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Deconstructing the Senkaku problem



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over the Senkaku Islands. While history and resources are clear drivers of the dispute, we also need to identify the strategic utility of these issues in the wider geopolitical context of the region. [Read more](#)

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A notable feature of Indonesia's performance in the last decade is that manufacturing has no longer been leading economic growth. Many commentators have interpreted this as a failure of policy. However, this pessimism is not only unfounded but dangerous. [Read more](#)

Shahbag: Bangladesh's new-wave activism

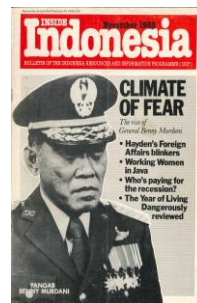


In 1971, Bangladesh suffered one of the 20th century's most horrific genocides and mass atrocities.

The ensuing mass uprising and armed resistance resulted in the birth of a nation-state. Bangladesh, however, never got over its troubled history.

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In the past decade, the rate of breast cancer in Chinese women has increased markedly, but their knowledge of the disease is far from satisfactory.

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Japan, the US and the 'rebalance': deconstructing the Senkaku problem

The standoff between Japan and China over the Senkaku Islands is much more than a territorial dispute.

By Rikki Kersten

Much has been written about the seemingly intractable standoff between Japan and China over the Senkaku Islands. While history and resources are clear drivers of the dispute, we also need to identify the strategic utility of these issues in the wider geopolitical context of the region in order to get to the heart of the problem.

When we expose the essential crux of this dispute over what *The Economist* calls those 'goat-infested rocks' in the East China Sea, we see that the Senkaku issue represents in microcosm the difficulties involved in power shift, strategic competition, and technological change.

The December 2012 edition of *Asian Currents* recalled the historical background of this dispute. Plenty of catalysts for contention are revealed in that narrative: Chinese resentment over Japan's claim to the islands following the first Sino-Japanese war, Japan's invasion of Manchuria and the atrocities Japan committed in China during the second Sino-Japanese war, and the belated 'restoration' to Japan of administrative control of the islands by the US, which had retained control of Okinawa and the Nansei Shoto (Southwestern Islands) until 1971. Great power rivalry is already latent here: at that time the US was embarking on its historic engagement policy with China, as part of its Cold War containment of the Soviet Union.

Japan was a vital part of that strategic play, but mainly through its postwar security treaty with the US. The core bargain of the Yoshida Doctrine, hosting US bases in return for the US ensuring the defence of Japan, set in place in the Asia-Pacific

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region a containment-oriented US force posture centred on Okinawa, and aimed at the Soviet bloc. It also positioned Japan in Chinese thinking as a 'restrained' former foe. The 'cap in the bottle' rationale for the US-Japan alliance was embedded in Chinese thinking from that time onwards. And herein lies the problem: this rationale for Japan's place in the US alliance system is now redundant. Indeed, redundancy permeates the geopolitical rendering of the Senkaku issue today.

This redundancy exists on several levels. First, Cold War containment policy lost its relevance with the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991.



Location of Senkaku Islands.
Maps: Wikipedia Commons.

Despite the ongoing problems associated with the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK)—North Korea—in the post-Cold War era, the US has not simply transferred containment from the Soviet bloc to the DPRK. They are fundamentally different challenges, and the forces stationed on Okinawa and elsewhere in Japan have specific and targeted missions associated with the DPRK threat that are at a far remove from those related to containment.

Furthermore, the notion that in the 21st century the US has shifted containment logic and force posture to China lacks credibility. The US 'rebalance' is premised on enhanced engagement of China in the liberal

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international system, and it explicitly acknowledges China as a rising power that ought to actively be welcomed into, and integrated into, the councils of world politics, trade and security. Calling this containment is disingenuous.

Second, the development of technologies in the cyber and space domains, coupled with emerging concerns over the maritime domain, has transformed the strategic landscape in the 21st century. The transnational, borderless nature of threats emanating from these domains literally makes containment impossible. This threat spectrum is part of what informs the US 'rebalance' to the Indo-Pacific, particularly the security component, i.e. wider dispersal of troops across the region, pre-positioning and preference for rotations over large permanent bases, and up-scaling the contributions of allies and partners. Taken together, these aspects will force a reconsideration of the role and status of Japan in the US alliance system, as well as a transformation of the San Francisco alliance system itself.

Herein lies another problem: this process is only in its infancy, and it is far from clear how this project of reimagining the alliance will unfold, and where it will lead. This is a transitional moment for the US and Japan, and for the region as a whole. But it is premature to declare that this 'cornerstone' alliance has already been redeployed to contain a China threat.

