the Malays and the notion of their 'Other'. The papers, presented by 15 speakers, were organized around five thematic questions, namely, Islam and Malayness; the nation in cultural projects; negotiated portrayals; the re-imagination of community and habitus; and issues of purity, hybridity and the other. In terms of country reference, the papers were based on research materials from Malaysia, Singapore and Indonesia.

The three keynote presenters spoke about the historical and social construction of Malay family and society, the Malay language as definer of identity and the traditionalism and modernism of Islam in the Malay world. There emerged several positions on the question. The most important consensus was on the constructed nature of social identities, although some perspectives imputed more fluidity in this formation than others who felt that the reality of being Malay is more structural than just simply 'imagined'. Variables such as state, nation-state, post-colonial reinvention of race, ethnicity, indigeneity and even the market had all played critical roles in shaping the political, cultural and intellectual project of 'being' Malay and 'doing' Malayness.

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

5 – 6 February 2009



Over the past decade, Muslim Southeast Asia has experienced a dynamic and multi-faceted Islamic religious revival, including significant developments in the legal sphere as 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 important but indirect roles in several non-religious jurisdictions — being cited in

court cases as a source of rules to govern situations where statutes are silent or ambiguous. Unfortunately, however, the ability of academics and policy makers to productively analyze these trends in the legal systems of Asian Muslim societies has been hampered by incomplete information about the actual institutions and individuals who are today implementing the new 'Islamic' laws.

This workshop, co-sponsored by the Faculty of Law, and the Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences, NUS and the Carnegie Corporation of New York, and convened by R. Michael Feener (ARI), Clark B. Lombardi (University of Washington), and Mark E. Cammack (Southwestern Law School), brought together Supreme Court justices from Malaysia and Indonesia, practising lawyers, bar association officials, law school administrators, activists and multi-disciplinary academics for focused examinations and discussions of the particular judiciaries, and other legal professionals who are actually entrusted with the task of interpreting and applying Islamic law in state courts in the region.

From Bombay to LA: The Travels of South Asian Cinema

9 – 10 February 2009



A fortnight before Bombay became the new buzzword in international cinema circles with the Bollywood inspired *Slumdog Millionaire* sweeping eight awards at the 2009 Oscars, this seminar cum workshop jointly organised by Professors Chua Beng Huat and Anjali Gera Roy of ARI focused on the travels of South Asian Cinema from Bombay to LA beyond. The multidisciplinary seminar cum workshop brought together established and new scholars in cinema with filmmakers and critics from India, Singapore, Malaysia, Australia, New Zealand, Canada and the US to compare the transnational flows of Indian popular cinema (in Hindi and other languages such as Bhojpuri, Bengali, Tamil, Kannada, Malayalam) in the present and the past to unpack the meaning of global culture by focusing on its impact within India, South Asia and the world. The highlight of the seminar cum workshop organised by the Cultural Studies cluster was the screening of the award winning first Tamil Malaysian film *Chemman Chaalai* (2005) in the presence of its young director Deepak Kumaran Menon. It was complemented by a three day long poster exhibition on "The History and Travels of Indian Cinema" at the library@esplanade and concluded with a panel discussion "Mad About Bollywood" moderated by Prof Chua Beng Huat in which film and television directors from Bombay, Singapore and Malaysia examined the claims of Indian popular cinema to mainstreaming in the "global village".

NEW ARI MEMBERS

Associate Professor Gregory Clancey

has commenced a 6-month appointment as an Associate with effect from 1 October 2008. He graduated from the MIT STS Program in 1998 and has since been teaching Japanese History and the History of Science and Technology at the National University of Singapore. Since 2006, he has been Assistant Dean of the Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences, where one of his priorities has been to build an STS Research Cluster. Six new scholars with this specialty across five different disciplines have been hired, with the goal of making Singapore a centre for this type of research and teaching in Asia.



At ARI, A/P Clancey will be working on one or more grant proposals to move this initiative further forward.

Dr Hoang Lan Anh

has commenced appointment as a Postdoctoral Fellow (Asian MetaCentre for Population and Sustainable Development Analysis) with effect from 3 Nov 2008. Her research interests include migration, development, social change, gender and power relations. Her PhD thesis looked into people's ability to exercise agency in household migration decision making with emphasis on gender and power norms and relations as both enabling and constraining social structures. Her professional experience in Vietnam i80 covers a wide range of issues from agriculture and rural development to local governance and community forestry.



