

ARI *news*

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

JULY 2009

ISSUE NO. 20

HIGHLIGHTS



SPECIAL FEATURE

Urban Research on
Southeast Asia



ASIAN METACENTRE NEWS

CHAMPSEA Project in
Vietnam



FEATURE ARTICLE

ASIA TRENDS 2009

FEATURE ARTICLE

ARI Asia Trends 2009

This year's ASIA TRENDS, one of ARI's flagship events, was held on 20 May with a new format. In contrast to the past when a single research cluster organised it each year, several ARI research clusters hosted a panel each in which invited speakers focused on a particular theme.



Asia Trends 2009 organised by Asia Research Institute, NUS University Hall — Lee Kong Chian Wing, 20 May 2009

In the first panel hosted by the Asian Migration cluster on "Does '(more) Open Borders' Make Sense in Asia", Thelma Kay, Director of the Social Development Division, United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (UNESCAP) argued that in the context of Asia becoming the fastest growing region in terms of the emergence of (re)newed streams of migrations, a better managed system of migration borders would make more sense than more migration or fewer borders. Xiang Biao, Research Council United Kingdom Academic Fellow, Institute of Social and Cultural Anthropology and Centre on Migration, Policy and Society, University of Oxford stressed the need to rethink borders not just as physical but also as dynamic and multiple. Warning that fewer borders did not necessarily add up to a world with less discrimination and conflict, he said the first aim in thinking of the border question was to understand the flexibility, multiplicity, differentiation, power and effectiveness of borders.

Speakers in Panel 2 organised by the Religion and Globalisation cluster on the theme "Evangelising Asia: Competition and Conflict among Religions

in Asia", called attention to the relationship between new media and technologies and the resurgence of the three "great" religions in Southeast Asia defying statist attempts to control their fragmentation and growth. While Mathew Mathews of the Department of Sociology, NUS, demonstrated the way churches in Singapore find creative ways to evangelise to circumvent the constraints posed by the Maintenance of Religious Harmony Act, Justin Thomas McDaniel of the Department of Religious Studies, University of California at Riverside, attributed the proliferation of diverse Buddhist movements in Southeast Asia to the use of modern communication technologies. Julian Millie of the School of Political and Social Inquiry, Monash University, examined the rise of Islam in West Java and the role of media resources at the disposal of Islamic oratory or *dakwah*.

Panel 3, hosted by the Sustainable Cities cluster, made India and China the focus of "Sustainable Cities, Asian Perspectives". Examining "Disasters, Vulnerability, and Sustainability in Asian Cities", Devanathan Parthasarathy of ARI, critiquing technocentric and technocratic disaster management approaches, proposed three alternative approaches to the sociological understanding of risks and vulnerability to disasters in Asian contexts. Speaking on "Trends in China's Urban Development", Mao Qizhi from School of Architecture, Tsinghua University, China, stated that though the central government in China had set up special economic zones and built city clusters with megacities, the deteriorating urban environment made "Better City, Better Life" seem like an empty slogan.

Riding on the successes of regionally produced media-based pop culture industries in the regional market, itself enabled by new media technologies, cultural or creative industries have been added to the export oriented industries in East Asia in the past decade. The two presentations in the fourth panel on "Cultural Industry in Asia" hosted by the Cultural Studies cluster addressed this increasingly loosely integrated cultural economy of Asia. Lily Kong provided a wide comparative survey of the policy statements of the four Asian tigers (Singapore, Hong Kong, South Korea, and Taiwan), Japan, China and India, noting the different emphasis placed on a set of common objectives beyond economic interests, such as generating social cohesion and improving quality of life locally. The second speaker, Jing Wang from School of Humanities, Arts and Social Sciences, Massachusetts Institute of Technology, who has been conducting research inside the Beijing office of a global advertising firm, highlighted instances of new advertising strategies, using Web 2.0 technologies, of large and cottage enterprises in the PRC.

**Professor Lily Kong**

Word from the Director

“What matters most in humanities and social sciences research is high quality researchers who have uninterrupted time to do their intellectual work, and a stimulating environment where ideas roam.”

Unlike STEM research, research in the humanities and social sciences hardly requires any equipment, and certainly not expensive million-dollar machines. PhD students and postdocs also pursue their own independent (if related) research agendas, and do not serve as a “pair of hands” in the labs for PIs. To press for large-budget research projects involving teams of researchers is essentially to impose a scientific model of research.

What matters most in humanities and social sciences research is high quality researchers who have uninterrupted time to do their intellectual work, and a stimulating environment where ideas roam. ARI strives to encourage and develop high quality research by providing just such a space for high quality researchers to do their work, even while it faces continued pressure with diminishing core budget support and exhortations to show its mettle by winning large, competitive grants.

Bearing in mind the objective of providing space and time for promising researchers, ARI has welcomed joint appointments between Faculties and the research institute, thus providing some relief from heavy teaching workloads in Faculties so that those with ideas can pursue them. While some may argue against this, seeing it as a scheme that subsidises Faculties, the resistance in fact smacks of bureaucratic thinking that has lost sight of the ultimate goal of supporting research.