Third, the Senkaku issue triggers what is very much a contemporary strategic concern, namely competition over scarce resources such as energy. While the existence of rich hydrocarbon deposits in the vicinity of the Senkaku islands is significant, it is more the maritime domain that sparks tension. Despite

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This behaviour has demonstrated contempt for the status quo, a mutual agreement not to acknowledge the existence of a problem for fear that they might both then be forced to resolve it.

the clashes between China and Japan over the Senkaku sovereignty issue in recent years, both nations were able to strike an agreement in 2008 to engage in joint development of those resources at the median line of the maritime boundary between them (according to Japan). Spillover from politics to the economic dimension of the Sino-Japanese bilateral relationship is a very recent phenomenon; until now, China and Japan have promoted rationalism between them even as they simultaneously made emotive pitches to their respective domestic constituencies. This is why 'hot economy, cold politics' has been possible.

Of greater consequence are two related concerns, namely what the US and Japan perceive as China's growing anti-access area-denial capabilities, and China's desire to secure passage to the Pacific for their as yet underdeveloped blue water navy. Securing the so-called 'global commons' of air, space, maritime and cyber spheres is likely to be a formative rationale for the reimagined US-Japan alliance, and is a core preoccupation of security policy in the 'rebalance'. This is where the Senkaku dispute acquires strategic salience.

Tensions between Japan and China over the Senkakus have recently escalated, due to behavior on both sides that has 'changed the situation on the ground'. This behaviour has demonstrated contempt for the status quo, a mutual agreement not to acknowledge the existence of a

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problem for fear that they might both then be forced to resolve it.

Japan's decision to arrest the captain of the Chinese fishing vessel involved in a collision with a Japan Coast Guard ship in September 2010, and Japan's September 2012 decision to 'nationalise' three of the islands, were taken by China as a declaration of fluidity on the sovereignty question. Similarly, China's retaliation in the form of squeezing off exports of rare earth metals to Japan, and the weapons radar lock fixed on Japanese assets in January this year, have crossed boundaries that used to preserve the status quo. It remains to be seen whether the Japan and Taiwan agreement over fishing rights in Japan's exclusive economic zone in the area will prompt another round of negative interactions between Japan and China.

All of this matters for many reasons. But high on the list is the fact that contestation over these goat-infested rocks may trigger a challenge to the integrity of the US alliance system before the 'rebalance' even gets its strategic underpinning. If a limited skirmish over the Senkakus were to expose the reluctance of the US to come to the aid of an ally, as Article 5 of the US-Japan Security Treaty mandates, then the security guarantees of the entire alliance system will be called into question. The last thing the US wants to do is get involved in an armed conflict between China and Japan. The US has engaged in concerted behind-the-scenes diplomacy in recent years to encourage both sides to decompress, and engage once more in quiet, constructive diplomacy. As of April 2013, this seemed to be gaining some traction, with regime change in both Japan and China in recent months acting as circuit breakers.

The hardy goats inhabiting those rocky outcrops in the East China Sea are bearing witness to history in the making.

In the 21st century, the geopolitics of unipolarity have been transcended by a recognition on the part of the region that multilateralism is an inevitable and necessary medium for meeting the challenges of the new era. Some people may call this counterbalancing against an assertive China, but calling it containment is invalid in a world that is in strategic transition and in a region where this historic inflection is most pronounced.

At its core, the Senkaku problem is a trilateral one—between Japan, China and the US. But it is also symbolic of a profound shift in the packaging and rationale of power, its projection and its institutionalisation. As such, the hardy goats inhabiting those rocky outcrops in the East China Sea are bearing witness to history in the making.

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Indonesia's manufacturing pessimism unfounded

The slowdown of manufacturing growth in Indonesia should not be interpreted as failure, but rather as an indicator of successful development.

By Ross McLeod

Prior to the Asian Financial Crisis in 1997–98, Indonesia's manufacturing sector grew considerably more rapidly than the economy as a whole, increasing its share of total output (GDP) from just 7 per cent in 1963 to 27 per cent in 1997.

In the late 1980s and early 1990s much of this manufacturing relied on low-skilled labour, which Indonesia had in abundance. Since low-skill individuals comprise the bulk of the poor, rapidly increasing demand for such workers in the manufacturing sector contributed significantly to reducing poverty, from 29 per cent in 1980 to just 11 per cent in 1996—a remarkable achievement.

A notable feature of Indonesia's performance in the last decade, however, is that manufacturing has no longer been leading economic growth, with its share of total output peaking at 29 per cent in 2001 and then declining to 25 per cent by 2010. Given that manufacturing had contributed so much to raising incomes and reducing poverty, many commentators have interpreted this as a failure of policy. However, this pessimism is not only unfounded but is dangerous, because it provides the impetus for unwarranted and counterproductive policy changes.

