



Confucius Institutes adopt a sage approach to cultural understanding

The first Confucius Institute in Australia opened five years ago—seven more have followed, and approval has been granted for another one. However, ALLAN SHARP finds there is nothing 'standardised' about them.

Since the first Confucius Institute was established in Seoul, South Korea, in 2004, the institutes have become an international and—as China's influence and power have grown—sometimes controversial phenomenon.

Today there are several hundred Confucius Institutes worldwide, including eight in Australia and a ninth in the offing, providing a wide variety of programs and activities.

The first Confucius Institute in Australia opened at the University of Western Australia five years ago. Seven other Australian universities—Adelaide, Melbourne, New South Wales, Sydney, Queensland, the Queensland University of Technology and the Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology—now host Institutes, and the University of Newcastle plans to open the only Institute in a regional location in Australia in the next few months. All have been established with the assistance of start-up grants from the Beijing government.

Operating under the Office of Chinese Language Council International, or [Hanban](#), Confucius Institutes aim to promote Chinese language and culture and support local Chinese teaching internationally. They also involve partnerships with Chinese organisations—generally universities.



The institutes have been greeted warily by some who see them as little more than an instrument to increase China's 'soft power'.

A strong early critic, Professor Jocelyn Chey, a visiting professor at the University of Sydney and former diplomat, said in 2007 that she saw the institutes as a propaganda vehicle for the Chinese communist party and a threat to academic freedom.

'My concern about the potential threat to academic freedom mainly related to Confucius Institutes that might take over existing undergraduate teaching and supervision of research work,' she said.

Chey said there were many different views of Chinese foreign policy, including its

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public diplomacy and the Confucius Institutes. In her view, Prime Minister Kevin Rudd summarised this well in his recent [speech](#) at the ANU, where he pointed to the need for academics and the Australian Government to make an objective assessment of China's strong points as well as failings, in the role of what he described as a 'true friend'—zhengyou.



Hans Hendrichske—concerns based on a false premise.

The [University of Sydney's Confucius Institute](#) director, Professor Hans Hendrichske, believes that the concerns expressed when an institute was proposed for the university were based on a false

premise—that Confucius Institutes would attempt to influence the academic curriculum in the Chinese Studies department.

'This was never intended and the university has never compromised its academic independence,' Hendrichske said. 'There is by now ample academic literature on Confucius Institutes—little of this literature on "soft power" in international relations is based on actual evidence of activities of Confucius Institutes.'

Hendrichske recently accompanied the Foreign Minister, Stephen Smith, during a recent visit to [Fudan University](#), where the Foreign Minister stated that through the Confucius Institute in Sydney—a joint project between the University of Sydney and Fudan—Australians were learning about the Chinese language and culture.

The Director of the [University of Adelaide's institute](#), Professor Mobo Gao, has no concerns about threats to academic independence.

'We do what we want to do for the interest of the university and Australia, but would not have been able to do some of those things had there not been support,' he said.



Mobo Gao—no threats to academic independence.

not—stop me from doing my duty for the university, to interact with the relevant Chinese authorities and colleagues in running the institute.

'Whatever the motivation of the Chinese for supporting the Confucius Institute, we do what we would like to for the interest of an Australian university,' he said.

Associate Professor David Ambrose, Director of the [University of Western Australia's institute](#) and a former Australian diplomat with service in China, said the Chinese Government had influence over what the institute offered only to the extent that funding for proposed activities needed approval from Hanban.

Professor Bob Elliott, Director at the [Queensland University of Technology's Confucius Institute](#) agreed that the Chinese Government had never sought to influence any of its programs or activities.

'What we seek to offer each year in the line of projects and activities is in collaboration with our Chinese partner, thinking creatively about how we can best achieve our goal of quality teaching and learning of Chinese language and culture in Queensland schools and community,' Elliott said.

The Institutes' broad range of programs include academic outreach, study tours to China, community language teaching, business briefings, language tutorials, discussion forums, workshops, cultural events and, in the case of RMIT, Chinese medicine education.

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The University of Sydney Institute, says Hans Hendrichske, has attracted thousands of people to its activities, with nearly 700 people attending the largest event. Smaller events, such as lectures, have audiences up to 200, depending on the topic.

Some of the institutes have ambitious plans. Western Australia, for example, wants to develop a multi-purpose Confucius Institute in a future cultural precinct at the university.

Western Australia also wants to work with schools to increase numbers studying Chinese language to year 12 and on to tertiary studies, especially by helping to



Chinese opera night, University of Sydney Confucius Institute.

establish Confucius classrooms. QUT, too, has plans to establish a network of Confucius classrooms in Queensland schools.

The [Confucius Institute at the University of New South Wales](#), which formally opened in July 2009, has embarked on a 'broad-based and multi-focal strategy' to meet the objectives of UNSW, its partner [Shanghai Jiao Tong University](#), and the Hanban.

'We draw on our strengths, and that of Shanghai Jiao Tong University, as two universities at the cutting edge of research, innovation and business, to develop a program of activities that complement existing programs and directions in Australia,' said Director Cathryn Hlavka. 'Our program is targeted towards academic, business and community groups that have a long-term interest in China.'

Clients of the different institutes vary. A feature of the Confucius Institute at the University of Queensland is its focus on science, engineering and technology (SET). 'As well as supporting Chinese language and culture instruction in the

university and the broader community, we aim to promote collaboration in teaching and research between the university and Chinese universities in SET,' said Institute Director, Professor Ping Chen.

Little of this literature on soft power in international relations is based on actual evidence of activities of Confucius Institutes.

'We're doing this through student and staff exchanges and by offering courses in Chinese and translation and interpreting designed for SET students.'

QUT is fostering major relationships with the state's education authorities, schools and teachers of Chinese language and is in discussion with a range of businesses concerning corporate programs—including lawyers, banks and companies.

'We're located in a purpose-built office complex, designed in a very contemporary style to convey ideas of innovation and modern Chinese language at QUT's Kelvin Grove campus,' said Bob Elliott.

'We're very clearly focussed—being specifically established to work with education authorities and schools in Queensland to assist them to promote quality teaching and learning of Chinese language and culture, and also to teach Chinese language and culture to communities and professional groups in Queensland.'



QUT's Bob Elliott

In contrast, [RMIT's Confucius Institute](#) focuses on Chinese medicine education, research and practice in collaboration with its long-term partner, the Nanjing University of Chinese Medicine in Jiangsu Province.

'The development of the Chinese Medicine Confucius Institute is a natural progression

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and expansion of RMIT's commitments to Chinese medicine education and research,' said Institute director Professor Charlie Xue.

Similarly, Sydney does not have commercial clients in business and government but is concentrating on education, cultural programs and academic projects. 'Generally, with the cultural programs that we run for public audiences, we expect one-third of the audience to be of Chinese cultural background,' said director Hans Hendrichske. 'Some activities are aimed at university students.'

The [University of Melbourne Confucius Institute](#) decided on a strong corporate focus this year, aiming to be a centre of education excellence for Australian companies wishing to do business in China and for Chinese companies and executives wanting to do business in Australia. It is also working in partnership with the Victorian Education Department to promote and manage the Confucius Classroom network in Victoria.

