



Decline in Asian studies

Challenge for new ASAA council

As a professional association, the ASAA needs to generate greater interest in Asian languages and studies, says PURNENDRA JAIN, the new president of the association.

Asia today is vastly different from what it was in the past. Interest in Asia around the world is now much stronger because of its rising economic importance and growing political weight globally.

Australia's trade with Asian countries has grown exponentially and is likely to increase further. Australia's links with Asia have expanded beyond the economic realm, visibly changing the Australian landscape.

An increasing number of migrants now come from Asia as do another sector of the temporary resident population, international students; China and India source Australia's two largest international student communities.



funding and building stronger academic programs.

And yet sadly, today the state of Asian studies in Australia does not look robust. Both Asian languages and Asian studies have seen a steady decline over the last 15 years. Whereas Australia could once boast to be the world leader in Indonesian studies, it has lost its primacy through non-replacement of retired staff and the closing down of language teaching in schools and universities nationwide. Similarly, in

In these circumstances one would expect Asian studies to flourish, with government and educational institutions allocating greater

scholarship on Indian history and the teaching of Indian studies that flourished in the past have now become almost non-existent. And the tale goes on. Raw figures for enrolment may suggest that Chinese language programs defy the general trend of decline. The reality, however, is that the increase here is driven not by greater interest in China among Australians as the Chinese economy dominates the world. Instead, the growth in enrolments is due largely to the many full-fee paying Chinese students choosing to take advanced Chinese language and literature courses designed to fit in as electives for their professional degree courses.

The decline in the programs and offerings of Asian languages at both school and tertiary levels can partly be attributed to the cutback of federal and state funding. Although the federal government and its leaders rhetorically

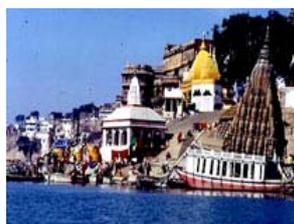
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Challenge for new ASAA council

<<From page 1 claim the importance of Asia knowledge for Australia, they are unwilling to allocate adequate resources to make this happen. Teaching Asian languages, especially character-based languages such as Japanese and Chinese, requires significantly more resources than most university deans and vice-chancellors are unwilling to deploy, as often their main concern is the bottom line rather than knowledge creation.



We have watched with concern as Asian language and studies programs have declined in general. There

is surely a need to rectify this situation if Australia wants to regain its position as a hub for Asian knowledge and the strategic, economic, diplomatic and cultural benefits that this brings. Unfortunately, government appears unlikely to provide the resources needed. While Australia loses its pre-eminence, other countries in the region, most notably Singapore, are allocating huge resources to the study of Asian cultures, societies—their politics and international relations.

One positive development in Australia today—the silver lining of earlier years of active support for and investment in Asian studies—is that Asia awareness, and understanding of its importance for Australia, is taking roots within the larger scholarly, political and societal milieus.

Today there are think tanks and research centres, such as the Lowy Institute, that now focus their analysis increasingly on Asia. At the tertiary level, Asia-related courses are being mainstreamed in many disciplinary areas from politics and anthropology to architecture and music, which is a welcome development. Australian scholars are forging research links and conducting joint projects with counterparts in Asian countries in fields as diverse as engineering, science and medicine.

One can see clearly a tremendous growth in Australian scholarly communities

partnering with Asian academics. These are not 'Asian studies' groups per se, but nevertheless they bring valuable Asia knowledge and understanding to the wider Australian communities and help to foster links at the personal level that are so important for relationships at the national and regional levels.

While Australia loses its pre-eminence, other countries in the region, most notably Singapore, are allocating huge resources to the study of Asian cultures, societies—their politics and international relations.

As a professional association we confront both opportunities and challenges. One of the challenges we face is how to generate greater interest in Asian languages and studies so that students value these programs and undertake and complete them. We need to convince government at both federal and state levels that our nation needs an appropriate funding model that makes these study programs viable and sustainable.

Today, state governments also realise the importance of Asia knowledge as they increasingly interact with Asian countries not just for economic matters but also because of the larger number of migrants from Asia in their communities and the challenges/opportunities these migrants face as a result. As the title of a recent presentation by NSW Liberal Party leader Barry O'Farrell at Asialink suggests, Australian state leaders are seeking their 'rightful place in Asia'.

As interest in Asia reaches beyond the scholarly community—ranging from think tanks, business and state and local governments to the general public—the association has opportunities to network with these new Asia-interested groups through making itself relevant to them.

Australia traditionally lacks a culture of corporate funding in education and professional bodies, but now that Asian companies are expanding their interest in Australia, this may be an opportune time for us to approach not just

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Challenge for new ASAA council

<<From page 2 not just Australian but also Asian corporations and seek funding to create and extend Asia knowledge in Australia. There is also a need for us to network with scholars and analysts beyond Asian studies centres and seek out joint projects and conferences with other Asia-interested institutions and associations.

In my own field of Japanese domestic and international politics, for example, the Australian Institute of International Affairs comes readily to my mind as an organisation with which positive synergies can be generated. I am sure there are many other organisations with which we can partner to build Australia's Asia knowledge stock—if we think creatively and act wisely.

The challenges are immense, but we are committed to keeping Australia at the forefront of Asia knowledge.

I am very fortunate to be supported by an able and enthusiastic executive and council. I am positive that the new council will take initiatives to strengthen Asian studies by building networks beyond the existing constituencies.



The challenges are immense, but we are committed to keeping Australia at the forefront of Asia knowledge. At the present historical moment when parts of Asia are manifestly 'on the rise', we must help to position our nation to maximise the mutual benefits that our Asia knowledge creation and passage of it to others will bring.

I thank the outgoing executive, especially Robert Cribb and Peter Mayer, for their confidence in me by nominating me for this position, and to all members for endorsing my nomination.

Looking over the list of past presidents, I feel truly humbled to be in the company of such luminaries as Stephen Fitzgerald,

Wang Gungwu, Colin Mackerras, John Ingleson and Robin Jeffrey, whose scholarly contributions both nationally and internationally are deep, wide and lasting.

The association stands where it is today because of the work of its outstanding past presidents ably supported by their executive and council members and other volunteers in the profession. All of these people have contributed immensely to making the ASAA ever stronger and effective as a national body promoting Asian studies and scholarship in Australia and beyond.



Across its nearly 35 years of activity, the ASAA has served the professional community well through its biennial conferences, which bring together hundreds of delegates from across Australia and overseas, its publications series in three geographic areas—Northeast Asia, Southeast Asia and South Asia plus Women in Asia—and its highly regarded and world class A-ranked quarterly journal, *Asian Studies Review*.

The association has also produced periodically some excellent reports on the state of Asian studies in Australia, with recommendations that have influenced government policy.



Purnendra Jain is the new president of the Asian Studies Association of Australia and a professor in the Centre of Asian Studies, University of Adelaide.

Action call to arrest decline in Indonesian

With the teaching of Indonesia in sharp decline in Australian education, urgent strategies are required, says DAVID T HILL.

In their 2010 study *The current state of Indonesian language education in Australian schools*, Michelle Kohler and Phillip Mahnken¹ concluded that, while Indonesian remains a major language in our schools, 'the number of programs offered and students studying the language are in serious decline'.

Indonesian is now 'an "at risk", low candidature language' at senior secondary level attracting only 1167 (or less than 1 per cent of) of Year 12 students. The 2005–08 data indicates Indonesian enrolments are declining by an average of 10 000 school students annually.

The Australian Government's National Asian Languages and Studies in Schools Program (NALSSP) aims to invest \$62.4 million over 2008–11, and aims to have at least 12 per cent of students exit Year 12 by 2020 with sufficient competence in one of the target Asian languages (Mandarin, Japanese, Indonesian and Korean) to enable them to participate in trade and commerce in Asia and/or in university study.

But, while we would all support its goal, NALSSP currently has neither sufficient funding—nor funding of sufficient duration—to achieve this.

