

ARI news

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ARABIA-ASIA RELATIONS, THEN AND NOW

Inaugural Muhammad
Alagil Arabia-Asia Chair
Conference, June 2014

THE POLITICS OF HISTORY: Indonesia Redefined





PROF PRASENJIT DUARA

WORD FROM THE DIRECTOR

The last four months have been typically busy for ARI. There were about a dozen conferences, including of course the annual and 9th Singapore Graduate Forum on Southeast Asian Studies which capped off our somewhat reduced Asian Graduate Student fellowship programme which we host every summer.

Two new initiatives were also launched during these events. The first was the inaugural *AAS-IN-ASIA CONFERENCE 2014 - Asia in Motion: Heritage and Transformation* held on 17-19 July about which we describe in more depth inside; the other was the first Arabia-Asia conference held under the auspices of the Muhammad Alagil Distinguished Chair in Arabia-Asia Studies which was established in January 2014. Kudos are due to Prof Eng seng Ho, the holder of the Distinguished Chair, and ARI Senior Manager, Sharlene Xavier, as well as Valerie, Sharon and Jonathan of the Events team for pulling off such a successful inaugural event within three months of securing the grant. Prof Ho discusses the event and the research agenda of the programme.

As usual, we have had a fair number of visiting scholars from abroad including Armando Salvatore who will be joining McGill University as Chair Professor of Islamic Studies, Prof Shu-mei Shih of UCLA and Hong Kong University, and Prof Adrian Vickers of Sydney University whose work on Indonesia is also featured in the newsletter. These visitors, together with many others,

gave several talks in ARI and elsewhere in NUS and shared their cutting edge research in various fields of Humanities and Social Sciences.

Finally, we would like to bid goodbye to two long-term stalwarts of ARI. The first of these is Prof Gavin Jones who has now retired after his tremendous contribution since the early days of ARI. Among all his notable achievements is the founding of the *Asian Population Studies* journal, which has been gaining established reputation in the field. We greatly thank Prof Jones for his dedication to ARI and we wish him the best retirement ever. The second is Jonathan Lee, the young member of our Events team, who not only sent you the weekly updates on events but managed many of the talks, seminars, workshops and conferences together with Valerie and Sharon. His radiant presence—often accompanied by a song or a joke—made the complicated management of our cascading events seem effortless. He also discovered a talent for making eye-catching posters for our events. We will miss him a great deal, but we wish him good luck.

Prof Chua Beng Huat has been appointed as a Member of the Advisory Board of the Centre for Cultural Studies, Chinese University of Hong Kong.

He also presented a keynote address on "Unintended Consequences of Multiracialism and Bilingual Education in Singapore" at the conference on *Minority Students, Social Justice and Equal Educational Opportunity: Rethinking Multicultural Education*, the 20th Annual International Conference of Sociology of Education, National Taiwan Normal University, Taipei, 16-17 May 2014.

Dr Sharon Quah gave an invited plenary on "'The Whole Village Must Help': Exploring the Effectiveness of Social Support for Singaporean

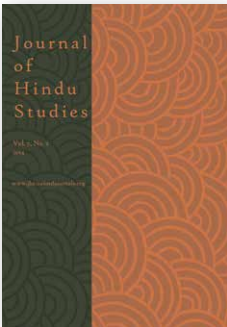
Divorced Parents" at the *11th Family Research Forum*, Civil Service College, Ministry of Social and Family Development, Singapore, 28 April 2014.

Prof Brenda Yeoh gave 2 keynote speeches: "Indonesian Domestic Workers and the (Un)Making of Transnational Livelihoods and Provisional Futures" (co-authored with M. Platt, C.Y. Khoo, T. Lam, and G. Baey), at the workshop on *Transnational Migration and Global Work*, Geovetenskapens hus, Stockholm University, Sweden, 6-7 March 2014; "Emotional Entanglements, Transnational Affect and the Shaping of Migration Trajectories among Indonesian Domestic Workers in Singapore" (co-authored with M. Platt, C.Y. Khoo, T. Lam, and G. Baey), at the workshop on *The Emotions of*

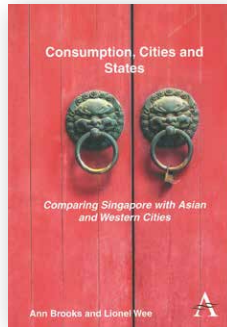
Migration, University of Malaya, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, 8-9 August 2014.

Prof Yeoh also gave an invited plenary on "Care and Cosmopolitanism in the Global City: Transnational Care Workers and the Eldercare Crisis in Singapore" (co-authored with S. Huang), at the *10th Crossroads in Cultural Studies Conference*, Tampere, Finland, 1-4 July 2014. In addition, she has been reappointed Member of the Arts Advisory Panel, National Arts Council, for the period 1 April 2014 to 31 March 2016.

Prof Jean Yeung Wei-Jun was reappointed as a Member of the Advisory Board of the Peking University Social Science Research Institute in March 2014.