Any economy has three main components: the primary, secondary and tertiary sectors. Primary production covers agriculture (defined to include fishing and forestry) and mining (defined to include crude oil and natural gas production); secondary production

refers to manufacturing; and tertiary production to services.

In the early phase of a country's development a very large proportion of GDP is in the form of agricultural products. As development gets underway, agriculture begins to decline in relative terms, making possible a reallocation of productive inputs to manufacturing. During this phase manufacturing grows rapidly relative to agriculture: indeed, many observers tend to equate industrialisation with development. This process does not continue indefinitely, however: manufacturing eventually relinquishes its role as 'engine of growth', and its share of output stabilises.

Manufacturing rarely provides more than about one-third of total production. The main explanation is to be found, not in supply side constraints or competition from other countries, but in the evolving structure of consumer demand.

Broadly speaking, individuals desire to consume products from all three major sectors, but the relative importance of each depends on their income. When income is very low, individuals are forced to put a very high priority on food in order to survive, producing much of this food themselves. Later, as incomes rise, more can be spent on other things, such as clothing and housing. Labour is reallocated from agriculture into simple manufacturing during this phase. Further increases in income allow greater expenditure on more sophisticated manufactures (radios

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and TV sets, motorcycles, washing machines, refrigerators, and the like). Many of these items are imported rather than produced locally, and paid for with the revenue from exports of agricultural and mining commodities and other manufactured goods.

As development progresses even further, rising incomes are used increasingly for purchasing more and better services, such as education, health care, public transport, entertainment, telecommunications, prepared meals and beverages, beauty treatments, tourism, participatory sport, banking and finance, and the repair and maintenance of consumer durables, vehicles and housing.

What is special about services is that, overwhelmingly, they cannot be imported but must be produced domestically. Thus more and more productive inputs must be devoted to services, correspondingly reducing their availability to the primary and secondary sectors of the economy. The slowdown of manufacturing growth in Indonesia in recent years therefore should not be interpreted pessimistically as some kind of failure, but rather as an indicator of successful development. Indonesian average incomes have risen enormously over the last few decades, and there is now quite a large middle class whose spending emphasises luxuries rather than basic needs.

Surprisingly, this interpretation is largely absent from commentary on the Indonesian economy, yet the limits to manufacturing growth are readily evident in data on the share of manufacturing around the globe (Figures 1 and 2). The rise of manufacturing eventually peters out, with its share first stabilising at a

quarter to a third of GDP, and typically falling thereafter.

For the so-called 'industrialised' countries the peak was typically achieved decades ago, and in The Philippines and India the share of manufacturing remains much the same now as it was in 1960. Manufacturing has been declining in China for over three decades. Indonesia reached the turning point around 2001, while Thailand appears to have done so in about 2003.

Figure 1: Decline of Manufacturing in Selected 'Industrialised' Countries (% of GDP)

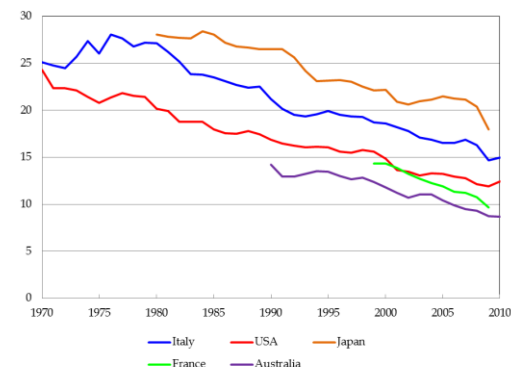
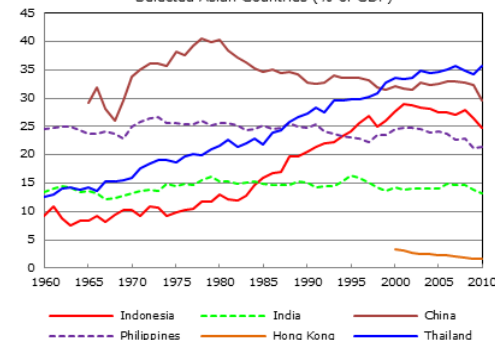


Figure 2: Rise and Decline of Manufacturing in Selected Asian Countries (% of GDP)



The basic pattern is clear: manufacturing eventually surrenders its role as the leading growth sector. We should be neither surprised nor concerned that this has already happened in Indonesia; on the contrary, we must recognise that it is now the turn of the tertiary sector to increase its share of total output, and to provide the bulk of new employment opportunities for the growing labour force.