In universities, enrolment figures collected by three different exercises² show the number of students studying Indonesian has been declining steadily and relentlessly, at least since 2001. Between 2001 and 2007 the fall was about 24 per cent. By 2009 only two universities had an EFTSL load greater than 30 (which we might very crudely convert to about 100 actual students in total across three years of study).

My own survey underscores these general findings, with provisional data for 2002–09

pointing to a drop of 30 per cent nationally, by 39 per cent collectively in Tasmania, the Australian Capital Territory and the Northern Territory, and by nearly 49 per cent in Queensland. First-year enrolments of more than 30 individual students are now a rare phenomenon in any Indonesian program, with upper-level units commonly falling into single figures.

Kohler and Mahnken found less than 1 per cent of Year 12 students were studying Indonesian. My very rough calculation, based on 2008 figures, comparing Indonesian EFTSL load (about 245) to total bachelor's degree EFTSL (559 440), indicates that Indonesian language load at universities is not 1 per cent, not half a per cent, but about 1/20th of 1 percent, or 0.05 per cent of the total. That is, less than one in every 2000 students was doing any Indonesian.

We have to take the initiative—even if that is confronting for us, our colleagues, our universities, and for the government which sets education policy.

Despite the closure of at least five university Indonesian programs in the past eight years, Indonesian still remains available in at least one university in every state and territory. Fifteen Australian public universities offer self-sustaining independent Indonesian language programs. Five others include Indonesian through arrangements under which staffing and materials are provided by another university.

In five of those 15 universities, there is only a single tenured staff member attempting to offer three (or four) years of Indonesian language instruction, sometimes together with associated area studies (or 'content') units about Indonesia. Across all of the Northern Territory and Queensland there are only three tenured staff members (and a single fixed-term contract position) catering for the entire population of Continued page 5>>

Action call on Indonesian

<< From page 4 these two jurisdictions. Under such conditions, the future would have to be judged precarious. If the current trajectory continues, by the NALSSP target year of 2020, in several states there may well be no university Indonesian programs for the anticipated 12 per cent of post-NALSSP Year 12 students with Asian-language competence, to enter!

We need to evaluate realistically the challenges we face, and determine practical, implementable solutions. If we do not intervene decisively, the consequence is clear: Indonesian enrolments will continue to fall, programs will continue to close, departing staff will not be replaced. We have to take the initiative—even if that is confronting for us, our colleagues, our universities, and for the government which sets education policy.

What strategies are there?

An individual university might attract more students to its Indonesian course without additional cost by simply promoting its Indonesia profile more effectively via its website; being more flexible with its degree structures; offering an entry-point (LOTE) bonus to language-learners; encouraging cross-institutional enrolment in languages and related units to broaden its suite of units available—that is, by fundamentally changing (what one might call) the institutional psyche, the attitude towards language learning and language skills within the university.

How might such attitudinal change come about? A second language might be designated a desirable attribute in all academic staff recruitment, whatever the discipline: a polyglot staff model and embody for students the benefits of language competence. Influential officers, like a vice-chancellor or a dean, have a powerful potential influence.

Currently—at least at a cursory glance—polyglot vice-chancellors or senior administrators are very rare indeed and where they exist, they are rarely fluent in an Asian language. How different would be their counterparts in universities in

Europe or Asia where multilingualism is the norm, not the exception?

There are various national strategies to consider for Indonesian that might require us to put aside our institutional interests.



David Hill—call to action.

Would Indonesian be stronger if we had a national core curriculum; if we collaborated nationally to develop a common textbook or a bank of teaching resources available to all? Would our external Indonesian

courses be of higher quality and more popular if we had a national provider, funded and with staff trained specifically for external delivery? Would the credibility of our graduates be higher if we adopted a national proficiency rating scale for Indonesian? Are the current models of inter-university collaboration in the provision of Indonesian working, and are they worthy of expansion?

What would be the impact if the government funded the establishment of a national centre for Indonesian, such as it has effectively done for Chinese at the Australian National University and for Indian studies at the University of Melbourne? Would such a 'centre' strengthen Indonesian or would it paradoxically undermine the current diverse strength and spread of Indonesian studies around Australia, 'putting all our eggs in one basket'?

The establishment of a key centre for Indonesian studies may send shivers down the spines of staff in smaller programs.

Crucially, what is the role of government—of governments, Indonesian as well as Australian—in the future of Indonesian in our universities? There are indications the Indonesian Government appreciates the 'soft power' benefits—and indirect economic advantages—that accrue when large numbers of Australians learn the Indonesian language, visit Indonesia, and support electorally Australia's foreign aid contributions to Indonesia. But we await clearer signals from

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Action call on Indonesian

<<From page 5>> Jakarta, particularly at a time when investment from China, Korea, and Japan in supporting their languages in Australia appears to be increasing markedly.

What does Australian Government funding to universities say about the value it places on languages—and on Indonesian particularly? Has the government ever determined which, if any, of the world's languages are of strategic national importance, and would such a determination increase funding for the teaching of designated languages.

In May 2004, the Australian parliament's Joint Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs Defence and Trade recommended 'that Indonesian Studies be designated a strategic national priority and that the Australia Research Council and the Department of Education, Science and Training be requested to recognise this *in prioritising funding for both research and teaching* (italics added).

Since 2006 the Australian Government funding agreements with universities do officially designate Indonesian and Arabic as 'nationally strategic languages'. Universities must seek the government's approval to close a nationally strategic language permanently. While I understand no request to close an Indonesian department has been received by the Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations, it is widely known that Indonesian language courses have ceased at various universities.

As for the committee's recommendation that Indonesian studies receive prioritised funding, absolutely nothing has been done.

Other strategies have transformative, even threatening, implications for our own positions: the establishment of a key centre for Indonesian studies, for example, may send shivers down the spines of staff in smaller programs that may fear being undermined by such a concept. Yet I believe we need to face all these possibilities, and debate them. Even if they are threatening to some, if they offer the best likelihood of strengthening Indonesian

studies overall, then we should not shirk from them.

References

1 M Kohler and P Mahnken 2010, *The current state of Indonesian language education in Australian schools*. Report to Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations, Curriculum Corporation, Canberra. Downloadable from: <www.deewr.gov.au/Schooling/NALSSP/Pages/Resources.aspx>, sighted 20 October 2010.

2 P White and RB Baldauf 2006, 'Re-examining Australia's tertiary language programs: a five year retrospective on teaching and collaboration', pp.11 and 16. Downloadable from <<http://www.dassh.edu.au/presentations/whitebaldaufreport.pdf>, sighted 18 January 2009>; the ASAA annual surveys, and my own attempts last year.



David T Hill is Professor of Southeast Asian Studies, at Murdoch University and a National Teaching Fellow of the Australian Learning and Teaching Council (ALTC). This is an edited report of his opening address to the National Colloquium on the Future of Indonesian in Australian Universities, at Murdoch University, Perth, on 9 February 2011. With ALTC support he is currently developing a national strategic plan for Indonesian in universities.

Asian Studies Review



Asian Studies Review is multidisciplinary and welcomes contributions in the fields of anthropology, modern history, politics, international relations, sociology, modern Asian languages and literature, contemporary philosophy, religion, human geography, health sciences, and the environment. The journal focuses on the modern histories, cultures, and societies of Asia and welcomes submissions that adopt a contemporary approach to critical studies of the Asian region. *Asian Studies Review* welcomes research in new fields and emerging disciplines, including cultural studies, gender and sexuality studies, film and media studies, popular and youth cultures, queer studies, diasporic studies, transnational and globalisation studies.

Three-year ARC study

Climate, natural hazards and change in Southeast Asia

A groundbreaking project is investigating the impacts of climate-related and other natural hazards on the economy, society and history of Southeast Asia since the 10th century.

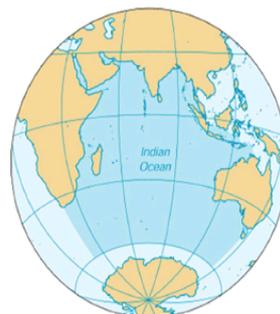
By the 13th century, the Indian Ocean World (IOW) had developed what economic historians have called the world's first 'global economy'—a sophisticated and durable system of long-distance exchange of commodities, ideas, technology and people.