Adelaide has been running a public lecture series and a China briefing series on current issues of most concern to the Australian public. The lectures and briefings aim at high quality intellectual forums by experts in the fields. Topics in 2009 included human rights in China, Chinese investment in the Australian resource industry and the Chinese economic stimulus package.

The [Institute of the University of Newcastle](#)—when it opens in the next few months—will have a rural and regional focus, promoting education and cultural programs in schools and for the general community, and for the corporate sector, including mining companies engaged with China.

Notable among Australia's leading universities that have not established a Confucius Institute is the Australian National University.

John Minford, a professor of Chinese, at the ANU's [School of Culture, History and Language](#), said bodies such as the Japan Foundation and the Korea Foundation, and like the Alliance Française, the Goethe Institute, and the British Council, had well-established track records as academic partners with universities, individuals and cultural groups.

'We note the more recent Confucius Institute initiative and look forward to seeing how it evolves,' he said.

Clearly—as Australia's universities are showing—there is more than one model for Confucius institutes.

'Hanban has clearly been feeling its way into the establishment of Confucius Institutes and has rapidly realised that one size does not fit all, said UWA's David Ambrose. 'It recognises that conditions and circumstances differ everywhere and there can be little to no standardisation, except in procedural matters, like application, reporting and accounting for funds expended.'

The University of Melbourne's Institute director, Barbara Hilder, also believes the Chinese Government has been 'incredibly flexible' with the types and range of Confucius institutes it has established around the world.

'They're keen to promote Chinese language, culture and an understanding of China that is suitable for each location that an institute is established,' she said.

'With Australia's growing ties with China, especially in the area of business and trade, it's incredibly important for as many Australian's as possible to have a more contemporary view of where China is today.

'I also think it's a great change in Chinese policy to be reaching out to the world, and I see that this can only be a positive.'

Allan Sharp is editor of Asian Currents.

Revolution and federalism: Indonesia and Malaysia compared

As multicultural and asymmetric states become a priority for analysis in a globalising world, attention turns to Asia's newer but complex states. ANTHONY REID examines the factors that have led to a federal and avowedly multinational Malaysia and a stubbornly unitary Indonesia.

At any time before the watershed of the 1940s, the 'Malay World' appeared unlikely to be on a path leading towards strong, unitary states. It never developed bureaucratic, law-giving states of its own, and interior populations remained wary of the externally supported states on the coasts.

The prevailing wisdom in both the Indies and British Malaya in the 1930s was that independence was scarcely viable. Insofar as there were colonial attempts to evade the nationalist pressure by devolving powers, feebly in the 1920s and thirties but almost frenetically after 1945, complex structures of diversity seemed the only viable option.

As both truly new states, Malaysia and Indonesia are unable to draw on the state nationalism of a pre-colonial monarchy, which had a claim to continuity as in post-colonial state such as Burma, Vietnam and Korea.

The post-colonial states of Indonesia and Malaysia would have to be artificial constructs in both cases, within the artificial boundaries Britain, Holland and France had drawn between the Indonesian Archipelago and the Malay Peninsula, and across the Peninsula and Borneo.

The two names 'Malaysia' and 'Indonesia' are alternative scholarly inventions to describe broader identities of the 'Malay world', or the world of Austronesian languages, taken over by politicians who had no satisfactory word for their imagined state.

But the path to that new identity divided them sharply. The revolutionary path gave the name 'Indonesia' a supernatural aura demanding loyalty. The blood of revolutionary martyrs was held to sacralise the flag, the independence declaration, the

constitution and the sacred sites and dates of dead heroes.

The success of this revolutionary process, completed in 1950 with the destruction of the complex federal architecture of Republik Indonesia Serikat, was almost magical. The steel of the Dutch colonial bureaucracy was inherited by the army, but now married to a new passionately held ideology of the sovereignty of the Indonesian people.

Malaysia, on the other hand, inherited a great variety of older political forms of monarchy and of authority within separated communities, only gradually establishing the higher authority of Kuala Lumpur among them. Sultans continued to have outrageous prerogatives and immunities from the law; political parties were based on what they considered immutable 'race' rather than on programs or ideologies.



On the positive side of the revolutionary path, one might list many valuable

coherences in which Indonesia rejoices, which Malaysia lacks to its cost: an unquestioned national language; a strong sense of identity as Indonesians, despite extraordinarily diverse histories; acceptance of the 'one man one vote' idea, with no special privileges in constitutional theory; and acceptance of the irrelevance of race.

On the negative side of the balance, the revolutionary assertion of these principles brought some clear political disadvantages:

- The way heroic myths of revolutionary struggle take the place of history, denying all Indonesia's peoples, but especially the more marginal, their roots and their identity. By contrast Malaysia's Dayaks, Kadazans, Chinese and Kelantanese know their distinct histories, even if the federal government does little to support that knowledge.

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- The huge gap between revolutionary expectations and Indonesia's diverse realities virtually required that the state fill the gap with force and the threat of force. People were expected to act as though Indonesia was united around these unifying ideals, and legitimate differences were often therefore equated with treason and suppressed by force. Even in times of democracy (1949–57 and since 1998) it has been difficult for Indonesia to legitimate these differences, though progress is being made.
- The unitary system, interpreted as meaning that there needed to be uniform administrative, educational and judicial systems throughout the country, drove particularists in Aceh, Papua and East Timor, and Islamists everywhere, into a cycle of rebellion and suppression. By contrast, Malaysia has become, through a succession of unsatisfactory but workable compromises, a striking example of what Keating (2001) calls 'plurinational democracy' and 'asymmetric government'.
- Basing the rights of endangered minorities such as Chinese and Christians on the myth of nationalist equality rather than legality and the right of redress has in practice not served them well. A pattern developed of affluent minorities having to buy protection and justice rather than relying on constitutional and legal means. In the process the rule of law was further eroded.

The toll of political violence is one factor that can be measured, and Indonesia comes out on the wrong side of that equation. Both countries got off to a bad start in the violent aftermath of the Japanese occupation, so that up to 1965 Indonesia probably saw no more political deaths, proportionate to size, than Malaya/Malaysia.

But, save for Malaysia's day of anti-Chinese violence in May 1969, there is nothing to put in the balance against the bloodbath of Indonesia's communists in 1965, the racial and religious violence of 1998–2002, the separatist wars in Timor

The toll of political violence is one factor that can be measured, and Indonesia comes out on the wrong side of that equation.

and Aceh that killed more than a million Indonesians in total.

It is possible to argue that federalism had something to do with Malaysia's better record here, while the unitary dream did have to be imposed by violence. Revolution itself is, however, a larger factor in the contrast. Once legality was breached by violence in the name of the 'people', only a highly disciplined and usually undemocratic force could stop it running out of control. In the Indonesian case this was the army, though in frequent contestation with the communist party before 1965.

The overriding of legality by politics also had incalculable costs for Indonesia's legal system, while the need for affluent minorities to buy protection rather than rely on legal and constitutional guarantees has helped corrode the military and bureaucracy with corruption.