The manufacturing sector has always

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attracted much attention from policymakers. In the newly independent Indonesia there was considerable debate as to whether policy should favour agriculture or manufacturing. Neither view prevailed: successive governments tried to promote both sectors.

During the Soeharto era agriculture was heavily supported by providing subsidised seedlings, fertilisers, insecticides, herbicides, irrigation services and credit to small farmers. At the same time, industrialisation was boosted through policies of protection against imports and by heavy state investment in 'strategic' manufacturing subsectors. In terms of actual outcomes, the share of manufacturing in total output rose while that of agriculture fell. It seems doubtful that these policies had a positive impact on GDP and national income, however, because they all worked against Indonesia's comparative advantage.

The policy approach changed rapidly in the mid-1980s because of the reversal of the 1970s oil boom, which had provided the government with ample funds that could be directed to both sectors. As these funds dried up, policymakers chose instead to allow markets a far greater role in determining the direction of structural change in the economy. Tariff protection was reduced to low levels in most manufacturing subsectors, as were subsidies to agriculture and the level of state investment in its own enterprises. This policy reversal enabled a return to rapid growth in the face of a huge reduction in oil revenue. Manufacturing continued to grow, but was now based on the kinds of products for which Indonesia was competitive in world markets, especially textiles, clothing and footwear. Meanwhile, agriculture continued to grow slowly, and thus

The major concern with 'manufacturing pessimism' is that governments always feel bound to 'do something' when there is a perceived problem.

saw an ongoing decline in its share of total output.

It is interesting that few people at the time regarded the relative decline of agriculture as a matter for concern—except perhaps some in the agriculture ministry—no doubt because this was accompanied by rapid growth in manufacturing output and employment. This may be contrasted with the present situation, where it is the turn of manufacturing to decline in relative terms.

For some reason the services sector just does not have the same appeal to policymakers and commentators. The stereotypical image of the services sector seems to be that it is dominated by low-level informal work: street vendors, pedicab and motorcycle taxi drivers, gardeners, household servants, small-scale caterers and the like.

In reality, the services sector also provides employment for surgeons and nurses, university lecturers and schoolteachers, airline pilots and bus drivers, engineers, architects, lawyers, accountants, economists, bankers and information technology specialists. Relatively few individuals follow such vocations in highly undeveloped countries, but in the advanced nations today there are vast numbers in these kinds of professions. Not all young people in Indonesia will enter these kinds of jobs, of course, but even lower level occupations such as shop assistants, beauticians, metalworkers and mechanics are likely to provide better paid work than was available to their parents' generation.

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The major concern with 'manufacturing pessimism' is that governments always feel bound to 'do something' when there is a perceived problem. When the problem is imagined rather than real, this is almost inevitably counterproductive. In the early days of Indonesia's independence, 'doing something' involved costly and wasteful exercises in import substitution and government investment in heavy industry. In the current context, it involves attempts to force domestic refinement of natural resources prior to export—flying in the face of high domestic processing costs. The value to Indonesia of the natural resources gifted by Mother Nature is the residual between the world price of the refined commodity and the per unit cost of extraction and refinement of the raw material.

Government insistence on domestic refinement implies higher costs, since the profit motive would otherwise ensure that refining occurred at the least cost location elsewhere. Hardly anybody gains from this attempt to promote a new kind of manufacturing in Indonesia, because the policy dissipates the value derived from the exploitation of its natural resources through unnecessarily high processing costs.

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Applications open for AsiaBound study

Australian tertiary students will get the opportunity to study in Asia as part of the new AsiaBound program, which opened on 6 April to higher education and vocational education and training (VET) institutions.

Prime Minister Julia Gillard and Tertiary Education Minister Craig Emerson said AsiaBound was part of the Gillard government's implementation of initiatives flowing from the White Paper on Australian in the Asian Century, released in October last year.

Tertiary education providers are invited to apply for grants under the first round of the \$37 million program, to be awarded to Australian students for study in Asia as early as the second semester this year.

Grants available include \$5000 for semester study, \$2000 for short-term study and \$1000 for language training.

Approximately 3600 students each year will be able to study in Asia as part of their academic program. This includes 600 VET students.

AsiaBound supports practicums, clinical placements, internships, research trips and volunteer projects, as well as institution-based study for up to two semesters.

From 2014 eligible students will also have access to up to \$7500 through OS-HELP to put towards the costs of their studies in Asia.

The Gillard government also announced the opening of the 2014 Round of the Australia Awards Endeavour Scholarships and Fellowships program. Guidelines for both programs can be found at the AsiaBound [website](#) or DIISRT [website](#).