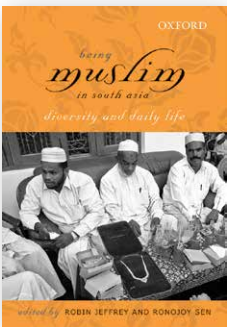
Andrea Acri (guest ed)
Text and Reality in the Study of Balinese Hinduism
Special Issue of *Journal of Hindu Studies* 7(2), 2014



Ann Brooks and Lionel Wee
Consumption, Cities and States: Comparing Singapore with Asian and Western Cities
Anthem, London & NY, 2014



Martin van Bruinessen (ed)
Conservative Turn. Islam Indonesia dalam Ancaman Fundamentalisme
Al-Mizan, Bandung, Indonesia, 2014



Robin Jeffrey and Ronojoy Sen (eds)
Being Muslim in South Asia: Diversity and Daily Life
Oxford University Press, India, 2014



Gavin W. Jones and Wei-Jun Jean Yeung (guest eds)
Marriage in Asia
Special Issue of *Journal of Family Issues* 35(12);
doi:10.1177/0192513X14538029



Peter Marolt and David Kurt Herold (eds)
China Online: Locating Society in Online Spaces
Routledge, New York, 2014

ARI HOSTS THE INAUGURAL AAS-IN-ASIA CONFERENCE

PROF PRASENJIT DUARA
AND ASSOC PROF MICHAEL FEENER

After two and a half years of preparation and mobilisation across continents and high levels of commitment from a succession of AAS presidents, AAS staff, ARI events team and FASS/ARI committees, the inaugural AAS-in-Asia Conference finally took place between July 17th and 19th and went off as smoothly as we hoped. Indeed, AAS President, Professor Mrinalini Sinha noted, "There is no denying that this, our inaugural AAS-in-Asia, was a big success. On behalf of the AAS, thank you." Thanks for the success of the event are also due to the co-sponsorship by the Singapore Tourism Board, the Singapore Exhibition & Convention Bureau, and the BestCities Global Alliance.

The landmark event marks the beginning of an important new initiative in the globalisation of Asian Studies, kicking off a series of other such meetings to be held over the coming years in other Asian cities, with future meetings already scheduled for Taipei (2015) and Kyoto (2016). The idea behind holding a smaller version of AAS-in-Asia nourishes the hope that panels will be formed with a mix of scholars and reflective practitioners in diverse policy and professional fields working in Asia, the USA and other parts of the world. We think the goal was achieved in this inaugural conference.

The theme of the conference, "Asia in Motion: Heritage and Transformation," managed to provide a broad and stimulating rubric for proposals. The call for papers attracted a bumper crop of proposals from humanists and social scientists, as well as people from the worlds of law, policy, civil society and other fields. Although we could only accept less than 30% of the panel proposals, in addition to the keynote and special sessions, we were able to

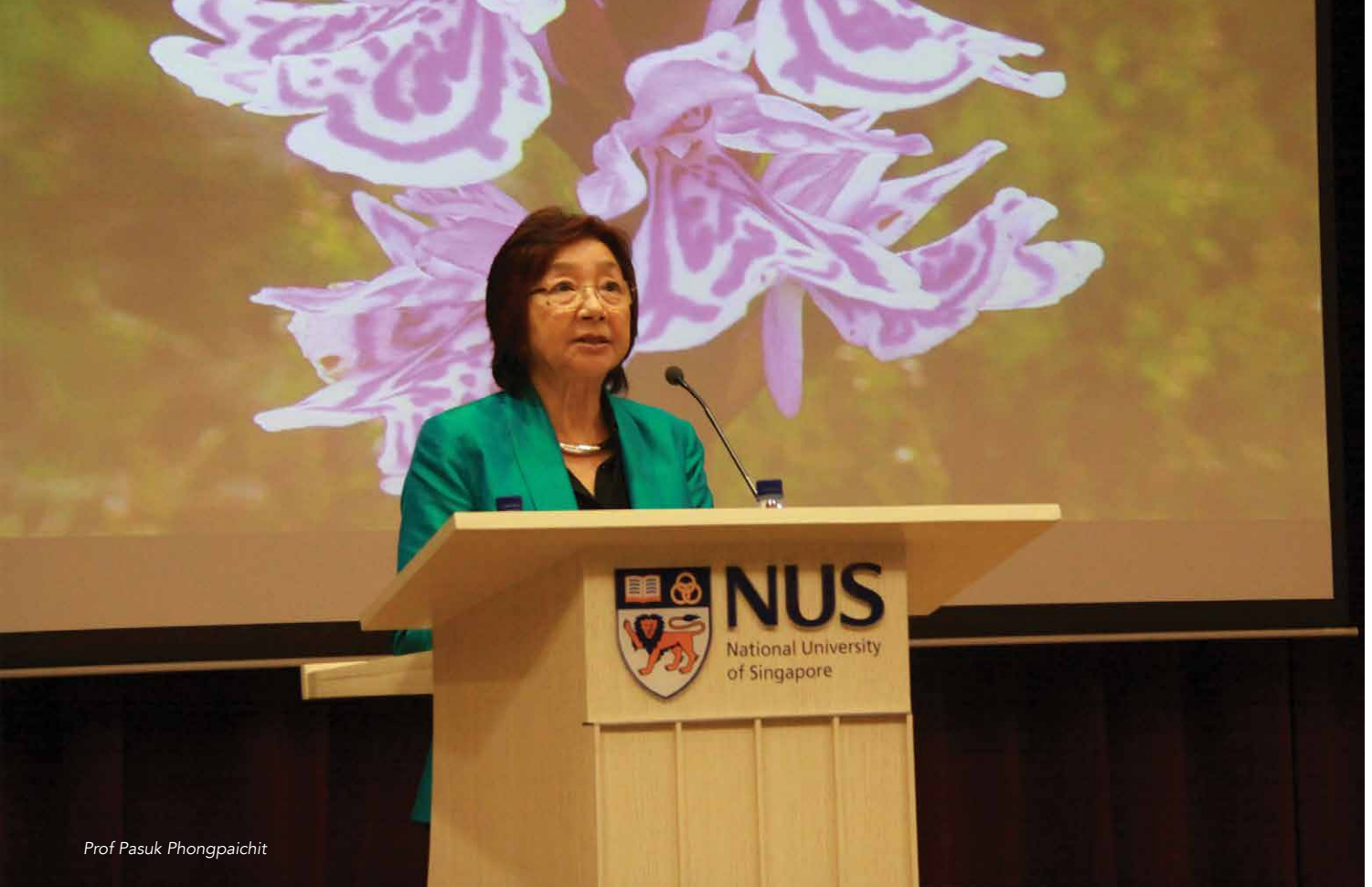
hold about 80 panel sessions. In all, 505 registered participants from 32 countries from around the world, approximately two-thirds of which from Asia, attended.