In the last year, therefore, ARI has jointly appointed several researchers: Tim Bunnell (Geography), Gregory Clancey (History), Jean Yeung (Sociology), and Zhu Jieming (Real Estate), who join several others already on joint appointments: Julius Bautista (Southeast Asian Studies), Chua Beng Huat (Sociology), Michael Feener (History), Robbie Goh (English Language and Literature), Maznah Mohamad (Malay Studies), Gavin Jones (Sociology), and Brenda Yeoh (Geography). Most of these individuals form the core of ARI's research staff, providing continuity and stability even while short-term visitors cycle in and out of ARI, bringing new projects and ideas, though, in most cases, not staying long enough to develop lasting ties (some do, of course).

As the overall job market becomes more competitive, academic positions are also increasingly difficult to come by. In the next few months, ARI will be advertising again for Research Fellows, postdoctoral fellows and visiting fellows. Judging from the many informal inquiries to date, ARI will have many high quality applications vying for a small number of positions. Unfortunately, as the academic job market shrinks, and as high quality candidates become more readily available, ARI's budget is also facing cuts. This unfortunate and perhaps short-sighted desire to slash will hurt NUS' overall desire to have “global impact, Asian influence”.

INTER-ASIA ROUNDTABLE 2009 — Gender Relations in the 21st Century Asian Family

www.ari.nus.edu.sg/conf2009/inter-asia-roundtable-2009.htm

17 – 18 Aug 2009

Contact person for
further details:

Prof Gavin Jones
arigwj@nus.edu.sg

There is not a great deal of dialogue across the major regions of Asia – East, South and Southeast Asia – concerning major social issues, largely because it is often felt that there are such wide differences between these regions that there may be little in common to discuss. Challenging this idea, ARI is initiating an annual series of roundtables in which leading researchers from the major regions of Asia – East, Southeast and South Asia – will come together to conduct dialogue and share views. The first of these Inter-Asia Roundtables will be held on 17 – 18 August 2009 on the theme “Gender Relations in the 21st Century Asian Family”. It will bring together theoreticians and researchers working on the family in different parts of Asia to examine recent trends in the field of family studies, factors affecting family change and convergences and divergences across and within regions of Asia. The broad focus of

the roundtable will be on gender relations in the family. Gender relations colour all aspects of family structure, family decision-making and family forms, and influence the way these are modified under conditions of socio-economic change and globalising forces. In turn, the change in family forms and structures (e.g. falling fertility, rise in the share of the aged, more families operating trans-nationally), whatever may be the cause, inevitably makes for change in gender relations.

The one and a half day roundtable will focus on three major presentations by prominent researchers, each followed by discussion, and three panel discussions focusing on questions and issues circulated in advance. The focus will be on issues that cross-cut East, Southeast and South Asia, and we will interrogate convergences and divergences across and within these regions. The 24 “official participants” in the roundtable have been chosen for their strong theoretical foundation; their grounded expertise in one country or region; and their capacity to think and theorise beyond their country, region or discipline. There will also be up to 40 roundtable observers, who can participate fully in the discussions but who will not be seated at the roundtable.

TRANSNATIONAL MOBILITIES FOR CARE: State, Market and Family Dynamics in Asia

www.ari.nus.edu.sg/conf2009/transnational-mobilities.htm

10 – 11 Sep 2009

Contact persons for
further details:

Dr Chee Heng Leng:
arichl@nus.edu.sg

Prof Brenda Yeoh Saw Ai:
geoyasa@nus.edu.sg

Prof Gavin Jones:
arigwj@nus.edu.sg

Jointly organised by the Asian Migration Cluster and The Changing Family in Asia Cluster of the Asia Research Institute and the Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences, National University of Singapore, this conference is focused on issues surrounding the transnational mobilities for care, specifically eldercare and healthcare, in Asia. Three observable trends in recent decades provide the context for our inquiry. First, the demographic trend points to rapidly aging populations in many Asian countries giving rise to the classic problem of a relatively smaller working population having to support an expanding group of retirees.

Second, the curtailment of public spending in some developed countries in the 1980s and 1990s has negatively affected the supply of healthcare

personnel in the 1990s and beyond, which in turn created a strong demand-led migration of care workers from poorer countries to richer ones.

A third trend, observed in changing social mores, conventions, and family and gender roles, has had discernible effects on care-giving in the family.

The convergence of these three trends in the region has resulted in a crisis of care and social security in some countries – increasingly inadequate pensions and more pressing need for eldercare, a concomitant shortage of care workers and healthcare personnel and rising healthcare costs. As these trends play out in the Asian region, where countries differ in their levels of economic development, transnational options appear to present themselves.

This conference is convened to examine the nexus of the family, the market, and the state in relation to the transnational mobilities of care in the geo-political context of an ageing Asian region.