Using history, archaeology and geography, a groundbreaking interdisciplinary research project, led by [Professor Gwyn Campbell](#), anchored at the [Indian Ocean World Centre](#), McGill University, will explore the growth and importance of the IOW trade from its origins to the present day, as well as the interaction between environment, commerce and people.

The IOW is a geopolitical arena of primary importance. It includes an emerging superpower, China; a broad arc of Muslim countries where numerous hotspots—from Somalia (warlords and pirates), the Persian Gulf and Pakistan (conflict zones and nuclear proliferation) to Bali and the Philippines (fundamentalist and separatist militants)—pose threats to democracy and international stability; and eastern Africa, where poverty and corruption constitute challenges to global peace and security. The geopolitical significance of the region has deep historical roots which continue to inform its major actors today.

A rare interdisciplinary collaboration between historians, archaeologists and geographers, this project will fundamentally alter how the IOW is viewed both in academe and by stakeholders. It involves three main research thrusts: archival, archaeological and paleo-environmental. Geographic information systems will combine the three lines of evidence in a spatial-temporal framework facilitating both the data analysis and dissemination of results to a diverse audience.

Increasingly, historians acknowledge the significance of dynamic human–environment interaction but lack the sophisticated tools and techniques to detect, measure and interpret this relationship. In this unique project, historian team members will trace the emergence of the IOW global economy from historical records; archaeologists will trace the physical evidence of that economy; and geographers will examine and measure fluctuations in human–environmental interaction over time.



Together, team members will assess their results with three aims: to build a new history of the first global economy in the context of human–environment

interaction; to evaluate the changing roles of China, Muslim countries and Africa in that economy; and to assess their current relationships in the IOW macro-region in the light of that history.

The project will deliver exciting new historical paradigms for the IOW that will lay the basis for original historical interpretations of other regions. Additionally, it will render historical research directly relevant to stakeholders in the IOW and, through the strategic dissemination of research results, help to better inform the public about the history and current roles in the IOW of China, Muslim societies, and Africa—all issues of vital international importance.

The IOW is a new conceptual framework. Whereas the Atlantic and Pacific worlds are defined by oceans and land masses, the IOW is defined by the monsoons, a complex system of winds Continued page 8>>

Climate and change in SE Asia

<< From page 7 and currents that governs the waters of the and currents that governs the waters of the northern Indian Ocean, the Indonesian Sea and the South and East China Seas.

Unique to this macro-region, the monsoons facilitated the early development of a sophisticated and durable system of long-distance maritime exchange, linking Africa to the Middle East, South Asia, Southeast Asia and the Far East, that constituted the first 'global' economy.

From the 19th century, a truly international economy, precursor of today's world economy, increasingly absorbed global economies—a process that continued through the 20th century. Understanding the structure and development of the IOW global economy is thus vital to an understanding of the current roles in the macro-region of China, IOW Muslim countries, and eastern Africa.

Human–environment interaction is intrinsic to the concept of the IOW global economy. This, in turn, owes much to the theories of Fernand Braudel (foremost French historian of the post-1945 era). He argued that conventional frameworks for historical analysis, notably territorial entities such as nation states, empires, and continents, were inadequate because they largely ignored human–environment interaction.

Braudel's theories inspired the development of the Annales School of historians in Europe, and more recently a new school of historians of Asia who stress the monsoon system as a facilitator of trans-oceanic, intra-Asian sail and trade.

The monsoons comprise a system of regularly alternating winds and currents unique to the Indian Ocean and the South and East China Sea. From April to September, as the Asian land mass heats up, hot air rises producing a vacuum which sucks in the air from the ocean, creating the southwest monsoon. During the other six 'winter' months of the year, the opposite reaction occurs, creating the northeast monsoon.

The conventional view is that these winds enabled vessels to engage in purposeful two-way, trans-oceanic trade that, between about the 10th to 13th centuries, connected the major productive areas of Asia, China, India and Mesopotamia (present-day Iraq) in a system of trade that endured to the mid-19th century.

However, these studies suffer from four major limitations. First, they largely ignore human–environment interaction beyond accommodation of a simplistic monsoon model. Second, conventional histories are imbued with interpretative preconceptions which obscure major developments and sectors of the first global economy. These include the nation state and regional studies approaches which analyse the IOW in terms of component modern states and geographical zones such as the Far East, Southeast Asia, South Asia, and the Middle East.

Yet these derive from Eurocentric and colonial era classifications and serve to imprison Braudelian concepts within conventional frameworks of nation states or 'territorial' area studies. They do little justice to the complex trans-frontier, trans-IOW exchange of commodities, monies, technologies, ideas and people that characterised the pre-colonial era.

A third pervasive preconception is that economic modernisation and state formation are closely correlated, economic development, as a rule, being most advanced in centralised hierarchical states and least advanced in decentralised stateless societies.

This approach has resulted in three major assumptions: that China, India and the Middle East constituted the 'core' IOW economies, and that regions such as Africa and the Indonesian Archipelago (outside Sumatra and Java) were of marginal significance; that following European intrusion into the region from circa 1500, European agents largely controlled the most valuable aspects of IOW production and trade; and that with the imposition of European colonial rule, indigenous systems of long-distance exchange collapsed. Finally, conventional Braudelian studies are pervaded by an Asiacentrism which reinforces the equation of Africa with primitive economic structures and marginalises Continued page 9>>

Climate and change in SE Asia

<< From page 8 the role of African states in the IOW global economy.

This project seeks to redress limitations in existing studies of the IOW global economy arising from embedded biases and to establish new interpretative approaches. Research will focus on six principle questions:

- How and when did the first global economy emerge and develop?
- How do environmental forces impact on IOW economic activity?
- How has human–environmental interaction shaped the first global economy?
- What roles did China, Muslim countries and Africa play in the IOW global economy?
- How did human–environmental interaction impact on China, Islam and Africa?
- To what extent will this research clarify the current roles of China, Islam and Africa in the IOW?

Professor James Warren, of the [Asia Research Centre](#), at Murdoch University, is leading a team of scholars under the auspices of an Australia Research Council Linkage Grant, aligned with the Indian Ocean World Centre's groundbreaking project that runs over seven years (2010–17), sponsored by the Canadian Government's [Social Science and Humanities Research Council](#).

The ARC project undertakes the first broad investigation of the impacts of climate-related and other natural hazards on the economy, society and history of Southeast Asia from the 10th century to the present. The project aims to reconstruct spatial, temporal and social patterns in vulnerability to the adverse effects of climate variability and natural hazards. The research will focus on economic, demographic and social trends across Southeast Asia in association with climatic and natural hazard events, and will examine closely the sometimes catastrophic effects on human institutions and cultural values. In particular, the team will collect qualitative and quantitative data



Aftermath of the tsunami in Aceh, 2004.

from largely untapped and accurate historical records, and integrate these data with climate change and geophysical

models to overcome the lack of reliable sustained statistical records before the modern era. The team will combine these diverse data to clarify the complex and uncertain linkages and causality, both historical and current, between Southeast Asian people, their economy and environment.

The project's scope is uniquely broad and multidisciplinary, comprising collaborations between historians, archaeologists, seismologists, volcanologists and others to analyse the development of Southeast Asia's vast and sophisticated economic system within the context of human–environment interactions over a scale and time period which has been inadequately investigated.

The project breaks new ground in the location and use of resources, and an interdisciplinary approach to problem and method. It will advance the knowledge base of disciplines, provide a radically new history of the region, and a new basis for understanding complex interactions between human and natural forces.

The ARC Linkage Project represents a crucial Australian step in the global collaboration led by Gwyn Campbell. It will initiate very important research on the Philippines, Indonesia and Vietnam and establish the systems for converging research on critical trade contacts in the Indian Ocean world, such as Madagascar. Crucially, it will create synergies and mutual benefits by bringing to the project as an industry partner a world-renowned source of maritime archaeological expertise and public outreach that is actually located on the edge of the Indian Ocean, the [Western Australian Maritime Museum](#).