If there is any link here with federalism it



can only be the indirect one of a more stable, open and democratic environment. The post-revolutionary violence and instability of Indonesia had a terrible effect on its

economy. Not surprisingly, the other Asian states which made a revolutionary transition to independence—Vietnam, Laos, Cambodia and (more ambivalently) Burma—were the only ones whose economy fared even worse than Indonesia's in this mid-century crisis period.

In conclusion, Indonesia's post-revolutionary drive towards uniformity increased the likelihood of violent outcomes to some regional, ethnic and even ideological tensions. An evolutionary federal path such as Malaysia's would have facilitated a less violent negotiation

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of the place of Aceh and East Timor, and perhaps also of Ambon, Papua and parts of Sulawesi and Sumatra, within Indonesia.

While the possibility could not be ruled out that federal states would move towards secession, the examples of Sarawak and Sabah in Malaysia, and of many disgruntled states in the northeast, northwest and south of the Indian federation, suggest that federations do have effective means to prevent this outcome.

While greater democracy in Indonesia would have provided more space for federal ideas and campaigns, the reverse is less clear, that federalism would have encouraged democracy. One might say rather that some degree of democracy is a precondition for effective federalism, in that the legitimacy and leverage of constituent states can have no other basis than elected governments.

Because post-revolutionary Indonesia provided a difficult climate for democracy to flourish, it was also an infertile field for federalism. Developments since 1998, however, should be watched closely for the interplay of democratic procedures and less symmetric political structures.

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Indonesia's post-revolutionary unitarism, like that of France and China, has achieved remarkable success in turning 'peasants into Indonesians', and liberating its people from entrenched differences of class, race, and descent. In the very long term this should prove to be a source of great strength for the nation state. But this spectacular achievement has come at a very high cost over the first 60 years.

Given the extreme heterogeneity of the Archipelago and its historic resistance to bureaucratic states of any kind, it may be that the quasi-mystical space that a unitary Indonesian Republic sought to fill in its

people's imagining was the only way it could perform the miracle of nation-building. Yet there were also clear dangers in this path, indicated by the steadily greater role the military came to play in state affairs between 1945 and 1980, and its frequent resort to force to suppress dissent.

The need for affluent minorities to buy protection rather than rely on legal and constitutional guarantees has helped corrode the military and bureaucracy with corruption.

While Indonesia's course looked more promising than Malaysia's in the 1950s, the reverse has been the case at most periods since. However the remarkably democratic outcome of the 1998 *reformasi*, including the readiness to attempt new solutions in East Timor and Aceh and the legislation for regional autonomy in general, may mean that the balance sheet is about to turn again, and Indonesia may prove able to experiment more effectively from its unitary foundation than can Malaysia from its entrenched asymmetries.



Anthony Reid is Emeritus Professor at the College of Asia and the Pacific, at the Australian National University. This article is based on a presentation he gave to a seminar in April 2010.

Indonesian treasure trove now on line

by Ron Witton

The University of Sydney's Fisher Library has placed 59 Indonesian social case studies dating from 1959–60 on the internet. The studies were produced by sociology and anthropology students at the University of Indonesia and Gajah Mada University under the supervision of Professor Mervyn Jaspán.

Mervyn Jaspán (1926–75), originally from South Africa, gained sociology and anthropology degrees from Natal and Oxford. In 1955 he was appointed to the Chair of Sociology at Gadjah Mada University in Yogyakarta, and in 1959 to the Chair of Sociology at Padjadjaran University, Bandung. He later taught at the Australian National University and at the University of Western Australia, before relocating to Hull University, where he died in 1975.

While teaching in Indonesia, Dr Jaspán supervised the theses of a vast number of anthropology and sociology students at both the University of Padjadjaran and Gajah Mada University. The theses provide a rich sociographic record of Indonesian village life in 1959–60 and contain information on education, wealth distribution, politics, religion and social structure. A few have an urban focus.

When he came to Australia, Dr Jaspán arranged the microfilming of 59 of the social case studies of his Indonesian students. These materials have now been digitalised and are easily accessible on the internet. There are 37 village studies spread throughout Java (14 in West Java, 14 in Central Java, and nine in East Java) and a number of ethnic studies carried out in Sumatra, Kalimantan, Nusa Tenggara and Sulawesi.

There are also sociological studies of such diverse social groupings as academic staff at a unit of FKIP Bandung, an adult education committee in Karees, orphan children in a Tasikmalaya institution, an urban fire brigade, shoe factory workers, the Chinese community of Magelang, manual workers at a Bandung Home for the Blind, and lottery ticket vendors in Bandung.

These materials lend themselves most immediately to village longitudinal studies, using the original data, in order to examine social, economic and political change over the past 50 years. Undergraduate students could use them to study individual villages for their final-year theses, as could higher degree students and scholars who might focus on a number of such villages to develop comparative analyses.

Quantitative data from 37 of the villages on Java is already available in a comparative form in the appendices of my MA thesis (R A Witton, *Schooling and Adult Education in Rural Java: A Comparative Study of 37 Villages*, M.A. dissertation, University of Sydney, 1967). Appendix 1 has a short description of each village, including its geographical location. The study also lists the names and authors of the 37 Java village studies.



A community of scholars already interested in the re-study of the villages and communities has been developed. Under the creative leadership of the University of Indonesia's Professor Iwan Pirous, the scholars interact through the internet group he established, which is open to new members. It is designed to ensure that the planning for—and eventual results from—further studies of the villages are disseminated among the group and within the Indonesian academic community generally. A full listing of the studies and pdf files of the original studies is available.

Dr Witton is Senior Fellow in the Faculty of Law at the University of Wollongong.

Educating Laos—the role of foreign aid

KEN BRUNKER finds hope for the development of one of Southeast Asia's poorest countries, while sitting in a bamboo hut by the Mekong.

Growing up in country Australia, I never envisaged that one day I would be in Laos, sitting in the shade of a bamboo hut overlooking the Mekong, talking to young adults about their educational aspirations and dreams.

My connection with Asia began about 12 years ago when I was offered a short-term position on an Asian Development Bank project developing teacher skills at a vocational training institute in the Maldives.

I was invited back to spend a further 12 months in the country. Since then I've worked on aid projects in the education sector in Indonesia and Papua New Guinea, and commercial projects in Thailand, Myanmar, and China.

While working on these projects, I observed what appeared to be remnants of previous projects going back many years that were, by all accounts, attempting to achieve similar outcomes to projects I was working on. Local residents confirmed his suspicions.

Over the years other aid organisations had landed on their shores, designed and implemented a project, and walked away secure in the knowledge that the systems and processes they put into place would guide the 'underprivileged' locals to a new and prosperous future. Obviously, the project outcomes were not sustained, and so the process repeated with new projects, and more new projects.

After some quick research, I found my observations were not isolated. Countless millions of dollars had been poured into underdeveloped countries through multilateral and bilateral aid over the years, but social and economic indicators indicated that foreign aid had made little positive impact and, in some cases had had a negative impact.

