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Games preparations reflect widening gulf between India and Bharat

Behind the glamorous façade of India's preparations for the XIX Commonwealth Games lies a grim reality, says TULSI CHARAN BISHT.

With the approach of the XIX Commonwealth Games, the politicians and mandarins in India's capital Delhi are in a frenzy. Almost every day a new games project is being inaugurated and the capital is being spruced up to turn it into a 'world-class city'.

The Indian prime minister recently inaugurated a 'swanky' new airport. Delhi Metro is working overtime to finish the project to link various game venues and places of interest. Overseas companies are landscaping Delhi's streets, and Connaught Place or Rajeev Chowk, the crumbling landmark of Lutyens' Delhi, is being refurbished. It all appears in sync with India's status of one of the world's fastest growing economies and a potential future superpower.

Behind this glamorous façade, however, lies a grim reality, not only of cost overruns of various projects, corruption, missed deadlines or the political bickering, but also stories of immense human exploitation and suffering. It is estimated that more than 400 000 daily wage, contract workers are toiling to complete various infrastructure projects and games venues. A large majority of these workers are from the rural areas of the neighbouring states where rural poverty and lack of employment opportunities have forced them to accompany the *thekedars* (contractors) on an exploitative trail. These migrant labourers work and live in appalling conditions and under constant threat of being thrown out of work or not being paid for it.



A recent report, 'In the name of national pride: blatant violation of workers' rights at the Commonwealth Games site', by the Peoples Union for Democratic Rights, a Delhi-based civil liberties and democratic rights organisation, points to a number of exploitative working conditions. The report outlines evidence of numerous violations of labour laws meant to protect workers' rights. The workers are not paid legal minimum wages and are made to work overtime and often long shifts without adequate compensation.

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As a large majority of the workers are in the grip of sub-contractors who pay them unsystematically—for example, sometimes workers are paid for their daily requirements and the rest is kept by the contractor without any proper account and, at best, is paid later or, at times, not at all.



Delhi Metro—working overtime. Photo: Wikipedia.

The living and working conditions of these workers are equally appalling. The report says the workers are

herded like animals in unliveable quarters and share small cabins

with no ventilation and no basic facilities such as toilets and clean, running water. Families with young children live in these unhygienic conditions and, as outside interactions are restricted, it is difficult to learn about their plight.

Nor do these workers have access to a safe and secure work environment. They are not provided with safety gear, even when they work in hazardous and unsafe conditions. If such provisions are made, money is deducted from their wages. A number of deaths have been reported as a result of unsafe working conditions. The officials, whose only concern seems to be to finish the projects before the games, overlook these exploitative practices and violation of rules and laws.

The construction frenzy will be over soon and India will be telecasting its refined imagery worldwide by showcasing the Delhi Commonwealth Games. Little will be heard of the numerous unfortunate workers who built these grand edifices in a resurgent India. Some of them will still follow the trail of exploitation, moving to other places where they will continue to live in similarly appalling conditions. Some might be left behind in the streets and will join the league of the other rural folks who come to Delhi looking for basic sustenance and are labelled as 'slum dwellers'.

But being 'slum dweller' is no safe bet in Delhi. Slum dwellers squatting by arterial roads in meshed shanties, their half-naked children defecating on the footpaths and

begging at traffic intersections, have become eyesores for a city that aspires to be 'world-class' and 'beautiful'.

'Slum dwellers squatting by arterial roads in meshed shanties, their half-naked children defecating on the footpaths and begging at traffic intersections, have become eyesores for a city that aspires to be 'world-class' and 'beautiful.'

These 'slum dwellers' are what anthropologist Mary Douglas¹ terms as 'matter out of place', as their presence is seen by the city elites and the growing middle classes as dirtying and defacing.

Organising the Commonwealth Games has provided a handy opportunity for a clean-up and beautification drive whose hammer has already fallen on a large number of such unfortunate inhabitants of Delhi. Yamuna Pustha, a bustling community of over 40 000 households and more than 140 000 people² located on the banks of the Yamuna, has already been razed on the grounds that such human habitation on the river bed is ecologically harmful. However, on the same riverbed, the Commonwealth Games Village that will host the troops of international athletes and officials has been constructed.

Once the games are over, these residential quarters will be sold for millions of rupees apiece by a private company that has constructed the games' village under the 'public-private partnership', a subterfuge for neo-liberal policies that allows the Indian state to acquire land in the name of 'public purpose' and subsequently sell it to private parties. In this lucrative business, the displaced of the Yamuna Pustha are conveniently forgotten.

The story of Delhi is also the story of a number of other cities in India. According to the 2001 Census, 640 towns across the country have reported slums. Between 1981 and 2001, India's slum population more than doubled, rising from 27.9 million to 61.8 million. However, the fact remains that, over the decades, various rural development programs have failed to

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deliver and poverty, inequality and lack of employment opportunities have forced people from the rural areas to move to the urban centres. Lacking skills and education for an urban way of life, such population groups often find themselves at the fringes, taking up menial occupations. Lack of housing affordability and inadequate policies for low-income housing force these people to take up residence in the slum areas.

As the slums are often located within the fast-developing zones where land prices are skyrocketing, these have become a centre of investment attraction for private developers.

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The case of Dharavi, termed Asia's largest slum, is an example. It is spread over a large area in the centre of Mumbai. There are now plans to develop Dharavi into a skyscraper city similar to Shanghai. Under this program only a handful of the almost one million inhabitants of Dharavi will be resettled, while private developers and the moneyed classes will reap the benefits of the redevelopment.



Delhi Airport domestic terminal. Photo: Wikipedia.

Though the terms India and Bharat denote the same country, they are often used to invoke the contradictions that exist within—India represents the educated, often English-speaking, urban middle classes and the rural elite, while Bharat stands for the rural, regional landscape, the urban and rural poor and the indigenous and peasant communities. The relationship between the two is seen as asymmetrical and exploitative—India internally colonising Bharat.³

In the past two decades, the Indian state's embrace of neo-liberal policies has further sharpened these contradictions. An example is that, despite India's massive economic growth, 55 per cent of the population is poor according to a [recent study](#)⁵ by the [Oxford Poverty and Human Development Initiative](#). The study uses 10 indicators basic to human existence, such as nutrition, health and education, to measure the extent of poverty.



Jawaharlal Nehru Stadium. Photo: Wikipedia.

Showcasing the Commonwealth Games will add to the hype about India's miraculous economic growth and its coming to the world stage. However, the continued widening of the chasm between India and Bharat makes one to wonder if Bharat will also ever come to the fore, and if the twain shall ever meet.

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The environmental ethics of Japan's whaling

The debate over Japan's whaling practices reflects major differences in Western and Japanese environmental ethical principles, says MIDORI KAGAWA-FOX.

A major difference between the development of Western and Japanese environmental ethical principles is that the Western model grew as a part of Western philosophical thought, whereas the Japanese model grew mainly through empirical experiences. Ethics are not rules but are living philosophical teachings, evolving in societies through the influence of parents, teachers and community members.

The Western code of environmental ethics that developed through the writings of academics and philosophers was largely based on Judeo-Christian principles that comprise three sources of moral enlightenment: biblical teachings, ethical traditions and moral reasoning.¹ Individual philosophies were influenced by the network of Western thinkers who approached the developing debate on environmental concerns from different perspectives.