The conference was designed to help support the development of new lines of investigation in global Asian studies. By bringing together Asian specialists from abroad with scholars and practitioners in Asia whose routine expertise is grounded in the region but not necessarily foregrounded as "Asian Studies," a number of panels on the programme became exciting sites for interaction, and a number of them have stimulated discussions among participants about possible future research collaborations.

The two and a half days of panels were bookended with keynote addresses by Dipesh Chakrabarty (University of Chicago), and Pasuk Phongpaichit (Chulalongkorn University). Professor Chakrabarty's talk, "Asian Studies in a Planetary Age: Rethinking Location" opened the event by posing a compelling critical question to the theme of the conference, asking "Where

does one think about heritage?" His exploration of this question helped to push the discussion of issues of concern to many of the scholars at the conference from the traditional frameworks of area studies to a planetary scale engaging with the urgent and complex challenges of shared human futures in an age of an increasingly severe climate crisis.

Professor Phongpaichit's keynote, "Inequity, Oligarchy, and Protest: Reflections on our Time", then shifted scale back to a careful consideration of major economic and political dynamics at work on the scale of human societies in contemporary Southeast Asia. Drawing on the current empirical realities of countries in the region, she challenged some of the dominant positions in global literature dealing with economic inequality and its socio-political consequences. She specifically highlighted the ways in which various combinations of traditional conceptions of social hierarchy, cultural conservatism skeptical of democratic ideals, and the effects of interventionist development policies have served to foster the



Prof Pasuk Phongpaichit

consolidation of oligarchies in many countries of the region. At the same time, she also pointed to the fact that within such contexts, challenges to oligarchy may take forms unfamiliar to observers without a deep grounding in the particularities of contemporary Asian societies—thus highlighting the need for continual work in a broad range of fields to refine our understandings of developments across this internally diverse and dynamic region.

The wide-ranging critical conversations stimulated by these two talks and the range of papers presented and discussed in the panel sessions made for a very stimulating conference and helped to foster the formation of new networks of research cooperation connecting scholars from across the region and beyond. We look forward to this initial burst of intellectual and network energy being sustained and developed during future such events in Asian studies in Taiwan, Japan and beyond.



Prof Dipesh Chakrabarty

ARABIA-ASIA RELATIONS, THEN AND NOW

INAUGURAL MUHAMMAD ALAGIL ARABIA-ASIA CHAIR CONFERENCE, JUNE 2014

PROF ENGSENG HO

In January 2014, Mr Muhammad Alagil of Riyadh, Saudi Arabia, endowed a Chair in Arabia-Asia Studies at the Asia Research Institute, NUS. The inaugural conference was held six months later in June, with Mr Alagil and President Tan Chorh Chuan of NUS participating in the opening panel, along with ARI Director Prasenjit Duara and Alagil Chair Engsens Ho.

Prof Tan stressed the importance of Arabia-Asia relations, noting the existence of a new generation of scholars working in the field, and among them welcomed home NUS alumni who had continued their work in leading universities abroad. In doing so, he also alerted them to the founding of a new PhD programme in comparative and connective Asian studies at NUS.

Prof Duara emphasised the thematic and strategic importance of Asian connections to ARI and to Singapore, and welcomed the addition of Arabia-Asia to this nexus.

Mr Alagil observed that while relations between the Middle East and the West have been full of conflicts and wars, relations between Arabia and Asia were much more peaceful and historically deep; and they were resurgent today. Yet the former has been widely studied, while the latter neglected. Mr Alagil explained that the naming of the chair—Arabia-Asia—

was meant to make clear this contrast. Here was a historic opportunity for scholars to study Arabia-Asia, as has been done for relations between the Middle East and the West.

