

# ARI NEWS

ARI  
ASIA RESEARCH INSTITUTE  
National University of Singapore



Mali Bucha: Dance Offering by Kornkarn Rungsawang. Courtesy of Kornkarn Rungsawang & Theatres on the Bay, Singapore.



May 2025

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## Director's Foreword Research Impact

At the beginning of a financial year, I am pleased to report that ARI continues to receive strong support from within the university, reflecting ongoing recognition of the Institute's value and contributions as well as confidence in our research directions. At the same time, we remain committed to expanding our external engagement—actively pursuing funding opportunities, cultivating donor relationships, and strengthening partnerships that will sustain and grow our research into the future.

During this period, three research clusters have submitted grant proposals to the Ministry of Education's Academic Research Fund (AcRF), while the institute secured new funding both from within Singapore and from the New York-based Henry Luce Foundation. These successes underscore the strength of ARI's dynamic and thriving grant culture.

Projects that have recently wrapped up include the *Belt and Road Initiative and Student Mobilities in China–Southeast Asia (BRISM)*, funded by the Ministry of Education AcRF Tier 2. Among the publications arising from that project, one I would like to highlight is the special section on [The Internationalisation of Education and 'Belt and Road' Student Mobilities in Southeast Asia \(Volume 21, Issue 1\)](#) guest-edited by Kris Hyesoo Lee, Yi'En Cheng, Brenda S.A. Yeoh, and Kong Chong Ho. The project *Plastic Waste and Women's Household Practices in Asia and Australia*, also supported by AcRF Tier 2 funding, concluded with the publication of research by Qian Hui Tan and Brenda Yeoh. Their article [Everyday circular literacy in Singaporean households: Informal relational pedagogies in teaching and learning about circular R-behaviours](#) was published in *Cleaner and Responsible Consumption* in March. The project on *Mapping Middle Road: Prewar Japanese Community in Singapore* delivered a different kind of output in the creation of a digital story map on the National Library of Singapore's [Curiosity](#) website. This project (PI

Clay Eaton, Co-PIs Naoko Shimazu & Lee Chee Keng) was supported by a National Heritage Board Heritage Research Grant and has also been highlighted in *NUS News*.

In terms of partnerships, ARI welcomed a series of international visitors, including Max Weber Foundation President Ute Frevert and Franz Waldenberger, Director of the Deutsches Institut für Japanstudien (DIJ). The visit aimed to further strengthen our [existing partnership with the DIJ](#) and explore future avenues for collaboration. A delegation from the Centre for Europe Studies at the University of Warsaw—Professors Bogdan Góralczyk and Kamil Zajączkowski—visited ARI to engage with researchers from across our clusters. The discussions focused on shared research interests and explored opportunities for collaboration on emerging issues in Asia and Europe. Their visit included the Roundtable [Regions and Regionalisms in Asia and Europe](#), culminating in a second roundtable on the future of diplomacy at the Asia-Europe Foundation, where Prof Tim Winter spoke alongside Professors Góralczyk and Zajączkowski.



Prof Merlyna Lim, Canada Research Chair in Digital Media and Global Network Society at Carleton University made an informal visit to ARI and spoke about her work on [Social Media and Politics in Southeast Asia](#) that was recently published in the Cambridge Elements Series.

We were also delighted to welcome former ARI Director, Professor Jonathan Rigg, back to ARI as a participant in one of our many successful events—the two-day workshop, [Theorizing Migration and Social Mobility in Asia and Beyond](#), organized by ARI's Prof Brenda Yeoh and Dr Wei Yang, together with Prof Marta Bivand Erdal and Dr Karen Liao from the Peace Institute of Oslo. Among other well-attended events were February's hybrid workshop, [Law and Geography in Urban Asia](#), convened by Dr Dhiraj Nainani, A/P Maitrii V. Aung-Thwin and A/P Kah-Wee Lee, from the NUS Department of Architecture; and [Crossing Boundaries - Food and Southeast Asia 1500-Present](#), led by Dr Kathleen Burke and Assoc Prof Jamie S. Davidson from our Food Politics & Society cluster.



The Nalanda Professorship in India China Studies was launched on 8 April. This endowed Professorship seeks to promote research and education on India-China relations – specifically, the political, economic, historical and cultural interactions between India and China. It was made possible through a generous S\$3 million gift from the Nalanda Library Fund Limited (NLFL) presented to ARI by former Foreign Minister Mr George Yeo as NLFL Trustee, in a ceremony witnessed by NUS President Professor Tan Eng Chye at NUS and promoted widely across [NUS social media](#).

ARI's signature public talk series, [ARI Asia Trends](#) followed swiftly on the heels of this launch ceremony. Tansen Sen, Professor of History and the Director of the Center for Global Asia at NYU Shanghai delivered the keynote address for the event, titled 'Why India and China? Historical Significance and Contemporary Relevance', aptly held at the Asian Civilisations Museum. A recording of the Asia Trends keynote and subsequent discussion will be available on our YouTube channel soon.