Western 'environmental ethics' developed to encompass a broad spectrum of ideals that included Arne Naes's *Deep Ecology*, Aldo Leopold's *Land Ethics*, and Peter Singer's *Animal Liberation*. The Western model was initially a top-down approach, but as it gained acceptance it was strongly supported by broad sections of the public; people could find in 'environmental ethics' a field about which they felt passionate. The launching of the world's first anti-whaling campaign by Greenpeace in 1975 was a catalyst for the global Save the Whales movement, and helped to bring about the ban on commercial whaling.

Japanese environmental ethics did not develop as an academic discipline as in the West. It has not been included in any branch of Japanese philosophy nor has there been enough pressure from academics and environmentalists to highlight environmental concerns and to promote public debate.² The Japanese understanding of the word ethics in an Indo-European sense is *rinri* ((倫理). It translates in meaning as 'the maintenance of a healthy relationship in the community' and includes a reciprocal relationship with

animals. Religious thought has also shaped the Japanese empathy towards the environment. The three most influential spiritual beliefs in Japan are Shinto, Japanese Buddhism, and Confucianism. Shinto has shaped the Japanese interaction with the natural environment: respect for nature, admiration for nature and being in harmony with nature come from these teachings and have been a strong influence contributing to the uniqueness of Japanese aesthetics. The



Whale meat on sale at Tokyo fish market.

Japanese relationship with animals is based on the Buddhist belief in reincarnation. Characteristics of this relationship

are reciprocal care, respect and compassion. By comparison, the Western attitude is one of admiration and dominion and is primarily a one-way action from humans to the natural world.

An example of the difference between Western and Japanese perceptions towards animals can be seen with the wolf. In Japanese religious belief, wolves are seen as animals that protect grain farmers from numerous hardships and shrines are erected for them.³ The Japanese have a greater empathy with animals as they see them as messengers or guardians from the gods that exist in nature. This contrasts with the wolf in the Bible where it is symbolic of the wilderness and is considered a devilish animal which exists in a 'place without God'.

The world-wide debate over Japan's whaling practices broaches many contentious issues that include political, cultural, ecological and ethical influences and makes the whaling issue particularly complicated. In Western minds, Japan's whaling demonstrates a lack of ethical consideration for both the suffering inflicted on the whales and for the harm it causes the marine ecosystem. Although whaling demonstrates a lack of ethical

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consideration for both the suffering inflicted on the whales and for the harm it causes to the marine ecosystem. Japanese ate whale meat from early times, mainly through the opportunistic gathering of beached whales. Takeshi Hara pointed out that the Japanese were reluctant to kill whales as it ran counter to their traditional Buddhist beliefs, although eating them offered a means of survival.⁴ By the early 17th century, however, whaling had become an established industry; the Japanese acknowledged that whales were mammals and their fishermen considered them to be special animals, different from the fish species.⁵

At the conclusion of World War II a critical shortage of protein in the Japanese diet led to a great expansion of Japanese pelagic whaling that only ceased with the implementation of the whaling moratorium in 1987. A factor that may contribute to the present opposition to Japan's whaling is that Western countries, with the exception of Norway and Iceland, do not have a history of hunting whales for their flesh. Following the moratorium, the Japanese Government then established its controversial scientific research whaling program which, for more than two decades, has been the only option left open for Japan to legally hunt whales. The rationale for the research program draws much fire from environmentalists, as does the actual hunting itself. Japan claims that it needs to kill large numbers of whales to furnish adequate research data on their feeding habits. But the high numbers of whales caught and the quality of the scientific research call the program into question.

It is argued that stomach content analysis, particularly in the case of minke whales, only indicates the animal's most recent meal and these whales consume a large variety of prey over different periods and in different regions. Technology today in the form of DNA faeces analysis, photo identification and satellite tracking, to mention but three, allows for far more detailed and accurate results than can be obtained through lethal sampling. The Japanese Government considers whales to be a fish resource and as such to be exploited. The research program is

supported by the 'Whaling Triangle', a collaboration of the Fisheries Agency, the Japan Fisheries Association, and the Institute of Cetacean Research. This group has a vested interest in maintaining whaling, and many critics of the research program claim that it is a cover for commercial enterprise. The interests of the Whaling Triangle ignore the traditional Japanese empathy to animals.

As the Japanese Government controls media coverage of overseas whaling clashes, and as Japanese citizens do not care much about eating whale meat, it means the whaling issue does not rate very highly in Japanese consciousness. The government's claim that whaling should be continued to preserve a national tradition fails under close examination. In Japan, the 40-year period after the end of the war is the only time that the practice could be considered to be widespread. A point of departure with present day Western thought is that the Japanese Government considers whales to be a management matter, rather than an environmental one.

However, as in the West, whale-watching in Japan is increasing as more citizens come to appreciate the 'gentle giants' of the ocean and become aware of their role in the marine ecosystem. In Japan, this awakening of a moral consciousness to the wellbeing of whales may rescue them from deadly exploitation.

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Teacher training key to Chinese language education

Initiatives to improve the position of Chinese as the least studied of the six most commonly taught languages in Australian schools are well underway, reports JANE ORTON.

In August 2009 the Victorian [Department of Education and Early Childhood Development](#) and China's [National Office for Teaching Chinese as a Foreign Language \(Hanban\)](#) entered into a partnership to provide a national Chinese teacher training centre in Australia.

Following a tendering process, the centre was established at the [Melbourne Graduate School of Education](#), home base of a consortium that also includes the [China Institute](#) at the Australian National University and [Education Services Australia](#). The primary objective is to improve the teaching of Chinese so as to increase the number of students continuing to Year 12, and to be doing so at a higher level of language proficiency than now.

The means to achieving this are enhancing Chinese language teacher capacity, undertaking research and promoting the learning of Chinese. This Chinese Teacher Training Centre (CTTC) brief follows closely the recommendations made in the 2008 report [Chinese language education in Australian schools](#) (Orton, Melbourne Graduate School of Education and Confucius Institute, Melbourne).

In June 2010, on behalf of the Commonwealth Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations, the [Asia Education Foundation](#) republished the 2008 report as *The current state of Chinese language teaching in Australian schools*, along with [three similar reports](#) on the state and nature of, respectively, Japanese, Indonesian and Korean in Australian schools.

The reports provide clear evidence that at the operational level, there can be no lumping together of the four under the one

'Asian languages' heading: enormous linguistic differences make each a separate challenge for learners; demographic differences make the clientele for each vastly different in terms of size and background speaker-classroom learner ratio; and the state of current provision, teacher supply and quality, and student numbers are quite incommensurate.

The research shows that Chinese is the least studied of the six most commonly taught languages in Australian schools, by a wide margin (84 000 students in primary and secondary nationally, the next lowest German with 130 000, and on top, Japanese with 330 000). This is largely because, as soon as they may (at the end of Year 8 or 9), 94 per cent of students drop the language. By Year 12, some 65 per cent of students taking Chinese are international students who have arrived from China or Taiwan in Year 10; and an approximate further 30 per cent are local students who have spoken Chinese since birth.

'The research shows that Chinese is the least studied of the six most commonly taught languages in Australian schools, by a wide margin.'

Most of these latter, including those whose mother tongue is a Chinese dialect, have attended private Saturday classes in Modern Standard Chinese for up to 10 years. Typically, as well as being fluent speakers, they know between 1200–1800 characters, the lower figure being a minimum of characters fully known, the upper figure recognition knowledge only.