While at ARI she will be working on a research project entitled 'Transnational Migration in South-East Asia and the Health of Children left Behind'.

Dr Heinz Scheifinger

has commenced a 1-year appointment as a Postdoctoral Fellow in the Religion and Globalisation Cluster with effect from 3 Nov 2008.

Broadly, Dr Scheifinger's research interests are concerned with globalisation and religion. Specifically, his prior research has centered upon the relationship between religion (especially Hinduism) and the Internet. To this end, he has conducted research in the Indian cities of Varanasi, Kolkata and Puri.



While at ARI, Dr Scheifinger will be pursuing a project which investigates the use of the Internet by Hindu temples in Singapore. Particular attention will be paid to the interplay between the global and the local as a result of online Hinduism.

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ARI SPECIAL FEATURE 1



Professor Wei-Jun Jean Yeung
Department of Sociology;
Asia Research Institute, NUS

Last summer, I moved from New York with my family to join NUS as a member of the Asia Research Institute and the Department of Sociology. This move is a significant milestone in both my personal and professional life. Personally, it is a home coming, back to Asia after a quarter of a century in North America. I was born and brought up in Taiwan. After finishing college, I went to the U.S and Canada to pursue postgraduate studies and subsequently had the privilege of working with some of the best minds in University of Michigan and New York University. Returning to Asia now with a family is an emotional experience. Conversing in Mandarin or Hokkien with cab drivers and enjoying shaved ice and *bak kut teh* at the hawker stands bring back fond childhood memories that I am thrilled to share with my children. Professionally, I have returned at a time when exciting socioeconomic transformations are unfolding at an unprecedented speed in Asia, as a new world order is emerging in the economic, political, and cultural systems. As a family sociologist and a demographer, I have landed on a fertile ground for research on Asian families in transition.

In the next few years, I plan to focus on understanding family transition in China and India. These two most populous countries in the world have distinct economic and family policies. Yet, they also share certain cultural values and practices. India's more gradual approach in economic development and population policy and China's more drastic economic reform and one-child policy have resulted in markedly different demographic trajectories and socioeconomic environments in these two countries.

I would like to learn how these different contexts shape people's behaviour and attitudes towards family formation (marriage, divorce, cohabitation, and fertility), gender roles, kinship network, and intergenerational transfers. As the globalization process continues, will the western idea of families based on liberalism of individual choices prevail in these countries? Will families in China and India undergo a "second demographic transition" as many western countries and experience an increase in divorce rates, single-parent families, cohabitation, and nonmarital births? Alternatively, will the traditional norms of extended families, filial piety,

male dominance, and son preference reinvent themselves into a new "Asian model(s?)" in modern China and India? Are gender roles more equal in China than in India as a result of the one-child policy? How are families in these two countries adapting to the different challenges they face, as a consequence of the divergent policies, in caring for elderly and children, in providing adequate access to education, health care, housing, and employment for all social strata?

The study of family, of course, goes beyond demography and includes pertinent topics such as family's economic well-being, health, human capital development of children, parenthood, and disparity among families of different ethnic and socioeconomic background. A systematic understanding of these issues will not only affect people residing in these two countries, but also shed light on the challenges and options that other countries face. I will base my research on data collected in recent national surveys in urban and rural areas across China and India. I hope my work in China and India will complement the strong expertise in Southeast Asia in ARI's research clusters such as Changing Family in Asia, Asian Migration and Sustainable Cities.

Among the most valuable experiences I obtained in the U.S. is the opportunity to participate in one of the longest running social science surveys conducted by the Institute of Social Research in University of Michigan – the Panel Study of Income Dynamics (PSID). In 1989, I joined the study as a graduate student and later became a co-principal investigator. This study, initiated in 1968 in an attempt to assess the War on Poverty, (a legislation introduced by President Lyndon Johnson to fight poverty), has collected rich data on thousands of American families spanning over three or more generations. Last year, we celebrated its 40th anniversary. Over the years, based on the study's data, more than 2,500 journal articles and books about the American family's economic, health, socio-psychological well-being have been published by more than 2,000 scholars all over the world, including several Nobel prize winners. Panel data permit in-depth examination of the causes and consequences of social and economic processes that repeated cross-sectional data do not. Countless policies have been made based on findings from these studies. It was eye-opening to see how survey methodologies developed after WWII can push social sciences to a new height to generate knowledge about a wide range of social processes. In the past few decades, such a model of family study has been used in many other countries in Europe and Asia.