For expressions of interest for IOW PhD scholarship, see page 23.

Climate change and its impact on Southeast Asian security

Global climate change is a threat to national and regional security in Southeast Asia, writes Carlyle A Thayer.

In 2007 the author was invited to take part in an international workshop on climate change and national security hosted by the US National Intelligence Council (NIC). The purpose of this workshop was to examine the impact of climate change on 49 countries of concern to the US Government.

Workshop participants were told that no one US Government intelligence agency had the means and resources to study the global impact of climate change on national security. This was why the workshop—an unprecedented outreach by the NIC—was organised. The workshop was one of many inputs into the preparation of a US National Intelligence Assessment mandated by the US Congress.

Prior to the workshop, participants were given data on climate change that included a range of estimates of aggregate temperature vulnerability, agricultural productivity impact, fresh water availability and sea level rise in coastal zones. Participants were also provided with several specialist studies including the findings of the United Nation's *Fourth assessment report of the intergovernmental panel on climate change*. Staff members from Columbia University's Center for International Earth Science Information Network (CIESIN) later briefed workshop participants on the strengths and weaknesses of climate change data.

Each of the workshop participants was a country or regional specialist. Each participant was tasked with preparing and presenting a scenario-based analysis for peer review that addressed six questions:

1. What is the likely political, economic and social evolution of your country/region of expertise over the next two decades?
2. What has been the response of your country/region of expertise to environmental stress (domestic instability and/or migration) in the past?

3. To what extent will climate change bring about disruptive change in your country/region of expertise? And will disruptive change result in a breakdown or state failure?
4. Does your country/region of expertise possess the latent reserves of social resilience and ingenuity and/or institutional capital that would enable it to meet the challenges of global climate change successfully?
5. Will global climate change make your country/region of expertise a destination for migrants and refugees? Will neighbours resort to aggression to seize resources and living space at a time of environmental stress?
6. Will your country/region of expertise be more or less open to engagement with external states to address the impact of global climate change? And will your country/region of expertise be more or less amenable to American influence and interests?

For purposes of the workshop, national security was defined broadly to include: direct impact on the US homeland and a US economic partner or ally; potential for humanitarian disaster that would call on U.S. resources; and short- and long-term impact on the elements of national power (geopolitical, military, economic or social cohesion).

The NIC submitted its *National intelligence assessment on the national security implication for global climate change to 2030* to the US Congress in June 2008. Although the assessment was directed towards an American audience, its general findings have applicability to Southeast Asia and to Australia's national security interests. For example, one of the National Intelligence Assessment's (NIA) key observations was: 'We assess that climate change alone is unlikely to trigger state failure in any state out to 2030, but the impacts will worsen existing problems—such as poverty, social tensions, environmental degradation, ineffectual leadership, and weak political institutions' (p.5). Continued page 11>>

Climate change and impact on SE Asian security

<< From page 10 The author's research on the impact of global climate change on Vietnam revealed that it was one of 10 countries in the world most likely to be adversely affected in six major areas: land area, population, Gross Domestic Product and urban extent, and second most likely to be affected on agriculture extent and wetlands.

As a follow up, the US NIC commissioned a special report on *Southeast Asia and Pacific islands: the impact of climate change to 2030* (August 2009). This report noted that 'the effects of climate change have already begun in Southeast Asia'. Average annual surface temperatures increased by 0.5–1.1 degrees celsius over the last 100 years and were forecast to rise by nearly 1 percent Celsius annually through to 2030. Rising temperatures produced an increase in extreme weather events, such as more frequent tropical storms in the South China Sea.

Rising temperatures have resulted in more frequent and intense rains and floods in some parts of Southeast Asia (northern Indonesia), and drought in other areas (southern Indonesia). The impact of these developments could result in a decline in cereal crop yields between 2.5 and 10 percent by 2025. And sea level rise is occurring with a wide variation across Southeast Asia. The largest increases were recorded near Indonesia and the Philippines, with less so for coastal areas of Vietnam, Cambodia and Thailand.

In summary, Southeast Asia is particularly vulnerable to the impact of global climate change due to its heavily populated low-lying coastal areas, large agricultural sector and extent of poverty. The areas of greatest vulnerability include virtually all of the Philippines and Cambodia, north and east Laos, Vietnam's Mekong River delta, the central Bangkok region in Thailand, and south and west Sumatra and east and west Java in Indonesia. However, as noted by Australia's 2009 Defence White Paper, the large-scale strategic consequences of the impact of global climate change were unlikely to be felt before 2030. During this period, governments and regional associations

could take steps to adapt to and mitigate the adverse impact of global climate change.

Do the adverse affects of global climate change amount to a threat to national and regional security in Southeast Asia? The answer is 'yes' if a broad definition of security is used and the threats to national and regional security are viewed across a wide spectrum ranging from inter-state war over resources, state failure, civil unrest and internal disruption to food and human security. The probability of each of these adverse developments would also vary from state to state.

As noted by the 2009 Australian Defence White Paper, weak states such as Timor-Leste, which are already beset by economic stagnation, socio-political instability, poor governance and crime, will face worsening conditions and increased stress. These pressures on weak states will likely result in internal conflict over land, potable water and food; the spread of infectious diseases such as malaria and dengue fever; and the generation of 'environmental refugees' who become internally displaced and/or who cross land and sea borders seeking refuge. In some states these inter-related developments will degrade the capacity of their security and defence sectors and their ability to provide protection to foreign nationals.

In summary, global climate change will require regional states individually and collectively to draw up plans to adapt and mitigate its adverse impacts. Global climate change is a threat to national and regional security in Southeast Asia. The Australian Defence Force, alongside its allies and regional partners, can be expected to play a major role in border security, civilian evacuation, humanitarian assistance and disaster relief and security stabilization in failing states.



Carlyle A. Thayer is Emeritus Professor, the University of New South Wales. The academic papers for the climate change workshop will be published in April: Daniel Moran, ed., Climate change and national security: a country-level analysis. Washington, D.C: Georgetown University Press, 2011.

Religious minorities fall victim to Pakistan's blasphemy laws

The recent assassination of the liberal and outspoken governor of Punjab province, Salmaan Taseer, and the sentencing of a Christian woman to death under Pakistan's blasphemy laws have focused international attention on the struggle between the country's secularist ideals and religious extremism. ZAHID SHAHAB AHMED reports.

When I was growing up in Lala Musa, a town in the Gujarat district of Punjab, and in Islamabad, I saw Christians employed in my home and neighbourhood as domestic workers—regarded as one of the lowest forms of work.

I thought that all Christians were economically disadvantaged but, like most children of my age, I never bothered to ask why—perhaps because Pakistan's public schools do not usually encourage us to think critically and question.

Unfortunately, this educational foundation stays with some for a lifetime, and they will blindly follow almost anything, good or bad, until it starts to bother them. Such is the case with attitudes to religious minorities in Pakistan, where many Muslims have learned not to question the edicts of clerics and teachers and other influential figures. When the issue is associated with religious sanctions, as in the case of Pakistan's blasphemy laws, the situation becomes even worse.

Sadly, however, not much debate has been encouraged in Pakistan over the laws, even though they have often legitimised violence and judicial discrimination against religious minorities. In an environment of religious intolerance and mounting conflict between Islam and the West, and against the backdrop of the war against terrorists in Afghanistan and Pakistan, blasphemy laws are being increasingly misused. It is, therefore, not surprising that the UK-based [Minority Rights Group](#) lists Pakistan seventh among countries where minorities are under threat.

Religious violence is not new in South Asia, and particularly in Pakistan. But

more recently it has been developing deeper roots in both India and Pakistan. In 2008, while in Nepal, I met hundreds of asylum seekers from Pakistan's Ahmadiya community. At the time I did not fully understand why they were living with no identity and facing hardships in another country. But in May 2010, when terrorists attacked several Ahmadiya mosques in Lahore, I realised that Pakistan is becoming increasingly insecure for religious minorities, and that this has been a major factor in the number of Ahmadiyas migrating to Nepal and other countries such as Canada, the UK, the US and Germany.



