

ASIA: THE REGION AND THE WORLD

2 – 3 OCTOBER 2017

Organised by: FASS Asian Studies Departments/Programme

Supported by:



Faculty of Arts
& Social Sciences



ASIA: THE REGION AND THE WORLD
2 – 3 October 2017
Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences, National University of Singapore

The objective of this two-day conference is to showcase the variety and depth of the constituent units of the Asian Studies Division of the Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences. The conference will consist of a keynote lecture delivered by the inaugural Yusof Ishak Chair, Professor Leonard Andaya, five panel sessions, each organised by a particular department, and a closing round table session with representatives from all Asian Studies departments. Through this event, we hope to make our colleagues in the Faculty, the university and the wider public more aware of the richness and range of knowledge production and resources related to Asian Studies at NUS.

We sometimes forget that NUS hosts one of the largest concentrations of scholars of Asia in the world. This apparent amnesia comes about because NUS's Asianists are scattered across a number of departments in FASS and cognate faculties. While Asian Studies departments and their language counterparts in CLS have constituted a core element of FASS for as long as half a century (Malay Studies is celebrating its 50th anniversary this year), it must be acknowledged that the connections and ties among different Asian Studies Departments are not as well developed as they could be.

The inauguration of a new Asian Studies building offers a unique opportunity for FASS to concentrate the majority of its resources related to Asian Studies in a single venue and for the Departments in question to get to know each other better and to work with each other more intensively, pooling resources where possible and taking advantage of the synergies of size, proximity, and common interests and challenges. In other words, the primary audience for this conference is ourselves: the faculty and students of the Asian Studies Division and the Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences.

The conference theme of "Asia: The Region and the World" seeks to locate Asia across different spatial scales and historical temporalities. Reflecting a post-area studies understanding of "Asia," different sessions at this conference taken together produce Asia at the intersection of multiple discourses, networks, materialities, and forces, from the sub-national to the super-natural, from the ideational to the infrastructural. Each department has chosen a different theme and emphasis to present at this conference, together reflecting the conference theme of "Asia: The Region and the World." These include reflections on the state of the field, the difficulties of theorising across regional diversity, transnational networks, and meanings of water in theoretical and empirical terms. Each session will consist of three to four presentations: the conference will end with a joint round table discussion on "Theorizing from the (Asian) Margins."

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MONDAY, 2 OCTOBER 2017	
08:45	REGISTRATION
09:00 – 09:30	WELCOME & OPENING ADDRESS
	Robbie GOH <i>Dean, Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences, NUS</i>
09:30 – 10:30	KEYNOTE ADDRESS
<i>Chairperson</i>	Jonathan RIGG <i>Asia Research Institute, NUS</i>
	Water in the Study of Asia Leonard ANDAYA <i>Yusof Ishak Professor in Social Sciences, Department of Southeast Asian Studies, NUS</i>
10:30 – 11:00	MORNING TEA
11:00 – 13:00	SESSION 1 – SOUTH ASIAN STUDIES
<i>Chairperson</i>	Kenneth DEAN <i>Department of Chinese Studies, NUS</i>
	Contemporary South Asia: Challenges Ahead Gyanesh KUDAISYA <i>South Asian Studies Programme, NUS</i> Rajesh RAI <i>South Asian Studies Programme, NUS</i> Sidharthan MAUNAGURU <i>South Asian Studies Programme & Department of Sociology, NUS</i>
13:00 – 14:00	BOOK LAUNCH – SOCIOLOGICAL THEORY BEYOND THE CANON
<i>Chairperson</i>	TEO You Yenn <i>Nanyang Technological University</i>
<i>13:10</i>	Commentary Riaz HASSAN <i>Institute of South Asian Studies, NUS</i> Sharon SIDDIQUE <i>Singapore University of Technology and Design</i>
<i>13:40</i>	Responses from Authors Syed Farid ALATAS <i>Department of Sociology & Department of Malay Studies, NUS</i> Vineeta SINHA <i>Department of Sociology & South Asian Studies Programme, NUS</i>
	Questions & Answers
14:00 – 14:30	LUNCH
14:30 – 16:00	SESSION 2 – CHINESE STUDIES
<i>Chairperson</i>	THANG Leng Leng <i>Department of Japanese Studies, NUS</i>
	Chinese Cultural Networks in Southeast Asia Kenneth DEAN <i>Department of Chinese Studies, NUS</i> KWEE Hui Kian <i>Department of Chinese Studies, NUS</i> YUNG Sai-Shing <i>Department of Chinese Studies, NUS</i>
16:00 – 16:30	AFTERNOON TEA
16:30 – 18:30	SESSION 3 – MALAY STUDIES
<i>Chairperson</i>	Noor Aisha ABDUL RAHMAN <i>Department of Malay Studies, NUS</i>
	Malay Studies at the Crossroads: Rethinking Approaches and Vision in the Era of Academic Internationalisation Syed Farid ALATAS <i>Department of Sociology & Department of Malay Studies, NUS</i> Maznah MOHAMAD <i>Department of Malay Studies & Department of Southeast Asian Studies, NUS</i> Azhar IBRAHIM <i>Department of Malay Studies, NUS</i>
18:30	END OF DAY 1