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Shahbag: Bangladesh embraces new-wave activism

The Shahbag movement, instead of healing old wounds, has opened up new ones in Bangladesh society.

By Faham Abdus Salam

Protests, uprisings, awakenings, revolutions—usually the loftier the word, the easier it is to sum up the achievements and demands of such events in the historical context.

The French Revolution, for example, transformed society by overthrowing absolute monarchy and the three-estate system; the October Revolution gave socialism to the Russians; the Arab Spring forced some Middle East dictators from power and paved the way for a democracy of sorts. And while the achievements of the Occupy Wall Street movement remain hotly debated, the demands of the protesters were clear—an end to the growing economic and social inequality in the United States.

All of these moments, whether successful or not, had clear aims stemming from the desire for change. It is not so easy, however, to define Bangladesh's Shahbag Movement, as the demands, aims and leadership of the protest have changed dramatically over the course of the last two months.

In 1971, Bangladesh suffered, at the hands of the Pakistani military, one of the 20th century's most horrific genocides and mass atrocities. The ensuing mass uprising and armed resistance resulted in the birth of a nation-state. Bangladesh, however, never got over its troubled history, as every government since the nation's inception has been either helpless, or politically unwilling, to try the war criminals—mainly Pakistani military officials—and their

local collaborators, infamously known as *Rajakar*.

Eventually, the issue of war crimes trials became a tool in the political power struggle, and created a culture of impunity. In the 42 years since the war, however, the demands of the Bangladeshi people for justice did not wane completely, and the landslide election victory in 2008 of the ruling Awami League (AL) was widely attributed to the party's pre-election promise to bring the key war crimes perpetrators to justice.



Demonstrators at Shahbag Square, February 2013. Photo: Wikipedia Commons.

In 2010, the government established an International Crimes Tribunal (ICT)¹, and so far eight leading members of the Jamaat-e-

Islami (JI)—the leading Islamist political party, which actively sided against the freedom fighters in 1971—and two members of the Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP)—the main opposition party in parliament—have faced trial.

It is against this backdrop that the ICT, on 5 February 2013, sentenced JI's assistant secretary-general Abdul Kader Mollah to life in prison for war crimes committed in 1971.

The verdict immediately came under suspicion as being the result of possible collusion between AL and JI, and was seen by many as lenient. A handful of bloggers and online activists called for an immediate protest in Shahbag, a major intersection in the heart of the capital, Dhaka.

Initially, the protestors could not have anticipated the popular support

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they would receive—and probably because of the frequent use of the contempt power by Bangladeshi courts, no one had criticised the ICT over its verdict. The demand of the protestors was straightforward: the death penalty for Mollah and other war criminals.

Social media and high mobile phone usage among urban youth played a vital role in the unprecedented popular support for the coming protest, and the result was phenomenal. Hundreds of thousands of protestors joined in the biggest spontaneous popular movement of the past two decades. Bangladeshis from all around the world also lent 'virtual' support.



Demonstrators at Shahbag Square. Photo: Wikipedia Commons.

Bangladeshi author Tahmima Anam, who wrote two highly praised novels that focused on the events of 1971,

described the mood of the protest arena as like that at a fairground where 'children were accompanied by their parents, vendors were selling food, play was staged by the performers, protestors were singing, playing guitars, reciting poems², and of course chanting for the death penalty for war criminals.

While the core appeal of the movement—the trial of the war criminals—resonated with the educated urban middle class, the overall message of the protest was highly confusing. As the crowds began to grow larger, so did the number of demands and slogans. The perils of a leaderless movement were evident—anyone could ask for anything, and constant media coverage made it impossible to

separate individual demands and those of the masses.

At the height of this mass protest, the mainstream media endorsed the proceedings with such euphoric zeal that it became difficult to distinguish media personnel from activists. Whether the public should coerce the courts into delivering a certain verdict, or whether a certain verdict—capital punishment—could be a satisfactory form of justice, or whether blatantly chauvinistic expressions of Bengali nationalism over non-Bengali ethnicity in national discourse was to be commended—such necessary and relevant questions did not enter the media portrayal of the Shahbag movement.

The initial reaction of the two major political parties was confusion and bewilderment. While the main opposition BNP party remained suspicious of the movement's goals and credibility (JI is an electoral ally of BNP and two of its leading party men are facing trial), amidst massively growing public dissatisfaction over accusations of high-profile corruption and economic mismanagement, the ruling Awami League astutely embraced the movement for political advantage.