The Victorian Certificate of Education (VCE) lists a compulsory 420 characters which must be fully known in Second Language Chinese by the end of Year 12, while the [International Baccalaureate](#) expects around 600 of those who take Second Language Chinese. Textbook series used in Australia for classroom learners have introduced around 500 characters by the end of Year 12. This is the number mastered by Grade 1 students

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in China, Hong Kong and Taiwan. While the L1 (mother tongue) internationals have a separate course and assessment, not surprisingly, the few non-background classroom learners left by Year 12 get blitzed annually in the rankings for Chinese as a Second Language, managing scores of 25–40 in VCE, while local home speakers clean up the A+ scores of 40–50. Such results have made prestigious schools decide not to offer Chinese despite its obvious importance, and even those with good programs often advise their students to drop Chinese in senior years.

Apart from this major deterrent to continuing, there are three other significant



Professor John Minford, Head of the China Centre, ANU, talking to Year 11 students about Chinese culture.

obstacles to Chinese flourishing in schools, all generally unique to Chinese. Firstly, it is a laborious and, in part, difficult language for an English speaker to learn, due to its tones and the

memory burden of characters, and hence, as well, the pace and degree of progress can be disheartening. Despite estimates that Chinese requires 3.5 times longer to master than a European language, the time allocation in schools is the same for all languages.

Secondly, Chinese language remains very under-researched, and what it demands as a learning task for school students, and how that might best be assisted, is virtually unknown. Compared to other languages, resources are thin and often very outdated in pedagogy. A third factor is that languages teachers are not well trained due to language method being taught as a generic course without specialist attention to the specific challenges of a particular language.

Furthermore, most teachers of Chinese are native speakers who, without special training, quite naturally have neither knowledge of nor sensitivity to learner difficulties with aspects of the language that seem to them normal and self-evident.

There is also a very big gap in educational philosophy and accepted practice between the school experience of the 92 per cent native speaker teachers, educated in China and Taiwan, and that of their Australian students and colleagues. Teacher–student relationships, teaching–learning style and school expectations are often in real contradiction between the two groups, and the outcome unsatisfactory for all. Finally, all this occurs in a situation where there is generally low community support for language learning and little incentive in the way of jobs for those who do persevere. To tackle these obstacles, the CTTC is providing regular professional development sessions for teachers, including summer and winter schools. It is undertaking research into strengthening the pedagogy and curriculum in existing programs, developing evidence-based beneficial ways for students to use information and communication technologies (ICT) independently so as to increase time on Chinese, and examining the affordances for language, culture and intercultural learning of short in-China sojourns.

The CTTC is also exercising strong advocacy with appropriate bodies for a separate curriculum and assessment for three strands of Chinese learner: L2 (classroom learner), heritage (home speaker), and L1 (international student). In 2011 CTTC staff will teach the new postgraduate Specialist Certificate in Chinese Language Teaching for the Melbourne Graduate School of Education, developed with a [National Asian Languages and Studies in Schools Program](#) Strategic Partnerships grant. To date, the response to these initiatives has been excellent.



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published widely on intercultural competence in Australian–Chinese relations at work.

The Indian roots of modern Chinese thought

The revival of a form of Indian thought among leading Chinese intellectuals has played a decisive role in shaping major currents in modern Chinese thought, writes JOHN MAKEHAM.

The Euro–American and Japanese roots of many aspects of modern Chinese thought have been well documented. Far less well understood, and still conspicuously overlooked, is the significance of the main exemplar of Indian thought in modern China: Yogācāra Buddhist thought. This situation is all the more anomalous given that the revival of Yogācāra thought among leading Chinese intellectuals in the first three decades of the 20th century played a decisive role in shaping major currents in modern Chinese thought more generally.

Yogācāra is one of the most important philosophical systems of Indian Buddhism and has also exerted a profound influence on Buddhist developments in East Asia and Tibet. It focuses on meditative practice, as well as epistemology and logic.

Competing traditions of Yogācāra thought were first introduced into China during the sixth century, with the *Weishi* (Sanskrit, *Vijñaptimātra*; cognition-only) school—associated with the famous pilgrim and translator, Xuanzang (600–664)—rising to pre-eminence in the 7th century. By the Yuan dynasty (1279–1368), however, the major commentaries of this school ceased being transmitted in China and it was not until the end of the 19th century that a number of them were re-introduced into China from Japan where their transmission had been uninterrupted.

Even within the context of a broader renewal of interest in traditional philosophical writings in the late Qing dynasty (1644–1911), this corpus of Yogācāra writings attracted unparalleled attention among leading Chinese intellectuals from the late 1890s to the 1930s, including such figures as Yang Wenhui, Tan Sitong, Song Shu, Lin Zaiping, Ouyang Jingwu, Xiong Shili, Liang Shuming, Taixu, Zhang Taiyan, Liang Qichao, and Lü Cheng.

For example, Zhang Taiyan (1869–1936) regarded Buddhism as a sort of scientific

philosophy or philosophical science, superior not only to religion but also to both science and philosophy. This superiority is born of the fact that the object of the Buddha's teachings is the verification of the source and true nature of all existence: 'thusness.'



Like a number of influential figures of the day, Zhang regarded Yogācāra as a sophisticated knowledge system that

could serve as an authoritative alternative to the knowledge systems being introduced from the West. He regarded it as an 'indigenized' intellectual resource which could be co-opted to counter the challenges posed by the logic, philosophy (which then included psychology), and science of the West.

Zhang attempted to build a philosophical edifice on the foundations of an ontology and cognitive epistemology that exclusively privileged key Yogācāra Buddhist doctrines and conceptual categories. He believed that Buddhist logic (Ch. *yinming*; Sk. *hetu-vidyā*) enables one to uncover the true meaning of certain pre-Qin writings on logic and reasoning in a way that Western philosophy cannot.

Against the backdrop of an intellectual climate in Japan and China during the decades either side of 1900, in which a premium had come to be placed on logic as a precondition for the development of philosophy, Zhang was one of the first Chinese intellectuals to follow the lead of Japanese scholars in maintaining that classical Chinese philosophers had developed indigenous forms of logic. Significantly, he further argued that Chinese versions of Yogācāra texts on Buddhist logic and reasoning—having only recently become available again after a hiatus of many centuries—made it

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Possible, once again, to gain a proper understanding of China's earliest writings on logic. Zhang also applied the benchmark of Yogācāra Buddhist philosophy to assess the philosophical merit of individual pre-Qin texts such as *Xunzi*, *Mozi* and *Zhuangzi*, seeking to establish that early Chinese texts 'bear witness' to insights into realities which transcend individual cultures but are most fully and systematically articulated in Yogācāra systems of learning; and that classical Chinese philosopher-sages had attained an awareness of the highest truths, evidence of which can be found in their writings. In short, Zhang used Yogācāra to affirm the value of 'Chinese philosophy' and, in doing so, helped shape its early definition.



Over the past two years, one of my main research undertakings has been to explore the

role that Yogācāra Buddhist philosophy played in the intellectual formation of one of 20th-century China's most influential philosophers, Xiong Shili (1885–1968). The broader context in which this research is being undertaken is a collaborative research project with my ANU colleague John Powers, other colleagues in Australia, and a network of internationally-based Yogācāra specialists. The project is called The Indian Roots of Modern Chinese Thought.

My work on Xiong Shili aims to illuminate the legacy of Yogācāra thought on the formative development of key paradigms in New Confucian philosophy. New Confucianism is a modern philosophical movement, with religious overtones. (In English, the term 'New Confucian' is to be distinguished from 'Neo-Confucian,' which refers to certain thinkers of the Song, Yuan, and Ming dynasties, in particular.) The movement is promoted and/or researched by prominent Chinese intellectuals based in China, Taiwan, Hong Kong, and the United States. Sympathetic

interpreters trace the movement to the early part of the 20th century.