Now we look ahead to mid-June for the [Singapore Graduate Forum on Southeast Asian Studies 2025](#), our flagship forum dedicated to humanities and social science research relating to Southeast Asia. Now into its twentieth iteration, this hugely popular forum for students and early-career researchers typically attracts participants from a wide range of academic institutions worldwide and serves to highlight emerging trends in Southeast Asian research. I look forward to sharing more about it with you in the next newsletter.



**Tim Bunnell**  
Director

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#### Featured Research

### Remote Choreographies: Contemporary Southeast Asian Performance Traversing Cultural and Cosmic Distance

ARIscope



Using remoteness as an analytic, this article analyses a recent work of Thai experimental dance, *Mali Bucha*, by Kornkarn Rungsawang, a performance piece that brings together traditional ritual with VR technology - by Aparna Ramachandran Nambiar

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#### NUS News

**Uncovering hidden stories of the Pre-War Japanese Community in Singapore**

#### In Conversation

**Q&A with Dr Fathun Karib**



The *Mapping Middle Road* project, led by Dr. Clay Eaton, Professor Naoko Shimazu, and Dr. Chee Keng Lee under the National Heritage Board's (NHB) Heritage Research Grant and hosted by the Asia Research Institute (ARI), took two years to complete. It was eventually published as a story map for the National Library Board's *Curiocity* initiative.

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"My main motivation aligns with my punk roots, focusing on social justice issues. Sociology helps explain structural inequalities and other phenomena that fuel my curiosity."

[Read More](#)

## Featured Event

# Nalanda Endowed Professorship in India-China Studies



The Professorship seeks to promote research and education on India-China relations with the overarching goal to shape policy and deepen societal understanding in the interdisciplinary field. Pictured (from left to right) are NUS President Prof Tan Eng Chye, NLFL Trustee Mr George Yeo and ARI Director Prof Tim Bunnell.





The official ceremony for the establishment of the Nalanda Endowed Professorship in India-China Studies was held on Tuesday 8 April. The Professorship is made possible through a generous S\$3 million gift from the Nalanda Library Fund Limited (NLFL) which was presented by Former Minister Mr George Yeo as NLFL Trustee to Director of ARI, Professor Tim Bunnell in a ceremony witnessed by NUS President Professor Tan Eng Chye.

The Professorship will be awarded to leading scholars in the domain for a fixed term. The appointed professor (otherwise known as the Chair) will spearhead original research through a long-term project on India-China relations, lead archival initiatives to collect, digitise and preserve original materials related to historical research on India-China ties and their regional influence, mentor graduate students, as well as contribute to the broader discourse in the field through engagements with the academic and policymaking communities and the public in the form of workshops, public lectures and an annual conference. The global search for the first Chair has already begun.

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## Others

### Bulletin Board

**Call for Applications:** [East Asian Pop Culture: 30 Years of Transformation](#) closes 23 May 2025. [The Geological Turn in Asia: Empires, Geological Knowledge, and Geological Agencies](#) will be held 04-05 September, submissions close 31 May.



The [20th Singapore Graduate Forum on Southeast Asian Studies](#) will be held between 16-27 June. The presentations by keynote speakers and participants are fully in-person and open to all to attend. Details to follow on ARI's website soon.

**Staff Changes:** ARI welcomes [Dr Jonathan Galka](#) and Mr Tran Quang Anh. At the same time, we say our goodbyes to Ms Lee Chyen Yee Dr Blaž Kriznik and Ms Aishah Alhadad.

**New Book:** [Handbook of Gender and Mobilities](#) by Valerie Preston, Sara McLafferty, Minka Maciejewska & Brenda S.A Yeoh was published by Edward Elgar Publishing.

**Special Section:** [The Internationalisation of Education and 'Belt and Road' Student Mobilities in Southeast Asia](#) (Volume 21, Issue 1) was published in *Asian Population Studies Urban Studies*. Guest Editors Krs Hyesoo Lee, Yi'En Cheng, Brenda Yeoh & Kong Chong.

**Lecture Series:** Tim Winter participated in the official launch of the [2025 ASEF Lecture Series](#) as part of a panel discussion on "Shaping the Future: Soft Diplomacy in Asia-

Europe Relations."

**Channel News Asia:** Mairii Aung-Thwin gave comments in the CNA documentary [Myanmar in Turmoil](#).

**Channel News Asia:** Michel Chambon gave comments in the CNA feature [Late Pope Francis left a lasting impact on pressing issues in Asia, say observers](#)

**The Straits Times:** [Seniors are taking the kampung spirit beyond the neighbourhood](#) by Elaine Ho, Vincent Chua and Feng Chen-Chieh.

**The Straits Times:** [If Singapore decides to invest in nuclear energy, floating power plants deserve a closer look](#) by Stefan Huebner.

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