TUESDAY, 3 OCTOBER 2017	
09:45	REGISTRATION
10:00 – 12:00	SESSION 4 – JAPANESE STUDIES (JCCI-SPONSORED PANEL)
Chairperson	Vineeta SINHA <i>Department of Sociology & South Asian Studies Programme, NUS</i>
	The 'Indianisation' of Japanese Outcastes: Eta as Pariah and Caṇḍāla in Early Modern Japan Timothy AMOS <i>Department of Japanese Studies, NUS</i>
	Chinese and the Introduction of Western Cooking to Japan: On Chinese as "Secondary Agents of Modernity" in 19th-Century Japan Timothy TSU <i>Kwansei Gakuin University</i>
	China as Building Blocks for Tokugawa Culture: An Alternative Interpretation Framework NG Wai Ming <i>Chinese University of Hong Kong</i>
	Wife, Child, Illegal: Shifting Representations of Filipinos in Japanese Manga Karl Ian CHENG CHUA <i>Ateneo de Manila University</i>
12:00 – 13:00	LUNCH
13:00 – 15:00	SESSION 5 – SOUTHEAST ASIAN STUDIES
Chairperson	Leonard ANDAYA <i>Department of Southeast Asian Studies, NUS</i>
	The Oceanic Turn in Asian Studies John MIKSIC <i>Department of Southeast Asian Studies, NUS</i> Jan MRÁZEK <i>Department of Southeast Asian Studies, NUS</i> Gerard SASGES <i>Department of Southeast Asian Studies, NUS</i> Itty ABRAHAM <i>Department of Southeast Asian Studies, NUS</i>
15:00 – 15:30	AFTERNOON TEA
15:30 – 17:30	ROUNDTABLE SESSION
Chairperson	Maitrii AUNG-THWIN <i>Department of History, NUS</i>
	Theorising from the (Asian) Margins Eyal BEN-ARI <i>Kinneret College</i> Vineeta SINHA <i>Department of Sociology & South Asian Studies Programme, NUS</i> Azhar IBRAHIM <i>Department of Malay Studies, NUS</i> GOH Beng Lan <i>Department of Southeast Asian Studies, NUS</i> Kenneth DEAN <i>Department of Chinese Studies, NUS</i>
17:30	END OF CONFERENCE

SESSION 1 – SOUTH ASIAN STUDIES

Contemporary South Asia: Challenges Ahead

Gyanesh KUDAISSYA | *South Asian Studies Programme, NUS*

Rajesh RAI | *South Asian Studies Programme, NUS*

Sidharthan MAUNAGURU | *South Asian Studies Programme & Department of Sociology, NUS*

Reflecting the multi-disciplinarity and diversity of substantive research interests represented in the department, this panel explores the challenges of theorising the diverse region of South Asia with papers on religion, popular culture, sports, region-making, politics and economy. The papers offer reflections about the challenges ahead in making sense of the shifting, moving spaces and sites in South Asia where everyday lives are enacted against the backdrop of state structures and received legacies and histories. The panel will present research on specific topics grounded in empirical realities of India, Sri Lanka and Bangladesh with the objective of thinking comparatively and synthetically across this complex and plural region.

SESSION 2 – CHINESE STUDIES

Chinese Cultural Networks in Southeast Asia

Kenneth DEAN | *Department of Chinese Studies, NUS*

KWEE Hui Kian | *Department of Chinese Studies, NUS*

YUNG Sai-Shing | *Department of Chinese Studies, NUS*

The Chinese Studies Department covers Chinese Language (Linguistics and Translation) and Chinese Studies (Classical Literature and Philosophy, Ming Qing Neo-Confucianism, Chinese Religion, Print and Popular Culture, and Overseas Chinese History). We will present research related to Chinese cultural networks in Southeast Asia, from Chinese temple and business networks, to the circulation of opera troupes and the spread of dialect-based cinema, to the transformations of Chinese Mandarin in Singapore.

SESSION 3 – MALAY STUDIES

Malay Studies at the Crossroads: Rethinking Approaches and Vision in the Era of Academic Internationalisation

Syed Farid ALATAS | *Department of Sociology & Department of Malay Studies, NUS*

Maznah MOHAMAD | *Department of Malay Studies & Department of Southeast Asian Studies, NUS*

Azhar IBRAHIM | *Department of Malay Studies, NUS*

Malay studies as a field of areas studies has been approached from paradigms and perspectives that are not isolated from dominant political and ideological interests of influential groups within and beyond national contexts for over more than two centuries. They impact not only the epistemological underpinnings but determine the sense of relevance of fields of inquiry and penetrate perspectives on studies on the Malays. Similar to the experiences and problems in knowledge construction of many formerly colonized Asian societies, Malay Studies has been dominated by strong elements of Eurocentrism as well as defensive ethno-nationalistic provincialism championed by indigenous scholars in the post-independence period. These limitations have been compounded in the last four decades or so by the emergence of exclusive religious and ideologically motivated trends strongly characterized by presumptions of deep epistemological binary between Islam and secularism. More recently, the field has also been impacted by post-modernist perspectives that attempt to deconstruct existing basis and conceptualisation of studies on the Malays. The extent to which and how these paradigms affect the development and production of a relevant, critical and autonomous Malay studies and its diverse fields of study will be examined. The challenge of academic imperialism in rethinking directions of Malay Studies within the context of mounting pressures for academic internationalisation will also be discussed.