Since the 1970s, New Confucian philosophy has been growing in influence in 'cultural China' to become the pre-eminent philosophical current in Chinese philosophy of the late 20th and early 21st centuries. Its rise to pre-eminence in

'Since the 1970s, New Confucian philosophy has been growing in influence in 'cultural China' to become the pre-eminent philosophical current in Chinese philosophy.'

mainland China over the past 15 years is nothing short of phenomenal. Just as with Neo-Confucian philosophy of the Song period, contemporary New Confucianism is very much a product of a sophisticated engagement with the intellectual challenges posed by indigenised forms of Buddhist philosophy.

In the case of contemporary New Confucianism, it was Yogācāra philosophy that provided that formative intellectual challenge. Together with Liang Shuming (1893–1988), Xiong Shili is now widely regarded as a father of the New Confucian school of philosophy and one of the most original and creative Chinese philosophers of the 20th century. Included among his students are such towering figures as Tang Junyi (1909–1978), Xu Fuguan (1903–1982) and Mou Zongsan (1909–1995), each of whom in turn attracted many disciples and promoters.

To date, my work on Xiong has focused on preparing an annotated translation of his *Xin weishi lun* (New treatise on cognition-only) [classical Chinese version of 1934], a challenging and technical work but one of critical importance to our understanding of modern Chinese philosophy more generally, and New Confucian philosophy more particularly.

Conventionally presented as a critique of Yogācāra philosophy and an endorsement of the so-called Learning of Mind wing of Neo-Confucianism, the work in fact is more fruitfully read as an attempt to

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synthesise Buddhist and Confucian philosophies on the basis of Xiong's own creative interpretation of key concepts in Chinese philosophy. He was particularly inspired by the view found in the *Book of change* that the cosmos is perpetually and vigorously changing. By and large, it was in reaction to the notion of a quiescent and unchanging fundamental state/condition



(*benti*) that spurred his embrace of the philosophy of change and process he found in the *Book of Change*. Xiong also subscribed to

the notion of the mind as being originally enlightened, a view common to several Sinitic systems of Buddhist thought—Tiantai, Huayan and Chan—influenced by the *Dasheng qixin lun* (The awakening of faith in Mahāyāna).

In contrast, scholars associated with the Inner Learning Academy (such as Ouyang Jingwu and Lü Cheng) were part of a movement that ostensibly sought to 'return to the roots' of original Indian Buddhism, with special attention being paid to Yogācāra teachings and hence were opposed to the doctrine of 'original enlightenment' that had developed in China.

At the heart of this schism lie key issues still being debated in contemporary discussions surrounding so-called Critical Buddhism and which are fundamental to East Asian Buddhist soteriology (the doctrine of salvation): Is human nature innately quiescent or innately enlightened? This point of contention has a direct bearing on a range of issues, from methods of cultivation to the justification of militarism.

John Makeham is Professor of Chinese Studies in the School of Culture, History and Language, College of the Asia and the Pacific, the Australian National University.

New technologies, new responsibilities for students of Asia

A recent forum highlights the new trend in academic exchange, using innovative media, write LUKE HURST and SHIRO ARMSTRONG.

The recent [East Asia Forum Emerging Scholars Roundtable](#) at the Australian National University highlights the new trend in academic exchange, using innovative media and away from simply publishing in academic journals. It also underlines how the next generation of academics will bring not only new ideas but a whole set of new communications skills to their work.

The roundtable was the brainchild of [Emeritus Professor Peter Drysdale](#), who is renowned for his stewardship of emerging scholars, having supervised more than 70 PhD students in his 47-year tenure at the ANU. He now heads up [East Asia Forum](#).



Participants were selected on the basis of an 800-word op-ed essay on the issue of

'Asia's economic and political challenges and how to deal with them'. The top 12 were flown to Canberra to participate in the three-day event, which included top researchers from the ANU as well as 15 ANU PhD students, and had their pieces published in a special edition of [East Asia Forum Quarterly](#). The [finalists](#) were from diverse academic and cultural backgrounds, representing a number of universities around the world: from Yale (US) to Quaid-e-Azam (Pakistan), Peking (China) and Lingnan University (Hong Kong) to the ANU.

During their three days in Canberra they were put through their paces in their fields and more generally on the issues facing the region. They were challenged by leading ANU academics such as Professors Hugh White, Michael L'Estrange and Kent Anderson, who pushed them to the next step in their

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understanding of regional affairs. This experience was complemented by the opportunity to meet with senior level analysts at the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, including secretary Dennis Richardson, a private roundtable discussion with ANU chancellor Gareth Evans and attendance at the China Update roundtable and conference.

If we take Henry Makeham's [prognosis](#) seriously, 'that Australian graduates are grossly underequipped to embrace the rise of China and compete effectively in a globalised Asian job market', then the platforms on which the next generation can voice and refine their opinions will be vital.

With the East Asia Forum, the ANU is providing a national platform for engagement on Asian affairs with the international academic and policy community via the new media. It already has huge international reach.

A related initiative in the sphere of economics in the region is the [PAFTAD Young Fellowships](#) program, which also provides avenues for developing the academic rigour and networks the next generation of policy makers on Asia will require.

The move toward new technologies for academic discourse confers additional responsibilities on students of Asia. Being at the frontier of knowledge now requires familiarity with technologies such as Google Reader and Twitter, which allow quick digestion of a large mass of information.

The key message from the initiatives at the ANU is how critical the research base and rigorous scrutiny and review of analysis remains to the delivery of quality material via the new media.

Luke Hurst is a graduate student and [Shiro Armstrong](#) is a Research Fellow at the Crawford School of Economics and Government, ANU College of Asia and the Pacific.

International conference on Taiwan studies

The [Asia Institute](#) at the University of Melbourne, in association with the Melbourne University [Taiwan Research Reading Group](#), invites submissions for papers for an international conference on Taiwan studies.

Titled 'Spatial cultures and cultural spaces in Taiwan: Historical and contemporary perspectives', the conference will be held at the Asia Institute, University of Melbourne, on 9–10 December 2010.

It will reflect the strong interest in the relationship between culture and space in humanities research worldwide in the past few decades. Space has ceased to be the sole province of geographers, but has become an interest to scholars in anthropology, history, sociology, literary studies, political science and sociology.

The conference will address the way in which cultural practices interact with physical spaces in Taiwan, including how space is culturally organised and how culture manifests itself spatially (spatial cultures) and how particular spaces, such as museums, historical sites, art galleries, religious buildings and memorials, are designated as having specifically cultural significance (cultural spaces).

The aim of the conference is to bring together scholars from Australia, Taiwan and other countries who are interested in looking at the reciprocal relationships between culture and space as these are played out in Taiwan. It will be multidisciplinary in focus, and participation by academic researchers working in any area related to the space and culture relationship and by those working in the arts and other domains of cultural activity is welcomed.

The conference will be run in conjunction with a postgraduate symposium on Taiwan Studies to be held on 7–8 December, also at the University of Melbourne.

Abstracts of approximately 300 words should be [submitted](#) by 31 August 2010. Further details about the conference will be available from the [conference website](#).

The Indian empire, multiple realities

A new exhibition at the Art Gallery of New South Wales is a rare opportunity to engage with images of 19th-and 20th-century India, writes JACKIE MENZIES.

The free exhibition, *Indian empire, multiple realities*, now showing in the [Asian Gallery of the Art Gallery of New South Wales](#) until 7 November 2010, introduces the competing narratives that emerged following the first European encounters with India.