Aasia Bibi—sentenced to death. Photo courtesy of [Allvoices](#)

Official figures put Pakistan's population at more than 96 per cent Muslim, with the remainder comprising Christians, Hindu, Ahmadiya, Parsi, Buddhist, Sikh and others. As Christianity is the second largest religion in the country—about 1.6 per cent of the population or about 2.5 million followers—Christians have been more exposed to injustices under blasphemy laws than the other minority groups.

Recently, a Pakistani Christian woman, Aasia Bibi, was sentenced to death for insulting the Prophet. Aasia is believed to be the first woman sentenced to death under the blasphemy laws, and her case has become an international issue, with Pope Benedict demanding justice for her.

The pressure from abroad has led to Pakistan president [Continued page 13>>](#)

Pakistan's blasphemy laws

<< From page 12 Asif Ali Zardari initiating an inquiry into Aasia's case, which has provoked the fury of religious extremists. In January, this led to the assassination of the liberal governor of Punjab, Salmaan Taseer, by his bodyguard because of his outspokenness against the blasphemy laws and his criticism of the verdict against Aasia Bibi. This has not deterred other liberals from speaking out, especially Bilawal Zardari Bhutto, co-chair of the Pakistan Peoples Party, who condemned Taseer's murder and assured his commitment to protecting religious minorities in Pakistan.

Shortly before the 62nd anniversary, in 2009, of the founding of Pakistan, a group of Muslims looted and burned houses and a Catholic church in Gojra, in my own district of Toba Tek Singh. Seven Christians were killed and 20 injured. The



Salmaan Taseer—killed by his bodyguard.

attack, by an extremist group known as Sipah-e-Sahaba, was in response to an alleged incident involving Christian children tearing pages of the Qur'an.

A report by the [Human Rights Commission of Pakistan](#) found that the

Gojra incident was planned, and that although the police had information that an attack was being planned, they did nothing to prevent it.

Muslim-Christian relations in Pakistan have reached their lowest point, mainly due to a number of international events, including the so-called war on terrorism in Afghanistan, the Iraqi war and the publication of 'blasphemous' cartoons in a Danish newspaper.

These events have added misery to the lives of Christians in Pakistan, who are often called 'American *jasoos*', or American agents. Religious extremists are exploiting their Muslim followers, and often demand that they mistreat religious minorities, as a sign of their solidarity with the Muslim Brotherhood.

It is reported that, to date, 500 people have been charged with blasphemy, most

of them on false accusations. Although no-one has been officially executed under the law, about 10 people accused under it have been murdered before the completion of their trials.

Although no-one has been officially executed under the law, about 10 people accused under it have been murdered before the completion of their trials.

In his famous address to the Constituent A Assembly on 11 August 1947, the father of the nation, Muhammad Ali Jinnah, wished for an inclusive and impartial government, religious freedom, rule of law and equality for all. Although Pakistan has been an Islamic republic since 1952, at the national level the values of secularism were practised for many years after independence in 1947.

Unfortunately, Pakistan did not inherit all the values advocated by Jinnah, who died in 1948, before he could play a crucial role in helping frame the state's constitution. During his lifetime, however, Jinnah appealed, on the basis of Islam, for religious pluralism in Pakistan, and was clear on the need to separate religion from affairs of state:



Protesters against move to amend blasphemy laws. Photo courtesy of [Allvoices](#).

You are free to go to your temple; you are free to go to your mosques or to any other place of worship in this state of Pakistan. You may belong to any caste or creed—that

has nothing to do with the business of the state.

Islamic groups and some prominent scholars, however, demanded that Pakistan be declared an Islamic state—a homeland for Muslims—and lobbied for the Islamisation of the state. Despite pressure from these groups, two successive constitutions, passed in 1956 and 1973, reaffirmed Jinnah's secular vision. After Jinnah's death, some governments, fighting for survival, relied on the support of the Islamists and consequently Islam emerged as the state's *raison d'être*. Continued page 14>>

Pakistan's blasphemy laws

<< From page 13 But the more Islamic the state became, the more religious minorities suffered. The situation worsened when the blasphemy laws were implemented under dictator General Zia ul Haq in the 1980s. Pakistan's blasphemy laws are considered to be the strictest of any country with a Muslim majority. Among other things, they forbid defaming the Koran, which can carry a penalty of life imprisonment, and defaming the Prophet, which can carry the death penalty.

Religious minorities in Pakistan are still demanding the implementation of Jinnah's vision, in letter and spirit. In 2007, to celebrate the 60th anniversary of Jinnah's 11 August 1947 speech, religious minorities—including Christians, Hindus and Sikhs—gathered at the Minar-e-Pakistan, the minaret in Iqbal Park, Lahore, built to commemorate the Pakistan Resolution demanding the creation of Pakistan, to recall the secularism promoted by Jinnah.

Pakistan needs sustainable solutions to curb the influence of religious extremism.

Responding to national and international demands, the Musharraf government tried to amend the blasphemy laws in 2000, but failed because of opposition from conservative clerics. Aasia Bibi's case has led to renewed efforts to abolish the laws.

But will that be enough? I have doubts. Pakistan needs sustainable solutions to curb the influence of religious extremism, and one way of dealing with this is to provide quality education—at all levels, and to everyone.

Recently, there has been a program to provide free education to children. More effort is needed, however, to ensure that schools promote inter-religious harmony. And, in the meantime, much more effort is needed to protect religious minorities from the blasphemy laws.

Most of all, Pakistan needs policies and laws to ensure equal opportunities for all

citizens, irrespective of their religious beliefs—something that religious minorities have been demanding for many decades.



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ASAA Women's Forum

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The list is moderated by Lenore Lyons, Research Professor in Asian Studies at the University of Western Australia.

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Novel strategies introduce taboo topic

The topic of abortion—in any form, no matter how limited—is not a subject for open discussion in Catholic Philippines. But one organisation has found an innovative way to talk about it to a mass audience. MINA ROCES reports.

In the Philippines, abortion is illegal and punishable by law. While democratic institutions implied that women's activists were not prohibited from public advocacy for the cause, in practice, the political hold of the Catholic Church, the Catholic context, and the global neo-conservative swing, means that anyone brave enough to openly endorse the legalisation of abortion risks severe public censure.

Any individual or organisation that so much as hints at legalising abortion, even in whatever limited form (for instance, for rape victims), is immediately demonised. Given this environment, there has been no overt proactive lobby or networking for absolute reproductive rights in the legislature, although there have been attempts to legalise abortion under special circumstances. Women activists knew it was futile to campaign publicly for the legalisation of abortion in a social climate where they had no chance of success. They had to explore alternative methods of subtle propaganda.

Abortion is one of the most divisive issues in women's movements and is considered to be the most radical. Because of the delicate nature of the issue, I focus here on the one organisation ([Likhaan](#)) that has given me permission to mention its name and its stance on the issue.

After internal debate, Likhaan put forth an official position via its chair, Sylvia Claudio-Estrada's speech to Amnesty International in London, in June, 2005: 'In the end, we took a position for legalisation for economic reasons, in cases of threat of life to the mother, in cases of severe fetal deformity, in cases of rape. We also set the cut-off point for access to below the age of viability.'¹

My reading of the evidence suggests that activists (at least until 2008) have been preoccupied with the task of making society 'culturally prepared' for the public discussion of abortion as a feminist issue.



Sylvia Claudio-Estrada.
Photo: Jun Madrid

Activists worked from the premise that this 'cultural preparation' would take a long time. Advocacy was generally limited to an appeal for empathy for these

women who made these decisions at great risk to their lives, and for non-discriminatory post-abortion care in hospitals. But a major part of the 'cultural preparation' was a message that abortion was a reality for many women in the local community.

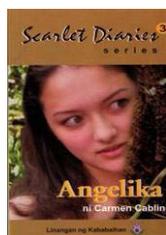
Though abortion was permitted under Philippine law only to save a woman's life, and although it was not accessible even for this reason,² statistics show that between 155 000–750 000 abortions were performed each year (with the research conducted by the [Guttmacher Institute](#) claiming that 473 000 occurred in the year 2000).³ The women who had abortions came from all classes, with a majority of them poor Catholic married women who already had several children.

