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Japan faces political upheaval as jaded voters look to 'new politics'

Japan's political landscape faces a long period of upheaval as voter disillusionment with the country's two major political parties grows, says RIKKI KERSTEN.

In the aftermath of the July half-upper house election in 2010, it is clear that the honeymoon is over for the Democratic Party of Japan (DPJ).

In this election, voters punished the DPJ for its perceived inability to deliver on the promises that had accompanied its spectacular rise to power in August 2009. Electing the DPJ a year ago had been a belated yet vehement demand by Japan's voters for new politics, meaning an end to overt pork barrelling, smashing the conservative template for policy and politics and the evolution of a new kind of politician who could create as well as implement policy.

While the marginalisation of former secretary-general Ichiro Ozawa and the removal of Yukio Hatoyama as prime minister could be seen as progress on eradicating money politics, the ongoing malaise oppressing Japan's economy and the mismanagement of the Futenma (the US Marine Corps base on Okinawa) issue—and with it the security relationship with the US—has made the electorate take another look not only at the DPJ, but at the state of Japan's politics in the 21st century.

While the DPJ's inability to implement policy has been the main focus of voter disillusionment, opinion polls have revealed that the depth and scale of voter dismay go beyond this. Political realignment in Japan will henceforth be shaped by the fury and expectations of an electorate that is no longer amenable to categorisation and for whom political loyalty and submission to established political forces are no longer applicable. The DPJ has continued to be judged harshly by Japan's voters after the July poll for being ineffective. With no majority in the upper house and less than a two-thirds majority in the lower house, policy paralysis will make it even harder for the DPJ to deliver any kind of policy agenda before the next general election, due by 2013. This image of weakness shrouding the DPJ was strengthened by what the majority of voters saw as emasculated dithering by the DPJ government over successive territorial disputes with China over the Senkaku Islands, and with Russia over the Northern Territories (Kuriles) in the months following the electoral hiding of July.

Prime Minister Naoto Kan—grim-faced at APEC.

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<< Continued from page 1 Since then, the DPJ has been rocked by evidence that as many as 112 of the corporations or entities that had been designated for closure or drastic reductions in funds provided by the state had simply changed their names and resubmitted successful budget requests.

This represented a failure of a core electoral promise that politicians would seize political control from faceless bureaucrats. It was also further evidence that the DPJ was not capable of governing.

The US base at Futenma, Okinawa. Photo: Courtesy Wikipedia.

We could argue that the unsteady path of the DPJ since August 2009 could only be expected from a relatively new political force that had been in opposition since its inception, but the dead weight of two lost decades in terms of growth, combined with the humiliation of the territorial disputes, may yet see the electorate lose patience altogether with the fledgling DPJ government.

Fault-lines within the DPJ over core policy positions have also been exposed, with party divisions consolidating and feeding paralysis in the wider political sphere. As Prime Minister Naoto Kan staggered grim-faced from one ineffectual heads-of-state meeting to another during the APEC summit in November, farmers howled with outrage at the prospect of being exposed to competition if Japan signed up to the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP) proposed by the US. With the DPJ divided against itself over this issue, the government postponed a decision on Japan's stance on the TPP until the middle of next year.

Opinion polls have revealed a hardening of the voters' critical outlook on the DPJ, with the disapproval rate of 51 per cent overwhelming the approval rate of 31 per cent for the Kan administration, for the first time, in November. Voter volatility has been constant since the Hatoyama administration, revealing huge swings of 20–30 per cent in voter approval and disapproval for the DPJ, triggered by one-off events such as the release of the captain of the Chinese fishing trawler which rammed two Japanese coast guard vessels in the vicinity of the Senkaku Islands in September 2010.

This is no longer about the LDP or the DPJ; it is about transforming the landscape of politics in Japan.

But while the disputes with China and Russia have made headlines and encouraged neo-nationalist outbursts about 'protecting Japan's borders', voters remain primarily concerned with the state of the economy and the efficacy of political leadership rather than with the state of Japan's foreign policy. Voter reactions to single issues are not the engine of change in Japan's politics.

Underlying all of the sound and fury has been a transformation in voter behaviour and voter thinking that forces us to rethink how we go about analysing and understanding the Japanese electorate.

The July poll conveyed the degree to which the tectonic plates underpinning Japanese politics today are moving. Exit polls revealed that as many as one-third of the electorate now self-identified as floating voters, with allegiance to no party. High numbers of affiliated voters defected from their declared party of choice to the enemy, and an improbably high number of voters stated their preference for a new, and as yet non-existent, coalition of political forces to deliver the kind of politics they wanted to see.

It is highly significant that in the face of apparent incompetence and naïveté on the part of the DPJ, the electorate has not chosen to turn back to the safe hands of the Liberal Democratic Party (LDP). The LDP continues to be seen as a spent force, rating only 20 per cent support in November. More importantly, the LDP is regarded as the entity that represents regression in Japanese politics.

It is also significant that in the November round of opinion polls, voters saw the choice before them as one between going back to the polls or creating a 'grand coalition' of politicians that transcended existing party affiliations. This is no longer about the LDP or the DJP; it is about transforming the landscape Continued page 3>>

Japan's jaded voters

<<Continued from page 2 of politics in Japan. In this sense, we are still witnessing the aftershocks of the first political alignment in 1993 when a vengeful and merciless Ozawa forced the LDP from power. Ozawa may yet prove to be an anarchic force in Japanese politics. If he escapes prosecution for a funding scandal in the coming months, we can expect the next disruptive phase of Japan's political realignment to begin.

On September 14 the DPJ emerged from its leadership contest between Naoto Kan and Ichiro Ozawa a divided party. This means that Japan's voters will not see resolution of, or even progress on, crucial policy problems, including resolving the Futenma base relocation issue, rejuvenating the US-Japan relationship, managing relationships with Russia and China and the North Korea wildcard, balancing economic stimulus with fiscal austerity, liberalising agricultural trade and discussing the tax reform that Japan has to have.

While Kan defeated Ozawa in the 2010 poll for DPJ leader, this was due to a pro-Kan surge among the party rank and file across the nation. The parliamentary party was split right down the middle, with Kan garnering support from 209 party members and Ozawa winning votes from 200 members. This result reveals that Ozawa did indeed command loyalty from his 150 faction members and those of Hatoyama, something that outsiders before the vote murmured was 'unlikely'.

Ozawa, in his role as destroyer, now looms large over Japan's political landscape; with three party political transitions under his belt, it is possible that he may go for a fourth. In selecting former foreign minister Okada as the DPJ's new secretary-general, Kan reinforced his commitment to enable the DPJ to 'escape from Ozawa'.

But Ozawa may yet spit the dummy and march with a good number of his supporters—though nowhere near the full 150—into the political unknown, forging opportunistic alliances with the disillusioned young guns of the declining LDP and fusing the shards of the myriad new parties that have escaped the seismic danger zone of the major parties. And Kan may encourage this show of contempt on Ozawa's part, in the hope that a post-Ozawa DPJ can be forged from the slivers of hope that survive the next electoral quake.

New politics, not the DPJ, is now the focus of Japan's jaded yet feisty voters. The symbolic marginalisation of Ozawa will satisfy many in the electorate, but it is only one step towards remodelling politics in Japan. Increasingly, Japan's voters do not see themselves as committed LDP or DPJ voters, as their recent electoral choices demonstrate.

Ozawa may yet spit the dummy and march with a good number of his supporters into the political unknown.

The growing constituency of floating voters demands more analytical scrutiny that is not limited to particular policies but includes attitudes towards the practice of politics itself. The electorate is in search of political leadership that is competent, and framed by a strategic direction that reflects the national interest rather than a compromise between competing centres of personal political loyalty.

The LDP as a defining force in Japanese politics is dead in every sense except its representation of a form of politics that is no longer acceptable to the voters of Japan. What comes next in the long process of political realignment in Japan will be determined by the choices and aspirations of voters, who have truly escaped from the paradigm of one-party dominance, into a political landscape that will remain in a state of upheaval for some years to come.

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Indonesia reluctant to embrace new 'tourist boom'

Reproductive tourism is a rapidly growing business in the region. But, says LINDA RAE BENNETT, Indonesia is showing little inclination to encourage the practice.

In 2007 it was estimated that medical tourism in the Asian region constituted a US$1.3 million industry.[1] Despite continued debates over ethics, human rights, health equity, adequate accreditation of services—and even what terms should be used to describe those who cross borders seeking medical care—medical tourism has continued to mean big business both globally and in our region.

Typically, reproductive tourism is understood as the practice of travelling long distances—often internationally—to access assisted reproductive technologies (ART) and services such as in-vitro fertilisation (IVF), gamete (sperm and egg) donation, sex selection, surrogacy and embryonic diagnosis.[2]

Reproductive tourism is probably the most hotly contested form of medical travel that individuals, communities, states and regional monitoring bodies are attempting to grapple with.

For some time now, reproduction in general has been highly regulated by most states through the provision (or not) of family planning services, maternal and reproductive health services, safe abortion services and by a multitude of laws governing who may marry, reproduce, adopt and under what circumstances.

Contemplating whether reproductive tourism is likely to emerge as a new industry for Australia's nearest Asian neighbour, Indonesia, requires examining a mix of factors such as the quality, cost capacity, and regulation of reproductive technologies there, and understanding what motivates people to cross borders to access them.

The first baby born in Indonesia via IVF was in May 1988. There are currently 14 government-accredited fertility clinics operating in the country, with a further three being established or waiting accreditation. These clinics are heavily concentrated in Java, with Bali and Sumatra being the only other two islands with comprehensive IVF clinics.

Accredited clinics offer IVF and intracytoplasmic sperm injection (ICSI) to

married Indonesian couples when the wife is under the age of 40. The clinics have state-of-the-art technology, the cost of treatment varies but is parallel with the fees charged in Australia, and success rates are reported to be between 15 per cent and 45 per cent for different clinics.

The Indonesian Association of Obstetricians and Gynecologists (POGI) estimates 12 per cent of married couples in Indonesia experience infertility, with equal rates of females and males.

Overall, POGI estimates that less than 30 per cent of the current capacity of ART services is being utilised, and less than 5 per cent of couples experiencing infertility will ever seek specialised medical treatment—including ART.[3] So there is both high capacity in terms of ART services and high need for them among Indonesians, but very low domestic uptake.

The 1500 IVF cycles performed in Indonesia in 2008 was considerably lower than in other counties in the region (see Table 1). Indonesian professional bodies and fertility specialists have noted the excess capacity of their clinics to perform IVF cycles per year and have set targets to reach full capacity. Concern over barriers to accessing ART among the Indonesian population Continued page 5>>

Indonesia and reproductive tourism

<< Continued from page 4 has been raised, but will take considerable time to address.[4]

Table 1. IVF cycles by country.