Indeed, Arabia-Asia relations cover a broad canvas, encompassing trade, diplomacy, labour, religion, language, literature, kinship and culture. This breadth of engagement was represented in the audience, who filled the ARI seminar room to capacity, and included prominent leaders in diplomacy, government, finance and the Singapore Arab community. The theme of the conference, that Arabia-Asia relations were like *Slender But Supple Threads*, not always thick or visible, but nevertheless strong and enduring, resonated with the audience. At the opening panel, a number of them were moved to recount their family histories, with ancestors coming from elsewhere, intermarrying with various ethnic groups, and cultivating businesses

and friendships with one another. While relations between Arabia and Asia have existed continuously for centuries, modern scholarship has been divided by countries and regions, rendering those relations opaque. The conference was designed to overcome these divides by bringing together scholars working along a number of Arabia-Asia axes: to compare notes, complement each other, make mutual discoveries, and identify common areas of interest and ignorance. In that respect, the meeting was stimulating, and sparked lively discussions that we hope will bear fruit in developing research agendas.

Panelists came from Tunisia, Saudi Arabia, Yemen, Oman, India, Indonesia, Malaysia, Singapore, China, Korea and the USA.

Panels were focused on topics such as Arabia-Asia trading ports, Arabians in Asian cities, intellectual and organisational journeys, publishing, pilgrimage, and diaspora-state relations. It was striking that in many of these arenas of Arabia-Asia interaction, contemporary developments resonated strongly with historical precedents. The opening paper by Ho Wai-Yip introduced a maximal spatial and temporal stage, linking two cities at the limits of Arabia-Asia—Aden and Canton—in the thirteenth century and the present. Arabian trading diasporas, which had been active in Rasulid and Sung times, were again active in Canton today, even as China has been rebuilding roads and ports in Yemen. While Aden's traffic slowed during the socialist period, Dubai took up its role in

Indian Ocean trade, developing primacy in global logistics, as did its counterpart Singapore, as discussed by Engeng Ho, while profiting from and benefiting nearer regions such as Kerala in India, in an intertwined traffic of gold and labour, as demonstrated by Nisha Mathew.

Both the dynamism of contemporary Arabia-Asia relations and their resonance with the past was also captured in papers on individual cities, by Sumit Mandal and Aryo Danusiri. New Yemeni chefs partner with old creole Arab-Malaysian businessmen and women, making their mark on the culinary scene of Kuala Lumpur, while Arab saints are rediscovered or disappear as Jakarta undergoes relentless urban redevelopment. Riots erupt around saints' tombs as port cities boom,

Saudi-Chinese cousins' summer reunion party in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia: 1 Cake, 2 Countries, 3 Celebrations. Abdullah Qi al-Sini graduates from grade school in Xiamen China; cousin Abdullah Ma al-Sini graduates from high school in Jeddah; sister Nur Ma al-Sini celebrates her birthday. Photo by Janice Jeong, History Department, Duke University.



accompanied by new waves of diasporic Asians and Arabs carried along old trade routes between Dubai, Singapore and Canton.

Beneath the historical waves of business opportunity underlay a constant flow of scholars and pilgrims, journeying between Asia and Arabia. Papers by Michael Feener, Dadi Darmadi, Janice Jeong and Ismail Alatas shed new light on the formative influence such journeys had on intellectual developments in Arabia, Islamic organisations in Indonesia and China, and the revival of old centres of learning in Hadramawt. Diasporas from Asia shape the urban character of Mecca, while enabling the smooth functioning of the Hajj itself, as papers by Muhammad Sbitli and Muhammad Arafat revealed. Moving in the other direction, Muhammad Ba Dhib and Abdul Jaleel PKM detailed the propagation of Islamic publications and Sufi networks by Hadramis in India. At the boundary of Arabia and Asia, Oman became highly dependent upon trade between the two regions, as shown by Ismail al-Zadjali.

Nurfadzilah Yahaya's closing paper caused a near uproar among the audience, as her incisive analysis uncovered the strategies diasporic Hadramis employed to navigate the strictures of Islamic and colonial law governing inheritance and religious endowments in Singapore and the region. Such transactions, in addition to the other writings generated by literate Hadramis, left

a rich documentary trail that is being archived and published by Abd al-Rahman Bilfaqih and Ali Anis al-Kaf, who gave an overview of their important work in documenting and publishing the Hadrami heritage.

In order to overcome the limitations of colonial record-keeping and its profound effect on scholarship, two panels were conducted in Arabic, which enabled a more robust exchange across the regions than usual.

The concluding discussion opened up broad avenues for future collaborations. Themes of interest include new arrivals in old destinations, material circulations, biographies of multi-talented individuals, compiling a reference list of names found in letters, significance of long histories in the present, port-cities, pilgrimage, and archival collections of textual, visual and oral material, including interviews with knowledgeable elderly persons. Institutions to be drawn into scholarly collaborations in the coming months and years include ARI; Universitas Islam Negeri Syarif Hidayatullah, Jakarta; Omani public institutions; the King Faisal Centre for Research and Islamic Studies, Riyadh; the Tarim and Alkaf centres for publishing and archives, Hadramawt; Darul Huda Islamic University, Kerala.

Prof Engseng Ho is Muhammad Alagil Distinguished Visiting Professor, ARI, NUS and Professor of Anthropology and History, Duke University.