The government—so far, ruthless in crushing the voice of dissidents (at 8 April 2013, almost the entire top echelon of BNP is behind the bars)—promptly arranged police protection and logistical support for the protesters and started providing them free meals on a daily.

A stage was set up in the main arena (*Gonojagoron Moncho*) for the announcement of official statements from the movement. Critics of the Shahbag movement complained that the **official six-point demands** proclaimed from the stage did not reflect popular sentiment, as the movement was co-opted by AL—the party known for its political savvy and guardianship of the 'grand narrative' of 1971. Within days, the

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demonstration that had started essentially as a protest against the ruling party decisively turned into a pro-establishment movement. The reaction to the Shahbag movement was multifaceted, but none was as visible and significant as the reassertion of Muslim identity in the national discourse. *Amar Desh*, a leading Bengali daily known for its staunch pro-Islamic values and strong opposition to AL, ran a series of reports accusing some eminent bloggers of being anti-Islamic and atheists. While it is true that a handful of bloggers were peddling hate speech and anti-Islamic fundamentalism, they were not representative of the large Bangladeshi blogging community. The newspapers, however, convinced their conservative readership that 'all bloggers of the Shahbag movement are atheists'.

This narrative induced a countermovement of an unforeseen magnitude. The Hifazat-e-Islam (Protectors of Islam, a nonpolitical organisation), despite the government's blatantly obstructionist policy, organised a successful 'long march' to the capital on 6 April. Its leaders, virtually unknown until then, demanded the introduction of a blasphemy law, pressed for the death penalty for atheist bloggers, and proposed banning free mixing of men and women.

The Islam question has always been relevant in Bangladeshi politics, but for the first time in the history of the country, where a generally moderate version of Islam is preached and practised in national affairs, Islamic nationalism was exhibited brazenly at the center stage.

Ironically, at the height of euphoria, Shahbag officials demanded a ban on Islamist politics, which was clearly not the demand that protestors had

gathered for in the first place. Perhaps the educated urban middle class was mistaken in its assessment of its own strength, and this ultimately enabled the Islamists to demonstrate their strong presence.

Islamist activists, so far victims of an aggressive, political de-Islamisation campaign by the AL government, have vowed vengeance, which, if anything else, could put the lives of minority communities (commonly perceived as AL supporters) in grave danger.

It is too soon to predict the influence Islamists will be able to exert in coming days, but it seems inevitable that the Islam question will become more significant in Bangladeshi politics. On the other hand, the Shahbag movement, which started out, in spirit, as an attempt to heal old wounds, has instead created new ones. Although the spirit of the initial protest remains alive, it is difficult to draw similar conclusions about the ongoing significance of the movement.

The main lesson of the Shahbag movement is that, perhaps, losing the support of the middle ground is not an effective way of dealing with the past—a lesson that may haunt a new generation of protestors for a long time to come.

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Election year renews focus on Iran's ethnic diversity

Iran's largest ethnic minority group—the Azeris—demand greater recognition and respect.

By James Barry

The campaign for Iran's 11th presidential elections is not even underway yet and already the issue of Azerbaijan is in the news.

Recently, the English-language Fars News Agency reported that several Azeri-speaking members of the Iranian Parliament are petitioning for the re-annexing of the Republic of Azerbaijan, or 'northern Azerbaijan'. Their reasoning: the Treaty of Torkmanchai, in which Iran ceded the region to Russia in 1828, has now expired and the Islamic Republic wants it back.

Though the seriousness of such a proposition is questionable—Azerbaijan is a sovereign state and no longer part of Russia—it is understandable in the light of the recent tensions between Iran and Azerbaijan. On one hand this is related to the former Soviet Republic's friendly relations with Iran's arch enemy Israel, while on the other Iran is retaliating for what is seen as the interference by the Azerbaijanis with Iran's Azeri-speaking population. The rhetoric of reunification exemplifies this: in the early 1990s, the Republic of Azerbaijan used the same propaganda in calling for an annexation of 'southern Azerbaijan' (that is, Iranian Azerbaijan).

More recently, Iran has blamed Azerbaijan and Turkey for the appearance of Azeri nationalist sentiment at football matches in 2011. In particular, supporters of Traktor-Sazi, a club based in the Iranian Azeri city of Tabriz, have displayed Azeri and Turkish flags, and chanted ethno-nationalist

slogans as a show of defiance. Though instances such as these are not isolated, and indeed many Traktor-Sazi supporters explained their actions as a response to racist chants from their opponent's fans, it is not something that sits well in a multi-ethnic state like Iran.

But it is also an election year and whatever your faith in Iran's democratic institutions, there is no way that any candidate can ignore the Azeris who, at perhaps 25 per cent of Iran's total population, make up a significant portion of voters.