I have been involved in studies conducted in China, Taiwan and in several European countries. In 1999, Academia Sinica conducted the first panel study of families in Taiwan. In 2008, I participated in an advisory capacity in the first national panel study of Chinese families and communities conducted by the Peking University. These are path breaking undertakings in social sciences in Asia to which I have strong conviction. Such a model could be adopted in NUS as well to promote interdisciplinary and comparative research. Endeavours as such will dovetail ARI's objectives of being a world-leading global social sciences and interdisciplinary hub for research and education on Asia.

I look forward to many productive exchanges with colleagues in this stimulating environment in the next few years. I hope to capitalize on my experience in research methods and my work on family well-being and policies to contribute to the advancement of social sciences in Asia.

ARI SPECIAL FEATURE 2



Rachel Rinaldo

**Postdoctoral Fellow, ARI
September 2007 – August 2008**

**Postdoctoral Fellow
September 2008 – June 2009
Center for the Pacific Rim
University of San Francisco**

**Assistant Professor
August 2009 –
Department of Sociology
University of Virginia**

I became captivated by the enormous social and political changes taking place in contemporary Indonesia when I was a graduate student in sociology at the University of Chicago. A number of years earlier, I had spent a year between high school and university as an exchange student in East Java, and was fascinated to find that my host family's ethnic group, the Minangkabau, balanced their matrilineal heritage with devout Islam. In 1998, everything suddenly changed in Indonesia. A dictatorship of more than 30 years crumbled, and women's rights activists played a crucial role in the democracy movement. When I returned to Indonesia in 1999, the differences were striking. Not only had Islam become more prominent, but women also seemed to be more involved in public life than ever before.

When I arrived in Indonesia for fieldwork in 2002, I had planned to study how women activists adapted Islamic and feminist discourses. But events, including the Bali and Jakarta bombings and the growth of conservative Islam, turned my interests to the intersections of gender, religion, and politics. My PhD dissertation "Mobilizing Piety: Women, Islam, and the Public Sphere in Indonesia" drew on ethnographic fieldwork with Muslim and secular women's groups in Jakarta to investigate how Islam matters for women's engagement in the public sphere.

While Islam is often viewed as antithetical to women's empowerment, I argue that knowledge of religion helps women activists to become legitimate actors in the public

sphere. The activist groups in my study have distinct strategies of mobilising religious knowledge as a means of entry to the public sphere. These engagements are tied to different relationships with globally-inspired Islamic teachings about gender, different adaptations of transnational feminist discourses on women's rights and equality, as well as contrasting conceptions of the relationship between religion and state. Because these women activists' use of Islamic discourses provides them with public legitimacy and the potential to mobilise across class lines, their different political imaginations all have the potential to shape national discourses and policies.

During my fellowship at ARI, I was able to conduct two additional months of fieldwork in which I revisited the groups in my study and also interviewed members of a Catholic women activist organisation. Additionally, I began publishing some of the results of my dissertation as journal articles. These articles include "Muslim Women, Middle Class Habitus, and Modernity in Indonesia" (in *Contemporary Islam*, February 2008) which applies ideas from Bourdieu to analyse the subjectivities of women in the Prosperous Justice Party, and "Envisioning the Nation: Women Activists, Religion, and the Public Sphere in Indonesia" (in *Social Forces*, June 2008) which contends that Muslim women activists are playing a role in the renegotiation of the Indonesian nation-state.

I have also begun developing a theoretical framework for a book based on my dissertation, which I will be working on during my 2008-2009 fellowship at the University of San Francisco. Discussions with ARI colleagues proved incredibly helpful in this regard, pushing me to think about my project in broader terms. Although still lacking a title, the book which I will call "Mobilizing Piety" for now, will use gender as a lens to examine religion in the Indonesian public sphere. Understanding how people regard their world and how they decide what constitutes right and wrong is a classic endeavor of sociology. The heart of "Mobilizing Piety" is an examination of Indonesian women activists' moral worldviews. I investigate their engagements with Islam and feminism, the ways they deploy moral visions in the public sphere, and consider the broader consequences of such activism in the public sphere, especially for women's equality.

"Mobilizing Piety" brings together three sociological issues: how moral frameworks guide social action, religion in the public sphere, and the relationship between women's agency and gender equality. The central finding is that reformist Islam contributes to disparate moral visions in Indonesia. I conclude that Islam can indeed help to legitimise women's activism at a time when religion is playing a greater role in the public sphere. But while some theorists highlight struggles for inclusion as the key dynamic of the public sphere, I argue that women's greater participation does not necessarily challenge inequalities. The central issue of the Indonesian public sphere is not merely inclusion, but which conceptions of right and wrong are hegemonic. I suggest that ultimately, public spheres in post-colonial societies like Indonesia may be characterised by struggles between liberal and illiberal norms, with uneven consequences for gender equality.