THE POLITICS OF HISTORY: INDONESIA REDEFINED

PROF ADRIAN VICKERS

In the recent Indonesian presidential election, history was everywhere. Both candidates appealed to the spirit of past presidents: Prabowo Subianto by even dressing in the style of Indonesia's first president, Sukarno, while also claiming to be the heir of Sukarno's nemesis, Suharto; Joko Widodo, or Jokowi, by praying at the grave of fourth president Abdurrahman Wahid (Gus Dur), and by making use of some of Sukarno's slogans.¹

Prabowo's campaign incorporated (misleadingly) part of a documentary about the nineteenth-century freedom fighter Diponegoro so as to give the appearance that leading historian Peter Carey endorsed Prabowo as a heroic heir to Diponegoro (which was not the case). As the campaign got nastier, allegations were spread that Jokowi was the child of a communist who would bring back the communist party that was wiped out by mass murder in 1965.²

These events were samples of a much larger attempt to re-interpret Indonesian history that has been the subject of a book I have been completing while being an ARI Visiting Senior Research Fellow. As a historian my curiosity about the re-writing of Indonesian history was first sparked in the period immediately after the fall of Suharto in 1998, when I became aware of the flaring up of new books on history written by Indonesians and for Indonesians. Funded by a grant from the Australian Research Council, I set out to investigate what I am calling "re-writing the nation." I call it that because the many new accounts of history that are emerging are ways for Indonesians to redefine what their nation means in the absence of the Suharto regime's strongly controlled and heavily censored version of history.

The revision of Indonesian history most frequently discussed is the dispute about the events around the fall of Sukarno, beginning with a purge of generals on 30 September 1965; then followed by the killing of at least 500,000 people accused of being communists, and the imprisonment and oppression of a similar number;

and sealed by the signing over of power from Sukarno to Suharto in 1966. Discussions of the killings were banned during the Suharto period, and his New Order regime presented the 30 September events as a "treacherous" "coup" that was part of an attempt by the communists to take over Indonesia. The army, led by Suharto, were the "saviours" of the nation in this narrative. A new school history syllabus created in 2004 threw out the New Order story of 1965, but that syllabus in turn was revoked in favour of the Suharto-era version some two years later. The issue continues to smoulder, fuelled in particular by Islamic groups.

Yet "1965" was not the most popular topic for writers of history books. My research assistants (led by Safrina Thristiawati) and I found out about this when we put together a database of nearly 2,000 history books published between the fall of Suharto in 1998 and the dictator's death in 2008.

Making sense of the multitude of topics has meant comparing the key topics with the major trends in wider Indonesian historiography. Topics that have been important in the development of school curricula generally remain important. The clustering of topics showed that ancient history, local history, the history of Islam, the history of nationalism and those of the Sukarno and Suharto periods were the major areas of intensity. The more I looked, the more that Islam emerged as a common thread in examining the other major topics and points of contention in writings on history.



History books at the Culture Section of a bookshop in Yogyakarta, Indonesia

New versions of the history of the medieval Javanese kingdom of Majapahit are turning this Hindu-Buddhist kingdom into an Islamic sultanate. If this is not extravagant enough, other accounts are giving Islam precedence in the founding of Indonesia's nationalist movement at the beginning of the twentieth century, as well as making it the centre of the Indonesian Revolution of 1945–49. Some of these writings are based on earlier underground publications while others are new and surprising in their assertions. In their most extreme they attack older forms of history writing as part of an imagined conspiracy against Islam.

Such narratives are part of a broader attempt to Islamise the Indonesian past, but these attempts are increasingly coming under challenge. Counter-narratives pit “Indonesian” Islam against what the authors claim is an outside “Arab” form of the religion, but these are mild compared to attempts to reassert the pre-Islamic past as the basis of the “real” Indonesia. Such disputes show that Indonesia no longer has a clear, authoritative national ideology. The politics of Indonesian history are part of a fundamental rethinking of what Indonesia means to its citizens, and it is hardly surprising that 250 million people cannot agree on a single meaning.



Indonesia's Vice President Jusuf Kalla giving opening remarks at the centenary of Budi Utomo conference in 2008

Prof Adrian Vickers was Visiting Senior Research Fellow, ARI, NUS, from March to June 2014. He is Professor of Southeast Asian Studies at the University of Sydney where he is also Director of the Asian Studies Program, and Director of the Australian Centre for Asian Art & Archaeology.

References

- 1 John Roosa, “Sukarno’s Two Bodies”, *New Mandala* 26 May 2014, <http://asiapacific.anu.edu.au/newmandala/2014/05/26/sukarnos-two-bodies/>, accessed 3 August 2014.
- 2 Vanessa Hearman, “Spectre of Anti-Communist Smears Resurrected against Jokowi”, *The Conversation* 4 July 2014, <http://theconversation.com/spectre-of-anti-communist-smears-resurrected-against-jokowi-28730>, accessed 3 August 2014.



Dr Michiel Baas has commenced a 1-year appointment as a Research Fellow in the Asian Migration Cluster with effect from 2 June 2014. He received both his PhD and MA in Anthropology/Sociology from the University of Amsterdam.