The reasons for the abortion could be classified in three categories, with 72 per cent of women citing economic costs of raising a child, 54 per cent stating they already had the number of children they desired and 57 per cent reporting that they got pregnant too soon after the last pregnancy.⁴

In addition, an estimated 79 000 women were hospitalised due to complications incurred from the abortions with an estimated 800 women dying each year from complications of an unsafe abortion.⁵ In 1991 Likhaan conducted in-depth interviews with 30 women who had abortions. Likhaan's ingenious approach was to commission feminist creative writers to use the data to write 'fiction' or 'faction', and then publish them in the form of pocketbooks. Continued page 16>>

Novel strategies for taboo topic

<<From page 15 Between 2004–06 Likhaan published six pocketbooks. They were written by two authors; one of them, Lualhati Bautista, an award winning writer and novelist.



The pocketbooks written by Carmen Cabiling were distinguishable from Bautista's because they were grouped under a series called *The Scarlett diaries*. These pocketbooks were

packaged in the genre of romance novels, much like the Mills & Boon or Barbara Cartland books. But it was the issue of 'abortion' rather than 'romance' that received 'star billing' in these novels. While romance novels followed the quintessential formula that commenced with 'boy meets girl' and ended with 'boy gets girl', the pocketbooks by Bautista began with 'girl gets pregnant' and were preoccupied with 'girl and abortion'.

The books were written in conversational, colloquial Tagalog/Filipino, with an emphasis on lots of dialogue rather than literary description. All were short novels, of around 125 pages and published in newsprint. A print run of 6000 copies, or 1000 per pocketbook were published, most of them given out free. The conspicuous absence of any explicit descriptions of sex or 'sex scenes' in the novels themselves was probably intentional since Likhaan was not shy of discussing sexuality.

Because the purpose of the books was to inform, sex scenes that had the effect of titillating readers would only blunt the powerful message introduced by the narratives. Despite the cheap packaging and risqué series title (*Scarlett diaries*), these books handled the issue of abortion in a sophisticated and poignant way, delivering their attacks on the Catholic Church and the state through the intense dialogue of the characters. In this sense, the proverbial 'do not judge a book by its cover' was appropriate.

These pocketbooks subverted not just the socio-cultural and legal mores of their time, but even the romance trope in which they were 'packaged', since readers of romance

novels were not necessarily seen to be susceptible to feminist ideas. Perhaps that is why these books were seen as a potential subversive tool. But the aim was to raise the issue as a topic for discussion in mainstream society, epitomised by the target readers.

These books handled the issue of abortion in a sophisticated and poignant way, delivering their attacks on the Catholic Church and the state through the intense dialogue of the characters.

One could also detect a certain irony in the use of the romance novel as a way of refashioning readers, since readers of romance fiction were not usually perceived to be susceptible to feminist ideas.

The novels explored the variety of reasons why women seek abortions: they are poor and cannot afford to support another child; they got pregnant too soon after the last birth; they already have many children and cannot cope with another pregnancy; they are too young and are not ready to be a mother; or they are abandoned by their lovers, who are either married men or unavailable (e.g. a priest).



The dialogues were used to articulate some of the feminist responses to the issues of abortion,—sexuality (including virginity), womanhood,

motherhood and reproductive health/rights.

Bautista's *Ang kabilang panig ng bakod* (The other side of the fence) was the most candid in advocating the legislation of abortion as a reproductive right. The book is about the search for a safe abortion clinic that does not exist and the characters attack the government for failing to address this issue, particularly for poor women who cannot afford to go overseas for the procedure.⁶

In Estrada-Claudio's 2005 speech to Amnesty International the official position of Likhaan was the legalisation of abortion under very circumstances only. But in the novels, not all Continued page 17>>

Novel strategies for taboo topic

<<From page 16 the specific characters could be said to fit into these specific circumstances defined by the organisation. By advocating abortion as a reproductive right, these pocketbooks articulated a position even more radical than Likhaan's own official position on abortion. The characters critique existing ideal stereotypes of the Filipina woman: Louisa, in *Desisyon* (Decision), questioned why marriage and motherhood should be the 'be all and end all' of women's roles.⁷ They challenge the valorisation of motherhood and rejected the negative capital attached to single women.⁸

Women readers of romantic fiction have been introduced to the serious topic of abortion, although it is accompanied by a happy ending.

Likhaan is innovative in its use of pocketbooks to create a counter-hegemonic discourse by subverting the romance genre. But even these radical ideas are packaged in the narrative of romance. Perhaps cultural preparation requires hints rather than blunt demands.

In the meantime, women readers of romantic fiction have been introduced to the serious topic of abortion, although it is accompanied by a happy ending.

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The niaoulis of Tiebaghi

A former miners' village in New Caledonia seems an unlikely place to find traces of Javanese culture, writes PAM ALLEN.

Of great interest to geologists, on account of its extraordinarily rich chrome and nickel deposits, the Tiebaghi mine (founded in 1875 and abandoned in 1964) and former miners' village in the remote mountainous region near Koumac in New Caledonia, at first glance seem an unlikely place to go looking for traces of Javanese culture.

However, having made the journey by road to the abandoned mine site, and undertaken the rather arduous trek to the top of the mountain, one is in for a surprise. The multicultural village, home to the miners and their families, now eerily empty yet replete with relics of the past, was divided into quarters based on race. The Italians, the Melanesians and the Wallisians had their own quarters. So too did the Vietnamese and the Javanese.

Both the mine and the village are currently being restored by the North Caledonian Society for the Preservation of Mining and Historical Heritage (Association Pur La Sauvegarde du Patrimoine Minier et Historique du Nord Caledonien), which has secured and preserved the mine as it was on the day operations ceased, as well as restoring some of the old buildings and progressively establishing a museum that commemorates the technical aspects of the mine and its cultural legacy. In its heyday, Tiebaghi village was the destination for many Indonesian mine workers, and it provides a fascinating insight into what life was like for the mine employees who came to call it home.

The story of how almost 20 000 Javanese were brought to New Caledonia between 1896 and 1949 on five-year labour contracts is a little-known part of the colonial history of the Southeast Asian region. By the late 19th century Dutch colonial policy had devastated the economy of Java, giving rise to widespread poverty and thousands of landless people.

Although the colonial government used transmigration as a strategy to alleviate population pressure in Java and to increase the population of other Indonesian islands, from 1887 Indonesians were refused permission to emigrate to work for foreign companies or colonies. The English, however, could hire Indonesian workers on legal contracts for their plantations and mines in Malaya, Borneo and New Caledonia.

Initially, Indonesians in New Caledonia



Mme Sarimoto—on the register of arrivals.

only worked in agriculture and domestic service. The main hardships for these Indonesian workers in New Caledonia were the restrictions on their

movements and the fact that children—who were not allowed to attend local schools until the late 1930s—were required to work along with their parents.

At the expiry of their contracts, many Javanese chose to stay on in New Caledonia. Some began sharecropping and others were hired by the mines, including Tiebaghi, where they worked underground in the lucrative chrome mine, alongside Vietnamese and Japanese, all valued on account of their agility and small physical stature, which ostensibly made it 'easy' for them to negotiate the underground tunnels.

The New Caledonia-born descendants of the original Javanese emigrants are often referred to as *niaouli*, after the *niaouli* tree, a hardy eucalypt that is emblematic of New Caledonia. There are differing views as to why this name was chosen. One is that it simply refers to the fact that the Javanese were as resilient and adaptable as the *niaouli*. Another is that the name was given because the Javanese mothers working in the coffee plantations had the habit of hanging the sarong in which they cocooned their babies on the branches of *niaoulis* as they worked.