CALL FOR PAPERS

International Workshop on Pop Culture China

www.ari.nus.edu.sg/conf2009/pop-culture-china.htm

7 – 8 Dec 2009

Contact person for further details:

Prof Chua Beng Huat:
aricbh@nus.edu.sg

Between locations in East Asia where ethnic Chinese constitute a predominant or significant proportion of the local population, there has always been dense traffic of cultural products – popular literature, films, pop music and television programmes – in various Chinese languages. The most significant nodes in these corridors of traffic are the PRC, Taiwan, Hong Kong and Singapore, and the more peripheral areas include particular cities in the Asia-Pacific rim. The production, distribution, circulation and consumption of the pop cultural products constitute a loosely integrated cultural economy, which may be discursively and substantively designated as Pop Culture China. In contrast to cultural conservatives' efforts to search for a cultural centre for the global Chinese diaspora, the configuration of Pop Culture China is substantively and symbolically without centre. This is evident,

for example, in the use of different Chinese languages in the cultural products – Mandarin, Cantonese, Minnan/Taiwanese/Hokkien – and the different production centres for different media and genres of cultural products. This international workshop is looking for papers that will contribute to the refinement of the idea of Pop Culture China and/or provide substantive analysis of particular aspects of the network of flows in any of the Chinese pop culture media.

Those wishing to present a paper at the workshop are invited to submit a paper proposal which includes a title, a 500-word abstract, and a short paragraph of personal self-description by 15 August 2009. Please submit and address all applications to:

Ms Valerie Yeo
Asia Research Institute
National University of Singapore
#10-01 Tower Block, 469A Bukit Timah Road
Singapore 259770
Email: valerie.yeo@nus.edu.sg

Successful applicants will be notified by 31 August 2009. Preference will be given to papers that profile new research, fit with the core panel ideas and complement other papers.

CALL FOR PAPERS

International Conference on Economic Stress, Human Capital, and Families in Asia: Research and Policy Challenges

www.ari.nus.edu.sg/conf2009/conference-on-economic-stress.htm

3 – 4 Jun 2010
Singapore

Contact persons for further details:

Prof Jean Yeung:
ariywj@nus.edu.sg

Prof Gavin Jones:
arigwj@nus.edu.sg

This workshop will be jointly organised by The Changing Family Cluster (ARI); Family Research Network of the Ministry of Community Development, Youth, and Sports; Department of Sociology, Department of Social Work, and Department of Epidemiology and Public Health (EPH), Yong Loo Lin School Of Medicine, NUS; and Institute of Policy Studies (IPS), Lee Kuan Yew School of Public Policy, NUS.

This conference aims to provide a forum for researchers, policy makers, and practitioners to share findings about the consequences of economic stress and policy implications for human capital development and family well-being in Asia. The scope of this conference goes beyond the impact of current financial crisis to include the effect of economic deprivation families experience as a result of marital dissolution,

low-wage employment, or trying family events and circumstances (such as illness of family members or catastrophic natural calamities).

We invite papers that address pertinent conceptual, methodological, and policy issues on economic stress and families in an Asian context. Perspectives from multiple disciplines such as sociology, economics, social work, demography, public health, psychology, anthropology, and public policy are encouraged.

For topics of papers, paper proposal submission forms and submission details, please refer to the website listed above. Paper proposals should include a 250-word abstract. A short biography should also be submitted on the attached form by 31 August 2009. Successful applicants will be notified by 31 October 2009 and will be required to send in a completed paper by 30 April 2010.

Based on the quality of proposals and availability of funds, partial or full funding will be granted to successful applicants. Full funding will cover air travel to Singapore by the most economical means, and board and lodging for the duration of the conference.

Workshop on Constructing Sustainability – Ethics, Techniques or Aesthetics

13 Feb 2009



Too often, the platform of discussions on sustainability has been compartmentalised to frameworks such as environmental sustainability, building sustainability, social sustainability, so that each of these disciplines has sometimes become disconnected and ideas compartmentalised within specialised fields.

The aim of this workshop, jointly organised by ARI, FASS and SDE NUS, was to bring together top

scholars researching on different trajectories of sustainability to examine the question of how social, economic and cultural discourses can interface with the design discourses on sustainability. The discussion aimed to (re-)construct sustainability from multiple viewpoints, to bring the debate towards eventually establishing a meeting of multiple subjectivities on an important topic.

International Conference on American Pop Culture in Asia

19 – 20 Feb 2009



This conference, organised by Professor Chua Beng Huat and Dr Cho Youngchan, succeeded in bringing many Asian academics from different disciplines and diverse countries into one place to discuss the effects of American pop culture in Asia. The papers presented were not only

empirically-based but also engaged with the complexity of Asian pop culture produced under the influence of American pop culture. Currently, Professor Chua and Dr Cho are working on the final essays for an edited volume, which will be ready by the end of 2009.