ASIAN METACENTRE NEWS

CHAMPSEA (Child Health and Migrant Parents in Southeast Asia)

Project funded by the Wellcome Trust, UK

The past year has been a busy but fruitful one for the CHAMPSEA team, having successfully completed the fieldwork for the quantitative phase in the four study countries of Indonesia, Philippines, Thailand and Vietnam. Fieldwork in these countries was launched two weeks apart from each other, with the Philippines starting first on 14 April 2008, followed by Indonesia on 28 April 2008, Thailand on 19 May 2008 and finally, Vietnam on 26 May 2008. On average, each country spent around three months in the field and data collection as well as entry for this phase was completed in November 2008.

During the few critical months, different members of the team based in Singapore (National University of Singapore) and Scotland (St. Andrews University) were able to join in the fieldwork activities in the various countries and offer their assistance in the training of the interviewers as well as visit the study sites. The provinces that were eventually selected for the



During training in the Philippines...

study were East Java and West Java for Indonesia, Laguna and Bulacan for the Philippines, Lampang and Udon Thani for Thailand and Thai Binh and Hai Duong in Vietnam. Over 4,000 households took part in the study with each household completing up to three questionnaires: Household Questionnaire, Carer Questionnaire, Older Child Questionnaire or Young Child Activity.



The interview must go on, rain or shine.

The CHAMPSEA team then met in January 2009 in Singapore to take stock of the progress made. The in-country coordinators were happy to report that the problems encountered in the field were few and that the study in general was welcomed by the community. Initial findings from the quantitative phase were discussed, providing a springboard for the qualitative phase of conducting in-depth interviews with carers of left-behind children in all study countries. The timely appointment of Dr Hoang Lan Anh, Postdoctoral Fellow based in Singapore,

has further strengthened the team in its preparations for the qualitative phase.

Once again, we are deeply grateful to the in-country teams especially the in-country coordinators and co-coordinators, Dr Sukamdi and Dr Anna Marie Wattie (Center for Population and Policy Studies, Indonesia); Dr Maruja Asis and Ms Cecilia Marave (Scalabrini Migration Center, Philippines); Dr Aree Jampaklay and Dr Patama Vapattanawong (Institute for Population and Social Research, Mahidol University, Thailand), Dr Dang N. Anh and Dr Nguyen Duc Vinh (VAPEC, Vietnam), as well as their local collaborators for all the hard work they have put in.

The CHAMPSEA team would also like to congratulate Dr Andiara Schwingel, Postdoctoral Fellow formerly based in Singapore, on her recent marriage. Though we were sad to see her leave Singapore, we are thankful to her for her hard work during the first two phases of the project and wish her well in her marriage and future endeavors.

We would also like to thank Asia Research Institute, National University of Singapore, for kindly hosting the CHAMPSEA team during our last meeting in January 2009.

Do continue to watch this space as we hope to be able to present our findings before long! You can also obtain updates from our webpage, <http://www.populationasia.org/CHAMPSEA.htm>.



Recent Publication

Asian Demographic and Human Capital Datasheet 2008

Continued from page 6

Dr Peter Wolfgang Marolt has commenced a 1-year appointment as a Postdoctoral Fellow in the Open Category with effect from 17 Nov 2008.



Dr Marolt's research interests include social theory, urban and cultural/political geographies, and related post-disciplinary studies pertaining to globalization, the Internet, and China. In his recent Ph.D. project, he zoomed in on place-based individual agency, and the concrete expressions and processes that operate through, and in turn configure, the Chinese-language blogosphere.

At ARI, Dr Marolt will work on journal articles based on his dissertation research, and revise his thesis into a publishable monograph. He also hopes to begin a new project that adds a comparative (urban) perspective to 'global blog studies.'

Prof Vera Mackie has commenced a 3-month appointment as a Visiting Senior Research Fellow in the Open Category with effect from 2 February 2009.



She obtained her BA Hons and MA from Monash University, and her PhD from the University of Adelaide. She is currently with the Australian Research Council Australian Professorial Fellow in the School of Historical Studies at the University of Melbourne where she is working on 'A Cultural History of the Body in Modern Japan'.