Country	IVF cycles 2008
Indonesia	1500
Singapore	2500
Malaysia	3000
Thailand	4000
Vietnam	6000

Source: Indonesian Association for In Vitro Fertilization

With considerable excess capacity in ART services, and many barriers to be overcome before the Indonesian population at large will access those services, it could be expected that the infertility field in Indonesia may turn its attention to reproductive tourism to market and utilise its excess capacity.

However, the impetus for promoting reproductive tourism and efforts to market Indonesian reproductive technology services to foreign patients is not strong at this time. Rather, the most common concerns expressed by infertility specialists are how to increase access to ART among the Indonesian population and prevent wealthy Indonesians from seeking them abroad (primarily in Singapore, Malaysia and Thailand).

This inward focus on developing the industry domestically stems from a combination of factors related to dominant moral and ethical stances on ART, and its formal regulation in Indonesia.

The regulation of ART in Indonesia proceeded with relative pace compared with other nations in the region (particularly India), with the central government, religious authorities and professional bodies all responding to the need for clear guidelines. The first professional guidelines were ratified by POGI in 1990 and are applicable to all registered providers of Indonesian fertility services.

POGI has played multiple roles, including setting curriculum standards to train new fertility specialists, overseeing the certification and ongoing registration of fertility specialists and outlining and updating treatment protocols.

The Ministry of Health (MOH) first regulated ART in *Health Law No. 23* in 1992, making it explicit who can legally perform ART, who is eligible for it and what procedures are considered legal. From 1998 onwards the ministry also became responsible for accrediting all ART clinics.

The Indonesian Council of Ulamas was actually the first nationally representative authority to dictate how ART should be regulated in Indonesia, and issued a *fatwa* in June 1979, before IVF technology was even available in the country. The fatwa included four key statements that can be summarised as follows: 1) IVF is a legal procedure if the sperm and eggs used are from a legally married couple, precisely because the production of children is a key expectation of married couples according to Islam; 2) surrogacy of any kind is illegal, including by co-wives of the same man, in order to avoid confusion over biological parentage; 3) IVF using the sperm of a deceased husband is prohibited due to the potential to cause confusion over inheritance rights; 4) performing IVF using the sperm and egg of any two people who are not legally married is illegal, as it constitutes a form of illicit or free sex (*zina*), which contradicts the Islamic moral code.

Considering the pluralistic nature of Indonesian society, what is striking about the actions of all three regulatory parties is the speed and unity with which they declared that access to ART should be restricted to legally married couples, and that sperm or egg donation, as well as surrogacy, were illegal in the Indonesian context.

There is virtually no public dissent over the tight regulation of ART in Indonesia and no audible calls for loosening restrictions. Rather there is an increasing commitment to improving the processes and standards of clinic Continued page 6>>

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<< Continued from page 5 accreditation by the MOH, promoting high quality technical competence and ensuring that the certification of fertility specialists meets the standards upheld by professional bodies.

With the ongoing focus on domestic regulation, partly aided by the coherence of opinions and the small size of the industry, joint international accreditation (JIAC) may become a more important priority in Indonesia in years to come. However, the strict regulation of ART in Indonesia suggests that the motivation to pursue JIAC is not particularly high when the majority of potential reproductive tourists may well be legally excluded from access to Indonesian services.

Recent research into why foreign patients travel to other nations to access ART has established seven popular motivations.[5] These are the treatment being forbidden in the patients' country of origin, patients not fulfilling the conditions to obtain treatment in their own country (i.e. they may be too old, single or homosexual), treatment being more expensive in their home country, the treatment facilities in their home country not having the necessary expertise, the waiting lists being much longer in their country of origin, or their wish to have an anonymous donor.

While ART is legal for married couples in Indonesia, it is not legally available to single people, homosexual couples or women over the age of 40. Thus, the eligibility requirements for ART do not offer a solution to people excluded from treatment criteria on similar grounds in their country of origin. Moreover, the use of donor eggs, donor sperm and the practice of surrogacy are all illegal in Indonesia, which means patients requiring (non-spousal) donors and surrogates would not benefit by choosing Indonesia as a destination for ART treatment.

ART treatment in Indonesia is not state subsidised and the cost of IVF and ICSI—the most popular procedures—is parallel to the cost in Australia. As Indonesia is not a low-cost destination in terms of ART services, the motivation for finding more affordable fertility care is not likely to be solved by seeking services there.

While waiting lists for ART treatment in Indonesia are not long, and the standard of care is high, it is still unlikely that foreign married couples who fit the treatment criteria are likely to choose Indonesia as a destination for ART when other Asian destinations offer the same services at a lower cost. Tighter regulation of ART in Indonesia, compared to other Asian countries, such as India and Thailand, could be attractive to devout Muslim couples who may prefer to receive treatment in a cultural and legal context that is compatible with prevailing Indonesian Muslim interpretations of the acceptability of ART.

However, for the vast majority of people seeking ART outside their home countries, Indonesia does not currently represent a solution to the dilemmas that typically motivate them to seek fertility treatment abroad. Reproductive tourism is not likely to flourish in Indonesia in the near future, although it will most definitely remain a rapidly growing industry in the region for some time to come.

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Televangelists powering Indonesia's Islamic revival

The sensational popularity of a new generation of televangelists is changing the face of religion in Indonesia, writes JULIA DAY HOWELL.

Preaching would seem to presume some kind of expertise, or accredited knowledge, but in Sunni Muslim communities, like American mega-churches and Pentecostal churches around the world, laypeople are being called to shake off their complacency, recommit themselves to 'true' religion and reach out to others to follow suit—in effect, to preach. In Indonesian Muslim communities this is known as *dakwah*.

Today in Indonesia, televangelism is powering this laicisation of religion, but its roots go back into the 20th century.

The Indonesian word *dakwah* echoes novel forms of religious mobilisation in Egypt early in the 20th century, at the time when the Muslim Brotherhood sought to bypass traditional religious authorities, the *ulama.* To be an *ulama* (in any community) one should be deeply schooled in the classical disciplines of Islamic knowledge, including Arabic grammar, teachings of the faith, and religious law. The Brotherhood arose out of the Islamic Modernist movement, which held that slavish conformity to the traditional schools of Islamic law taught by the *ulama*, and the heretical local customs they supposedly perpetuated along with them, were holding back Muslim advancement.

The Brotherhood sought to mobilise ordinary Muslims, much as the socialist and nationalist movements were doing, but around a religious, not secular, program for personal and social renewal. For that, they encouraged laypeople—that is, people not schooled to be *ulama*—to 'invite' or 'call' (A. *da'wa)* their fellows to a purified faith, to 'true' Islam. One who did so urge others to greater piety was known as .a *da' iya)* or 'caller'.

Although an ordinary conversation might be turned into a call to faith, people distinguished themselves as *du'at* by regularly stepping up to deliver sermons and perhaps even writing in the increasingly widely available print media for the expanding literate public. Towards the end of the 20th century, electronic media, especially cassettes, became popular media for Egyptian *da'wa.*[1]

In Indonesia, waves of Islamic revivalism, notably that sponsored by the Dewan Da'wah Islam Indonesia from the 1970s and the later *tarbiyah* movement, have brought similar figures, called *dai*, into social prominence. *Dai* are ordinary Muslims (*orang awam*) who, out of special religious commitment, develop their talents for sermonising, and are regularly called upon to give religious talks at mosques, rallies and other public gatherings. While this is notionally a charitable activity, religiously sound and engaging *dai* become much sought after and can make a living out of the honoraria they are given. The recently established association of *dai,* the Ikatan Da'i Indonesia, supports their professional development.

Abdullah Gymnastiar —talent for impassioned sermonising. Photo: Wikipedia

At the turn of the 21st century, Indonesian *dakwah* (much like Egyptian *da'wa*) got a new fillip through the sensational popularity of a new generation of televangelists, the entertainer–preachers (as I call them).[2]The era was inaugurated by the 'smiling preacher', Abdullah Gymnastiar. Like his Egyptian counterpart Amr Khaled, Aa Gym (as Gymnastiar is affectionately known) had a secular education and a middle class background, but a particular talent for genial, humour-infused and impassioned sermonising. He also developed talk-show format proselytising, religious popular music routines, Continued page 8>>

Indonesia's televangelists

<< Continued from page 7 and a step-by-step Islamicly spiritualised self-help program called 'Heart Management' (Manajemen Qolbu). Aa Gym first drew national attention as a *dai* in October 2000 when he went on stage with the Sam Bimbo music group at a Bandung festival venue. This paved the way for his first appearance on national television in 2001 leading the service at the monumental Istiqlal mosque, Southeast Asia's largest. From then until the end of 2006 he was a mega-star *dai* regularly reaching millions with his televised programs, books, DVDs, seminars and workshops at his re-cast religious boarding school, Daarut Tauhiid.

Aa Gym was just the first to eclipse the nineties generation of television lecturers, mostly drawn from the ranks of authoritatively credentialed professors from the state institutes of Islamic studies (IAIN). He soon shared religious broadcast slots and sensational viewer ratings with other self-professed *orang awam* (ordinary people) whose stories of religious re-commitment were the more appealing for coming from 'someone like us': that is, a middle-class person (more or less) who hadn't taken her religion particularly seriously, but now thought she might. And each had a way of dramatising the appeal of religion through the television camera.

Yusuf Mansur—telling whoppers with a moral.

For Arifin Ilham, whose television stardom dates from 2001, it was not charismatic personality, such as Aa Gym radiated through his touching jokes, beautiful lyrics, and inspiring back-story of big business success combined with a super-sporty life-style. Rather Arifin, who presents himself in the simple white garb of an ordinary *santri* (dedicated pious Muslim), masterfully produces for television visually sensational and celebrity adorned z*ikir Akbar,* that is, religious services enriched with emotive litanies for audiences of thousands in the largest and most beautiful of the nation's mosques.

Some of the most popular *dai* to subsequently join Aa Gym and Arifin Ilham in the top television rankings have been a number of bad-boys-made good, most notably Yusuf Mansur and Jefry Al-Buchori. Mansur had a dubious career in business, and after twice winding up in jail for dudding his associates, found a way of repentance that he has been able to sell exceptionally effectively in personal appearances for charities, in his books and DVDs, and through the soap opera he scripts and sometimes appears in, *Mahakasih*.

In face-to-face engagements, Yusuf Mansur entertains (in order to inspire spiritual improvement) by telling whoppers with a moral. The stories run like this: if (after sincerely and abjectly repenting your sins) you show your utter trust in God's mercy and beneficence by giving away vastly more of your worldly goods than you could possibly afford, you will find yourself showered with many times more riches than you gave away. His sermons fill out the theological justification for this hope, constructed around the teaching that for God anything is possible: ""Let it be!" and it was so.' ('Kun Fayakuun!' from *Yasin*:82–83).