SESSION 4 – JAPANESE STUDIES (JCCI-SPONSORED PANEL)

The ‘Indianisation’ of Japanese Outcastes: Eta as Pariah and Caṇḍāla in Early Modern Japan

Timothy AMOS | *Department of Japanese Studies, NUS*

This paper first discusses the ways in which Japanese and Western experiences with and concepts about India and Indian caste came to inform discourse about Japan’s outcaste groups in the early modern period. The paper next addresses the emerging politics of “racialising” whereby early modern Japanese outcaste difference came to be increasingly conceptualized in both Western and Japanese literature as due to the foreign origins of the communities -- common conceptualisations rooted in distinct intellectual trajectories with varying political ends. The paper finally examines the nature of outcaste genealogies and analyses the logic behind the mytho-historical connections made by outcaste communities themselves to the subcontinent.

Chinese and the Introduction of Western Cooking to Japan: On Chinese as “Secondary Agents of Modernity” in 19th-Century Japan

Timothy TSU | *Kwansei Gakuin University*

This presentation argues that Chinese played a role in introducing Western cooking to 19th-century Japan. It likens the activity of Chinese cooks to the function of catalysts in chemical reactions. It observes that although Chinese helped bring Western cuisine to late-Tokugawa and Meiji Japan, they left no appreciable traces in the outcome today and were all but forgotten now. This article concludes with the proposition that Chinese cooks and other skilled Chinese workers in 19th-century Japan may be seen as “secondary agents of modernity” for their role in bringing into the country mundane but essential skills of Western-style everyday living. It further points out that these Chinese artisans were part of a larger migration trend in which Chinese skilled in Western trades spread across the world in the wake of Western imperial and colonial expansion.

China as Building Blocks for Tokugawa Culture: An Alternative Interpretative Framework

NG Wai Ming | *Chinese University of Hong Kong*

China in the Tokugawa imagination was complicated and multifaceted. In understanding the China factor in Tokugawa culture, we should think beyond the traditional dialectical framework of model and “the Other”. China also functioned as a set of building blocks to construct Tokugawa culture. This tripartite conceptual framework helps to achieve a holistic understanding of the nature of Tokugawa culture. Tokugawa Japanese selectively introduced and then modified Chinese culture to make it fit into the Japanese tradition. Used largely as a collection of building blocks to construct Japanese culture, Chinese culture was highly localized and hybridized in Tokugawa Japan. This can be observed in the ways in which Tokugawa Japanese reinterpreted Chinese legends, Confucian classics, and historical terms. These three components constitute the basic narrative structure and analytical framework of this research.

Wife, Child, Illegal: Shifting Representations of Filipinos in Japanese Manga

Karl Ian CHENG CHUA | *Ateneo de Manila University*

This paper will present the different representations of Filipinos through a case study of selected manga published in Japan in the contemporary period. While a radical shift in the representation of Japanese characters existed in Philippine komiks, one can find that despite the shifting contexts of Japan, some of the representations of Filipinos remain the same, particularly on the roles of women in these works. Through this study, it poses questions towards Japan’s multicultural policies and how it addresses its minorities.

SESSION 5 – SOUTHEAST ASIAN STUDIES

The Oceanic Turn in Asian Studies

John MIKSIC | *Department of Southeast Asian Studies, NUS*

Jan MRÁZEK | *Department of Southeast Asian Studies, NUS*

Gerard SASGES | *Department of Southeast Asian Studies, NUS*

Itty ABRAHAM | *Department of Southeast Asian Studies, NUS*

Water covers most of the globe and connects the region of Southeast Asia. Nevertheless, with the exception of catastrophic events like the 2004 tsunami or disputed zones like the South China Sea, for most of history, oceans and seas have remained a blind spot in the academic imagination. Since the early 2000s, scholarship has taken an “Oceanic Turn” that has begun slowly to address this lacuna. The present panel reflects the Department’s engagement with this scholarship. It features work from a range of disciplines – Cultural Studies, History, Political Science, and Archaeology – and focuses on diverse topics – literature, ships, islands, migration, heritage, and sovereignty. The result is to highlight the material, political, cultural, and ecologic significance of oceans and seas to Southeast Asia’s past and present, and to engage critically with the problem of how we simultaneously shape and are shaped by the oceans.