My interest piqued, I began a PhD to research foreign aid issues more deeply, focusing on foreign aid in the education sector and concentrating primary research on Laos.

I had never been to Laos but became fascinated with the country through reading and hearing stories of ancient warring Lao Kingdoms, French



A Lao family—clothed, fed and sheltered.

colonialism, Japanese occupation and fierce battles fought by CIA-led forces against North Vietnamese soldiers during the Vietnamese War. One hundred and fifty years or more of conflict has

taken its toll on Lao's development. I was also interested that there were 132 or more ethnic groups in a country of less than six million.

Most important were stories from Laotians living in Australia who told of the beauty of their country, but spoke of poor health facilities and schools, decaying infrastructure and the poverty of their people. And despite lashing of foreign aid, Laos and neighbouring Cambodia are the two least developed countries in Southeast Asia.

I recently returned to Australia after conducting primary research in Laos. The Lao Government approved my research and permitted me to talk to staff and students at the National University of Laos and the Ministry of Education.

A key finding from my research was the apparent successes in Laos of new systems and processes for designing, implementing and monitoring aid projects.

These new systems are mandated under a document called the Vientiane Declaration, based on the Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness. The Declaration gives greater control over aid spending by the recipient government, and demands greater cooperation and accountability from all parties involved in the aid process.

'Talking with a small group involved with these new systems, I detected an energetic optimism about the future.

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They were 'gee-d up'. As one senior Lao official put it. Things are moving slowly, but they're moving—and in the right direction.



No time for school.

Despite the optimistic outlook, the education sector is still in its infancy and there are many issues to address that are perhaps beyond the scope of the aid agencies. There are still

about 500 villages, for example, that don't have a school, and of those that do, a significant majority only teach to year 5. Language issues are also a major problem with four main language groups in Laos, each group comprising many dialects.

When I was sitting in that bamboo hut overlooking the Mekong with those young adults, it was apparent they believed they held the key to their country's future. They were trainee teachers close to finishing their course and saw their future teaching roles as instrumental in assisting economic growth and improving the wellbeing of their countrymen.

This is the crux of my research—examining the effectiveness of foreign aid to the education sector and its impact on growth and poverty alleviation.

I expect to finish my PhD in the next two years and am looking forward to returning to Laos to refresh some of my data on the Vientiane Declaration—as well as renew some friendships around the bamboo hut.



Ken Bruner is a PhD student at the University of Wollongong

Theatre project explores regional culture in a modern global context

An innovative ARC-funded project is exploring how theatre performances both engage with socio-political conditions in particular countries and convey a shared regional sensibility. BARBARA HATLEY reports

Theatre and performance are cultural sites charged with both preserving long-standing modes of performance and displaying the vibrancy of contemporary arts practice. Moreover transformations in theatre derive from developments in the domains of history, philosophy and society—theatre is not an autonomous, aesthetic sphere but very much part of the social and material world.

Through case studies of theatre practice in Australia, Indonesia, Japan and Singapore, our project aims to show how theatre bears witness to historical changes at the level of nation and region.

In this globalising era the nations of the region are experiencing a post-national or transnational stage of development that challenges the concept of the mono-cultural nation. Tensions and anxieties accompanying the blurring of national boundaries and the feared disintegration of national identity are expressed culturally in creative works and processes, which form the focus of this study. Our analysis of this material engages with current international debates about culture and modernity and re-orientates them to the Asia-Pacific region.

In keeping with the waning of interest in post-modernism, we propose new ways of understanding theatre that look beyond the fragmented, inter-textual, 'quotational' style of postmodern stylistics. We return to Jurgen Habermas's notion of the 'project' of modernity, and take up the concepts of new, second and counter modernity (Beck 2006) and liquid modernity (Bauman, 2000, 2007).

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Beck's second modernity refers to cosmopolitan cultures that have a greater awareness of 'the mixing of cultures than in the 'nationally closed' societies and democracies of 'first modernity' (Beck 2006, 27).

Bauman's concept of liquid modernity describes a condition in which social institutions, organisational structures and the routines of daily life 'melt faster than the time it takes to cast them, and once they are cast for them to set' (2007, 1). The individual finds him or herself caught up in global flows of information, capital and commodities, beset by 'the mind-boggling pace of change'.

Our project documents and analyses the differing ways these conditions are experienced and expressed theatrically in four countries of the region, and explores commonalities.

Members of the group are undertaking individual research on the performance cultures of Australia, Japan, Singapore or Indonesia, in keeping with their particular expertise and experience, and bringing their findings together for comparison, contrast and new illuminations.



[Denise Varney](#) investigates forms of new modernity in Australian theatre, seeking to identify their key features, and extending on her earlier work on themes of trans-nationalism and globalisation and cultural politics (Varney, 2008).

One of her current projects is an analysis of *Ngurumulmarrmiriyu [Wrong Skin]*, a new theatre work concerning a group of young people from Elcho Island in East Arnhem Land who posted their version of the Zorba the Greek dance on YouTube, attracting a global audience of over 1.5 million viewers. The 'Chooky Dancers' mimic and parody the Zorba dance weaving it into a hybridised mix of traditional Aboriginal dance and contemporary African-American forms including hip-hop and krumping. Denise is investigating the ways in which the Chooky Dancers' encounters with global modernity open up new forms of liquid modernity.

[Peter Eckersall's](#) research on



contemporary Japanese theatre reflects on a context where Japan is experiencing a new wave of modernity, without clearly defined pathways. The arts are proliferating and artists are crossing between practices, genres and cultures: everyone is doing everything now.

Eckersall interrogates modernity in Japan through two relating but contrasting examples. He examines questions of the nation-state and Japan's colonial history in Hirata Oriza's *Seoul Shimin* (Citizens of Seoul) and Japanese families experiencing rapid growth, imperialism and globalisation in Oriza's *Tokyo Notes*. Then he explores the zeitgeist of the new theatre phenomenon Chelfitsch (from a child's mispronunciation of the English word 'selfish').

The arts are proliferating and artists are crossing between practices, genres and cultures—everyone is doing everything now.

Eckersall reappraises Chelfitsch as an aspect of 'Cool Japan' (Uchino 2006) by showing how their apparently alienated presentation of youth links the material everyday with images of war.



I analyse performances in Indonesia since ending in 1998 of the authoritarian, centralist Suharto regime. Whereas previously the repressive political system provided a common target for critical theatre to demonise, today new regionally focused administrative structures and democratising ideology result in a focus on the local, the communal. Theatre groups stage performances which blend local cultural forms with global media influences and publicise their activities widely through new media.

I question how such performances reflect post-Suharto political changes, and how they are shaped by trans-national cultural flows and the felt need to create community amidst the fluidity of modern life.

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Chris Hudson, whose research interests include cultural politics, arts festivals and uses of urban space in Asian cities, is exploring performed

expressions of modernity and national identity in Singapore. Currently, she is investigating images and sites where there is a blurring of the boundaries between art and everyday life. Arts festivals in particular invade the everyday by coming into the street, creating a carnival-like atmosphere: the pre-industrial carnivalesque tradition is invoked, then displaced into media images and advertising within a context of post-industrial global consumption.