Jefry Al-Buchori, popularly known as 'Uje', appeals to adolescents and their parents, who know his story of recovery through religion from a life of drugs and dubious morals among actors and artists. He invites youth idols to his hip television-studio living room for chats. Into these he works light discussions about how to handle problems that come up in the lives of young people. He wraps up with simple religious morals like 'No drugs! No sex before marriage!'

Dai who become popular enough to make a career or at least a side-line as a preacher, are one manifestation of the laicisation of religion, even in Sunni Islam, which eschews ecclesiastical hierarchy.

But there is a yet more thorough-going laicisation of the religious calling in 21st century Indonesia in the form of a newly-emergent, semi-professional role: that of the personal development 'trainer' who melds Islamic spirituality with Western growth movement insights, popular psychology and management science. The best known of such *trainer* (an Indonesian loan-word from the English) is Ary Ginanjar Agustian, Continued page 9>>

Indonesia's televangelists

<<Continued from page 8 founder of the The ESQ Way training programs. Ginanjar, a businessman and one-time tourism faculty lecturer, first introduced his ESQ concept in 2001 in his 'best selling' book *Rahasia sukses membangun kecerdasan emosi dan spiritual, ESQ, emotional spiritual quotient* [The secret of success in developing emotional and spiritual intelligence, ESQ, emotional spiritual quotient].

Ginanjar purposefully references the Western growth movement literature as sources of the concepts 'emotional intelligence' ('EQ' from Daniel Goleman's *Emotional intelligence*) and 'spiritual intelligence' ('SQ' from Zohar and Marshall's *SQ: Connecting with our spiritual intelligence*). He also cites management literature 'proving' that developing the emotional intelligence of employees can improve the companies' performance. Ginanjar's contribution is to put EQ and SQ together as the basis for an Islamicly nuanced but ostensibly 'universal' (that is non-denominational) training program.

The ESQ training is offered commercially to businesses wishing to improve the efficiency of their staff and reduce corruption. Clients include some of Indonesia's largest corporations, including Garuda Airlines, Krakatau Steel, Pertamina Oil, Indonesia Power, and *Republika Daily News*, as well as a number of government bureaus. The training is also open to individuals through four-day morning-to-night programs in major convention centres accommodating upwards of a thousand people.

As the brochures for the training programs offered to the public foreshadow, the programs use a variety of methods, none of which sounds like sermonising: 'lecturette, learning experiences, case studies, [role play] games and discussion'. Indeed a good deal of the training consists of teaching concepts didactically using PowerPoint formatted points, tables and charts. However, such lecturing is interspersed with powerful, preacherly evocations of the beauty, greatness, and mighty wrath of the God of the Qur'an, and with calls to repentance right there in the darkened hall where we are already on our knees, swept away by the wailing voices and prayers for forgiveness carried by the surround-sound. The *trainer* has become a 'caller' to religious recommitment; in effect, a *dai.*

Indonesians I have spoken with about such trainers have corrected me when I occasionally referred to them as *dai.* Ginanjar is not a *dai,* I was told, because (in his public persona) he does not give sermons in mosques. He has adopted and developed a distinct role: that of spiritual 'trainer'. Nonetheless, that role does give him, as a lay person, the opportunity to exercise in public a kind of religious vocation.

By the same token, one of the best known *dai,* televangelist Aa Gym, is also famous for his heavily psychologised program for very this-worldly skills development and self-discipline. Although he was not known as a 'trainer', he did run spiritual training programs. And if anything, Aa's Heart Management program was (and for readers of his books, still is) more spiritually generic, that is, less explicitly and narrowly Islamic, than the interludes in Ginanjar's 'training' where he calls participants to recognise the truth of the Qur'an and repent.

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Growing Islamic populism defies prevailing 'alarmist' narratives

A new research project seeks to understand the rise of Islamic populism in Indonesia in the post-authoritarian era. VEDI HADIZ reports.

The factors behind the rise of Islamic populism in Indonesia are more complex than many of the prevalent and current alarmist security-oriented narratives would suggest.

Far from explaining Islamic-oriented political agendas in Indonesia primarily in terms of cultural or security concerns, my current research project situates them in concrete struggles over power and tangible resources.

In a nutshell, the guiding thematic question addressed in this study is: what is the relationship between the evolution of Islamic populism and the contradictions of contemporary capitalism?

The project is about understanding Islamic populism in post-authoritarian Indonesia by drawing comparisons with North African and Middle Eastern experiences. It explains the evolution of Islamic populism in relation to the outcomes of Cold War era social conflicts, the processes of state formation, and the social changes associated with capitalist development, particularly in its neoliberal and globalised phase.

The project is particularly interested in newer forms of Islamic populism, which has the capacity to merge the interests, aspirations and grievances of a range of social classes, especially the new urban middle class, the urban poor and peripheralised sections of the bourgeoisie and petty bourgeoisie. This capacity distinguishes them from older forms of Islamic populism that had been more fully rooted in the urban and rural petty bourgeoisie and whose political projects were more typically about salvaging the position of declining social groups rather than launching sustained assaults on the secular order.

Driving the project is the realisation that the literature on Islam and politics more generally in Indonesia has been largely devoid of the kind of broad political economy and historical sociology considerations that have proven very fruitful in the debates on North Africa and the Middle East, especially since the 1980s. Thus while a voluminous literature exists on the subject, underlying the majority of these works have been efforts to understand the political effects of competing religious traditions, cultures or interpretations of Islamic doctrine.

Such efforts have given rise to, and highlighted, a distinction between 'moderates' and 'radicals', or the 'civil' and 'uncivil'. In contrast, a significant portion of the literature on North Africa and the Middle East has been premised on theoretical perspectives that emphasise the interrelationship between historical trajectories, changing material conditions of life, modes of distribution of economic and political power, and contests over ideas.

The point to be made is that the politics of 'moderates', 'radicals' and anything in between are intertwined in the same complex social processes that need to be understood in order to make sense of profane and modern struggles undertaken in the name of Islam.

I suggest that infusing the literature on Islam and politics more generally in Indonesia with broader political economy and historical sociology concerns would be highly beneficial in avoiding the pitfalls of the prevalent and alarmist security-oriented narrative; as well as the related tendency to dichotomise the position of 'good' and 'bad' Muslims largely according to Western geopolitical concerns (as has been cogently observed by Mahmood Mamdani).

The failure to avoid such Continued page 11>>

Indonesia's growing Islamic populism

<<Continued from page 10 concerns (as has been cogently observed by Mahmood Mamdani). The failure to avoid such pitfalls has allowed security-oriented analyses to lately dominate the study of Islam and politics and to subsume it under the study of terrorism and violence, in spite of the presence of a longer tradition of studies based on profound knowledge of Indonesian social, political and economic history. I contend, perhaps rather controversially, that many recent works have been virtually sucked into debates that have been shaped by the concerns of security analysts like Zachary Abuza or Rohan Gunaratna.

Sidney Jones. Photo:Courtesy of Allvoices.

Such analysts rather obviously lack the expertise and detailed knowledge of Indonesia displayed in a number of International Crisis Group reports chiefly authored by Sidney Jones.

This project takes me on fieldwork to Turkey and Egypt, where the general trajectories of Islamic politics have been different from Indonesia but where versions of Islamic populism have also evolved concurrently with social, economic and political transformations over the last several decades.

In spite of well-publicised terrorist activities as well as the presence of intimidating paramilitaries, those who have championed Islamic-oriented political agendas in Indonesia have operated within both highly authoritarian and democratic environments without really presenting substantive challenges to the secular state.

In Egypt, however, they have been more successful in spite of continuing state authoritarianism, barely concealed in cosmetic changes to electoral politics, as seen in the predominance of the Muslim Brotherhood (or its offshoots) over the parliamentary as well as extra-parliamentary political opposition.

Turkey offers yet another scenario. Here the lingering threat of authoritarian suppression represented by some of the staunch guardians of Kemalism—especially the military—induces a form of Islamic populism that aligns the interests of disparate sections of society, including the urban poor and a rising 'Anatolian' bourgeoisie, in an embrace of democracy and the global market.

It is significant that in all of these societies, leftist political currents were suppressed prior to a period of more intensive engagement with the global economy.

Distancing itself from the rhetoric of the Islamic state, much like the PKS (Justice and Welfare Party) of Indonesia, the AKP (Justice and Development Party) has governed since 2002, but has yet to fully gain control over the state, with a number of important implications.

The research should also take me to Morocco; this will provide an opportunity to revisit Geertz' famous comparison[1] of Islam in that country and in Indonesia after four decades of social change.

It is significant that in all of these societies, leftist political currents were suppressed prior to a period of more intensive engagement with the global economy, in a Cold War context in which Islamic forces were often utilised to smash a range of communist and socialist parties and movements.

In all of these cases as well, the elimination of the Left spilled over, for significant periods, into state constraints on other ideologies, including that of political liberalism. This meant that the fledgling urban middle classes in Indonesia, for example, would be largely bereft of access to it in developing their new world views, even as they grew into a more significant social presence, much as the new urban proletariat was hindered from rediscovering the radical politics of past labour movements. All of this is important in understanding the evolution and salience of newer, cross-class forms of Islamic populism.

In Indonesia, the research has thus far been focussed on Continued page 12>>

Indonesia's growing Islamic populism

<<Continued from page 11 Jakarta, Yogyakarta and Solo, though it is possible for other localities to be later integrated. A range of informants have been sought from the pool of 'usual suspects (leaders of 'radical' Islamic organisations, political party figures) but also among the rank and file participants of struggles to advance the social position of ordinary members of the *ummah* in Indonesian polity and society. In populist style, the presence of politically depraved and morally corrupt but entrenched, elite interests, are typically seen by them as posing a systemic obstacle to their efforts.

While the study focuses on the dynamics of change in urban formations, it is impossible to neglect their connection with transformations taking place in rural society. For example, parts of the heartland of Central Java are now regular sites of operation for Indonesia's special anti-terrorism unit, Detachment 88, as they are considered mainstays of Islamic militancy. Links have been found even with remnants of the old Darul Islam movement, militarily defeated in 1962. This is ironic because these same areas were Communist Party or radical-nationalist strongholds a half century ago. Moreover, the original Darul Islam had made little inroads into Central Java except on its northern coast.

Explaining recent developments would require more than just analysis of the activities of 'militant' networks. They would include sorts of social dynamics that made possible new and greater receptivity toward overtly Islamic-oriented political agendas in the first place. I suspect that some clues can be found in changes in the material conditions of life in notionally rural areas associated with the increasing reach of capitalist transformations, especially during the New Order.

Reference

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Vedi R Hadiz is an Australian Research Council Future Fellow and Professor of Asian Societies and Politics, Murdoch University.

28th Indonesia Update

The 28th Indonesia Update conference at the Australian National University was held against the backdrop of slower economic growth and poverty decline than during the oppressive Suharto regime. CHRIS MANNING reports.