At ARI, he will be working on the topic of mid-level skilled migration from India to Singapore. The research builds upon and expands his PhD research which looked at Indian student-migrant flows to Australia. The project will also draw inspiration from his research project in India which revolved around new professional categories that have emerged as a result of recent economic growth in India.



Dr Fiona Lee has commenced a 1-year appointment as a Postdoctoral Fellow in the Cultural Studies in Asia Cluster with effect from 29 July 2014.

Dr Lee earned her PhD in English and Women's Studies Certificate at The Graduate Center, The City University of New York. Her research interests include modern/contemporary literature and visual media in Southeast Asia; postcolonial/transnational literature; and, postcolonial, critical race, feminist, and queer theories. At ARI, Dr Lee will be writing a book tentatively titled, *Reading Nation in Translation*. Based on her doctoral research, this book illuminates how translation plays a vital role in shaping the national racial imaginary of Malaysia.



Prof Eng seng Ho has commenced a 5-year appointment as the Muhammad Alagil Distinguished Visiting Professor in Arabia-Asia Studies in the Metacluster: Historical Sociology of Asian Connections, from 2 June 2014.

He is Professor of Anthropology and Professor of History at Duke University, US, and a specialist on Arab/Muslim diasporas across the Indian Ocean. He will be holding meetings and workshops to gather scholars working along various Arabia-Asia axes from different parts of Arabia and Asia.



Assoc Prof Pardis Mahdavi has commenced a 3-month appointment as a Visiting Senior Research Fellow in the Asian Migration Cluster with effect from 20 August 2014. She is Associate Professor and Chair of Anthropology at Pomona College. She received her PhD and MA in Anthropology from Columbia University. Her research interests include gendered labour, migration, sexuality, human rights, youth culture, transnational feminism and public health in the context of changing global and political structures.



Dr Paul Reddish has commenced a 3-month appointment as Research Associate in the Science, Technology, and Society cluster with effect from 1 July 2014.

He holds a PhD in Psychology from Victoria University of Wellington. His research focus examines the social effects of religion and rituals and the cognition that underlies religious thought and behaviour. Dr Reddish will be examining the social effects of collective rituals in collaboration with Dr Philip Cho (NUS, ARI), Eddie Tong (NUS), and Harvey Whitehouse (University of Oxford).

At ARI, she will be completing her fourth single-authored book entitled *The Family Detention Complex: (Im)Mobility and (Im)migrations across Asia*, based on five years of ethnographic research in the migrant receiving countries of the Gulf as well as in migrant sending countries such as Indonesia, the Philippines, Malaysia, Madagascar and South Africa.

ASIAN MIGRATION CLUSTER READING GROUP "CARTOGRAPHIES"

DR MALINI SUR AND DR ZHANG JUAN

The Asian Migration Cluster held a reading group entitled "Cartographies" from August 2013 till July 2014. This group re-engaged with the classics and contemporary theoretical debates in the social sciences. In each session, scholars explored a theme clustered around a set of key authors. Among the 11 themes were space, nation-states, citizenship and exclusions, and authors included Arendt, Balibar and Foucault. ARI postdoctoral and research fellows across research clusters and occasional visitors attended sessions. We would

like to give special mention to the contributions of Arun Bala in leading discussions on Habermas and the public sphere; Nausheen Anwar and Sidharthan Maunaguru (South Asian Studies Programme) on Walter Benjamin and psychoanalytic approaches to violence; and ARI Visiting Senior Research Fellow Daud Ali on the history of the sovereign body.

The reading group culminated in a one-day workshop on the theme of "States, Sovereignty and Violence." ARI alumnus Sankaran Krishna,

Professor at the Department of Political Science, University of Hawai'i at Manoa, led the discussions. Among the texts discussed were *The Beast and the Sovereign* (Derrida); *Economies of Abandonment* (Elizabeth Povinelli); and *The Make-Believe Space* (Yael Navaro-Yashin). The reading group was generously funded by the Office of Deputy President (Research & Technology) (ODPRT).



Prof Sankaran Krishna

THE SCIENCE, TECHNOLOGY AND SOCIETY (STS) CLUSTER

DR ERIC KERR

The STS Cluster has been working in collaboration with the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) of the United Nations and Fukushima Medical University (FMU) on radiation medicine in society following the accident at the Daiichi Nuclear Power Plant in March 2011. Cluster Leader, Assoc Prof Gregory Clancey, has been engaged for a second year as a consultant to the Division of Human Health of the IAEA. This collaboration has led to a two-year project to introduce STS into the medical curriculum in Japan and enhance research into the societal issues around radiation medicine. The collaboration is set to continue beyond 2014 with a series of three conferences in Hiroshima, Nagasaki, and Singapore, all funded by the IAEA. ARI will host the Singapore conference in 2016. Assoc Prof Clancey, along with Dr Tamra Lysaght and Dr Tyson Vaughan, have collectively participated in four technical meetings and three conferences relating to this project, including one hosted in Singapore as part of the 2013 Asia Pacific Science, Technology and Society Network (APSTSN) Conference.

THE RELIGION AND GLOBALISATION IN ASIAN CONTEXTS CLUSTER

DR WU KEPING

The Religion Cluster continues to devote much of its research force in the area of "Religion and Development in Asia" (RADA). Besides rigorous seminars and work-in-progress sessions, the cluster's reading group has continued to spur heated discussions. Over the past seven months, we have read six books and a carefully selected group of "grey literature" (material published outside of conventional academic channels). The topics we have covered range from human rights and religious NGOs to disaster and secularism/piety.