One of the high-profile Continued page 19>>

The niaoulis of Tiebaghi

<<From page 18>> *niaoulis* at the Tiebaghi mine was André Kesman, who was born in Koné in 1933 to parents who had come to New Caledonia as indentured labourers. André came to Tiebaghi at the age of 16, working until 1959 as a mechanic and a driver and later as a miner. He speaks of buying noodles and rice from the Vietnamese grocer—there not being a dedicated Javanese store—and of the mining families growing carrots, tomatoes and parsley and tending chickens in their little gardens on the mountain top.

The relics and documents collected by the Historical Society include notes and memos attesting to the character of the Javanese who lived in Tiebaghi: 'gentle, helpful and loyal' (*doux, serviables et fidèles*), wrote one; 'calm, quiet, hard-working' (*calme, tranquille, travaille*) wrote another.

While language prevented some non-French speaking Javanese from mixing frequently with the other ethnic groups, sport, music and theatre brought everyone together. The Javanese played soccer for the Tiebaghi team, the Chromes, and photographs abound of them playing a variety of musical instruments, including guitar and accordion, and performing *wayang wong* (a classical Javanese theatrical performance) in the Tiebaghi Club.



Henri Midjan—another name on the register of arrivals.

While most were Muslim, there was no mosque in Tiebaghi, so prayers were conducted at home. A former Javanese resident of Tiebaghi recalls the difficulty of observing the fasting month of Ramadan and the fact that most Javanese did their best nonetheless to fulfil their religious obligation. She also notes the understanding and tolerance displayed by members of the other ethnic groups. There is a photograph in the museum in Tiebaghi depicting celebrations held in Tiebaghi village to mark Indonesian independence.

While most were Muslim, there was no mosque in Tiebaghi, so prayers were conducted at home. A former Javanese resident of Tiebaghi recalls the difficulty of observing the fasting month of Ramadan and the fact that most Javanese did their best nonetheless to fulfil their religious obligation. She also notes the understanding and tolerance displayed by members of the other ethnic groups. There is a photograph in the museum in Tiebaghi depicting celebrations held in Tiebaghi village to mark Indonesian independence.

A 21st century visitor to the mine with an interest in Indonesia is struck by poignant reminders of the lives of the miners there—such familiar objects in such an unfamiliar setting! There is a photograph of three young Javanese miners' wives, dressed in European clothes but bearing platters of saté for a Javanese *selamatan* thanksgiving feast. Another photograph depicts a troupe of *wayang wong* performers, their costumes and masks evocative of their homeland, but the context slightly out of kilter as they pose in front of one of the Vietnamese houses.

On the register of arrivals one finds names that are clearly Javanese—Kartodimoedjo, Hassan, Sanadi—and also those that reveal the intermarriage that took place: André Kesman; Henri Midjan. The list of clothing rations reveals that while the clothing issued was almost uniformly European—cotton shirt, pants, hat for the men—the Javanese women were also issued with a sarong.

The descendants of those Javanese families at Tiebaghi are now dispersed throughout New Caledonia. While many of them have stronger links to France than they do to Indonesia, emotional ties with Indonesia are keenly felt, especially as many Javanese New Caledonians still have family in Indonesia. Some *niaouli* are learning Indonesian so that they can communicate with relatives in Indonesia.

There are a number of individual 'champions' of Indonesian culture. Marcel Magi, for example, established a group called *Asal Usul*, meaning Origins, with the aim of fostering some group and ethnic cohesion among locally born Indonesians. Tiebaghi represents a significant geographical and historical marker of that cohesion.



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Indonesia's ethnic Chinese: bringing the 'untypical' to light

In a new book, eight women explore what it means to be an ethnic Chinese living in Indonesia. Author DEWI ANGGRAENI hopes the book will help redress the simplistic images of ethnic Chinese in Indonesia.

‘Chinese everywhere are the same. They will always be Chinese, no matter where they live.’

It may be a simplified version—inadequately so—of a more complex description, as made by Lynn Pan¹, but I would never subscribe to it. However, it has been said often, in Australia as well as in Indonesia, by ethnic Chinese themselves and by others who believe they know.

Mid-1998 was the time I was really reminded that I was of Chinese descent. I had written an article about the horrible rapes of women—many of whom were ethnic Chinese—during the May riots in Indonesia.

At a social gathering in Melbourne, an Indonesian Australian friend rushed up to me. ‘Dewi, I read your article in *The Age*. I am so sorry! Really, really, sorry, Dewi!’ she said as she grabbed me by the shoulders and looked at me with moist eyes. She was clearly distressed. I was on the point of replying solemnly, ‘So, am I’, when it suddenly occurred to me, that my friend was apologising and conveying her condolences, as well as expressing her extreme regrets at what had happened. She believed that I had written the article because of my ethnicity; that I was grieving for the plight of my ‘sisters’, fellow ethnic-Chinese women. That realisation made me ponder hard.

I had been devastated. True. However, I didn’t believe I had written it because many of the victims had been ethnic Chinese. In fact, it took me several weeks to put pen to paper, so to speak. The reason was, when I heard of the horrible acts, I promptly went into denial. I did not believe that my fellow Indonesians had

been capable of committing such dreadful acts—on fellow Indonesians of Chinese or other ethnicities. It was my Indonesianness which had taken a serious beating.

I began a long soul-searching: would I have been devastated if no ethnic Chinese women were among the victims? Finally, I was satisfied that I would.

Each time I was in Indonesia during that time, I felt a definite tension, yet I never felt it against me personally.

By that year I had lived in Australia over half of my lifetime. And deep in my heart I felt both Indonesian and Australian. My Chinese ethnicity was part of my *self*, but not a source of an identity problem. I attribute this to the fact that during the New Order rule, despite going back often to Indonesia because of my work’, and possibly my subconscious need to return to my old comfort zone, I lived in Australia.

It was during the New Order rule under President Soeharto that there was a deliberate historical distortion which projected Indonesia’s ethnic Chinese in a very bad light; hence the negative stereotype became prevalent in the mainstream community. Each time I was in Indonesia during that time, I felt a definite tension, yet I never felt it against me personally.

There are a number of reasons for this. Firstly, the circles I moved in, even inhabited, were largely non-ethnic Chinese, with Javanese, Sundanese, Jakartans, West Sumatrans, South Sumatrans, and other regional ethnic groups among them. They were liberal and multicultural, where ethnicity was not made an issue, except when jesting. Secondly, the existing tension notwithstanding, life went on as usual. There was no widespread and daily persecution of ethnic

Continued page 21>>

Indonesia's ethnic Chinese

<<From page 20 Chinese. It was rather, a latent, political and social resentment seething unevenly in mainstream society, a resentment continuously nurtured by the power elite, who were adept at manipulating the media.

Anti-Chinese riots and violence did occur, as detailed by Jemma Purdey². However, considering the contrived social and political situation, they could have been more frequent. The reason for this, of which many ethnic Chinese, in Indonesia and elsewhere, were unaware, is also very important: the majority of non-ethnic Chinese Indonesians are not vindictive. Despite the unspoken message conveyed by the then power elite of the relative impunity of victimising the ethnic Chinese, very few would actually take advantage of the 'opportunity'. In fact, the thought filled many of them with disgust. Unfortunately, the very few who did have caused untold damage, the after-effect of which is still occasionally felt.

Returning to the glib phrases of the easy credo that Chinese are all the same everywhere, I have earlier expressed my disagreement. We only have to open our eyes to the diverse nature of Indonesia's ethnic Chinese—Leo Suryadinata et al³ estimated them at between 1.45 per cent and 2.04 per cent of the whole population—that unlike in Malaysia, for example, ethnic Chinese in Indonesia are not easily mapped by their ancestral home regions or provinces.

Their broad diversity can be explained by several patterns: the times of their migrations; the social and political drives behind their migrations; and where they settled in the archipelago that later became Indonesia. Those who settled in Java, especially in metropolitan Jakarta, in the west Javanese city of Bandung and in the island's central and eastern provinces, have absorbed the local mores to the extent that they are more identifiable by their local social vernacular—accents, body language, behaviour—than by the cultures of their regions of origins in China.

Another region where the ethnic Chinese have been largely culturally integrated is Manado on the northeast of Sulawesi. Here also, their self-identification is mostly closer to Manadonese than Chinese.