International Conference on Aceh and Indian Ocean Studies II: Civil Conflict and its Remedies

23 – 24 Feb 2009

Banda Aceh, Indonesia



This conference, organised by Dr Michelle Miller and Professor Anthony Reid was held in Banda Aceh on the neighbouring campuses of Syiah Kuala University and the Ar-Raniry State Institute

of Islamic Studies (IAIN). The conference featured 48 speakers from a dozen countries presenting work from a broad range of disciplines in the humanities and social sciences. It concluded

with an evening lecture on the peace process in Aceh by former Finnish President and Nobel Peace Prize Laureate Martti Ahtisaari. The conference was held in conjunction with the first

annual meeting of the International Board of the International Centre for Aceh and Indian Ocean Studies (ICAIOS), a new research centre based there.

Translation in Asia: Theories, Practices, Histories

5 – 6 Mar 2009



This international conference, co-organised with Dr Jan van der Putten of the Malay Studies department at NUS, brought together scholars working on various aspects of translation in Asian contexts. It included papers that touched upon conceptualisations of translation and its various practices and multiple histories in Malay, Tamil, Bengali, Javanese, Chinese, Cebuano, Kawi, Japanese, Tagalog, Kannada, Telugu, Hindi, Indonesian and Malayalam. Most

of these languages are rarely, if ever, mentioned in mainstream Translation Studies literature. One of the goals of the conference was to explore how the study of translation in these additional, diverse Asian contexts can enrich and problematise the ways in which translation has been studied and defined. The papers are currently being revised and will be submitted to a publisher later this year.

Jews in Indonesia: Perceptions and Histories

10 – 11 Jun 2009



This workshop, organised by Dr Ronit Ricci, brought together scholars from different countries and disciplines (religion, history, comparative literature, anthropology) currently engaged in research on the history of the Jewish community in Indonesia as well as on perceptions and images of Jews and Judaism in that country, from the eighteenth century to the present.

Topics discussed included histories of anti-Semitism and other forms of xenophobia in

Southeast Asia, the image of Jews in traditional Javanese manuscript literature and in contemporary translations from various languages into Indonesian (most prominently the so-called Protocols of the Elders of Zion), the histories of Jewish communities in Aceh and Minahasa and two perspectives on the Jews under Japanese occupation during WWII. Each panel included two paper presenters and a discussant. The papers will be published as a special issue of a journal.

Visit www.ari.nus.edu.sg/ARI-Events.htm for more details.

ARI SPECIAL FEATURE

“My research is primarily focused on theorising and conceptualising the notions of time-space and informality in Asian cities, and understanding how these play out within a larger context of de- and re-centred global flows, and domestic and transnational rural-urban transitions and networks.”



Courtesy of Dr Vu Thi Kieu Dzung, ARI

Urban Research on Southeast Asia



PROFESSOR DEVANATHAN PARTHASARATHY

*Visiting Senior Research Fellow
Sustainable Cities Cluster, ARI*

Trained as a sociologist, my doctoral dissertation in the early 1990s was on understanding processes of group and collective violence in coastal Andhra Pradesh, by relating it to processes of economic change, social mobility, and struggles for dominance between different caste groups in entrepot cities. Avoiding the pitfalls of a standard Marxist class based understanding as well as a purely sociological social structural/caste framework, the thesis (published as a book – *Collective Violence in a Provincial City*, OUP, 1997)

adopted a synthetic approach borrowed from the ‘Cambridge school’ approach to Indian history, and a nuanced Maoist understanding of semi-feudalism within an emergent capitalism.

Imperatives of career and the pressures of working in a publicly funded educational institution took me in diverse directions and I became part of minor and major research projects in the areas of agricultural sociology, social impact assessment, vulnerability and adaptation to climate change, and the sociology of development, before I could again seriously take up my interest in urban studies. Beginning with small studies on the social consequences of urban restructuring in Mumbai, I became interested in the rhetoric and public discourse surrounding urban change, urban planning, and urban restructuring in Indian cities – post economic liberalisation. Along with some of my doctoral and masters students, I also began micro-level field research in Mumbai on actual social, political, and urban processes in different localities in Mumbai.

A major project on post disaster resettlement and rehabilitation in Mumbai (2006-08) gave me a high degree of familiarity and key insights into urban processes in the city, but more importantly enabled me to obtain a more critical perspective of other well established scholarly approaches to social and political issues and processes in Mumbai.

Lessons learnt from a course that I co-taught on Contemporary Urban India, as well as a collective self-reflection on research carried out individually and along with students, led me to a realisation of the limitations of dominant western (predominantly Marxist) approaches in studying Indian cities – even as these cities are increasingly being incorporated into global financial networks, and are significantly altered as part of processes of global economic transformation. I was also unhappy with stilted criticisms blaming neo-liberalism for India's urban problems, as well as standardised post-modern critiques of the Indian city which were based on essentialised and reified rather than empirical and current understandings of urban change. This led me to two kinds of research which I have been focusing on in my research at ARI as part of the Sustainable Cities cluster. My research is primarily focused on theorising and conceptualising the notions of time-space and informality in Asian cities, and understanding how these play out within a larger context of de- and re-centred global flows, and domestic and transnational rural-urban transitions and networks. The first aspect pertained to obtaining a theoretical understanding of rural-urban transitions and networks and the implications of these for the city in Asia. Dominant Marxists approaches in urban studies, critical transnational urbanism perspectives, as well as conventional sociological and geographic, and post-modern approaches to the city have (with some exceptions) for long ignored these transitions and networks; a focus on the metropolitan, the global city, and mega urbanisation have detracted attention away from persisting rural urban connections and their social, economic, and spatial implications. The second aspect was to extend my geographical area of research and concern from India to other parts of Asia, which has been greatly facilitated by my stay at ARI.