On 9-10 October 2014, the cluster will host its annual event, an international conference on *The Ethics of Religious Giving*. This interdisciplinary conference is designed to explore the ethics of religious giving in Asian contexts, historically and ethnographically. It will explore diverse configurations of conceptions of reciprocity, as well as the relationship between ideas (ethics) and action (giving). This conference will bring together scholars from across the region and the world to engage in discussions of these issues, drawing on materials

from detailed historical and ethnographic case studies.

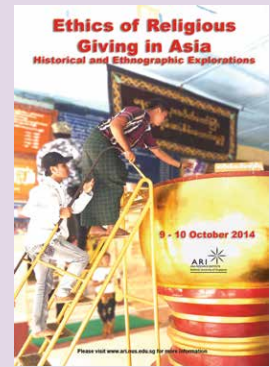
These explorations of what people actually do and think on the ground are intended to contribute both empirically and theoretically to the understanding of religion and development in Asian societies.

Following the success of APSTSN conference, ARI has been chosen to host the annual conference of the Society for the History of Technology (SHOT) in 2016, for which it has received a \$40,000 grant from the Singapore Tourism Board. This will be the first time that this large annual conference has ever come to Asia. Dr Francesca Bray, a prominent anthropologist and historian of China, and president of SHOT, will preside, and other internationally prominent STS scholars will be invited to give keynotes. Dr Jerome Whittington has been appointed Convener of the APSTSN and will be a Visiting Scholar at the Institute for Public Knowledge of New York University this fall.

In a joint project with the Asian Urbanisms Cluster, the STS Cluster has been awarded a large Tier 2 grant by the Ministry of Education for research on "Disaster Governance." The project will involve cluster members Assoc Prof Clancey, Dr Whittington, and Dr Eric Kerr in collaboration with scholars from the Asian Urbanisms Cluster, the Lee Kuan Yew School of Public Policy, and Nanyang Technological University.

Three books have been published by Cluster Affiliates including Dr John DiMoia, *Reconstructing Bodies: Biomedicine, Health, and Nation-Building in South Korea since 1945* (Stanford University Press, 2013); Dr John Van Wyhe, *Dispelling the Darkness: Voyage in the Malay Archipelago and the Discovery of Evolution by Wallace and Darwin* (World Scientific, 2013); and Alfred Russel Wallace: *Letters from the Malay Archipelago* (Oxford University Press, 2013).

Continuing the cluster's expertise in climate change, a workshop was held in November on *Emplacing Climate Change* with talks by cluster members Prof Bob Wasson, Dr Whittington, Dr Ingmar Lippert, and Assoc Prof Axel Gelfert.



METACLUSTER: HISTORICAL SOCIOLOGY OF ASIAN CONNECTIONS

DR ARUN BALA

The Metacluster was set up to create a research locus at ARI to articulate a new conceptual paradigm for understanding Asian societies in terms of connections and circulations. It has continued to expand by incorporating more themes and international support. The theoretical thrust of the Metacluster paradigm will be furthered by Prof Prasenjit Duara's study *The Crisis of Global Modernity: Asian Traditions and a Sustainable Future* (forthcoming, Cambridge University Press 2014). Also, through Professor Eng seng Ho, the Metacluster has just started administering a donation of SGD 3 million from Mr Muhammad Alagil of Saudi Arabia to explore Arabia-Asia historical connections.

At the same time, Dr Arun Bala's *Asian Connections in Science* initiative led to an invitation to become the Singapore partner in the Social Science and Humanities Research Council of Canada supported venture to open an East-West dialogue on history and philosophy of science that includes institutions from Canada (University of King's College, Dalhousie University, University of Toronto, York University and University of Alberta) and India (Manipal University and Jawaharlal Nehru University). The ARI conference *Globalising History and Philosophy of Science: Problems and Prospects* held in August 2014 was the launch event for this partnership. Further initiatives in the Metacluster to develop the

Asian connections paradigm include *Changing Role of the State in Asia* (Prof Prasenjit Duara) and *Disaster Management in Asia* (Prof Mike Douglass).

ASIAN URBANISMS: THE CITY AS AN EGG

PROF MIKE DOUGLASS



The AUC Asia Trends 2014 public lecture *Creating Centralities* on 18 June 2014 was given by Kees Christiaanse, a renowned architect and scholar, Professor at ETH Zurich, and Programme Leader of the Future Cities Laboratory at NUS. He spoke on "The City as an Egg" as a metaphor for the evolution of the city. As overlapping spheres of influence from the city to the villages, the egg was used by Prof Christiaanse's design team as a principal concept for the recent London Olympic Park Masterplan. In his Asia Trends talk, he further discussed its relevance as an element in urban design strategies in London, Hamburg, Shenzhen, and Singapore. Dr Limin Hee, Director of Research at Singapore's Centre for Liveable Cities (CLC), was the discussant for the evening lecture. Drawing from her recent book, *Future Asian Space* (NUS Press 2012), she helped anchor the presentation in the Singapore experience as well as delve into its more general applicability in Asia.