Shaped by a promised gift of significant works from the Portvale Collection, this large exhibition comprises prints, photographs, posters and textiles that capture the history and interests of Indians and foreigners as they lived in parallel but dissimilar worlds of varying degrees of overlap and interaction.



Unknown photographer, c1900. Unknown subject, handcoloured: Portvale Collection.

The exhibition starts with early European maps of sections of India, as well as images of the India of the European imagination, described in Partha Mitter's

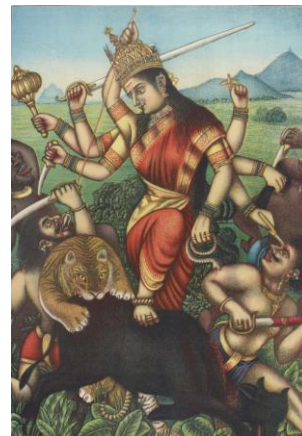
classic book *Much maligned monsters*. The narrative then moves to images created under the patronage of foreigners who were overwhelmed by a totally different country and culture.

Such images favoured depictions of the manners, customs and costumes of the Indian people, creating a new genre known as 'Company painting' since so many of the patrons were employees of the East India Company.

Apart from images of the people of India, popular too were topographical prints in the 'picturesque' style then in vogue in England.

Such paintings and prints in the exhibition capture the fascination and admiration Europeans felt for the people and cultures they encountered in the different parts of India where they settled.

Early Europeans in India were explorers and traders, lured by the wealth in spices, textiles, tea and opium. The East India Company came to dominate trade to the extent it effectively took over India after the Battle of Plassey in 1757, and continued to maintain an army of British and Indian soldiers until the British Crown



India, Ravi Varma Press, c 1880. *Durga killing the buffalo*, chromolithograph: Portvale Collection.

took over in 1858. As the wealth of foreigners grew, so did their demand for art, a demand met by local artists, as well as visiting European artists keen to earn a living by catering to the tastes of the new elite. Innumerable portraits of

powerful civilian and military officials were commissioned and the exhibition includes a large oil of Warren Hastings, first Governor-General of India, with an interesting Australian provenance.

The early phase of interaction between Indians and foreigners was brutally curtailed in 1857 with the First War of Independence (the Indian Mutiny), images of which are in the exhibition. The Mutiny ended the rule of the East India Company, and ushered in the Indian empire, better known as the Raj, with Queen Victoria being declared the Empress of India in 1877. The formal British rule of India was to last until Indian Independence in 1947. During the period of British rule, photography (a focus of the Portvale Collection) was adopted with great

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Indian empire, multiple realities

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enthusiasm by Indians and foreigners, amateurs and professionals. There survive countless albums belonging to Indians and to those foreigners resident in India from



Unknown photographer, 1870s. *HH The Maharana Saheb*, handcoloured photograph. Portvale collection.

the late 19th to the early 20th century. The albums in this exhibition exemplify the breadth of subjects covered: formal portraits, tea parties, balls, battles, hunts and landscape images by some of the best known photographers of the 19th and

early 20th century in India. Through the books, albums, photographs and prints produced during the Raj, the wondrous, past worlds of English colonels and Indian princes are evoked. Famous photographers whose work is represented in the exhibition include Samuel Bourne, Felice Beatto, Randolph Holmes, and Lala Deen Dayal.

Another focus of the Portvale Collection is



JC Mistri, Bengali photographer, active 1920s–40s. *Hey you!* Silver gelatine photograph. Portvale collection.

the fine embroidery distinctive to the areas of Kutch and Saurashtra in west India. India has always produced wondrous textiles, and while much textile production before Western imperial powers arrived was geared towards the export trade, cloth was of course also produced continuously for local use. In the princely kingdoms specialists crafted finely detailed textiles for the royal courts. In the countryside, village women embroidered blouses, skirts or shawls or made hangings to decorate their dwellings. The onset of British rule did not disrupt such creativity, nor did the coming

of independence in 1947. Such folk art continues to be created as demonstrated by some magnificent examples in the show.

Another exciting aspect of Indian history represented in the show is the vibrant lithographic prints created from the first introduction of the press in India in the mid-19th century. The prints were popular for imaging the numerous gods of Hinduism that could be bought cheaply to hang in the home, while also becoming a potent medium for political activists as the movement for Indian independence became stronger. The prevalence of these dramatic, ubiquitous images has affected the work of contemporary artists, as shown by a set of 10 photographs by Indian artists Pushpamala N and Clare Arni.

Yet another story in this absorbing exhibition is the reaction of foreign traveller photographers to uniquely Indian moments from the 1960s on. Examples in the show are mainly the work of Australian photographers, documenting the Australian reaction to the revelation that is India.

Jackie Menzies OAM is Head Curator of Asian Art, Art Gallery of New South Wales.

Life death and magic

An exhibition featuring dramatic sculpture, jewellery and textiles from Southeast Asia opened at the National Gallery of Australia in Canberra this month and will run until 31 October 2010.

This is the first major exhibition of animist art from Southeast Asia to be held in Australia. The works of art originate from Indonesia, the Philippines, Malaysia, Vietnam, Taiwan, East Timor, Brunei, Thailand, Cambodia and southern China.

The exhibition reveals the power of art made for rituals of life and death from prehistoric to recent times, and is drawn from the gallery's renowned collection and key loans from institutions in Asia, Europe and America.

Further information is available from the gallery's [website](#).

Kabuki down-under

Canberra would seem an unlikely location for the longest running kabuki troupe outside Japan—but given kabuki's unorthodox history over almost four centuries, perhaps this is not so surprising.

The Australian National University's [Za Kabuki production group](#) has been performing the highly stylised Japanese traditional play for almost 30 years. The group is made up of ANU students studying Japanese or taking Japan-related courses, along with Japanese international and exchange students.

Directed by [Shun Ikeda](#) of the ANU Japan Centre, the troupe performs traditional kabuki plays—a blend of music, dance and mime, with spectacular staging and lavish costuming—almost entirely in classical Japanese, with some English translation and ad libs inserted to assist the mainly English-speaking audiences.



When kabuki began in the 1600s, women played a central role in the performance. Some even say

that a woman invented this traditionally dance-based form of entertainment.

As kabuki in its original context meant 'queer behaviour', entertainers (including mistresses) developed theatrical ways of presenting idiosyncrasy to amuse their customers. Cross-dressing was certainly a very popular technique. Over time, however, the role of women in kabuki diminished and today only men are allowed on the stage. Going against this current, ANU Za Kabuki has both men and women taking part, featuring cross-dressing by both groups.

'For some, Kabuki is a lifetime experience and for others it has become an addiction, as they keep coming back for more,' said ANU ZA Kabuki producer [Kaima Negishi](#). 'Our performances are unique in the way they combine traditional and contemporary aspects of kabuki through the use of dance with contemporary popular music

and Australian humour. Students work hard to make the performance entertaining for audiences from different backgrounds.'



The tradition of annual Japanese performances at the ANU began in 1976, initially in the form of contemporary plays, and switched to

traditional kabuki in the early 1980s. These performances became increasingly elaborate during the 1990s, with the use of authentic makeup and costumes, original sets and musical accompaniment, and were hosted at a number of theatre facilities around the campus.

In 1999, the troupe made its first tour of Japan, performing at Nara City Hall and at Kōnan University in Kobe. A troupe from Kōnan University returned the favour, visiting the ANU two years later. The ANU troupe had hoped to visit Japan again this year, but has had to postpone this visit for lack of funds, among many other reasons. Instead, the troupe will focus this year—as it has in the past—on two public performances at the [Street Theatre](#) on September 3 and 4.