For my research project at ARI, I chose to study Bangkok, since for the issues I planned to study – background research revealed several similarities between Asian cities such as Mumbai and Bangkok. To complement the study of public spaces in Mumbai, and how these are influenced by global flows, rural-urban transitions, planning discourses, I carried out three rounds of field

work in Bangkok – focusing on the same themes I had studied in Mumbai – religious events, small and large scale political activities, and recreation. I received an opportunity to present some of this research at conferences and workshops organised at ARI, and will also be presenting them at some forthcoming conferences. I am currently in the process of revising these papers for journals, prior to a full length comparative book on informality, time-space, rural urban networks, and public space in Mumbai and Bangkok. Presentations at conferences and at ARI and other FASS seminars, as well as informal interactions and discussions with ARI academic staff and FASS Global Cities cluster members have been of immense use in conceptual and theoretical clarification, and in writing up my research. The academic collaboration facilitated by my stay at ARI will continue through a forthcoming workshop that I am involved in organising with the FASS Global Cities Cluster, and my becoming part of the editorial group for Cities of the ARI-Springer series. Both of these will be particularly useful for a South Asian to gain more familiarity and keep in touch with urban research on Southeast Asia. I have also become part of research networks at NUS and NTU working on climate change, disasters, and cities in Asia, and I hope to carry out significant collaborative research in this area in future. The research partnerships and personal friendships that I have formed during my ARI visit are invaluable and will always be treasured, as will my fond memories of Singapore as a city, and as a society.





DR MELODY LU

has commenced a 2-year appointment as a Research Fellow in the Migration Cluster with effect from 1 April 2009.

Dr Lu received her PhD in Anthropology and Chinese Studies at Leiden University, the Netherlands. Her main research interests are gender, migration and family in East Asia. While at ARI she will embark on a comparative research on immigration policies in Taiwan and South Korea and how female migrants from China move between the categories of wives, workers and illegal migrants in these two countries.



DR DANIEL GOH

has commenced a 6-month appointment as an Assistant Professor under the FASS Writing Semester Scheme with effect from 1 July 2009. Dr Goh has been an Assistant Professor

at the Sociology Department, National University of Singapore, since September 2005. He specialises in comparative-historical sociology and cultural studies. His research interests are state-formation, postcolonialism, religion, and social ecology, with empirical grounding in Malaysia, the Philippines and Singapore. While at ARI, Dr Goh will be drafting a book manuscript, based on his current research project on the transformation of Hong Kong, Penang and Singapore as postcolonial city-states into global cities.



A/P TIM BUNNELL

has commenced a 3-year joint appointment as Associate Professor with ARI and the Department of Geography, Faculty of Arts & Social Sciences with effect from 1 July 2009. At

ARI, Dr Bunnell will extend his interest in urban networks considering not only human mobilities and associated long distance social relations, but also flows of artifacts, commodities, ideas and even "cities" themselves in the form of urban models and imaginings. He is particularly interested in the "travel" of Asian cities in urban theory and planning practice, both of which have conventionally considered Europe or North America as the leading edges of urban transition and innovation.



A/P ZHU JIEMING

has commenced a 1-year joint appointment as Associate Professor with ARI's Sustainable Cities cluster, and the Department of Real Estate, School of Design and

Environment, with effect from 1 May 2009. His research interests lie in the institutional analysis of urban development in the transitional economy, and urban planning in high-density low-income Asian cities. He is Corresponding Editor of the International Journal of Urban and Regional Research, Editorial Board member of Journal of Planning Theory and Practice, and Guest Editor for Habitat International.



DR SHU-YI WANG

has commenced a 1-year appointment as a Postdoctoral Fellow in the Sustainable Cities cluster with effect from 4 May 2009. Her current research deals with the formation and

transformation of spatial structure in world heritage cities in China. During her doctoral study, she examined the impact of heritage tourism on the socio-cultural continuity of local community in the Ancient City of Pingyao, China.



PROF SASKIA WIERINGA

has commenced a 3-month Visiting Senior Research Fellowship in the Changing Family Cluster with effect from 11 May 2009. She is from the University of Amsterdam and

has done extensive research on sexual politics and women's same-sex relations in Indonesia and in other parts of the world, notably Japan and Southern Africa. While at ARI, she will write a book on heteronormativity in Asia among other projects.



DR ZHANG YANXIA

has commenced a 1-year appointment as Postdoctoral Fellow in the Changing Family Cluster with effect from 1 June 2009. Dr Zhang obtained her PhD in Social Policy and M.Sc.

in Comparative Social Policy from University of Oxford. Her research interests include child care, elderly care, gender, poverty and social security, and comparative family policies. While at ARI, Dr Zhang will be working on a research project examining how disadvantaged families in urban China provide child care and how family practices affect the wellbeing of the elderly.