The 'Chooky Dancers' of Elcho Island. Photo: Glenn Campbell, The Age.

Hudson's analysis, drawn initially from observations in Singapore, provides telling insights also into the workings of

festivals and parades in other Asia-Pacific countries. Indeed, arts festivals across the region—as they are staged in strategic spaces, play out understandings of national and regional identity and engage with transnational cultural flows—constitute an important shared focus of research for the project.

Team members will write about performance festivals in Australia, Japan, Singapore and Indonesia and collaborate on a comparative summation of their findings, in a special journal issue on this topic.

In June, I will be coordinating an international workshop in Yogyakarta on Indonesian performance. The workshop will provide another occasion for comparative, contrastive analysis. Team members will view the findings about Indonesian theatre emerging from the workshop within a broader, Asia Pacific frame.

In 2011 the ARC group itself plans an international symposium on Asia-Pacific modernities, and an edited volume of papers.

Finally, the most significant and challenging outcome of the project will be a co-authored book, exploring liquid forms, liquid spaces and liquid identities in society and theatre across the regions. How will it picture the distinctive nature of Asia Pacific modernities being expressed through theatre? Watch this space!

Emeritus Professor Hatley is a member of a team from the University of Melbourne, the Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology and the University of Tasmania exploring expressions of modernity through theatre in the Asia-Pacific region. She was appointed foundation Professor of Indonesian in 2000 and was Head of the School of Asian Languages and Studies at the University of Tasmania from 2000 to 2006.

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China's less work, more play schools policy having unplanned side effects

Worried by the effect an exam-centred system is having on secondary students, Chinese authorities have moved to introduce curriculum reforms. But, says ANDEW KIPNIS, the reforms may be having unintended consequences.

All over the globe, national education systems address contradictory agenda. They must ensure fairness, help the weakest students, provide an environment in which the best students can excel and encourage all students to learn to the best of their ability. In China, the contradictions faced by education policymakers are exacerbated by the intense competition for a seat in universities.

This competition creates several problems. First, to ensure fairness in selecting the best students, university administrators are forced to rely on examinations. Without exams, many students and their families would lose faith in the university selection process and accuse authorities of corruption. As a result of the reliance on exams, secondary education in China is entirely focused on exam preparations.

Some critics say that since Chinese secondary teachers focus on exam preparations, they do not have the time to encourage students to be creative, to develop their individual interests or to work on analytical skills that are not directly relevant to the exams. Besides, the focus on exam success alienates students who do not do well in exams. These students are likely to drop out of school altogether rather than face repeated failure in classes. The exam-centred nature of Chinese secondary education lets down the most elite as well as the most mediocre of Chinese students.

I have done research on education reform in Shandong province for over a decade and always found the competition intense. In 2006, I conducted a survey of households with a child in year 6 and found that all parents hoped that their children would attend university. Most

were shocked that I could even ask such a question. 'Of course' or 'Doesn't everyone want that' were common replies. The intensity of this desire is unlikely to change soon, but there are better and worse ways of dealing with it.



China's education system—facing contradictions.

One successful reform took place in a rural county that I visited during the mid-1990s.

At that time, there was intense

competition among junior middle school students, teachers and principals for success in the entrance exam to the top senior middle school in the county. Junior middle school principals were encouraging teachers to hold extra classes (after regular school hours and over the weekends), to assign extra homework, and to focus on drill and repetition during class hours. The county education bureau wanted to implement a more well-rounded junior middle school curriculum, as well as to give the students a bit more unstructured time away from the school.

To encourage the junior middle schools to comply with its recommendations, the county education bureau shifted from an exam to an exam plus quota system to determine admission to senior middle school. Each junior middle school was given a quota of seats in the senior middle school, but the exam determined which students in a given junior middle school would get the quota seats.

In this way, individual students still had an incentive to study hard, but principals could gain nothing by forcing students at their school to work harder, as the quota already determined how many seats their students would get in the top senior middle school.

Continued page 14

China's school policy

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The new system allowed the county education bureau to threaten individual schools with quota reduction if they did not implement curricular reform.

The education bureau also used the quotas to make sure that even students in the most impoverished junior middle school in the county had a chance of attending the best senior middle school. The reform was a success in the sense that it simultaneously enabled the best students to excel while creating greater opportunity for the most impoverished students.

More than a decade later, the Shandong provincial education bureau has initiated a similar type of reform at the senior middle school level. In Shandong, many rural senior middle schools are boarding schools. These schools implement strict disciplinary regimes to encourage students to study hard to give them the best possible chance of succeeding in the university entrance exam.

The provincial education bureau was worried that all this emphasis on test preparations was having a deleterious effect on the secondary school students. Since all of their time was scheduled for them, the students were said not to know how to schedule their own days in a productive manner. All the drill and exam preparations were further said to dull the students' imagination.

To solve these problems, the provincial education bureau has enforced a strict ban on mandatory evening and weekend classes in rural boarding schools. The students may study on their own, but teachers are not allowed to take attendance, or even visit the classrooms where students might be studying. In some ways the reform has been a success. Overworked teachers have deservedly enjoyed a shorter working day, exam averages have not fallen and most students seem perfectly capable of structuring their own time in a manner that allows for ample study.

But one side effect of the reform is quite worrisome. Private tutoring businesses

All the drill and exam preparations were further said to dull the students' imagination.

have expanded and flourished rapidly across the province. In the past, students with difficulties could always get help from their teachers during the mandatory study hall classes. Now students who need help can only get it if their parents can afford a private tutor or private after-school review classes.

One evening, I ran into a group of senior middle school students at a cafe where they had gone to smoke and drink instead of studying. They told me that before the ban they used to study hard but now they did not see the point. They did not understand enough in class to do their homework on their own and their parents, all from rural villages, could not afford private tutors.

One student even accused his teachers of deliberately leaving important bits out of lectures to force the students to rely on paid tutors, who would give the teacher kickbacks. In short, though the reform has probably benefited elite students, it has not been as beneficial for average students, especially not for average students whose parents are poor.

Education reform is always a matter of trade-offs. The best reform manages to simultaneously consider the problems of the most elite students, of average students, of academically weak students, and of students from relatively impoverished backgrounds. I am worried that this recent reform in Shandong has not taken all of these issues into consideration.



*Dr Kipnis is a senior researcher at the Australian National University. This article was published in the [China Daily](#) on 9 April 2010. He is the author of a forthcoming book, *Governing**

Educational Desire: Culture, Politics and Schooling in China (University of Chicago Press).

ASAA announces 2010 prize for excellence in Asian Studies

Studies of the depiction of food in modern Japanese literature and an analysis of the separatist rebellion in the Indonesian province of Aceh have jointly won the Asian Studies Association of Australia's (ASAA) 2010 [prize for excellence](#) in Asian Studies.



Dr Tomoko Aoyama, Senior Lecturer in Japanese and Director of Research, School of Languages and Comparative Cultural Studies at the University

of Queensland, shared the prize with **Dr. Edward Aspinall**, Senior Fellow, in the School of International, Political & Strategic Studies at the Australian National University.