'Za Kabuki was founded as an extra-curricular activity for students learning Japanese, to

improve their proficiency and facilitate their cultural encounters,' said Kaima Negishi. 'But it has become an annual cultural event for theatre-goers in Canberra. We're a non-profit group and meet twice a week when semesters are in session. We also organise social events, such as kabuki movie nights, to promote understanding of Japanese culture and cross-cultural interaction.'

The troupe makes frequent visits to ACT primary and secondary schools that offer Japanese to explain kabuki and demonstrate kabuki stage make-up and traditional Japanese costumes. It also performs at community events such as the annual [Canberra Nara Candle Festival](#).

The Han in Xinjiang: the view from the frontier

The Han Chinese have had a massive impact on Xinjiang—but the province has also had a transforming effect on many of the Han, writes TOM CLIFF.

Xinjiang is Chinese Central Asia, a place of deserts and mountains which has long been the meeting place of the Sinic and the Turkic worlds. The settled, oasis-dwelling Turkic Uyghur people constituted the vast majority of the population of this region before the advent of New China in 1949, when massive immigration and permanent settlement of ethnically Han Chinese began.

There are now more Han Chinese in Xinjiang than there are Uyghurs. Many of these Han think of themselves as 'Xinjiang people,' and their collective physical, political, social, and economic impact on Xinjiang has been massive. Just as they have changed the place, the place—and the other people in it—has transformed many of the Han in Xinjiang.

Over two of the past three years I have been conducting fieldwork on migration and social distinction among the Han in Xinjiang. I was there for the Olympics, the Sichuan earthquake, the riots in Tibet and the July 2009 riots in Urumqi. During that time, the personal stories—the life histories—of some of these Han have given me a better understanding of certain social and political processes in contemporary Xinjiang.

What is the Han experience of contemporary Xinjiang? This is a question that I have been asking myself and framing my observations of Xinjiang with ever since I began to take interest in the region and everything related to it a decade or so ago. I am not interested solely in what they experience, I am also interested in how they experience it and the strategies used to negotiate it: how they conceive of, navigate through, and direct their lives, and how they try to make their lives better.

The main objects of study in my dissertation are individuals' life histories

and the discrete stories they tell as part of those life histories. I aim to place these stories in the context of the history or histories of their society, and the social and spatial structures of that society. In this, I am following C Wright Mills' insistence on history, biography, and social structure as the 'three coordinate points for the proper study of [the human condition]'.¹ And since 'we look to the past in the light of the problems of the present',² these stories of past experience are most revealing of present experience.



Cracks in the façade of CCP unity have emboldened post-riot Han demonstrators.

The stories I tell here are intimate and extraordinary; they involve everyday anxieties, banal but important economic calculations and desires that are often somebody else's. I ask, what shared experiences do the people who tell these stories have? And what do these connections tell us? All of these stories begin with or involve migration: spatial migration from inland China to Xinjiang and the social migration of individuals and families buffeted or assisted by the winds of history and social change.

Eighty-seven per cent of the Han population of Xinjiang has arrived since the founding of the People's Republic of China—even by the dubious official figures on current levels, which have barely moved since the early 1990s. Far from being homogeneous, their origins and self-identities are many and varied. Almost every Han person in Xinjiang is from somewhere else originally, and the vast majority identify with having a place of origin somewhere in inland China.

Han who were born in Xinjiang, however, have an identity which incorporates the migration of their forebears but asserts their own distinctiveness: they may claim origin somewhere in inland China. Many are from Sichuan or Henan but claim to be of Xinjiang. Identities are always

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The Han in Xinjiang

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contextual, but the internal migratory flows to (and from) Xinjiang over the course of the past 60 years have added another level of flexibility and complexity to the identities of Han in contemporary Xinjiang.



The view from the frontier—
not always clear.

However, the productions of Western scholarship and media rarely make

reference to the diverse attitudes and identities of

Han people in Xinjiang—and even then, only in passing. This is particularly the case when it comes to politics, and their attitudes towards minority groups. Ethnicity is generally assumed to be the key marker of social distinction—sometimes with implications that ethnicity is the only marker of social distinction that matters in Xinjiang. However, the intimate and detailed stories that I re-tell in my dissertation reveal the complexity of socio-economic and political divisions within the Han of Xinjiang. Such a diverse mix is rarely found elsewhere in China outside of the eastern seaboard migrant destinations.

Also common is a tacit assumption that the Han settlers of Xinjiang are of the same mind as the Han-led authorities in Beijing and Urumqi. That is, that the governed, and those who govern them, all have the same interests simply because they are all Han. This assumption is made all the more incongruous by its persistence even after the riots in Urumqi in July 2009, riots which gave rise to the vocal expression of dissatisfaction with both the Xinjiang and Central governments by many Xinjiang Han.

These post-riot Han demonstrators were further emboldened by cracks in the unified facade that the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) is at constant pains to maintain. My bottom-up approach of talking to everyday Han people, with their disparate socio-economic (and thus political) interests, revealed these cracks as deliberately engineered. Information that appeared in the local-level CCP media acted as unofficial but clear authorisation for the popular criticism of

'The tacit assumption is that the Han settlers are of the same mind as the Han-led authorities in Beijing and Urumqi—an assumption made all the more incongruous by its persistence, even after the riots in Urumqi in July 2009.'

Wang Lequan (the now-former Party Secretary of Xinjiang). In turn, the mass popular antipathy towards Wang Lequan appears to have been a factor in his removal and replacement with a leading cadre who at least preaches 'openness'. [See my article 'China and the partnership of stability in Xinjiang,' in *East Asia Forum*]. Thus, even in China, elite politics is not a realm that is completely sealed off from the experiences, attitudes and actions of life at ground level. The bottom-up view is revealing of much more than just the bottom.

Early in 2011, a colleague and I hope to convene a workshop at the Australian National University that will take just such a bottom-up approach. The workshop will bring together scholars whose work examines the details of the human-level interactions that take place within and/or between the different ethnicities and social groups in Xinjiang.

References

1. Mills, C Wright (1959[1974]). *The sociological imagination*. Longon, OUP.
2. Cox, Robert W (2002). 'Civilizations and the twenty-first century: some theoretical considerations', in Mozaffari M (ed.), *Globalization and civilizations*. New York, Routledge, 1–23



Tom Cliff is a doctoral student in the Department of Political and Social Change at the Australian National University.

China's rocky road to prosperity

With China's economic development proceeding at breakneck speed, it could be time for all of the payers to start wearing seatbelts, writes JANE GOLLEY.

It is difficult to try and project forwards by looking backwards, and yet that's what economists often try to do. I have an old friend who once thought he knew a road he was driving along so well that he would be able to judge the turn ahead of him by looking backwards into the rear vision mirror. He misjudged it, and drove into a tree. He lived to tell the tale but still provided some important lessons for us all. Don't speed, watch out for bends in the road and wear a seatbelt. But also, anticipate that some of our predictions may well turn out to be wrong.

This year's [China Update](#)¹ book is titled [China: The next twenty years of reform and development](#), co-edited by [Ross Garnaut](#), [Jane Golley](#) and [Ligang Song](#). The book draws on contributions from China scholars from Australia, Japan, Thailand, the United Kingdom, the United States and, of course, China. One of the authors depicts the Chinese economy as a speeding car, which will face many potential hazards along the rocky road to prosperity. Certainly, it is clear that if China is to continue along its remarkable path in the next two decades, it will need to steer its way skilfully through a number of challenges.