Apart from the traditional political and economic updates,[1] the 28th Indonesia Update conference, held at the Australian National University on 24–25 September 2010, covered four broad topics—employment, migration and microenterprises; education and health; trends in poverty and government interventions; and the politics of poverty.

Entitled 'Employment, living standards and poverty in contemporary Indonesia', the conference attracted around 300 participants from academia, government, NGOs and the business community, including many from Indonesia. The topics were discussed against the backdrop of slower economic growth and poverty decline than during the oppressive Soeharto regime. Speakers dealt with a wide array of experiments introduced to try and improve living standards in the much more democratic environment in Indonesia since the global financial crisis and regime change in 1998.

Contrary to conventional wisdom, Lant Pritchett (Harvard University) argued that economic outcomes have been better than could be expected of a country experiencing a sudden transition to democracy, although poverty decline was slower than in the pre-transition period.

Lant Pritchett

Hal Hill (ANU) and Haryo Aswichayono (Centre for Strategic and International Studies, Jakarta) pointed to a key reason for the slower rate of poverty decline (described as the lower 'elasticity' of poverty with respect to growth by Pritchett): employment growth in labour-intensive manufacturing, and especially in larger firms, had fallen sharply after 1998. Nevertheless, households with improved Continued page 13>>

28th Indonesia Update

<<Continued from page 12 education, especially among rural-urban migrants, appear to have done better than most households. Sherry Tao Kong (ANU and Tadjuddin Noer Effendi (Gadjah Mada University, Yogyakarta) found a higher probability of occupational mobility among better educated migrants, based on research in four Indonesian cities in the post-crisis period.

Two papers looked at how schooling quality and opportunity help to explain sub-standard living standards experienced by many Indonesians. Daniel Suryadarma (ANU) pointed out that Indonesian schoolchildren have lower levels of mathematics and science competence than those in other countries. A high level of teacher absence is a major contributor to poor student performance. Another problem is a gross imbalance in the distribution of teachers between urban and remote areas.

Risti Permani (University of Adelaide) explored education challenges from the perspective of Islamic *madrasah* schooling, noting that greater access to *madrasah* among the children of poor families tends to reduce inequality. Even though religious studies tend to crowd out more economically relevant subjects, such as maths and science, reducing the religious component does not seem to increase academic achievement.

In the session on health, the focus was on public programs targeting the poor. Robert Sparrow (Erasmus University, Rotterdam) explored Indonesia's attempts at subsidised health programs for the poor, first introduced on a significant scale during the economic crisis of 1998. He argues that while the poor still underutilise health care, subsidies have 'increased the demand for, and access to, public health care'. However, the indirect costs of health care are a major constraint to the poor making better use of public services, particularly income forgone when breadwinners fall ill, and travel expenses to nearby hospitals or clinics. As might be expected, better-off households continue to have very much greater access to hospitals.

Lisa Cameron

Lisa Cameron and Susan Olivia (Monash University) focused on poor sanitation, one important area of concern. Each year tens of thousands of Indonesian children die from faecal-borne diseases, which spread because of many households have a poor-quality toilet or no toilet at all. However, government and community-driven programs aimed at improving sanitation and changing social values about its importance have had some success in recent years.

The third part of the program focused more directly on trends in poverty and government interventions. Asep Suryahadi (SMERU Research Institute, Jakarta) emphasised that, although the poverty rate has fallen greatly, a large percentage of the population is still vulnerable to poverty. Poverty reduction needs to focus on those both below and just above the poverty line. He suggested that more could be done to help the poor through labour law reform, investment in infrastructure and encouragement of job creation through labour-intensive manufacturing.

Government policies were the focus of the presentations by Vivi Yulaswati (Bappenas, Jakarta), Vivi Alatas (World Bank, Jakarta) and Lisa Hannigan (AusAID, Jakarta). Yulaswati discussed two major national support programs for the poor: the National Program for Community Empowerment (PNPM) and the Conditional Cash Transfer program (PKH). PNPM has now been extended to districts throughout Indonesia, providing assistance to communities for infrastructure, as well as specific projects of local significance for employment and income generation among the poor. PKH is much more recent. It seeks to link the award of cash transfers to the poor to improved schooling attendance among children, and better health practices, especially in relation to the needs of infant children. Targeting the poor has been a big challenge for most programs Continued page 14>>

28th Indonesia Update

<<Continued from page 13 in Indonesia, including PKH. Vivi Alatas examined how best to target poor households by seeking to minimise 'exclusion' errors (missing out on poor households) and minimising 'inclusion' errors (including better-off households in anti-poverty programs). She reported on a field experiment to evaluate two main approaches to identifying the poor: proxy means tests involving a census of major assets, and community-based targeting, in which villagers are asked to rank themselves from richest to poorest.

Lisa Hannigan argued that a major problem is gaps in coverage of the poor by government programs, such as failure to take sufficient account of extended family obligations or high transport costs, on poverty status. She contended that community evaluation often needs to be given more weight in identifying the poor, especially in isolated locations. Some of these gaps may be plugged better by more flexible private sector efforts to overcome poverty.

Not all poverty alleviation efforts are government based, however. Minako Sakai (University of New South Wales) discussed how Islamic alms-based programs are helping to create new approaches to poverty reduction, including support for microenterprises through small-scale credit.

The final session considered political economy issues. John McCarthy (ANU) focused on the social and environmental transformation, positive and negative, that result from rapid agricultural development. His paper dealt with oil palm development among smallholders in Sumatra. John Maxwell (University of Canberra) and Ari Perdana (University of Melbourne) emphasised that Indonesia will need to show stronger political will if it is to get even close to achieving its Millennium Development Goals, despite its plethora of anti-poverty programs.

Papers presented at the conference will be published in 2010 by the Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, Singapore, in its annual edited volume. This will be the 17th volume in the series, which began in 1995. PowerPoint presentations and most podcasts from the speakers are available on the Crawford School of Economics & Government website.

Reference

1. Both studies will be published in the December 2010 issue of the *Bulletin of Indonesian Economic Studies*.

Chris Manning is Associate Professor at the Crawford School of Economics & Government, ANU, and convener of the 28th Indonesia Update with Sudarno Sumarto, National Coordinating Team for Poverty Alleviation, TNP2K, Jakarta.

Japanese studies graduate summer school

A three-day Japanese Studies Graduate Summer School and conference will be held at the Australian National University from 1–3 February 2011.

The program of intensive research activities is designed to bring together PhD, research Masters and, where possible, potential Honours students and young Japan researchers from around Australia.

Held under the auspices of the ANU Japan Institute, the summer school provides a valuable opportunity for research students to present their work in a friendly and professional environment of their peers and to develop an international and interdisciplinary network.

The keynote speaker is Professor Patricia Steinhoff, from the University of Hawaii, a high-profile international scholar on Japan. Experienced Japanese studies researchers and scholars from the ANU will act as discussants, observers and speakers. The summer school not only showcases ANU research on Japan, but also allows participants opportunities to inter-act with ANU scholars on Japan.

Further information is available from the website.

From Charlie Chan to *The karate kid*—changing perceptions of oriental style

Recent Hollywood action and science fiction movies are helping shape new images of East Asia, says JANE CHI HYUN PARK.

In her 1999 comeback show, *I'm the one that I want,* Korean–American comedian Margaret Cho humorously laments the fact that the only role models she had growing up were the extras loading the trucks in the TV show *M*A*S*H.*

Later, Cho more seriously attributes some of her lack of self-confidence as the star of the first Asian–American sitcom, *All-American girl,* and the show's subsequent failure, to the dearth of well-developed representations of East Asians in US popular culture.

Cho's observation gestures toward a long history in the American entertainment industry, of East Asian people, places and cultures being relegated to the margins as in the *M*A*S*H* example; caricaturised in recycled stereotypes such as the evil Dragon Lady and Fu Manchu and their docile counterparts, Lotus Blossom and Charlie Chan; and rendered exotic objects of the Western gaze in films such as *Memoirs of a geisha*, *Lost in translation,* and *The forbidden kingdom*.

This history and its present-day repercussions are chronicled in a number of academic studies since the 1970s that discuss how Asians have been stereotyped in US film and television. While importantly pointing out the existence of demeaning and often racist images, this approach also inadvertently perpetuates what cultural scholar Kobena Mercer has called the 'burden of representation'.

Mercer was referring to the ways in which Black British artists were expected to depict African diasporic identity and experience in the most positive light for mainstream audiences—an expectation that arose as much from within Black communities as well as outside them. What may seem like the honour of representing one's 'people', however, actually places non-white artists, much like women or queer artists, in a tricky bind. Their work will either be seen as faithfully representing their particular 'culture'(an impossible task given the diversity within groups and the dynamism of cultures) or shirking their ethical duty by 'selling out'.

Ralph Macchio punches Pat Morita in a scene from *The karate kid*.

It is, of course, important to note that non-minority artists or academics, for that matter, are not expected to carry this burden because the complex humanity of their group—the dominant group—is seen as a given, rather than something to be constantly proved.

In my first book, *Yellow future: oriental style in Hollywood cinema,* recently published with the University of Minnesota Press, I use a slightly different approach to tackle this problem, and the lack of representational diversity that gives rise to it in the first place. Rather than looking for 'positive' or 'negative' stereotypes in films that thematically foreground East Asia, I chose instead to focus on the critically underexplored ways that East Asia, since the 1980s, has became prominent as a symbol of technology and postmodern futurity in the backdrop of many Hollywood action and science fiction movies.

Examples include the dystopic global cities of *Blade runner*, *Black rain,* and *The matrix*; the self-orientalising performances of Asian-American actors such as Gedde Watanabe in *Gung ho* and Pat Morita in *The karate kid*; and the now requisite martial arts action sequences featuring actors and actresses of different ethnicities in the *Rush hour* series, *Ghost dog, Kill Bill*, and *Batman begins*.

I argue that these allusions reduce many different Asian cultures, Continued page 16>>

Changing perceptions of oriental style

<<Continued from page 15 histories and aesthetics into a small number of easily recognisable, often interchangeable images that both reflect and help to shape changing attitudes about East Asia in the US.

***Kill Bill*—martial arts action sequences featuring actors and actresses of different ethnicities.**

The process and product of this reduction I call 'oriental style'—a term that draws on and extends Edward Said's model of orientalism by shifting the temporal and geographical contexts of his classic study to look at contemporary American media representations of East Asia. It also illuminates aspects of orientalism that have been relatively under-theorised such as fascination for the so-called 'other', complicity on the part of that 'other', and the multilateral networks of cultural exchange through which West and East come to meet in an increasingly mediated world.