The ASAA Mid-Career Researcher Prize for Excellence in Asian Studies is awarded biennially to a researcher or researchers for published work on an Asian subject.

Dr Aoyama won the prize for her book, *Reading Food in Modern Japanese Literature* (University of Hawaii Press 2008).

In its citation, the prize committee said Dr Aoyama's study seemed, at first glance, an unlikely subject, but the originality of the topic was fully sustained by the clarity of exposition the profound knowledge of modern Japanese literature (both in the original and in translation) and the assurance of the author's voice.



Dr Aspinall was awarded the prize for his book *Islam and Nation: Separatist Rebellion in Aceh, Indonesia* (Stanford University Press, 2009).

The committee said Dr Aspinall's study would clearly remain the definitive account of the separatist rebellion in Aceh, and described the range of its argument as impressive with the discussion moving smoothly from the detail of an interview to a general feature of the society or a telling international comparison.

Food for thought

ASAA prize-winner TOMOKO AYOAMA admits to an obsession.

More than ten years ago, while using Yoshimoto Banana's very popular fiction *Kitchen* and Tawara Machi's collection of *tanka* (31-syllable poetry) *Salad Anniversary* for my undergraduate courses, I realised that the theme of food in these and other texts evokes multiple interests, many of which are missing in conventional literary studies.

The project that started as a conference paper kept expanding. It is not that I was or am particularly interested in gourmet food or actual cooking and eating. But I became obsessed with what I call 'written food', that is, food, cooking and eating, as depicted or used in modern and contemporary Japanese literature. I refer to films and manga as well, but my main research area is literature.



With my long-term interests in parody and inter-textuality the notion of textual cannibalism (i.e. text eating,

devouring, digesting other texts) fascinates me.

Reading can be likened to eating and writing to cooking. But I am equally interested in the socio-historical aspects of 'written food', including food (both actual and metaphorical) in pre-war 'proletarian literature' and 'peasant literature', food shortages during and immediately after the World War 2, the genealogy of the gastronomic literature and post-gourmet boom fiction, food safety and environmental issues, and the changes in the gendering of food, eating and cooking in the course of the 20th century.

Gender is certainly one of the central issues in this book. Women writers are much better represented here than in

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Food for thought

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conventional modern Japanese literary history books. The texts discussed in this book include both the canonical and the obscure, the translated and the untranslated, popular and unpopular, serious and comic.

Inclusive as it is, the list could not possibly be exhaustive. After the publication of this book I keep finding more and more texts—not only in literature but in manga, film, television and other genres.

There may be a limit to what one person can eat/read and cook/write, but I hope that this book triggers a series of interesting inquiries into food in various genres and cultures.

Eyewitness to rebellion

EDWARD ASPINALL talks about the events behind his ASAA prize-winning study, *Islam and Nation: Separatist Rebellion in Aceh, Indonesia*.

Like many research projects, *Islam and Nation* began almost by accident. In 1999, the year after the fall of Indonesia's long-reigning autocrat Suharto, I visited Aceh for the first time.

I went as part of a monitoring team to observe Indonesia's first post-Suharto elections, but in many parts of Aceh there was not much in the way of elections to observe. Many people were boycotting the polls in protest against military abuses, others were too scared to vote because they feared that polling booths would be attacked by rebels.

In 1999, Aceh was in motion. In the towns, student protestors were denouncing the government for its human rights record and exploitation of Aceh's natural resources, and calling for an independence referendum.

In the villages, young men were flocking to join the guerrillas of the Free Aceh Movement. It seemed that people were re-evaluating their most basic political ideas and loyalties before my very eyes.

At the time, I was finishing my PhD thesis, which was about the pro-democracy movement that had brought down Suharto. Most of my PhD research had been conducted in Jakarta and other cities of Java.



Field work in Aceh.

In 1999, the activists I knew in those places were adjusting to the new political order. Most were pressing the case for political reform through civil society groups; others were forming or joining political parties. In short, they were trying to build a new democratic Indonesia.

In Aceh, I met very similar people who were engaging in very different politics. Many were rediscovering Aceh's past history—a glorious past, in their view—and becoming inspired by dreams of independence. Rather than trying to build a new Indonesia, they were trying to break away from Indonesia altogether. And as most of the country settled slowly into the routines and disappointments that come with a new political order, Aceh continued to be a site of violence and disorder.

Over subsequent years, as I determined I would write a book on Aceh's separatist conflict, I was privileged to observe a series of great events.

The first round of peace negotiations began in 2000 and there were several subsequent attempts to enforce a ceasefire. Overall, however, the violence worsened, peaking with a declaration of martial law in 2003. The province introduced new regulations drawing on Islamic law.

Throughout these years, and with the help of an Australian Research Council grant, I travelled frequently, not only to Aceh and other parts of Indonesia, but also to Malaysia and Europe, especially Sweden,

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Eyewitness report

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where refugees and leaders of the Free Aceh Movement lived in exile. I met and interviewed a tremendous range of people—civil society activists, religious scholars, guerrilla fighters, separatist ideologues, ordinary villagers and many others. Most of my interlocutors treated me with great candour, openness and generosity.

Then, at the end of 2004 much of Aceh was devastated by the Indian Ocean tsunami, an event that killed over 165,000 people in the province.

Guerrillas came down from the hills and many of them suddenly transformed themselves into businesspeople and politicians.

I travelled to Aceh in the aftermath and saw the terrible effects. Before long, the peace process was relaunched and an agreement was concluded in Helsinki in mid-2005.

Guerrillas came down from the hills and many of them suddenly transformed themselves into businesspeople and politicians. They competed in and won local elections. Finally, I was able to meet and interview rebel leaders who had previously seemed half-legendary figures.

Now, I maintain an interest in Aceh's politics, and the ongoing peace building efforts there, though not as intensively as when I was writing *Islam and Nation*.



After the tsunami

But the research I conducted for that book has led to other things. Observing the ethno-nationalist currents that animated Aceh has sparked my interest in ethnic politics in other parts of Indonesia and I am currently putting together a research project on that topic.

One of the striking and unexpected products of the peace process was the transformation of many former combatants

into contractors in the construction industry, and I am conducting research on the political economy of Indonesia's construction industry.

Finally, studying Aceh has made me more interested in comparable conflicts and peace processes elsewhere in Asia, though in practical and emotional terms I find it hard to tear myself away from Indonesia.

The ASAA Prize for Excellence in Asian Studies

The ASAA Prize for Excellence in Asian Studies is awarded biennially by the ASAA to a mid-career researcher (or researchers) for research on an Asian subject, as represented in a book or a portfolio of articles and/or book chapters.

Individual or joint candidates may nominate, or be nominated, for the prize. All applicants must be ASAA members employed at an Australian University below Associate Professor level at the time of application. Applicants must have completed their PhD at least five years before the application is lodged.