One of the key challenges facing China in the decades ahead is how to steer its way through the turning point—or more accurately, the turning period—in economic development. There is some indication that China has decisively entered this period already, which is characterised by the end of the labour-surplus economy and rising wages in some sectors of the economy. This has macroeconomic implications for China's future industrial structure and composition of trade. It will also impact on the

hundreds of millions of 'farmers-turned-migrant workers', who require deeper labour market reforms if they are to become true 'migrants-turned-urban residents' in the decades ahead.

Another major challenge for China is to re-balance its growth pattern in a number of ways. China's unbalanced growth in the past has been fuelled by highly resource- and energy-intensive production, contributing to mounting demand pressures in global resource and energy markets. Alleviating this pressure is clearly linked to the imperative of moving towards a low-carbon growth economy, and finding effective ways to combat the dire consequences of China's rapid growth and development on the global and local environments.

China's growth in the past has also relied heavily on exports and investment, which have contributed to rising global imbalances and to numerous structural problems in China as well. There is now widespread recognition of the need to rebalance growth towards domestic consumption and productivity. More comprehensive market reforms are an essential part of the solution to this problem, although this may take decades in some areas.

Sharing the benefits of growth is not just an economic issue but also an ethical one, particularly for a regime whose legitimacy has long been based on egalitarian principles. Uneven access to healthcare, along with rising income inequalities, inadequate social welfare systems, and the slowdown in poverty alleviation are some of the most undesirable outcomes of China's rapid growth in the past, and may pose serious threats to social stability in the foreseeable future.

Intricately linked to all of the economic challenges above is the question of political reform, which many scholars believe to be the key to China's long-term prosperity. Yet like so much of the reform and development process, it is clear that this will be gradual and certainly not without Chinese characteristics. The next two decades are likely to be more

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New books on Asia

China's rocky road

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challenging than the past, as China embraces a new mode of economic growth driven not only by efficiency, but also sustainability and equity considerations. If successful, the next two decades are likely to see China elevated to a position of global primacy alongside the United States. Success is not guaranteed, however, and will require many changes from the status quo.

If China has been a speeding car, it's done a fantastic job so far—the Chinese leadership could be likened to a Formula 1 pro. But for the future, it may be time to slow things down just a little bit. More importantly, it is surely time for all of the players in the Chinese economy to start wearing seatbelts!

Reference

1. The China Update is an annual event at which world leading experts present the latest research on the Chinese economy. Each year, the latest edition of the China Update Book Series is released the day before the conference



Jane Golley is Senior Lecturer, China Economics and Business Program, Crawford School of Economics and Government, the Australian National

University and co-editor of China: The next twenty years of reform and development.

Asian modernities: Chinese and Thai Art compared, 1980 to 1999. By John Clark. Paperback, 288pp, Power Publications. \$59.95.

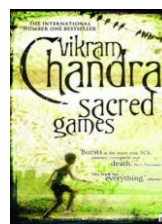
This is the first analysis that defines a space for Asian modernity without direct reference to Euramerica. Based on [John Clark's](#) extensive primary research using vernacular written and interview materials in Chinese and Thai, *Asian Modernities* also develops theoretical perspectives on genealogies of modernity, and the twin phenomena of globalisation and transnational artistic identity. It combines institutional examination with a close attention to art works and the way artists have positioned themselves through them at home and abroad.

Much crime fiction being detected in Asia

[AsiaBookroom](#) Singapore-based novelist Shamini Flint, the author of the Inspector Singh series of crime novels, is currently touring Australia. Her main character, Inspector Singh, typical of the crime fiction genre, is a maverick. Regarded as difficult by his superiors, he is, of course, quite brilliant and manages to thoughtfully observe and deduce who the criminal really is, when all around him are completely stumped.

Inspector Singh is just one of a number of detectives who work the Asian beat these days. These quirky detectives endear themselves to readers who, while following the twists and turns of the plot, are offered insights into the daily life and attitudes of the country in which the crime takes place.

North Korean Detective O, Sartaj, the only Sikh detective in Mumbai, Dr Siri, the Lao coroner who is forced to double as a detective, Chinese Detective Chen and Thai Buddhist Monk Father Ananda are all crime solvers par excellence—and they are only a few of the Asian fictional crime busters observing, deducing and making the world more interesting and entertaining for all of us.



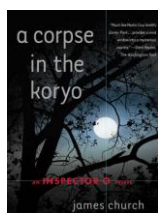
Sacred games. By Vikram Chandra. Faber and Faber. \$23.95.

When he gets an anonymous tip-off as to the secret hideout of the legendary boss of the G-company, he's determined that he'll be the one to collect the prize.

Sartaj, the only Sikh inspector in Mumbai, is used to being identified by his turban, beard and the sharp cut of his trousers. But 'the silky Sikh' is now past 40, his marriage is over and his career prospects are on the slide.

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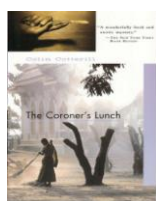
New books on Asia



A corpse in the Koryo. An Inspector O novel. By James Church. 280pp. Thomas Dunne. \$22.95.

Sit on a quiet hillside at dawn among the wildflowers; take a picture of a car coming up a deserted highway from the south. Simple orders for Inspector O, until he realises they have led him far, far off his department's turf and into a maelstrom of betrayal and death. North Korea's leaders are desperate to hunt down and eliminate anyone who knows too much about a series of decades-old kidnappings and murders—and Inspector O discovers too late he has been sent into the chaos.

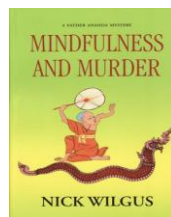
This is a world where nothing works as it should, where the crimes of the past haunt the present, and where even the shadows are real. A corpse in Pyongyang's main hotel—the Koryo—pulls Inspector O into a confrontation of bad choices between the devils he knows and those he doesn't want to meet. A blue button on the floor of a hotel closet, an ice blue Finnish lake, and desperate efforts by the North Korean leadership, set Inspector O on a journey to the edge of a reality he almost can't survive.



The coroner's lunch. By Colin Cotterill. Paperback, 257pp, Soho Press. \$25.95.

The Communist Pathet Lao have taken over this former French colony. Dr

Siri Paiboun, a 72-year-old Paris-trained doctor, is appointed national coroner. Although he has no training for the job, there is no one else; the rest of the educated class has fled. He is expected to come up with the answers the party wants. But crafty and charming Dr Siri is immune to bureaucratic pressure. At his age, he reasons, what can they do to him? And he knows he cannot fail the dead who come.



Mindfulness and murder. By Nick Wilgus. Paperback, 217pp. Silkworm Books. \$33.95.

When a homeless boy living at the youth shelter run by a Buddhist monastery turns up dead, the abbot recruits Father Ananda, a monk and former police officer, to find out why. He discovers that all is not well at this urban monastery in the heart of Bangkok. Together with his dogged assistant, an orphaned boy named Jak, Father Ananda uncovers a startling series of clues that eventually expose the motivation behind the crime and lead him to the murderers. *Mindfulness and murder* is the first in the Father Ananda mystery series.



Mao case. By Qiu Xiaolong. Hodder & Stoughton. \$24.99

Tucked away from the building sites of modern Shanghai are the beautiful mansions once owned by the smartest families in 1930s China. They have since been bought by rich businessmen and high-ranking members of the Communist Party. All except one. The owner is an old painter who holds a glittering party each night: swing jazz plays for his former neighbours, who dance, remember old times and forget for an evening the terrors that followed. But questions are being asked. How can he afford such a lifestyle? His paintings? Blackmail? A triad connection? Prostitution?