The desire for and identification with the 'Orient' is expressed in the narrative structure, production design, and ideological messages of these films as well as in the contexts of their production and critical reception. I trace this shift in film depictions of East Asia to three major economic and cultural developments in the US: the economic rise of Japan and the newly industrialised economies in the 1980s; the growing popularity of Japanese *anime* and Hong Kong action and kung fu films in the 1990s; and the increased presence of Asian bodies and cultures in what media scholar Lisa Nakamura has called 'cosmetic multiculturalism', or the general trend in popular media to flatten and commodify ethnic, racial, and gender differences for mainstream consumption.

These developments culminate in what appears initially as a solution to the problem of Asian media invisibility with which I opened this essay. Yet it is also important to remember that increased cultural presence does not necessarily correspond to increased power in the public sphere or to the evolution of more inclusive models of representation. A case in point is *The Cho show,* a recent pseudo-reality TV show in which Margaret Cho starred once again, this time wielding much more creative control. However, as much as *All-American girl* forced the actress to conform to certain stereotypes of the 'model minority', *The Cho show* continued to engage, and to a large extent perpetuated these stereotypes, especially in its uncritical celebration of the American Dream and the comic caricatures of Cho's parents as perpetual foreigners.

In future research I hope to critically examine how diasporic Asian media players like Cho negotiate entertainment industries in the US, Asia and the Pacific to produce new, hybrid forms of oriental style.

Dr Jane Chi Hyun Park is a lecturer in the Department of Gender and Cultural Studies and the US Studies Centre at the University of Sydney.

India's prospects in the post-crisis world

An international expert on global finance will give a public lecture on India's prospects in the postmodern world, at the Australian National University on 29 November.

Mr Montek Singh Ahluwalia is the Deputy Commissioner of the Planning Commission off the Government of India and the author of numerous publications and articles.

The yearly oration is given by a distinguished Indian public figure to enhance and promote understanding and friendship between India and Australia.

Mr Ahluwalia has served as Special Secretary to the Prime Minister of India and Finance Secretary in the Ministry of Finance. In 2001, he was appointed as the first Director of the Independent Evaluation Office at the International Monetary Fund, resigning in 2004 to take up his present appointment on the planning commission.

See Diary Notes, page 31

Manga and anime throw light on modern realities

Far from being childish, violent and sexual, manga and anime are bringing social issues and problems into the public arena. MIO BRYCE reports.

Advanced technoscience, such as gene engineering—which is capable of manipulating lives and organs by creating, duplicating and combining them—has profoundly shaken our understanding of being human.

Our feelings toward such advancement are ambivalent and expressed in an increasing number of portrayals of supernatural beings such as ghosts, spirits, vampires, monsters and super-humans. This resembles, somewhat, the way that traditional fantasies emerged in the 18th and 19th centuries to express anxieties about the dominance of scientific and technological developments.

Present-day portrayals are, however, inclusive and genre-hybrid, integrating science fiction and fantasies, manifesting not only fear but also hope for hybridity and the integration of humans and the other that the technologies produce.

The question, 'Who am I?', is thus more pressing and elusive than ever. This is what is consistently explored in narratives of adolescence, especially in manga and anime, in which my main research interest resides.

Manga and anime are hybrid texts of the visual and the linguistic, evolved from frequent interactions between Japanese traditional and contemporary arts and Western comics and animation. Their main strength lies in the novelistic storytelling, pioneered by prominent artists, such as Tezuka (1928–89) and Ishinomori Shōtarō (1938–98), and consumed and influenced by postwar baby boomers.

With the aggressive expansion, diversification and hybridisation of content, styles, genres and marketing, manga, then anime, have matured and grown into versatile cultural products accommodating diverse readers and audiences, from infants to elderly.

Manga and anime are highly intertextual, freely integrating and parodying well-known texts, such as folklore, novels, and other manga/anime works, as well as cultural, religious, historical, literary and visual motifs and concepts. There are, however, some differences between genres, although genre-crossing is frequent and the dissimilarities have become less distinct.

Previously, manga for boys and men, as typically seen in *gekiga* (realistic, often tragic manga with detailed depictions), consistently promoted the social conformity of men, as hardworking, devoted workers desired in the period of rapid economic growth. In contrast, employing hybrid characters (e.g. androgynous and/or non-human characters) *shōjo* (girls) manga created a full range of liminal worlds to allow their readers to experience alternative lives and their true or desired self.

By doing so, they liberated readers from oppressive gender-specific social norms and encouraged their self-esteem and independence, often through romantic stories. The exploration of 'who am I?' and 'where is my place in the world?—once characteristic of girls' manga[1]—is now commonly explored in other genres, especially in *shōnen* (boys') manga and anime (e.g. love comedies and girl fighters).

Manga (which became the basis of anime) uses symphonic narratives, consisting of a wide range of interdependently integrated stylised graphics, motion lines, backgrounds, frames, speech bubbles and linguistic texts. The graphics are essentially monochrome and less individualistic, yet idiomatic (e.g. a cute girl with starred eyes Continued page 18>>

Manga and anime throw light on modern realities

<<Continued from page 17>> showing her innocence), thereby functioning as visual language, suitable for rapid reading.

Depiction of the characters may shift from realistic to 'super-deformed', signalling radical emotional or contextual changes. Diverse motion lines indicate the direction and speed of activities, as well as the emotional intensity involved. Backgrounds are often suggestive, utilising clichés (e.g. roses for a romantic atmosphere and blackness for shock and/or isolation) to represent the mental landscape. Flexible frames in different sizes and shapes are eloquently used to constitute actual and/or psychological temporality and spatiality, as well as cinematographic effects.

Manga and anime, especially those for girls, have been able to bring social issues and problems into the public arena often much earlier than other media.

Likewise, diverse shapes of speech bubbles convey intensity of the utterance. Voiced speeches are written in speech bubbles, whereas thoughts are placed directly onto the pages. These conventions were largely developed in *shōjo* manga, enabling the artists to imbue the narratives with multiple voices and psychological complexity. Written texts are also presented in Continued page 18>>

Written texts are also presented in different fonts to communicate not only information but also the nuances and emotion of the speech, thoughts and narrations. Abundant onomatopoeia is included, especially in *shōnen* (boys) manga, to present sounds, appearances, atmosphere and emotional impact.

The specific context and tension are also communicated through the Japanese language, which is highly gendered and contextual with different levels of formality and honorifics, conveying not only the content but also the speaker's status (e.g. social position, age, sex), attitudes and emotions.

Utilising these attributes, often playfully, manga enables the reader to simultaneously grasp many layers of voices, meaning, dimensions and perspectives, whereby conveying complicated, emotion-ridden stories.

Because of their playful nature, they can smoothly convey simple truisms or moralistic messages, e.g. the importance of love, which otherwise may encounter the readers/audiences' resistance. They are also capable of representing human truth and a sense of immediacy, though their focused depiction of the protagonists' psychology and inter-subjective maturity, using subtle gestures and facial expressions together with layered verbal expressions.

The range of themes and topics covered by the narratives is vast, possibly larger than novels, although the profundity varies widely. With their close proximity and interactivity with readers and audiences, and their freedom as entertainment media, manga and anime, especially those for girls, have been able to bring social issues and problems (e.g., school bullying, gender discrimination, suicide, child abuse, domestic violence, drug abuse, teenage sex and pregnancies) into the public arena, enlightening readers and stimulating discussion, often much earlier than other media.

Hence, they can function as lifelong, personal learning resources. It is thus naïve to perceive them as childish, violent or sexual. In fact, the large portion of manga works today are entertaining yet educational, carrying accurate, detailed encyclopaedia-like information (e.g., about economics, legal matters, disabilities and even bacteria).

Still deeply rooted in the Japanese sociocultural context, manga and anime, however, penetrate the globe and have become recognised media, as global youth culture, as Japan's most profitable export materials, and as Continued page 19>>

Manga and anime

Continued page from page 18>> educational and research resources.

In academia, the number of publications and PhD theses has increased rapidly in various disciplines in many countries. In schools, and local libraries, manga and anime are also used—for example, in Australia, Miyazaki Hayao's *Spirited away* is used in the 2009–13 NSW Japanese Higher School Certificate extension syllabus.

The magnitude and the speed of the changes are amazing, and I have been truly fortunate to not only witness them but also experience them. In around 2000, we started to use manga and anime in teaching and research at Macquarie University, eventually developing four manga/anime units. Original manga/anime texts are also used in Japanese language teaching.

In the early period, very little primary and scholarly resources were available in Australia and I had to go to Japan to buy second-hand manga and videos. Translated manga and anime or scholarly books and articles (even in Japanese) were rarely available. Terms such as manga and anime were not known.

The development of our courses and research was only made possible with the enthusiastic and inspiring support of people, including our students. For several years, we have also been involved in interdisciplinary research into youth cultures, in conjunction with, and mentored by, Professor John Stephens in the English Department at Macquarie University.

Although the scale might be small, the developmental process exemplifies the history of manga and anime in Australia, and represents an essential quality of the media themselves: pervasive and creative interactivity, both between the works and the readers/audiences, and among the works and the readers/audiences. Manga and anime have significant value, as powerful and intriguing social commentary relevant to any society. They are hybrid, extremely versatile resources, which invite intercultural and interdisciplinary research across disciplines using diverse angles and methodologies.

Reference

1 Fujimoto, Yukari (1988), *Watashi no ibasho wa doko ni aru no?: Shojo manga ga utsusu kokoro no katachi*, Tokyo: Gakuyo shobo.

Dr Mio Bryce is Head of Japanese Studies at Macquarie University. She is currently involved in interdisciplinary research into youth cultures, with particular focus on manga and anime, in conjunction with the English Department.

Overseas travel fellowships

Applications are invited for the 2011 round of the Australia–Netherlands Research Collaboration (ANRC) Overseas Travel Fellowships: Southeast Asian Studies.

Individuals currently enrolled in a PhD program in an Australian university who are researching Southeast Asia are eligible to apply by the closing date, 25 February 2011. Funding is available for students to conduct specific, defined tasks in the Netherlands related to their PhD. These tasks could include fieldwork, consulting an archive or library, engaging in language or disciplinary study, or consulting academic experts.

PhD projects should address topics related to the humanities or social sciences. Funds will cover economy class return travel between Australia and the Netherlands plus a living allowance for a period of between one and six months. The research trip must occur within the term of the PhD enrolment, and take place in the period May 2011–June 2012. Up to four Fellowships will be offered in this round. See www.aust-neth.net or contact Helen.McMartin@anu.edu.au, or on 02 6125 0693 for further information.

Achieving a dream—the revival of Afghan music project

A vision to rebuild the musical traditions of Afghanistan after years of civil war is being realised, reports MARIKA VICZIANY.

The Monash Asia Institute at Monash University has had a long commitment to action research projects that can make a difference to the lives of people. But when Dr Ahmad Sarmast, son of the famous Afghani ustad conductor (master) Sarmast, approached me for help in 2005, I was overwhelmed by his vision.