During the last presidential election campaign in 2009, the controversial candidate Mir-Hossein Mousavi, himself an Azeri-speaker, campaigned in Iranian Azerbaijan for the increased official use of Azeri in government for this purpose. It is not unlikely that candidates this time around will make similar promises to Azeri voters.



The bazaar of Tehran: many Azeris have blended into mainstream society.

Azeris form the largest ethnic minority group in Iran and constitute a majority in four of the Islamic Republic's 31 provinces. More importantly, Azeris live in large numbers in every major city, especially the capital Tehran.

Despite being an ethnic minority, Azeris are well integrated; as Shi'a Muslims, they are religiously indistinguishable from the majority of the population. Because of this they are sometimes not considered a minority at all, since Shi'a Islam is the state religion and a central pillar of identity.

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Many Iranian Azeris have blended into mainstream society, speak perfect Persian and hold positions of influence. Furthermore, they have made crucial contributions to the political development of Iran over the past century. Iranian Azerbaijan equipped the Constitutional Movement of the early 20th century with its leaders. The same can also be said of the 1979 Revolution which overthrew the Shah. Indeed the Supreme Leader of Iran, the final authority of all policy, has Azeri background. And today the Azeri community continues to supply Iran with many of its leading minds in academia, sciences, politics, sport and the arts.

While their integration is often used to demonstrate the degree to which Azeris 'fit in' as a minority in Iran, it does not mean that they do not come across prejudice. In the past, Azeris have encountered resentment from the ethnic mainstream, and have faced restrictions on the use of their language in public life. During the reign of Reza Shah (1925–1941) Azeris were stigmatised as Turkified Iranians whose language was no more than a linguistic colonisation of Iran's Persian purity. Nevertheless, the constitution of the Islamic Republic permits the use of Azeri in much of the media, particularly in provinces where it is the dominant language, though Persian has precedence as a lingua franca in education.

My own research in Iran allowed me to meet many Iranian Azeris, particularly in Tehran where I was living in 2010. The people I encountered were very proud of their heritage, but included in this both their ethnicity and Iranian nationality. I have met several Azeris who identified themselves, or were introduced to me by others, as *tork*

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While their integration is often used to demonstrate the degree to which Azeris 'fit in' as a minority in Iran, it does not mean that they do not come across prejudice.

(Turk). For some outsiders this is a source of confusion; the term *tork* actually describes a category of Iranian citizen and does not refer to their nationality. In other words, to be a Turk does not mean a citizen of Turkey.

Iranian Azeris of course feel some cultural affinity with the Republic of Azerbaijan, but this does not extend to a desire of reunification, except among a minority of extreme nationalists (and a few members of parliament who want to score political points). The reality is that 160 years of Russian rule has created many differences between Azeris of Iran and those of Azerbaijan. Religion is a key component in this. Shi'ism, while nominally adhered to by many in the Republic of Azerbaijan, does not have as an important a place there as it does in Iran. The Sovietisation of Azerbaijan fostered a more secular mindset, which is even reflected in the language where two separate scripts—the Turkish-Latin and Perso-Arabic scripts—are used for the same language in Azerbaijan and Iran respectively. This alone acts as a barrier to unity.

In Iran, the concept of *tork* described above is centred on language and, by extension, ethnicity. It is commonly associated with certain regions of Iran and at times refers to Persian-speaking Iranians who have 'Turkish' descent. In addition to this, the term is not solely associated with Iranian Azeris and is also applied to ethnic Turkmen, Qashqais, Khorasani Turks and other speakers of Turkic languages.

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Elections focus on Iran's ethnic diversity

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As a result, the way that Iranian Azeris articulate their identity is wonderfully ambivalent. One good friend of mine describes herself as Persian when speaking English, for example, but calls herself Turkish when speaking Persian. Importantly, these are labels of her choosing and she resents other Iranians calling her a Turk (especially if they do so out of prejudice) as well as other Azeris dismissing her as Persian because she has only one Azeri parent. She is conscious that she has greater fluency in Persian than Azeri, and occasionally expresses a desire to improve her proficiency in the latter language. But for her this is not a barrier to identity, and she is by no means unique among Iranian Azeris for identifying this way.

Nevertheless, some Iranian Azeris do express strong ethno-nationalist sentiments, though ulterior motives can usually explain this. I remember meeting one Azeri man in Tehran whose apartment was filled with nationalist emblems, including an Azeri and a Turkish flag adorning his bedroom walls. At first I thought this nationalism was primordial, but fairly soon I realised that it had more to do with his dislike of the Iranian government. In addition to these two flags, he also owned a pre-revolution Iranian monarchist flag, which embodied his political stance and, by extension, his ethnic affiliation.