While at ARI, she proposes to write up her research on The Embodied Experiences of Globalisation in the Asia-Pacific Region and edit a collection of papers on this theme.

ARI RECOGNITION AND NEW BOOKS

Professor Anthony Reid delivered a keynote lecture titled "Understanding Nationalism in Asia", at the Biennial Conference of Indian Association for Asian and Pacific Studies, Santiniketan, 22 August 08. He also gave a presentation on "Non-state Civilizations in the Indian Ocean: Unities of Religion and Language" at a conference on The Formation of the Great Civilisations; Swedish Collegium for Advanced Studies, Uppsala, Sweden, 22 October 2008.

Professor Brenda Yeoh was appointed Vice-Dean (Research) of Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences, NUS, in January 2009.

Professor Bryan Turner was awarded the degree Doctor of Letters from the University of Cambridge, UK, at the end of 2008 in recognition of his research and publications record.

Professor Chua Beng Huat delivered a keynote address titled "Communication and Regulation of Culture in East Asia" at the International Conference on Production and Regulation of Culture in East Asia, Institute of East Asian Studies, Sungkonghoe University, Seoul, Korea, 28 June 2008.

He delivered another keynote address titled "Disrupting Hegemonic Liberalism in East Asia" at the International Conference on Globalization: Cultures, Institutions and Socioeconomics", Chinese University of Hong Kong – Washington University, Hong Kong 12-13 December 2008.

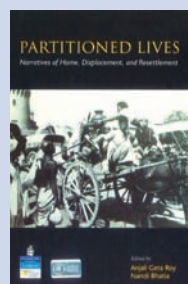
He was also appointed Convener for the Cultural Studies Minor Programme, Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences, NUS, from 1 July 2008 to 30th June 2009.

Professor Gavin Jones has been appointed by the National Population and Family Development Board of Malaysia to coordinate a team of consultants working with the Board to prepare the 2nd Population Strategic Plan Study Malaysia. This study will be completed before the end of 2009.

Professor Jean Yeung Wei-Jun delivered a keynote address titled "Utility and Research with Children's Time Diaries: Illustration with the Panel Study of Income Dynamics" to the Australian Government, Department of Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs (FaHCSIA), 3 December 2008.

She was also appointed by the Ministry of Education to the Board of Trustees for the Institute of Southeast Asia Studies, starting January 2009.

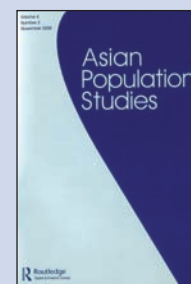
Professor V. Venkata Krishna gave 5 invited lectures on "Sectoral System of Innovation: ICT software and Pharma Sectors in India", "Indian Scientific Community Colonial and Post-Colonial Trends", "Globalisation and Changing Social Contract Between Science and Society: Some Implications", "Science, Technology and Innovation", "Internationalisation of R&D and Global Nature of Innovation: Emerging Trends in India", at Institute of Science, Technology and Society, Tsinghua University, Beijing and Shanghai International Business Administration School, Tongji University, Shanghai, China, 22-30 November 2008.



Partitioned Lives: Narratives of Home, Displacement and Resettlement

Anjali Gera Roy and Nandi Bhatia (editors)

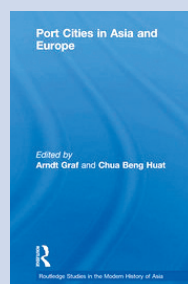
Delhi: Pearson Longman
2008



'Talent' Migration In and Out of Asia: Challenges for Policies and Places

Special Issue, *Asian Population Studies*, 4 (3)

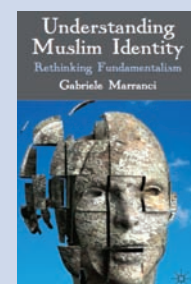
Brenda Yeoh and Lai Ah Eng (editors)
2008



Port Cities in Asia and Europe

Chua Beng Huat and Arndt Graf (editors)

London and New York:
Routledge
Studies in the Modern History of Asia Series
2008



Understanding Muslim Identity, Rethinking Fundamentalism

Gabriele Marranci

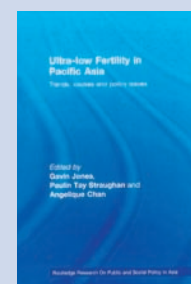
London & New York, Palgrave
Macmillan
2009