Ahmad had just returned from visiting family in Kabul and reported that the long years of civil war had undermined the most basic cultural institutions of Afghanistan. The country did not even have a brass band that could play at official government functions.

Numerous music masters were the last of their kind, as no young students were being trained to play many of Afghanistan's traditional instruments. The teachers, music performers and the craftsmen who made musical instruments were largely unemployed. The Kabul School of Music had virtually collapsed—the buildings were seriously damaged, many teachers had died or fled the country, few students were now interested in studying music and there were no venues for practising, holding performances or storing instruments.

Most tragically of all, the surviving master musicians and the ordinary musicians of Afghanistan were living in extreme poverty, poorer than the poorest owing to the degradation that musical traditions had suffered. Ahmad's vision was to rebuild the musical traditions of Afghanistan—all of them—classical Persian, classical Hindustan, tribal and western classical.

He wanted to redress the appalling attrition that he has seen in Afghanistan and start a pilot project to re-establish the Kabul School of Music and musical

education under the auspices of the Afghan Government. He started to devise schemes for employing the unemployed craftsmen, musicians and orphans of Afghanistan. He was even determined to rebuild the popular music industry of Afghanistan, which had been virtually destroyed by imports of musical videos, CDs, radio and TV programs from India, Russia, Iran and the West. The end of Taliban rule had opened Afghanistan to extreme forms of cultural imperialism driven merely by market forces, the lack of local alternatives and the great love for music of all kinds by the people of Afghanistan.

Young boys at the ANIM learning to play traditional Afghan instruments.

Fortunately for Dr Sarmast, enough had remained of Afghanistan's musical traditions to build on. Despite the many bans on some kinds of music by the Taliban, music itself had survived even if in attenuated form. Even the Taliban leaders were known to enjoy certain types of music, especially religious music.

At the height of Taliban power, music for special festivals and family events such as weddings had been tolerated. What was less acceptable was to indulge in music without any political or social purposes. To play or listen to music for pure enjoyment, especially when accompanied by dancing that had no special tribal or social meaning, was not tolerated and sometimes brutally suppressed; and definitions of what constituted 'meaningful' music became increasingly narrow over time.

Ahmad found a special source of encouragement among the orphans and street children of Kabul, many of whom engaged in peddling plastic sheeting and cigarettes. Their Continued page 21>>

Reviving Afghan music

Continued page 21>> employment was intermittent; they earned little money; and they were receptive to Ahmad's suggestion that they join the new Kabul Music School if they were interested in music and had some natural talent.

Knowing that there was popular support for the rebuilding of the music school, Dr Sarmast approached the Ministry of Education with his plans and a copy of the report that he had written for the Monash Asia Institute on the parlous state of music in Afghanistan.

Not only was the government receptive to this idea, but it also supported Ahmad and the institute in mounting an international campaign to find the money needed for this project.

Eventually, the World Bank agreed to provide funding for the refurbishment of the old building of the College of Fine Arts. The Afghan Government matched World Bank support.

Once building and fit-out had commenced, other donors agreed to provide specific kinds of support—the Goethe Institute provided funds for musical textbooks, Goldsmith College at the University of London provided expertise to develop the music curriculum, the Indian Government provided teachers of classical Hindustan music and the German Government provided hundreds of instruments. Many donors in Melbourne have supported the Monash Asia Institute in covering the costs of insurance, family assistance for street kids and musical instruments.

But the needs of students who are orphans or former street children remains especially acute. Apart from providing them with uniforms, transportation and food, we need to provide them with stipends to compensate for the loss of money they would have earned as street sellers.

The struggle for long term sustainability continues at every level—having attracted many talented musical teachers from numerous countries for the first two years, the Afghanistan National Institute of Music (ANIM) is now desperately looking for staff and volunteers for the next three years.

Our funding campaign, therefore, continues unabated, aided from time to time by the encouraging reports about the school in, for example, the *Wall Street Journal* (2 June 2010). Highly trained expatriate musical staff cost about $60 000 a year, but their expertise is critical to the establishment of a music school of world class standard.

The young girls who peddle goods on the streets of Kabul are numerous and especially vulnerable—there are about 600 000 'street kids' in Afghanistan of whom about 70 000 live in Kabul. More than half of them are girls and at risk of being trafficked and involved in prostitution and criminal gangs.

Many of the surviving music teachers in Afghanistan feel they have been left behind by the music education revolution that has occurred in other parts of the world.

A tiny number of these girls are now studying at the Kabul Music School, which hopes to double enrolments in the next 12 months. The curriculum begins each day with normal educational classes to improve basic literacy, and then mid-afternoon the focus switches to musical education and training. Even if a music career does not emerge as a viable option for these girls, they will be better placed for other jobs and improved lifestyles because of their ability to read and write.

A section of ANIM'S youth orchestra.

Rebuilding the music school has not been an easy task—the arrival of new resources in Kabul, no matter how limited, can give rise to new controversies about what is fair and equitable. Dr Sarmast and the Monash Asia Institute have been especially mindful of creating more communal harmony and minimising any disturbances.

An important priority for us is to ensure that the arrival of foreign teachers does not displace local teachers does not displace local teachers, Continued page 22>>

Reviving Afghan music

<<Continued from page 21 or training opportunities for them. Many of the surviving music teachers in Afghanistan feel they have been left behind by the music education revolution that has occurred in other parts of the world. We are planning, therefore, to bring two Afghan music teachers a year to Melbourne to give them opportunities to see what is happening to curriculum development and teacherpupil relationships here and in other parts of the world.

We can achieve our dream to have the finest music institute and world class musicians in Afghanistan.

I hope that some readers of this article will see the worthiness of our action-research project and contribute to it by writing to me at Marika.Vicziany@monash.edu. There is a list of current donors on the websites of the Monash Asia Institute and the Afghanistan National Institute of Music, which is the official name of the new Kabul Music School. Despite such generosity, many of the school's running costs are not yet covered.

ANIM continues as a project of Afghanistan's Ministry of Education and the Monash Asia Institute. ANIM represents a new educational model for Afghanistan, and there are now discussions about making the Kabul project into the foundation for a national program. To quote Dr Sarmast: 'With your support we can achieve our dream to have the finest music institute and world class musicians in Afghanistan.'

Professor Vicziany is Director, Monash Asia Institute and Professor of Asian Political Economy, Monash University,

Online courses point way for small-enrolment language programs

A new online course for teaching the Thai language could remove the threat to some small-enrolment Asian language courses at Australian universities, says CHINTANA SANDILANDS.

With the decline in the number of Australian universities offering courses in Thai language studies, the Australian National University is now the only university in Australia still offering the Thai language as a major.

The ANU's highly respected Thai program has been well-established in the School of Culture, History and Language—formerly the Faculty of Asian Studies—for more than 30 years.

However, with only about 30 students on average enrolled in the program, it is regarded as a relatively small-enrolment language and remains vulnerable. Therefore, proactive strategies must be initiated and implemented to attract enough students each year to keep the program viable and sustainable.

The Thai program's primary goal is to provide students with a sound knowledge of the Thai language and an appreciation of the rich cultural aspects of Thailand and its people. In doing so, the program heightens students' awareness of Thai values and cross-cultural issues. The aim of the interdisciplinary approach is to ensure students have a wide-ranging knowledge of Thailand and neighbouring countries, as well as of relevant contemporary issues.

Students can enrol in several in-country courses. These vary in length, from a few weeks to a year and are structured to allow students to undertake a study project that corresponds with their specific areas of interest in Thailand. One of the courses, the Southeast Asian Frontier: Thailand and Burma/Myanmar, has been successfully developed to improve students' language skills and maximise their learning skills and Continued page 23>>

Online courses point way for small-enrolment language programs

<<Continued from page 22 maximise their learning experience. The course gives students the opportunity to learn about the local knowledge, life experiences, and problems faced by some ethnic groups in Thailand and Burma.

The Thai program has also adopted other strategies, such as evening schedules to make classes readily accessible to students working fulltime, and community outreach programs. However, since the classes are limited in scope to the ACT, further efforts are needed to reach potential Thai language students at national and international levels. These activities assume greater importance in light of the program's broader attempts to support the study of the Thai language in Australia.

Since the first semester of 2010, the program has been providing online courses via the ANU Wattle (Web Access to Teaching and Learning Environments) website. This project has received strong support from the ANU, the School of Culture, History and Language, Wattle specialists, IT staff and students.

Simple, clear and practical guidelines for both staff and students provided on Wattle have facilitated the delivery of the online courses. Further advantages include the availability of Wattle training courses, the opportunities to share the experiences of other Wattle users and the support provided by qualified IT personnel.

Lecturers also have the opportunity to learn, practise, pre-test and develop their skills in using Wattle via short-course training. Close assistance from IT personnel with Wattle expertise has been particularly valuable in designing and creating practical models for each Thai course. Each online course incorporates a variety of digital and multimedia material, including Thai typing, Thai websites, video clips, links, photos, music, newspapers, and TV programs.

Students have enjoyed learning and participating in new and flexible forms. These include teaching and learning management via the Wimba Classroom, a live teaching and interactive classroom, including live audio and video, instant polling and surveys, whiteboard, application sharing, and archiving sessions for later review, the Voice Board (audio-enabled discussion forums), the Voice Presentation and the discussion forums.

They have also been able to undertake self-study and self-assessment by completing online exercises and playing online language games. Additionally, students can conduct research and submit their assignments online. Feedback from the students has helped develop more effective and practical models for each Thai course.

If this online initiative proves successful, enrolment numbers in the Thai program should increase. The program will be a role model for other small enrolment languages and could well serve to raise the national and international profile of the Thai language program at the ANU.

The activities of the Thai program represent an investment in the human capital of Australia. In supporting the program, the ANU is demonstrating the value that it places on the contribution of smaller languages to Australian society.

The vital activities of the program represent one way of responding to the challenges of globalisation, with linkages between societies multiplying rapidly in increasingly diverse forms, and in which Southeast Asia is of growing importance to Australia.

Chintana Sandilands is convenor of the ANU's Thai program and the Year in Asia (Thailand and Lao PDR) program and Assistant Director of the National Thai Studies Centre, Canberra. She was awarded the ANU Vice-Chancellor's Award for Excellence in Teaching (with team) in 1997. In 2008, she was awarded the 2008 ACT International Women's Day Award for services to Thai and Australian communities.

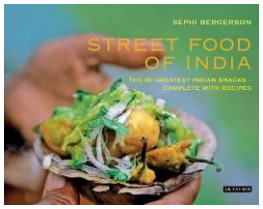
Give a bit of Asia this Christmas

From the Asia Bookroom

China. Through the lens of John Thomson (1868–1872). Beijing World Art Museum, 168pp, text in English and Chinese, River Books. Thailand. $105

Born two years before the invention of daguerreotype and the birth of photography, Thomson first travelled to Asia in 1862 where he set up a professional photographic studio. The local culture and the people of Asia fascinated him, and in 1868 he made his second trip, this time settling in Hong Kong. Between 1868 and 1872, he made extensive trips to Guangdong, Fujian, Beijing, China's northeast and down the Yangtse River, covering more than 8000 kilometres.