Many indeed, have been using local names long before the rule of New Order government when the ethnic Chinese were strongly 'encouraged' to adopt Indonesian-sounding names. In fact, in many cases, an ethnic Chinese man marrying an indigenous Manadonese would adopt her family name, which would then be used by their descendants.

In the regions where the ethnic Chinese are culturally—and racially—integrated, or at least are psychologically closer to the local indigenous mores than their original ancestral culture, their original ethnicity is very rarely in the forefront of their consciousness until somebody reminds them of it ('But you're Chinese, aren't you? What is your dialect?'). Interesting to note that most of the times when this happens, it is someone who doesn't know them well, personally or culturally.

The regions where the ethnic Chinese stand out the most are West Kalimantan, notably Singkawang; North Sumatra, notably Medan; South Sumatra, especially in the city of Palembang; and South Sulawesi, mostly in the city of Ujungpandang, also known as Makassar.

In these regions there are relatively large numbers of ethnic Chinese from particular



Breaking the stereotype—Linda Christanty, an award-winning writer and a journalist.

regions in China. So in these Indonesian regions they have built communities more coherent than those in areas where there were only small numbers and with more diverse origins. However, even in these regions, there are fairly large

numbers of ethnic Chinese who are outside those rather exclusive communities. It is useful to remember that not all ethnic Chinese are naturally inclined to operate business.

However during Soeharto's New Order rule, they were effectively shut out of other fields. Restrictive regulations barred, or at least tried to bar them from entering fields outside business and trade, where written and unwritten regulations were in place to make it difficult for them even to operate business honestly. Continued page 22>>

Indonesia's ethnic Chinese

<<From page 21 Despite all that, a number of ethnic Chinese have managed to sneak into other professions and vocations. Even in the New Order era, nothing was black and white in Indonesia. Where a barrier was put up, there were always cracks.

My book, *Breaking the stereotype; Chinese Indonesian women tell their stories*, will I hope reveal a little of the diversity to which referred briefly, and redress the simplistic images of ethnic Chinese in Indonesia to an extent that the reader would want to explore further.



Ester Indahyani Jusuf, a well-recognised human rights activist, and one of the women featured in the book.

These stories are told from the points of view of eight Indonesian women of different gradation of Chinese ethnicity, whose families have lived and still live in various regions, among others, Bangka, Jakarta, Semarang, Tasikmalaya, Malang, and Papua.

Through their eyes the reader will learn of what life has been like for some ethnic Chinese in Indonesia, and how they fare in society in general. And I believe they are representative of a large segment of ethnic Chinese in Indonesia.

Then why all women, you ask? Being a woman myself, trying to probe into often private areas of their lives, I felt it would be easier to build the necessary, preliminary mutual trust, then develop an easy camaraderie, than it would be if they were men. I have no ready evidence to back up this hunch, however.

Maybe one day I will work on a topic involving men.

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ethnicity and religion in a changing political landscape, 101. ISEAS.

Dewi Anggraeni is an adjunct research associate at the School of Political and Social Inquiry, Faculty of Arts, Monash University, a journalist, and writer of fiction and non-fiction. *Breaking the stereotype is published independently in English and Indonesian, in Australia and Indonesia. The title of the Indonesian edition is Mereka bilang aku China; jalan mendaki menjadi bagian bangsa.*



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.

ASAA conference proceedings now online

Proceedings from the 18th Biennial Conference of the Asian Studies Association of Australia (ASAA), held at the University of Adelaide in July 2010, are now online on the ASAA website.

Participants were invited to submit written papers based on their presentation for inclusion in the refereed online conference proceedings.

Papers were peer-reviewed and accepted for publication by an editorial board.

Scholarships and fellowships

Scholarship for Indian Ocean World research

Expressions of interest are sought for one PhD scholarship position to carry out archival research and fieldwork in either the Philippines, Vietnam or Indonesia.

The research will be into the impacts of climate related and other natural hazards (cyclonic storms, earthquakes, tsunamis, volcanic eruptions) on the economy, society and history of these nations from the 10th century to the present, or on the origins and development of maritime trade in the Indian Ocean World (IOW), an arena of primary geo-political importance, which includes eastern Africa, the Middle East, Southeast Asia, and emerging superpowers, China and India.

The successful candidate will work with a team of experienced researchers—Professor James Warren (Murdoch University), and with other collaborating researchers in Australia and Canada—on a Canadian Social Science and Humanities Research Council MCRI Project entitled 'The Indian Ocean World: the making of the first global economy in the context of human-environment interaction'.

The project will focus on reconstructing spatial, temporal and social patterns in vulnerability to the adverse effects of climate variability and natural hazards in the Philippines (earthquakes and volcanic eruptions), Vietnam (cyclonic storms and floods) and Indonesia (volcanic eruptions, earthquakes and tsunamis).

It also aims to provide the first broad evaluation of how long-term environmental patterns and the impact of natural hazards have affected the eastern component of the IOW, namely Southeast Asia's interlinked economy and societies, over centuries.

The project also aims to improve understanding of the geographic, temporal and social variables that correlate with increased vulnerability or resilience to natural disasters.

The candidate will be based at Murdoch University's Asia Research Centre in Perth. It is anticipated that the student will work on the historical impact of human-environmental dynamics on IOW economic and social activity or on an aspect of the rise, expansion and influence of maritime trade in the IOW

Essential criteria include:

- a first-class honours or masters degree with a thesis component in a relevant historical or social science field

- advanced reading ability in the relevant language(s)
- archival and/or field research experience
- ability to work independently and as part of a team
- Australian citizenship or permanent residency.

Potential applicants should send an initial expression of interest (2 pages) addressing the following points:

- personal details—name, birth date, citizenship status, address, phone and email
- academic qualifications—degrees, major areas of study, undergraduate grade point average, honours result
- title of honours thesis or other significant piece of research, and a brief account of the main argument and approach/methodology adopted
- level of competence in qualitative and/or quantitative research methods
- level of reading proficiency in the relevant research language(s)
- study, work or volunteer experience in either Spain, France, Netherlands and/or the Philippines, Vietnam and Indonesia
- research interests
- contact information for two referees who can comment on your academic background and suitability for undertaking this research project.

The scholarship is for a three-year period with an annual stipend of \$27 222 (tax exempt) and up to \$10 000 of additional funding for archival research and fieldwork in Europe and Southeast Asia. Professor Warren will determine a shortlist. The successful candidate is expected to take up the scholarship within six months of the offer of the award.

Please email initial expressions of interest to: [Professor James Warren](mailto:t.dent@murdoch.edu.au), with a copy to [Tamara Dent](mailto:t.dent@murdoch.edu.au), Administrative Officer, Asia Research Centre, t.dent@murdoch.edu.au



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.

Job websites

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

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

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

Diary notes

Tradition and innovation: Burmese wall paintings from the 17th to 19th century, seminar, Sydney, 17 March 2011, 5pm–6.30pm, by Alexandra Green, Curator of South and Southeast Asian Art, Art Gallery of New South Wales, Main Quadrangle, History Room S223, University of Sydney.

Timor–Leste Studies Association (TLSA) conference, Timor–Leste, 30 June–1 July 2011. This two-day conference for researchers is organised by the TLSA, an interdisciplinary, international research network focused on all aspects of research into East Timorese society, including politics and history, economics, communications, health, language and agriculture. The 2011 conference, 'Communicating new research on Timor-Leste', will be co-hosted by the National University of Timor-Lorosa'e, Swinburne University of Technology, and the Technical University of Lisbon. See [conference website](#) for details.

The world and world-making in art: connectivities and differences, conference, Australian National University, Canberra, 11–13 August 2011. This international conference coincides with the ANU's Humanities Research Centre's theme for 2011 on 'The world and world-making in the humanities and the arts. Venue: Sir Roland Wilson Building, ANU. Further information: [Dr Michelle Antoinette](#).

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

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.

About the ASAA

The Asian Studies Association of Australia 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. The ASAA believes there is an urgent need to develop a strategy to preserve, renew and extend Australian expertise about Asia. 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](#).