A scholarly book (must not be based on a thesis) or ten chapters or journal articles published in the five years before the application is submitted. If joint candidates submit a portfolio of articles and/or book chapters, then at least six must be co-authored and 50 per cent of the remaining articles and/or book chapters must be single-authored by each candidate.

If an individual candidate submits articles and/or book chapters, a maximum of three can be co-authored (in this case the co-author does not have to meet the application criteria).

Turning point or another false Asian dawn?

Led by China and India, Asia is showing signs of strong economic recovery—but will this be a systemic turning point or another false Asian dawn?



This is the question that will be posed by [Tan Sri Dr Munir Majid](#), the keynote speaker at the Asian Studies Association of Australia (ASAA) [18th Biennial Conference 2010](#), which will be

held at the University of Adelaide in July.

Dr Majid is Chairman of Malaysia Airlines and a Senior Fellow at the London School of Economics, where he obtained a PhD in International Relations. He has also worked as a journalist and a banker and has served on various government boards and committees.

In an abstract of his keynote address, Dr Majid says there is now renewed expectation of a new Asian or East Asian century occasioned by the global financial crisis of 2008 in the West and the 'great recession' that followed.

'Even if financial systems in Asia were not adversely affected, the real economies were,' he says. 'Today, Asia—led by China and India—shows signs of strong economic recovery, but the West continues to stagger, its self-belief weakened and without prospect of a rapid and real recovery.'

Dr Majid says the expectation of a new Asian century was rudely shaken by the Asian financial crisis of 1997–98. Asian countries are, however, not taking any chances and are positioning themselves for the new regional architecture. But will it be a smooth and seamless order that will come into being?

'The rise of China is central to all this, but it cannot be expected that the United States will just let go, or that other significant countries in the region will just fall into a new regional system decided upon elsewhere without their active participation,' he says.

'The present situation is complicated and the outcome will be more complex than the emergence just of the new Asian century. There will be a redistribution of power defined by other practical characteristics, not just by an Asian affinity.

'Globalising Asia's diversity and diverging interests will be the greater determinant of the balance of power and international relationships both in the region and around the world.'

Dr Majid's participation at the biennial conference has been sponsored by [Santos](#).

Conference Theme

Asia—crises and opportunities: past, present and future

Today, Asia helps shape the world in more and more obvious ways and in many other more subtle ones; its crises are often world crises while world crises help reshape Asia.

The 1990s Asian Financial Crisis ushered in dramatic political changes throughout South East Asia, while the current global financial crisis seems to be aiding the rise and rise of China and India at the same time as Japan seems destined to genteel decline.

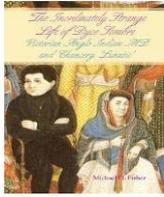
More prosaically, Asian studies in Australia is also facing many challenges such as funding, problems with attracting students and getting them to study Asian languages—this in the face of an Asia with ever growing economic, political and cultural influence redolent with opportunities.

Even the apparent saviours of the Australian education system, international students, are a mixed blessing: is this a crisis or a new beginning?

New Books from Asia

Asia Bookroom

INORDINATELY STRANGE LIFE OF DYCE SOMBRE, VICTORIAN ANGLO INDIAN MP AND CHANCERY 'LUNATIC'.
By Michael H Fisher. C Hurst & Co Publishers Ltd. 396pp. \$56.95.



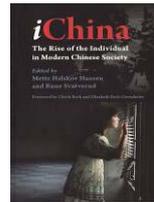
The descendant of German and French Catholic mercenaries, David Ochterlony Dyce Sombre defied all classification in the North Indian principality where he was raised.

His influences included an adoptive mother who began as a Muslim courtesan and rose to become the Catholic ruler of a strategically placed, cosmopolitan little kingdom, which her foster son was destined to inherit. Sombre's fascinating life reflects many of the Romantic, political, and colonial trends of a century.

As heir to the throne, Sombre took great advantage of the sensuous pleasures of privilege, but he lost his kingdom to the British and went into exile in London with his very considerable fortune. Despite being Indian and Catholic, Sombre married the daughter of an English Protestant Viscount, who was a prominent defender of slavery.

Sombre bought himself election as a British MP but then was expelled for corruption. His treatment of his aristocratic wife led to his arrest and confinement as a Chancery lunatic. Fleeing to France, he spent years trying to reclaim his sanity and his fortune from those among the British establishment who had done him down.

In this thrilling biography, Michael H Fisher recovers Sombre's strange story and the echoes of his case for modern conceptions of race, privilege and empire.



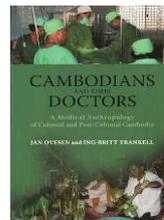
CHINA. THE RISE OF THE INDIVIDUAL IN MODERN CHINESE SOCIETY. Mette Halskov Hansen and Rune Svarverud (eds). NIAS Press. 275pp. \$56.95.

In spite of intense preoccupation with individual and self in modern Western thought, the social sciences have tended to focus on groups and collectives and downplay the individual. This implicit view has also coloured the study of social life in China where both Confucian ethics and Communist policies have shaped collective structures with little room for individual agency and choice.

A strength of this volume is that its authors succeed in depicting the individualisation process in conceptually acute and empirically sensitive terms, and as something with its own distinctively Chinese profile.

That makes this book a 'must read' for all those wanting to understand present-day Chinese society, with all of its ambivalences, contingencies and contradictions.

CAMBODIANS AND THEIR DOCTORS: A MEDICAL ANTHROPOLOGY OF COLONIAL AND POST-COLONIAL CAMBODIA.
By Jan Ovesen and Ing-Britt Trankell. NIAS Press. 301pp. \$56.95.



At face value, this book is about medicine in Cambodia over the last hundred years. At the same time, it is an historical and contemporary anthropology of Cambodia, in that 'medicine' (in the sense of ideas, practices and institutions relating to health and illness) is used as a prism through which to view the colonial and post-colonial society at large.

Rich in ethnographic detail derived from both contemporary anthropological fieldwork and colonial archival material,

Continued page 20

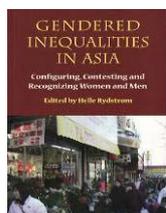
New books from Asia

From page 19

the study is an account of the two medical traditions: the modern, biomedical one first introduced by the French colonial power at the turn of the 20th century, and the indigenous Khmer health cosmology.

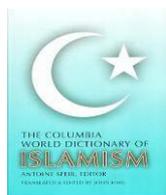
In their reliance on one or the other of the two traditions, the Khmer people have continually been concerned to find efficient medical treatment that also adheres to norms about the morality of social relations.

GENDERED INEQUALITIES IN ASIA:



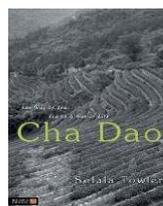
CONFIGURING, CONTESTING AND RECOGNIZING WOMEN AND MEN. Helle Rydstrom (ed.) NIAS Press. 303pp. \$54.95.

Readers will find insightful contributions that consider how gender relations in Asia—and indeed the very meaning of gender itself—are affected by neo-liberalism, globalisation and economic growth; security in all of its meanings; multiculturalism, race and class; family life, power and intergenerational support; religious discourses and activism; and by male norms in politics.