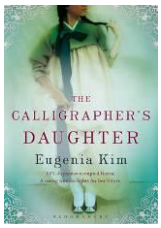
This exhibition catalogue is drawn from his time in these regions. Thomson managed to take a wide variety of images, including landscapes, people, and architecture, domestic and street scenes.



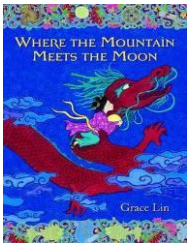
Street food of India. The 50 greatest Indian snacks—Complete with recipes. By Sephi Bergerson, 192pp, IB Tauris & Co Ltd. $45.

Meetha lassi and bhel puri; paneer tikka and masalas; chutneys, biryanis and samosas—all visitors to India are greeted by a quite astonishing display of roadside snacks throughout the country, from the teeming lanes of Old Delhi to the hot and dusty streets of the remote countryside. It is painfully hard to resist the smells and sights and tastes of this roadside food, prepared in front of customers' eyes with the freshest ingredients and a generous helping of panâche and showmanship. Acclaimed photographer Sephi Bergerson has been tracking down the very best street food in the country, which has been his home for the past seven years. The resulting book is a visual celebration of this splendid everyday cuisine and a virtual feast in itself.

The calligrapher's daughter. By Eugenia Kim, paperback, Bloomsbury. $23.99.



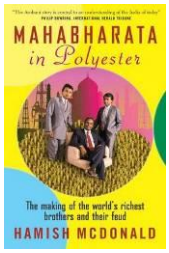
In this novel, set against the background of the Japanese occupation of Korea, Najin Han, the privileged daughter of a calligrapher, longs to choose her own destiny. Smart and headstrong, she is encouraged by her mother, but her stern father is determined to maintain tradition, especially as the Japanese steadily gain control of his beloved country. Spanning 30 years, *The calligapher's daughter* is a richly drawn novel about a country torn between ancient customs and modern possibilities, a family ultimately united by love and a woman who never gives up her search for freedom.



Where the mountain meets the moon. By Grace Lin, hardback, Little, Brown and Company. $28.99.

In the valley of Fruitless Mountain, Minli spends her days working hard in the fields and her nights listening to her father spin fantastic tales about the Jade Dragon and the Old Man of the Moon. Minli believes these enchanting stories and embarks on an extraordinary journey to find the Old Man of the Moon and ask him how their family can change their fortune. She encounters an assorted cast of characters and magical creatures along the way, including a dragon who accompanies her on her quest. Winner of the 2010 Newbery Honour Award, this novel is suitable for primary school children. More new books page 25>>

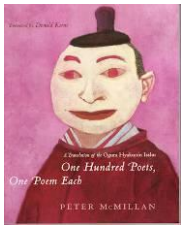
New books on Asia



Mahabharata in polyester. The making of the world's richest brothers and their feud. By Hamish McDonald, paperback, 402pp, UNSW Press. $34.95.

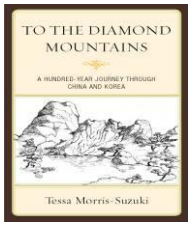
This is the riveting story of one of the wealthiest families in the world. Dhirubhai Ambani was a rags-to-riches Indian tycoon whose company, Reliance, which emerged from the textile industry, is now one of India's major corporations. His sons, Anil and Mukesh, took over after his death in 2002 and their respective arms of the company are bigger than the parent ever was. The brothers are now worth $43 billion and $42 billion respectively, largely from petrochemicals, telecommunications, and entertainment.

To say that the sibling tycoons are not close is an understatement: their feud—personal and business—is an extraordinary story. But as this book shows, the Ambani story tells a bigger story about modern India, not only as an economic powerhouse but about the complicated links between government and big business.



One hundred poets, one poem each: a translation of the *Ogura hyakunin isshu*. By Peter McMillan, paperback **,** 194pp, University Presses of California. $38.95.

Compiled in the 13th century, the *Ogura hyakunin isshu* is one of Japan's most quoted and illustrated works, as influential to the development of Japanese literary traditions as *The tale of Genji* and *The tales of Ise*. The text is an anthology of 100 waka (a precursor of haiku) poems, each written by a different poet from the seventh century to the middle of the 13th, which is when Fujiwara no Teika, a renowned poet and scholar, assembled and edited the collection. The book features poems by high-ranking court officials and members of the imperial family. Though the *Ogura hyakunin isshu* has been translated into English before, many scholars and other translators have struggled with the formality of the original text. In this bold new translation, Peter McMillan uses only the words that are necessary to evoke the original sensations these poems once gave their readers. The *Ogura hyakunin isshu* is an excellent introduction to Japan and its important tradition of poetry.



To the Diamond Mountains: a hundred-year journey through China and Korea. By Tessa Morris-Suzuki, hardback, 200pp, Rowan & Littlefield. $51.95

This book takes readers on a unique journey through China and North and South Korea. Following in the footsteps of a remarkable writer, artist and feminist who travelled this route a century ago in the year when Korea became a Japanese colony, the journey reveals an unseen face of China and the two Koreas—a world of monks, missionaries and smugglers, of royal tombs and socialist mausoleums; a world where today's ideological confrontations are infused with myth and memory, and nothing is quite as it seems.

Northeast Asia today is poised at a moment of profound change as the rise of China is transforming the global order and tensions run high on the Korean Peninsula, the last Cold War divide. Probing the deep past of this region *To the Diamond Mountains* offers a new and unexpected perspective on the region's present and future.

New books from the ASAA series

Southeast Asia Series

The series seeks to publish cutting-edge research on all countries and peoples of Southeast Asia.

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.

New books on Asia

Rebuilding the ancestral village: Singaporeans in China. By Khun Eng Kuah-Pearce (2nd edition jointly by Hong Kong University Press, Amsterdam University Press and National University of Singapore Press), 1st quarter 2011.

This work illustrates the relationship between one group of Singapore Chinese and their ancestral village in Fujian, China. It explores the reasons why the Singaporean Chinese continue to maintain ties with their ancestral village and how they reproduce Chinese culture through ancestor worship and religion in the ancestral village.

Khun Eng Kuah-Pearce

In some cases, the Singaporeans feel morally obliged to assist in village reconstruction and infrastructure developments such as new roads, bridges, schools and hospitals. Meanwhile, officials and villagers in the ancestral home utilise various strategies to encourage the Singaporeans to revisit their ancestral village, sustain heritage ties, and help enhance the moral economy.

This ethnographic study examines two geographically distinct groups of Chinese coming together to re-establish their lineage and identity through cultural and economic activities.

Khun Eng Kuah-Pearce is associate professor in the Department of Sociology, University of Hong Kong.

Suicide and Society in India. By Peter Mayer, hardcover, 264pp. ASAA South Asia Publication Series. £85.00

In India about 123 000 people take their own lives each year, the second highest total in the world. There is a suicide death in India almost every four minutes, and it is the leading cause of death for rural Indians, especially women in early adulthood. This book presents a comprehensive analysis of suicide in India based on original research as well as existing studies, and looks at the issue in an international, sociological and historical context.

The author looks at the reliability of suicide data in India, and goes on to discuss various factors relating to suicide, including age, gender, education and marriage. Among its findings, the book exposes a hidden youth suicide 'crisis' in India which is argued to be far more serious than the better known crisis of farmer suicides. The book dispels many myths that are commonly associated with suicide, and highlights a neglected public health problem. Suicide in the region of Pondicherry is looked at in detail, as well as in the Indian diaspora.

This book is a useful contribution to South Asian studies, as well as studies in mental health and sSociology.

Job websites

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 is *The Times Higher Education Supplement*.

www.comminit.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.

Prizewinning thesis throws light on 'arcane' topic

A study that takes an innovative approach to Japanese literary translation studies has won the 2010 Asian Studies Association of Australia President's Prize for the best thesis on Asia.

An adjudication committee member described Dr William Fryer's winning thesis as showing a mastery of both the theory and history of translating Japanese poetry into English.

Another committee member said it was 'extremely well-conceptualised and well-written, drawing the non-expert into what could be seen as an arcane topic'.

The thesis, entitled 'Interpretive and source-oriented approaches: modern Japanese free verse poetry in English translation', is the first in-depth examination of modern Japanese poetry in translation.

It has a special focus on two approaches prominent among English translations of modern Japanese free verse poetry—namely 'interpretive' and 'source-oriented' translation, which have tended to be loosely associated with the vague notions of 'free' translation and 'literal' translation respectively.

'My PhD topic grew out of my love of poetry, and my interest in the history of translation,' Dr Fryer said.

'I was lucky that I was able to cover two fields of study in my research—Japanese literature and translation studies. I hope this has given me a firm basis to carry out research on a broad range of topics in the future.'

The thesis examines translations of modern poets Miyazawa Kenji,

Hagiwara Sakutaro, and Kusano Shinpei, done by prominent translators of Japanese free verse, including American poets Gary Snyder and Cid Corman.

Dr Fryer

The aim of the study is to provide a critical history of the first book-length translations of individual poets, and to show how they challenged the dominant postwar discourse on translation in the Japanese literary studies community, which included arguments for a homogenous translation style and an intolerance of differing approaches.

Bill Fryer grew up 'in the wilderness in New South Wales' and began studying Japanese at age 13. He completed a BA with double major in Japanese language and an Honours degree in Japanese studies at the University of Queensland before going to Japan on a Japanese Government scholarship and completing a Masters degree in Japanese literature at Kochi University, Shikoku.

'At Kochi University I studied the works of Miyazawa Kenji, several works of classical Japanese literature and a fascinating 16th century Japanese translation of Aesop's fables,' he said.

'For the past 18 months, I've been working full time as a translator for an innovative medical technology company. This has been a great opportunity to improve my translation skills. However, I'm keen to take up an academic position when a good opportunity presents itself.'

ASAA president Professor Kathryn Robinson said the committee selected Dr Fryer's thesis from a very strong field, and chose his work as winner out of a pool of 11 nominated theses from 11 universities.

ASAA 2011–12 Council

President

Purnendra Jain's research and teaching interests concern the domestic and international politics of contemporary Japan, specifically, and regional politics of Asia Pacific generally. His current project examines Japan's strategic options and responses to the rise of China and India, funded by an ARC Discovery Grant (2009–11). As ASAA president, he aims to increase connections between the association and scholars who work on Asia in various disciplines within public and private institutions but remain outside the association's network. This will help to develop untapped synergies, widen the membership base and strengthen the ASAA's academic pursuits and capacity for effective community voice.