Professor Anjali Roy delivered a lecture titled "One Land, Many Nations: The Indian Partition of 1947" for the special seminar on Promised Lands at the School of Historical and European Studies, La Trobe University, Australia, on 26 May 2009.

Professor Anthony Reid delivered the opening lecture on "Reimagining Southeast Asia" for the 'Asian Emporiums' symposium of SEASREP at the University of Indonesia in Jakarta on 20 April 2009. He also gave a keynote address titled "World History for our Time and Place: The Historian's Contemporary Responsibility" for the First Congress of the Asian Association of World Historians, Osaka University, on 29 May 2009. He has also been appointed Member, Board of Directors, Asian Association of World Historians, from 2009 to 2012.

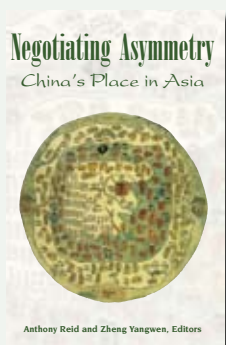
Professor Reid ended his contract with ARI and NUS in June 2009. He has taken up a position of Emeritus Professor and Visiting Fellow at the

Department of Pacific and Asian History, RSPAS, Australian National University in July, as well as a Visiting Fellowship at the Center for Southeast Asian Studies at Kyoto University for the period of August 2009 to January 2010.

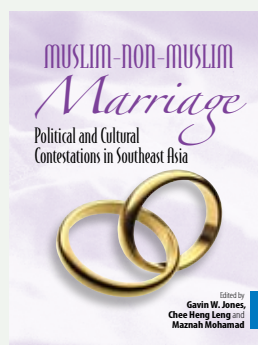
Professor Lily Kong has been invited by the Board of Management of the Asia Research Centre, Murdoch University, to serve on the International Advisory Panel of the Centre for a period of 3 years, till end of June 2012. The Board looks forward to benefiting from her expertise to ensure that it has at its disposal the best quality strategic advice to advance its research agenda.

A/P Robbie Goh delivered a plenary speech at the conference on "Asia Pacific Transculturalisms: New Theoretical Perspectives" at University of Wollongong, Australia, 8 – 9 June 2009. He has also been appointed to the board of directors of the National Council of YMCAs of Singapore.

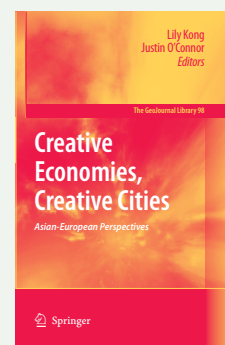
New Books



Negotiating Asymmetry: China's Place in Asia
Anthony Reid and Zheng Yangwen (editors)
Singapore, NUS Press
2009



Muslim-Non-Muslim Marriage: Political and Cultural Contestations in Southeast Asia
Gavin W. Jones, Chee Heng Leng and Maznah Mohamad (editors)
Singapore, ISEAS
2009



Creative Economies, Creative Cities: Asian-European Perspectives
The GeoJournal Library 98
Lily Kong and Justin O'Connor (editors)
London & New York, Springer
Dordrecht Heidelberg
2009

1. (SENIOR) RESEARCH FELLOWSHIPS, ONE-YEAR VISITING (SENIOR) RESEARCH FELLOWSHIPS AND POSTDOCTORAL FELLOWSHIPS

Applications are invited for (Senior) Research Fellowships, One-Year Visiting (Senior) Research Fellowships and Postdoctoral Fellowships at the Asia Research Institute (ARI) for commencement between April 2010 and September 2010.

The positions are intended for outstanding active researchers from around the world, to work on an important piece of research in the social sciences and humanities. Interdisciplinary interests are encouraged. Up to three months of a 12-month fellowship may be spent conducting fieldwork in the Asian region.

A majority of the positions will be allocated to the more specific areas listed below. However some will be reserved for outstanding projects in any area outside of those listed. Applicants should mention which category they are applying to or if none, indicate "open category". Applications which link more than one field are also welcome.

(Senior) Research Fellowships

1. The appointment will be tenable for a period of two years at the first instance, with the possibility of extension for another term of two years (ie. up to a total of a four-year term).
2. Travel assistance will be provided for non-Singaporeans who are recruited from overseas. Singaporeans and Singapore Permanent Residents who are returning home from abroad will be provided with travel assistance if they have been residing overseas for more than three years.
3. Support for research and fieldwork, and conference attendance (on application and subject to approval).
4. A monthly housing allowance for expatriate staff who do not own properties in Singapore to subsidise the cost of property rental in Singapore.
5. Medical benefits.
6. Vacation leave of 28 days per calendar year.

One-Year Visiting (Senior) Research Fellowships

1. The appointment will have a normative tenure of one year, though shorter periods may be negotiated.
2. Airfare reimbursement/travel subsidy will be provided for expatriates who are recruited from overseas.
3. A monthly housing allowance for expatriate staff who do not own properties in Singapore to subsidise part of the cost of property rental in Singapore.
4. Medical benefits.
5. Vacation leave of 28 days per calendar year.