FORTHCOMING EVENTS

16 - 17 OCTOBER 2014

THE QUOTIDIAN ANTHROPOCENE: RECONFIGURING ENVIRONMENTS IN URBANIZING ASIA

Contact Persons:

Dr Eli Elinoff; arieae@nus.edu.sg
Dr Tyson Vaughan; arietv@nus.edu.sg

6 - 7 NOVEMBER 2014

THE RESILIENCE OF VERNACULAR HERITAGE IN ASIAN CITIES

Contact Persons:

Prof Mike Douglass;
michaeld@nus.edu.sg
Dr Rita Padawangi; ritapd@nus.edu.sg

14 - 15 JANUARY 2015

WILD SPACES AND ISLAMIC COSMOPOLITANISM IN ASIA

Contact Person:

Miss Sharon Ong; arios@nus.edu.sg

4 - 5 FEBRUARY 2015

EDUCATIONAL RESILIENCE AMONG ASIAN CHILDREN IN CHALLENGING FAMILY ENVIRONMENT

Contact Person:

Ms Valerie Yeo; valerie.yeo@nus.edu.sg

5 - 6 MARCH 2015

DECENTRALIZED DISASTER GOVERNANCE IN URBANIZING ASIA

Contact Person:

Ms Valerie Yeo; valerie.yeo@nus.edu.sg

Details of events are available at: <http://www.ari.nus.edu.sg/calendarofevent.asp?categoryid=6>

THE FEATHERED CHARTER: ARI BADMINTON FORUM

DR ERIC KERR AND DR MALINI SUR

STENOGRAPHERS OF THE ARI BADMINTON FORUM



Figure #1



Figure #2

On a very ordinary evening at the Bukit Timah Campus, representatives from ARI research clusters, including visiting delegates from Australia, India, and the US, held an extraordinary meeting to decide on the precise border of a disputed territory. Previous summits had been held in the same location throughout 2013 and 2014. The committee, initially composed entirely of women from Europe and Asia, subsequently welcomed distinguished men. Delegates were tasked with many duties that included resolving overlapping maps (see Figure #1), technical glitches, statistics, casualties, and several minor boundary disputes. Experts from the Lee Kuan Yew School of Public Policy were drafted in as an extraordinary measure to arbitrate future boundaries. Motions put forward involved rapid adjustments, strategic re-positioning, and orders were continuously bounced back and forth. Outcomes included a specialised training in local knowledge for one delegate by a Singaporean expert. While deliberations are still ongoing, at the July Assembly a feathered charter was signed with representatives from the official languages of the forum (see Figure #2). At its most recent summit, and after lengthy negotiations, it was finally decided that the shuttle was in.



THE ASIAN GRADUATE STUDENT FELLOWS, FROM A CUMULATIVE VANTAGE POINT

DR KAY MOHLMAN

2014 marks the eleventh year of ARI's Asian Graduate Student Fellowships, an annual programme that hosts MA and PhD students from regional and Asian universities who are researching Southeast Asian topics for their degrees. For six weeks at ARI during May-June of this year, 25 Graduate Fellows made progress on their thesis research, sharpened their writing and presentation skills, and gained exposure to the workings of a professional research institution. Happily, the 2014 contingent encompassed all of the characteristic diversity of previous Graduate Fellow batches, containing not one but two doctoral students from Shan State, Myanmar, a sizeable number of Fellows from the Philippines, and the Graduate Fellows' very first passport-carrying representative from Timor Leste—the latter a notable addition to the group from Southeast Asia's youngest country.

The Graduate Fellows programme provides both skills and opportunities for participants. There are well-defined channels through which members are introduced to ARI's various specialty research clusters, and for cluster

members to see in turn what graduate work is being done outside of NUS that relates to their topic areas. Many Fellows are under pressure to publish, even before they finish their degrees. Accordingly, every year Dr Paul Kratoska from NUS Press speaks to the group about professional academic publishing, which is followed up with a workshop on writing for journal publication as part of my own Academic Writing and Communication Programme. The Fellows also hear from Dr Bruce Lockhart, of the Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences Deanery, about opportunities available to MA students for doctoral study at NUS, a talk that has in some cases opened doors and changed lives. Over the years, various FASS departments have had or now have Graduate Fellow alumni earning their NUS PhDs.

A longer-term engagement with the Graduate Fellows yields an appreciation for the cascading and rippling benefits of this programme as it continues to evolve. Some of today's participants have supervisors or thesis committee members who were Graduate Fellows themselves.

A look at current members' conference paper bibliographies often turns up research citations to the work of previous Graduate Fellows. Even the notion of the Graduate Fellows as a "collegial family" carries literal as well as figurative weight: two participants in this year's group were actually spouses of Graduate Fellows from former years (and in no way was the selection committee influenced by, or even aware of, these connections!).

Seen from a cumulative vantage point, the value of this initiative—one that originated with ARI's first Director, Professor Anthony Reid—is evident. The Graduate Fellows alumni network continues to expand. The scholarship on Southeast Asia continues to improve. And the programme's legacy continues to make its mark.

Dr Kay Mohlman is Director of the Graduate Fellows' Academic Writing and Communication Programme, and Academic Writing Consultant. She can be reached by email at kmohlman@outlook.com.