COLUMBIA WORLD DICTIONARY OF ISLAMISM. By Antoine Sfeir & John King. University Presses of California, Columbia and Princeton. 430pp. \$49.95.

Antoine Sfeir's *Columbia World Dictionary of Islamism* is a major resource. Translated for the first time from the original French, this volume features more than 2000 entries on the history of Islamism and Islamic countries.



CHA DAO. THE WAY OF TEA, TEA AS A WAY OF LIFE. By Solala Towler. Jessica Kingsley Publishers. 172pp. \$29.95.

In China, the art and practice of drinking tea is about much more than merely soaking leaves in a cup of hot water.

The tradition is rooted in Daoism, and emerged from a philosophy that honoured living a life of grace and gratitude, balance and harmony, and fulfilment and enjoyment—what the ancient Chinese called Cha Dao, or the Way of Tea.

Cha Dao takes us on a fascinating journey through the Way of Tea, from its origins in the sacred mountains and temples of ancient China, through its links to Daoist concepts such as Wu Wei, or non-striving and the Value of Worthlessness, to the affinity between Tea Mind and the Japanese spirit of Zen.

Interspersed are a liberal helping of quotes from the great tea masters of the past, anecdotes from the author's own trips to China, and traditional tea stories from China and Japan.

The unique health benefits of tea are also explored, and a chapter is devoted to describing the history, characteristics and properties of 25 different tea varieties.

NEW BOOKS FROM THE ASAA SERIES

[Southeast Asia Series](#)
[Women in Asia Series](#)

Books can be ordered through [Asia Bookroom](#)

Job Websites

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

www.jobs.ac.uk advertises worldwide academic posts.
<http://isanet.ccit.arizona.edu/employment.html> is a free-to-access website run by The International Studies Association.
www.reliefweb.int is a free service run by the United Nations to recruit for NGO jobs
www.aboutus.org/DevelopmentEx.com has a paid subscription service providing access to jobs worldwide in the international development industry.
<http://h-net.org/jobs> is a US-based site with a worldwide scope. Asia-related jobs (mostly academic) come up most weeks.
www.aasianst.org is the website of the Association for Asian Studies. New job listings are posted on the first and third Monday of each month. You must be a current AAS member to view job listings.
www.timeshighereducation.co.uk The *Times Higher Education Supplement*.
www.comminet.com is the site of The Communication Initiative Network. It includes listings of jobs, consultants, requests for proposals, events, trainings, and books, journals, and videos for sale related to all development issues and strategies. You can view all posts on these pages without registering, but will need to register to post your items.

Diary Notes

LIVING HISTORIES: THE PERSONAL FACE OF THE AUSTRALIA—JAPAN RELATIONSHIP. A series of six lectures each Friday night, from 6pm (for 6.30pm start) to 8pm, from 28 May to 2 July 2010. Organised by the Japan Foundation, Sydney, the lectures address the topic of people from Japan and Australia who have played roles in shaping the bilateral relationship since its inception. Speakers will shed light on the little-known history of people who built bridges between Japan and Australia. **28 May**, 'The Kure Kids' by Walter Hamilton; **4 June**, 'The Hirodo Family' by Graham Eccles; **18 June**,

'Living Legacies' by Dr Pam Oliver; **25 June**, 'Caught in the Middle' by Roger Pulvers; **2 July**, 'Japanese Migrants and Indigenous Australians' by Dr Yuriko Yamanouchi. Venue: Multipurpose Room, the Japan Foundation, Level 1 Chifley Plaza, 2 Chifley Square, Sydney. Admission free. Bookings Essential. [RSVP](#) or phone 02 8239 0055. [Full details](#). For further details contact Susan Wake 02 8239 0055, fax 02 9222 2168.

ASIAN STUDIES LECTURE SERIES, 5pm–6.30pm, University of Sydney, Thursdays, Common Room, School of Languages and Cultures. **27 May**, Dr Terry Woronov, Sydney University, Anthropology, 'Working class urban youth in contemporary China'. [Further information](#), or 02 9114 1295.

CHALLENGING POLITICS: NEW CRITICAL VOICES, Emerging Scholars Conference, University of Queensland, St Lucia, 10–11 June 2010. An interdisciplinary conference bringing together early career researchers who are interested in power and politics, but are engaging with perspectives, knowledges and concerns that may fall outside the preoccupations of conventional political science.

READING DUTCH FOR HISTORICAL RESEARCH intensive residential course, Kangaroo Island, 14 June–3 July 2010. Open to academics, professionals and current and intending postgraduate students. Participants in the course will receive instruction in reading Dutch historical texts, especially from the period 1850–1950. Dutch texts with the aid of a dictionary. Contact [Helen McMartin](#) for more information.

ASAA BIENNIAL CONFERENCE, Adelaide, 6–8 July 2010. The 18th Biennial Conference of the Asian Studies Association of Australia will be held at the University of Adelaide. Its theme is 'Asia: Crisis and Opportunity'. See the [conference website](#).

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Diary Notes

DISPLACEMENT, DIVISION AND RENEWAL conference, Sarawak, Malaysia, 8–9 July 2010. Organised by the Curtin University Research Unit for the Study of Societies in Change, in conjunction with Curtin University in Sarawak, the conference will be held at Miri, Sarawak, as a sequel to the conference 'Crossing Borders', held in Sarawak in 2007. See [website](#) for further information.

CHINA UPDATE 2010: Canberra, 14 July 2010. Hosted by the Rio Tinto–ANU China Partnership, between the China Economy Program in the Crawford School and Rio Tinto Australia, this is an annual event at which world leading experts present the latest research on the Chinese economy. Venue: HC Coombs Lecture Theatre, ANU. Further information from the [website](#). Enquiries: Ligang Song on 02 6125 3315, Dominic Meagher on 6125 3831.

INDONESIA UPDATE 2010, ANU, Canberra, 24–25 September 2010. The 28th Indonesia Update Conference will focus on employment, living standards and poverty in contemporary Indonesia. The conference aims to provide a research-based assessment, accessible to a general audience, of how Indonesia has travelled in regard to social policies over the past decade. [Enquiries](#).

You are welcome to advertise Asia-related events in this space. Send details to the [Editor](#).

Contributing to Asian Currents

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

About the ASAA

The Asian Studies Association of Australia (ASAA) promotes the study of Asian languages, societies, cultures, and politics in Australia, supports teaching and research in Asian studies and works towards an understanding of Asia in the community at large. It publishes the *Asian Studies Review* journal and holds a biennial conference.

The ASAA believes there is an urgent need to develop a strategy to preserve, renew and extend Australian expertise about Asia. It has called on the government to show national leadership in promoting Australia's Asia knowledge and skills. See 'Maximising Australia's Asia Knowledge: Repositioning and Renewal of a National Asset'.

Asian Currents is published by the ASAA and edited by Allan Sharp. The editorial board consists of Kathryn Robinson, ASAA President; Michele Ford, ASAA Secretary; Mina Roces, ASAA Publications officer; and Lenore Lyons, ASAA Treasurer.