Postdoctoral Fellowships

1. Contract is tenable for a period of one year in the first instance with a possibility of extension to two years.
2. Housing allowance (for expatriate staff who do not own properties in Singapore), travel subsidy, medical benefits and vacation leave will be provided.
3. Support for research and fieldwork, and conference attendance (on application and subject to approval).
4. Candidates must have fulfilled all requirements of the PhD within the last 4 years. If you are currently a PhD candidate at the point of application, you may also apply provided that you are confirmed for graduation between April to September 2010. A letter from your university will be required to confirm your graduation before your proposed start date.

** Terms and conditions, according to university guidelines, are subject to change without prior notice.*

Areas of research focus:

- The Changing Family in Asia
- Asian Migration
- Religion and Globalisation in Asian Contexts
- Cultural Studies in Asia
- Sustainable Cities
- Science, Technology and Society
- Open Category

Invitation to apply:

Interested applicants are invited to email/mail their applications, consisting of:

- i) Application form (http://www.ari.nus.edu.sg/docs/HR/APPLN FORM_BigAd 2010.doc)
- ii) Curriculum Vitae;
- iii) Synopsis of the proposed research project (no restriction on the number of pages);
- iv) At least one sample of published work;
- v) Ensure that at least 3 referees submit directly to us (email is acceptable) a confidential report on the applicant's academic standing and on their research project by 1 October 2009.

The closing date for applications is 1 October 2009. We regret that only successful candidates will be informed. Candidates who do not hear from the University within 10 weeks after closing date of the advertisement may assume the position has been filled.

Address for submission of applications and references:

Human Resources
c/o Ms Chong Mei Peen
Asia Research Institute
National University of Singapore
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2. PHD RESEARCH SCHOLARSHIPS, NUS

The Asia Research Institute is pleased to offer PhD research scholarships from August 2010 in the following interdisciplinary areas:

- The Changing Family in Asia
- Asian Migration
- Religion and Globalisation in Asian Contexts
- Cultural Studies in Asia
- Cold War in Asia
- Sumatra Heritage, Archaeology and Reconstruction

The PhD scholarship is to be taken up jointly with the appropriate discipline-based department. This would normally be with a department of the Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences, but where appropriate could also be with the Faculty of Law, School of Business or School of Design & Environment at the National University of Singapore. Please note that some departments/programmes only have one intake per year in August (Semester 1).

Interested applicants are required to submit their application by 15th November 2009, indicating clearly both which ARI interdisciplinary area they wish to join and which department they would be attached to. Application procedures and forms can be obtained from the NUS website www.nus.edu.sg/registrar/edu/gd-applnres.html

Applicants must use the application forms in the respective Faculty websites depending on the Faculty to which they wish to seek admission. They should send their applications directly to their respective faculties, indicating their interest to be attached to ARI. Applicants should not send a duplicate copy to ARI.

For the description of interdisciplinary areas offering scholarships, please visit ARI website www.ari.nus.edu.sg.

For enquiries, please contact:

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Asian Metacentre News



Nam Tiên Village, Vũ Tiến Commune, Vũ Thư District, Thái Bình Province

The CHAMPSEA Project is currently well into its qualitative phase and fieldwork has already been successfully completed in Vietnam, Philippines and Indonesia. Fieldwork in Thailand will commence after the training of interviewers in Singapore in early July. Around 48 to 54 caregivers of children from both transnational migrant and usually resident households in each of the four study countries were selected for the interview. In addition, a small sample of older children from two countries, namely the Philippines and Indonesia, were also interviewed.

In the qualitative study, the team seeks to cover aspects of the impact of parental migration on children left behind that could not be interrogated using a survey design. Information on care arrangements, relationships, feelings and emotions associated with parental absence were also collected. The sampling strategy for identifying target households for the qualitative interviews was designed to ensure a spread of household types, migration status, caregiver types, age and sex of children, as well as to reflect

the diversity of the quantitative findings on the physical health and psychological well-being of these children.

Postdoctoral fellow, Dr Hoang Lan Anh, was in Vietnam recently to conduct the qualitative interviews. She shares her thoughts and observations with us:

"With the support of the Vietnam Asia-Pacific Economic Centre (VAPEC), I was in Vietnam from 19th April to 31st June 2009 to conduct the fieldwork in Thái Bình Province, 110 km south-east of Hanoi. Thái Bình Province is one of the seven provinces in the Red River Delta in the North of Vietnam. It is the only predominantly agricultural province in the country with population density exceeding 1,000 persons (Rambo et al., 1991: 30). The extreme pressure placed by its population on the limited resource base is one of the most important factors constraining the development prospects of the province. Rice-based small-scale agriculture remains as the backbone of the provincial economy although agricultural production is no longer able to ensure food self-sufficiency for local farming households due to poor per capita land endowment.