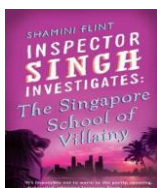
Inspector Chen is asked to investigate discreetly what is going on behind the elegant facade. But, before he can get close to anyone, one of the girls is found murdered in the garden and another is terrified she will be next. Chen's quest for answers will take him to a strange businessman, triads, Chairman Mao himself and a terrible secret the Party will go to any length to conceal.

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New books on Asia

Asian crime

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Inspector Singh investigates. The Singapore school of villainy. By Shamini Flint. Paperback, 309pp. Little Brown. \$22.99.

Inspector Singh is home—and how he wishes he wasn't. His wife nags him at breakfast and his superiors are whiling away their time by giving him his usual 'you're a disgrace to the force' lecture. Fortunately for Singh, there is no rest for the wicked when he is called out to the murder of a senior partner at an international law firm, clubbed to death at his desk. Unfortunately for Singh, there is no shortage of suspects—from the victim's fellow partners to his wife and ex-wife—or motives, as many of the lawyers have secrets they would kill to protect. And very soon Singh finds himself heading up an investigation that rips apart the fabric of Singapore society and exposes the rotten core beneath. Perhaps coming home wasn't such a good idea, after all...

New books from the ASAA series

Southeast Asia Series

The Southeast Asia Publications Series seeks to publish cutting-edge research on all countries and peoples of Southeast Asia across disciplines including anthropology, geography, history, literature, political economy, politics, sociology and the fields of cultural studies, communication studies and gender studies.

Women in Asia Series

The Women's Caucus of the ASAA operates a publication series in conjunction with Routledge that focuses on promoting scholarship on Women in Asia. See the Routledge web site [ASAA Women in Asia Series](#) for full details.

Job websites

These sites offer career prospects for graduates and postgraduates in Asian Studies. If you know of other useful sites advertising jobs for postgraduates in Asian Studies, please send them to the editor.

www.jobs.ac.uk advertises worldwide academic posts.

<http://isanet.ccit.arizona.edu/employment.html> is a free-to-access website run by the International Studies Association.

www.reliefweb.int is a free service run by the United Nations to recruit for NGO jobs.

www.aboutus.org/DevelopmentEx.com has a paid subscription service providing access to jobs worldwide in the international development industry.

<http://h-net.org/jobs> is a US-based site with a worldwide scope. Asia-related jobs (mostly academic) come up most weeks.

www.aasianst.org is the website of the Association for Asian Studies. New job listings are posted on the first and third Monday of each month. You must be a current AAS member to view job listings.

www.timeshighereducation.co.uk The Times Higher Education Supplement.

www.comminet.com is the site of The Communication Initiative Network. It includes listings of jobs, consultants, requests for proposals, events, training, and books, journals, and videos for sale related to all development issues and strategies.

Diary notes

SYMPOSIUM—ASIAN MATERIAL CULTURE IN CONTEXT, Sydney, 27 August 2010,

organised by the Australian Centre for Asian Art and Archaeology. 2–5 pm. Leading experts in individual fields of Southeast Asian and East Asian art will provide case studies and considerations of questions of what is material culture and how should it be examined. Venue: University of Sydney, Faculty of Education, Room LT 351. The symposium will be followed by the launch of two books, *Asian material culture* (Dr Marianne Hulsbosch, Elizabeth Bedford and Martha Chaiklin (eds)) and *Modernities of Chinese art* by Professor John Clark at the Schaeffer Fine Arts Library, Level 2 RC Mills Building, from 5–6.30pm. RSVP by 24 August to [Susan](#).

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Diary notes

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INDONESIA UPDATE 2010, ANU, Canberra, 24–25 September 2010. The focus of this year's update—the 28th—will be on the nexus between employment, social participation and reform, poverty and inequality is a major area of social and economic life and of public policy. Enquiries Indonesia.Project@anu.edu.au, ph +61 2 6125 3794, fax +61 2 6125 3700.

LIFE death and magic, Australian National Gallery, Canberra, until 31 October 2010. An exhibition featuring sculpture, jewellery and textiles from Southeast Asia. Exhibition Assistant Niki van den Heuvel will introduce recent Gallery acquisitions of Southeast Asian animist sculpture and ancient bronzes on **26 August** at 12.45 pm.

SUNTA GRADUATE STUDENT PAPER PRIZE. The Society for Urban, National, and Transnational/Global Anthropology has announced its Annual Graduate Student Paper Prize competition. Students in anthropology MA and PhD programs are invited to submit papers pertaining to urban, national, and transnational/global anthropology and/or any of the areas of interest to SUNTA, including refugees and immigrants, poverty and homelessness, and space and place. The winner will receive a \$250 cash prize plus favourable consideration for publication in the international, refereed journal *City and Society*. Papers should be submitted to Dr Gautam Ghosh (gghosh2@gmail.com or gautam.ghosh@otago.ac.nz) by **31 October 2010**.

SPATIAL CULTURES AND CULTURAL SPACES IN TAIWAN: Historical and contemporary perspectives conference, Melbourne, 9–10 December 2010, organised by the Asia Institute, University of Melbourne, in association with the Melbourne University [Taiwan Research Reading Group](#). The conference will be run in conjunction with a [postgraduate symposium](#) on Taiwan Studies to be held on 7–8 December. The conference will be run in conjunction with a [postgraduate symposium](#) on Taiwan Studies to be held on 7–8 December, also at the University of Melbourne. Further details about the conference will be available from the [conference website](#)

Tenth International Women in Asia (WIA) Conference, Canberra, 29 September–1 October 2010, hosted by the College of Asia and the Pacific at the ANU and supported by the Women's Forum of the Asian Studies Association of Australia.

INTERROGATING MULTICULTURALISM IN AOTEAROA/NEW ZEALAND: AN ASIAN STUDIES PERSPECTIVE symposium, University of Otago, Dunedin, NZ, **19 February 2011**. The one-day symposium, hosted by the Asia-NZ Research Cluster at Otago University, will examine multiculturalism in New Zealand. The symposium is free of charge and open to the public. The organisers have called for papers. Please see www.otago.ac.nz/humanities/research/clusters/asianz/ for more details. The deadline for the submission of abstracts is Wednesday, **15 September 2010**. Please send paper title, 200-word abstract and contact details to Dr Gautam Ghosh at gghosh@otago.ac.nz. The deadline for the submission of abstracts is Wednesday, 15 September 2010.

Contributing to Asian Currents

Contributions, commentary and responses on any area of Asian Studies are welcome and should be emailed to the editor. The general length of contributions is between 1000–1500 words. As *Asian Currents* is intended for scholars and general readers please avoid technical language and keep references and notes to a minimum.

About the ASAA



The Asian Studies Association of Australia (ASAA) promotes the study of Asian languages, societies, cultures, and politics in Australia, supports teaching and research

in Asian studies and works towards an understanding of Asia in the community at large. It publishes the *Asian Studies Review* journal and holds a biennial conference. The ASAA believes there is an urgent need to develop a strategy to preserve, renew and extend Australian expertise about Asia. It has called on the government to show national leadership in promoting Australia's Asia knowledge and skills. See [Maximising Australia's Asia knowledge: repositioning and renewal of a national asset](#).



Asian Currents is published by the ASAA and edited by [Allan Sharp](#). The editorial board comprises Kathryn Robinson, ASAA President; Michele Ford, ASAA Secretary; Mina Rocas, ASAA

Publications officer; and Lenore Lyons, ASAA Treasurer.