Recipes for Immortality: Medicine, Religion, and Community in South India

Richard S. Weiss

New York,
Oxford University Press
2009



Ultra-Low Fertility in Pacific Asia: Trends, Causes and Policy Issues

Gavin Jones, Paulin Tay Straughan and Angelique Chan (editors)

London: Routledge
2008



China and Southeast Asia (6 volumes)

Edited and Introduced by **Geoff Wade**

London & New York, Routledge
Library on Southeast Asia
2008

Finding 'Religion' in Asia: Personal Reflections on a Singaporean Appointment

A farewell article by
Professor Bryan S. Turner
National University of Singapore



I left Cambridge University to take up the position of Research Leader of the Globalization and Religion cluster at ARI in January 2005. I had never before conducted research on Southeast Asia. Four years later my ideas about 'religion' have seriously changed. What changed my understanding of religious phenomena? Travelling throughout Asia and the experience of religious practices constantly challenged my intellectual understanding of the subject matter of the sociology of religion.

I spent time in Bangkok with Pattana Kitiarsa studying religious commodification in modern Thailand. His special interest is amulets. My understanding of Buddhism came from my former teacher, Trevor Ling, who viewed it as an austere religion of mendicant monks whose lifestyle cut them off from everyday worlds. In Bangkok I found Buddhist monks – often referred to as 'magic monks' - blessing and selling amulets on a huge religious market, and celebrating the activities of rock groups, corrupt politicians and football stars. In the side streets, mountains of amulets were on offer to secure luck in sex, money making, and careers. New amulets regularly appear on the market, commanding high prices only to fall in value as newer amulets arrive. Reconciling this market with my textbook vision of Buddhism suddenly became problematic. Trying to understand this experience, I eventually wrote a chapter on new forms of spirituality in Kitiarsa's *Religious Commodifications in Asia*.

My second transformative experience was to attend with Julius Bautista an open-air church service held by a charismatic lay person called Brother Mike near the city airport of Manila. Brother Mike's followers are members of

El Shaddai, a movement associated with the Catholic Church which serves the poor. The 'congregation' that evening was said to be 54,000 in number. When I arrived around seven o'clock, this multitude had already attended a Catholic mass lasting many hours and by dusk they were warming up to greet Brother Mike. The evening service closely resembled American-style TV evangelism with rock bands, dancing and collective singing. Eventually Brother Mike arrived on stage in a bright red jacket, a bow-tie, jet black hair and a mouthful of smiling teeth. He was a consummate performance artist, teasing the audience and draining emotion from them. The major theme of his sermon was that 'Miracles happen'. One might recover from a serious illness; a barren wife might have a child; you could win the lottery. Large sums of money were collected during the evening as jumbo jets thundered, insects nattered and sweat ran. The preaching and hymns lasted until late at night, and finally the jostling crowd left on jeeps and trucks, arriving home in the early hours of the morning.

My third experience was more intimate and involved saying prayers in a narrow old house in Hanoi near Red River. In an upstairs room given over to offerings of fruit and prayers, we bowed before three images – a faded black-and-white photograph of a dead soldier husband, a statue of Buddha, and a commercial picture of Ho Chi Minh. Our prayers were also directed at ancestors who have some responsibility to look after the household and its living members. The lady of the house is still a staunch communist and therefore I don't think she liked me. I am bourgeois, western and rich.

These experiences at ARI have led me to concentrate on religion as an ensemble of practices concerned with health, wealth, misfortune and the dead. I developed these ideas in a special issue of *Contemporary Islam* by exploring piety and its relationship to the new middle classes in Asia. Religious beliefs and the question of the meaningfulness of life do not appear to impinge on any of these religious practices and institutions. It appears that secularization is not a feature of Asian societies. Religious practices, especially Taoism and spirit possession, are flourishing in China, Vietnam and elsewhere. People borrow promiscuously from whatever religious traditions are to hand. Confucianism – not a religion in my view – pervades everything and communism appears to have had little lasting impact. I am now more interested in religious objects – amulets, statues, altars, sacred places, stones, rivers, mountains. One issue that has struck me forcibly is that objects might be ineffable or speechless representations of sacred powers – an idea I explored in an article in *Theory Culture & Society* titled 'Religious Speech: The Ineffable Nature of Religious Communication in the Information Age'. The human body is central to such practices – an idea I developed in the third edition of *The Body and Society*.

These years at ARI have been inestimably rich and rewarding. I am grateful to the research directors, my cluster colleagues and visiting fellows for their encouragement and support. However, a lot of thinking still needs to be done.



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