Transnational labour migration from Thái Bình to countries other than the former Soviet bloc started a new wave of migration in the 1990s with Malaysia, Taiwan and South Korea being the top destinations. Vũ Thư District – our study site – has seen the most transnational out-migrants compared to other districts in Thái Bình. The fieldwork was carried out in five communes of Vũ Thư District through networks of health workers and Women Union's members. A total of 50 interviews with caregivers were conducted in the conversational style with the use of an Aide Memoire. In general, the fieldwork went smoothly although it was not always easy to find eligible households according to our sampling criteria – many migrants have returned home for good since our last quantitative survey in 2008 mostly due to the current economic recession that has badly hit the manufacturing sector in Malaysia, Taiwan, South Korea and Japan. Voice recordings of the interviews are being transcribed and translated into English and data processing is expected to be completed by the end of 2009.



Map of Vietnam

The absence of a parent due to transnational labour migration implies important changes in the way childcare is arranged in the 'transnationally split household' depending on who the migrant is. While many cases in our study appear to confirm the stereotypical depiction of the left-behind husbands in the literature as drunken and lazy men shunning their parenting duties, involved in extra-marital relationships and squandering away remittances, it was not all bad when the mother was away. Some children who were cared for by fathers in migrant households had better health outcomes and did better in school than their peers from usually resident households. The wealth generated from migration apparently allowed migrant households to invest more in their children, be it in terms of time or money. In contrast, parents in usually resident households often worked longer hours, held different jobs at the same time and generally could not afford to spare more time to care for their children.

During my fieldwork in Vietnam, I also observed an important aspect of transnational labour migration that has not attracted much attention from scholars as well as policy makers – the large financial debts incurred by return migrants due to their 'failed' migration. Many households in the study actually became impoverished after migration because of the hefty debts incurred to cover migration costs. The people affected

are often those who are at the lower end of the economic ladder, who could only afford paying lesser fees and thus, could only get lower-paid jobs with higher risks and job insecurity. In some cases, the migrants hardly earned enough by the end of their contract to settle all their debts. This problem is further aggravated by the current economic recession. The costs of migration imposed an extra economic burden on left-behind spouses, some of whom were forced to take full-time jobs outside the farm for the first time in order to support the family and pay debts. This has serious impact on the health and welfare of the children as well as that of the migrant and his/her spouse."



MOU between ARI and IIAS

The Asia Research Institute and the International Institute of Asian Studies signed a Memorandum of Understanding effective from 1 April 2009.

The IIAS, based in Leiden, the Netherlands, is one of the foremost research institutes for Asian studies in continental Europe. Its objective is to encourage the interdisciplinary and comparative study of Asia and to promote national and

international cooperation. The institute focuses on the human and social sciences and on their intersections with other sciences.

Under this MOU, ARI and IIAS will engage in joint academic activities, research collaborations, and exchanges.

ARI Interns



From left:

Ms Emma Lin Xiting is a second year Professional Accountancy major at the New Asia College, Chinese University of Hong Kong. She is attached to ARI as events assistant from 15 June to 6 August 2009.

Ms Monica Feng Xueying is a second year Professional Accountancy major at the New Asia College, Chinese University of Hong Kong. She is attached to ARI as administrative assistant from 15 June to 6 August 2009.

Ms Alice Lau Wing Shuen is a second year Translation major at the New Asia College, Chinese University of Hong Kong. Attached to ARI from 15 June to 6 August 2009, she provides research assistance to Prof Gavin Jones for the Changing Family in Asia Cluster.

Mr Ryan Lledo is a third year Geography undergraduate at the University of British Columbia. Attached to ARI from 21 May to 28 August 2009, he provides research assistance to Prof Brenda Yeoh for the Asian Migration Cluster.

Ms Kelsey Beninger is a fourth year Psychology major at the University of British Columbia. She is attached to ARI as events assistant from 15 June to 4 September 2009.

"In the short time that I've been here, I have already met many interesting people and have learned a lot. Furthermore, I am delighted to be able to absorb the intangible experience of being involved with a major academic centre in the region. My work in CHAMPSEA has allowed me to explore new perspectives of the mobility of international labour that I would have otherwise never considered. I also value the exchanges that I've had with the members of the Asian Graduate Student Fellowship."

Ryan Lledo

"Having been at ARI for 3 weeks now as an events assistant, I am learning lots about the logistical and administrative processes involved in coordinating international academic conferences. I would have to say my favourite aspect of the job thus far is meeting the highly accomplished and interesting international speakers and staff who manage ARI conferences and workshops. The staff is very supportive and adds their enthusiasm and energy to everyday tasks. This is an exceptional professional development, educational, and cultural learning experience and I look forward to the adventures that are still to come."

Kelsey Beninger

"I have been working as an events assistant and I really appreciate that I have been given this precious chance to work in ARI and to experience different cultures in Singapore. Ever since I started working in ARI, I have met a lot of nice coworkers and have learnt a lot from them about aspects of organising an event and about teamwork. So far I have had a wonderful time in ARI and I hope that in my remaining time in ARI, I will learn more and experience more."

Emma Xiting Lin