Vice-president

Kent Anderson is a comparative lawyer specialising in Japan. He is director of the School of Culture, History and Language in the ANU College of Asia and the Pacific and holds a joint appointment with the ANU College of Law. His research is focused on insolvency, private international law, and recently the introduction of Japan's new quasi-jury system (*saiban-in-seido*). As well as law subjects, Kent teaches advanced Japanese, the compulsory course in the Master of Asia Pacific Studies and a suite of courses relating to Japanese law. He is active in promotion of Asia–Pacific Studies in the public sphere by serving on the National Asian Languages and Studies in Schools Program advisory committee, Asia Education Foundation board and the 2020 Summit, and by working with relevant government departments, embassies and funding bodies to promote Asian literacy.

Secretary

Michele Ford chairs the Department of Indonesian Studies at the University of Sydney, where she researches and teaches about social activism in Southeast Asia, with a particular focus on labour movements. She also contributes to the Indonesian language program, teaching advanced units on human rights, development and politics. Michele has been secretary of the ASAA since mid-2006. In addition, she serves on the Indonesia Council, the ANU's Indonesia Project Advisory Board, the Australian Consortium for 'In-Country' Indonesian Studies Reference Group and the Sydney Indonesian Study Circle Organising Committee. In her spare time, she is coordinating editor for the online magazine *Inside Indonesia*.

Treasurer

Lenore Lyons is research professor in Asian Studies at the University of Western Australia. She has been treasurer of the ASAA since 2008 and editor of the Women in Asia series published by Routledge since 2009. Lenore is currently working on a project that examines migrant worker activism in support of female domestic workers in Malaysia and Singapore. She recently completed a major study of citizenship, identity and sovereignty in the Riau Islands of Indonesia (with Michele Ford). Over the course of her career, Lenore has been heavily involved in research training for higher-degree students. She has organised Asia–Pacific Futures Research Network workshops for early career researchers on a range of topics, and many national and international conference panels.

Regional councillors

China

Jason Lim has just completed his two-year stint as a postdoctoral fellow in the Department of History at the National University of Singapore and since September 2010 has been a Lecturer in Asian History at the University of Wollongong. His main teaching and research interests are the modern history of China, Taiwan, Malaysia and the overseas Chinese community in Southeast Asia. Jason has been a member of the editorial committee of the *Journal of the South Seas Society* since 2009. He aims to act as an effective bridge between the ASAA and China scholars.

Japan and Northeast Asia

Seiko Yasumoto lecturers at the University of Sydney in Japanese Studies and Asian Studies. She carries out research on media, culture and communication of Japan and East Asia. Continued page 28>>

ASAA 2011-12 Council

<<Continued from page 27 Her current research focus is on transnational media, cultural flows and television studies. She is an executive member of both the Sydney Network for Language and Culture and the Oriental Society of Australia and a co-editor of the Brazilian scholarly journal *Ilha do Desterro.* She has been actively involved in the organisation of media cultural communication research clusters and international workshops.

South Asia

Assa Doran is a research fellow in Anthropology and South Asian Studies at the Australian National University. His research involves three main areas: the anthropological study of religion and politics; medical anthropology; and the anthropology of media and technology. Assa currently holds an ARC postdoctoral fellowship and is a member of a team working on an ARC Discovery project on media in India and an AusAID project on gender and violence in Asia. Assa has been actively involved in the organisation of a number of cross-disciplinary international workshops and conferences, including as co-convener of the Asia Pacific Week at ANU.

Southeast Asia

Kate McGregor is senior lecturer in Southeast Asian History at the University of Melbourne, where she teaches Southeast Asian and Asian thematic history. Her research interests are memory and violence in the Asian region. Kate served six years on the ASAA Council, first as a general councillor and then as a regional councillor for Southeast Asia. She is also secretary of the Indonesia Council. In 2001 she proposed and co-convened the first national Indonesia Council Open Conference as a means of bringing together established academics and postgraduates working on Indonesia. The conference is now a biennial annual event.

West, Central and Inner Asia

Minerva Nasser-Eddine is a research fellow with the Hawke Research Institute at the University of South Australia and the Director of Al Hikma–Middle East Advisory Agency. Her research and teaching interests are related to contemporary socio-political and cultural issues and developments in the Middle East and among its diaspora communities in Australia. Minerva is the South Australian representative on the Australian Arabic Council, recent past chair of the Australian Arab Chamber of Commerce and Industry (SA chapter), trustee of the History Trust of South Australia, and its representative on the Migration Museum Foundation. She was a recipient of the Prime Minister's Centenary Medal in 2003.

General councillors

Michael Barr is head of the Department of International Relations, Flinders University, where he lectures in both Asian Studies and International Relations. He also conducts Honours and Masters courses on religion, ethnicity and politics across both disciplines. His two areas of research focus are Singapore history, politics and society, and religious and ethnic nationalism in Asia. Michael was a member of the organising committee of the recent ASAA Biennial Conference and is a co-editor of the proceedings of the conference.

Amrita Malhi's research interests include the colonial transformation of nature and human subjects in Southeast Asia. Her recent PhD examined an Islamist forest uprising and holy war against colonial power in 1920s Malaya. She has also written on contemporary Islam and identity politics in Malaysia, and the production of belonging in a 'Muslim world' through Gaza solidarity campaigns. Amrita is currently the inaugural Minerals Council of Australia Fellow at the National Library of Australia. She is also a visiting fellow in the ANU College of Asia and the Pacific.

Annie Pohlman is the program leader for Southeast Asia at the Asia–Pacific Centre for the Responsibility to Protect, a regional genocide prevention research and advocacy centre at the University of Queensland. Between 2004–09 she taught Indonesian language, politics and history, Southeast Asian history and genocide studies at UQ. Anne has been an active member of the ASAA and is particularly interested in encouraging participation by Continued page 29>>

ASAA 2011-12 Council

Continued from page 28>> postgrads and early career researchers in the association. She has convened four postgraduate conferences at UQ and participated in numerous forums on Asian Studies. She hopes to have the opportunity to contribute more to the ASAA.

Postgraduate representative

Wayne Palmer is a PhD candidate in the Department of Indonesian Studies at the University of Sydney. His research focuses on Indonesia's labour export program. He received a University Medal for his 2008 Honours thesis on the use of public–private partnerships in the management of Indonesian migrant workers in Hong Kong. He is currently a recipient of the Prime Minister's Australia Asia Endeavour Award. He was a member of the 2009 Indonesia Council Open Conference organising committee and co-edited a special edition of *Inside Indonesia* on labour migration, entitled 'Leaving Indonesia'.

Co-opted members of the board

Kathryn Robinson is professor in the Department of Anthropology, College of Asia and the Pacific, at the Australian National University. She has been researching in Indonesia since 1976 on mining and development, gender relations, migration and the internet. She served as ASAA vice-president in 2008–09 and as president in 2009–10, and will sit on the 2011–12 council as immediate past president. Kathryn is a fellow of the Academy of Social Sciences in Australia and the recipient of a citation for excellence in teaching from the Australian Learning and Teaching Council in 2008. She is also editor of the *Asia Pacific Journal of Anthropology*.

Mina Roces teaches in the School of History and Philosophy at the University of New South Wales where she is also the postgraduate coordinator and Asian Studies coordinator. Her current research interests include the women's movement in the Philippines, transnational Filipinos and the politics of dress. She has been publications officer of the ASAA since 2004 and is Regional General Asia editor for the *Asian Studies Review*. Since 2006 she has been the series editor for Sussex Academic Press's Sussex Library of Asian Studies series launched in 2007.

Peter Jackson, the editor of the *Asian Studies Review,* is senior fellow in the Australian National University's School of Pacific and Asian Studies. His interests include the histories of Buddhism, gender, sexuality and globalisation in Southeast Asia. He is general editor of Hong Kong University Press new Queer Asia monograph series and with Jacquie Lo set up the ANU Asian and Pacific Cultural Studies Network in 2008. In collaboration with the Princess Maha Chakri Sirindhorn Anthropology Centre he established the Thai Queer Resources Centre in Bangkok in 2007.

Sally Burdon is the director of Asia Bookroom, an Asian specialist bookshop in Canberra. Sally is committed to exciting and involving the general public in Asia-related ideas and issues. As well as encouraging Asian literacy, she organises regular talks and other events at Asia Bookroom. Sally is currently vice-president of the Australian and New Zealand Association of Antiquarian Booksellers. Sally has served on the ASAA Council since early 2008.

Maureen Welch serves on the council, representing the Asia Education Foundation (AEF). She has been with the foundation since 1993 and is currently its director. She has responsibility for managing the AEF's programs, including partnerships with key stakeholders at national and state/territory levels, professional learning programs, curriculum materials development and international programs. She has a background in program evaluation and a strong interest in national policy development and implementation strategies.

The ASAA was founded in 1976 to promote and support the study of Asia in Australia. Its membership is drawn mainly from academic staff and students at Australian universities, but it also takes a strong interest in Asian Studies and the use of Asia-related materials in schools and in Australian attitudes to and policies towards Asia.

Diary notes

India's prospects in the post-crisis world, Canberra, 29 November 2010**.** Public oration by Mr Montek Singh Ahluwalia. See page 16. Venue, Hedley Bull Theatre 1, Hedley Bull Centre, corner of Liversidge Street and Garran Road, ANU, 5.30pm–6.30pm. Enquiries: Australia South Asia Research Centre on 02 6125 4482, ANU events on 02 6125 4144.

Innovations and creativity in ancient Qin, symposium, Art Gallery of New South Wales and University of Sydney, 4–5 December 2010. The symposium will launch the gallery's exhibition 'The first emperor: China's entombed warriors'. Full program and bookings**.**

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, also at the University of Melbourne. Further details about the conference will be available from the conference website.

***Indonesians overseas: historical perspectives conference*, ** University of Wollongong, 10 December 2010. See conference website.

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.

Advertise your event free in Diary Notes. Details of events should be sent to the editor by the 15th of each month.

Chinese Studies scholarships

The School of Culture, History & Language at the Australian National University (ANU) is calling for applications for honours scholarships in traditional Chinese studies.

The Liu Ts'un-Yan and Liu Chiang Szu-Yung scholarships are available to outstanding Chinese studies students from Australian universities seeking admission to the ANU Bachelor of Asia–Pacific Studies with Honours. They are open to Australian citizens and Australian permanent residents. Preference will be given to candidates using classical Chinese language sources in their research. Applications close 26 November 2010. Information: john.makeham@anu.edu.au

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 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 Roces, ASAA Publications officer; and Lenore Lyons, ASAA Treasurer.

This is the last *Asian Currents* for 2010. On behalf of the ASAA, I extend my warmest thanks to all who contributed so willingly during the year. The next issue will be published in February 2011.

Allan Sharp, Editor