But of course life is not so straightforward and there is no question that many Iranian Azeris would like to see a greater status given to their language in their country. Some of those who I met specifically expressed a desire to see an increased amount of bilingualism in education and other aspects of the society, especially in districts where

The Islamic republic is willing to tolerate expressions of ethnic diversity provided that it does not pose a threat to their authority or take precedence over religion.

Azeri is the first language. These feelings have been acknowledged by several Iranian politicians, both Azeri and non-Azeri, with even the current President Mahmud Ahmadinejad attempting to win over his audience at political rallies in Iranian Azerbaijan by trying to speak in Azeri.

Though some commentators may perceive Iran's ethnic diversity as a potential threat to the cohesiveness of the state, not to mention a source of tension with their neighbours, the reality is that most Iranian Azeris are well integrated into the society they live in and see themselves primarily as Iranians. Their principal issue of contention is a demand for greater recognition and respect from the mainstream of society.

Unlike previous regimes, the Islamic republic is willing to tolerate expressions of ethnic diversity provided that it does not pose a threat to their authority or take precedence over religion. For this reason, it will not be surprising if Iranian Azeri voters use this election campaign as an opportunity to lobby for the increased use of their language in the four provinces of Iranian Azerbaijan. But just as very few people anticipated the 1979 revolution, so too it is near impossible to predict the future course of ethnic relations in Iran with any real accuracy.

James Barry is an assistant lecturer in Anthropology at Monash University. His PhD thesis focused on transgenerational conceptions of identity among Armenian Christians in Iran.

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'Bringing Indonesia alive': *Inside Indonesia* celebrates 30 years

Thirty years on, *Inside Indonesia's* role is as vital as ever.

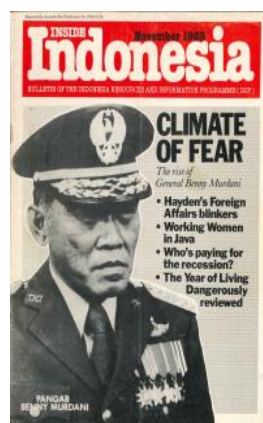
By Thushara Dibley and Jemma Purdey

In the July 1987 edition of *Inside Indonesia*, leading New Order dissident Adi Sasono, who was visiting Sydney at the time, told our reporter, 'Indonesian critics do not have the Australian luxury of discussing subjects like human rights and corruption. We can't exceed the limits of debate, at least not yet. Indonesia has no room for heroes'.

Inside Indonesia's founders never imagined themselves as heroes in any guise whatsoever, but they were aware of the capacity of a publication based outside Indonesia to provide a mouthpiece for critics of the New Order regime inside it—through which they may indeed 'indulge' in the heroic acts of discussing human rights, corruption and social inequality.

Launched in late 1983, *Inside Indonesia* magazine published 89 quarterly editions as a print publication and since 2007 has existed as a free online magazine, also publishing additional articles weekly. Late this year, edition 114 will mark exactly 30 years of continuous publishing. In that time, *Inside Indonesia's* readership and medium have both changed—yet the magazine retains an important role mediating the relationship between Indonesia and its English speaking audience, particularly in Australia.

Established in Melbourne at the height of the New Order, *Inside Indonesia* had two objectives. The first was, as Sasono described, the need to provide an international voice for fledgling NGOs and activists working for change in Indonesia. At the same time, it had a decidedly



The cover of the first issue: November 1983

Australian domestic focus and intention: to highlight the work being done by Indonesian human rights activists who were largely invisible to Australians. At the time many Australians had difficulty distinguishing Suharto from

the wider Indonesian population, principally as a consequence of the focus on the occupation of East Timor. It sought to improve Australians' 'Indonesia' knowledge beyond what was available in the mainstream media.

Since 1998, Indonesia has ushered in social and political reforms, a system of democratic rule, and media and press freedoms. With the burgeoning of the internet, the citizen journalist and a plethora of independent publishing houses, the scene is vastly different today from what it was in the 1980s when dissidents like Sasono had to leave Indonesia to have their protests heard, and *Inside Indonesia* was posted to that country in a paper bag.

Here in Australia, the media was also changed: the mainstream press and television media have correspondents placed in-country who regularly cover 'Indonesia' across a variety of issues. It could be argued that Australians have access to more information about Indonesia than they did in the 1980s. So, what is its purpose and who is the audience for *Inside Indonesia* today? Is an Australian-based magazine focused on issues of social justice and equality in Indonesia still

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relevant? The answer is an emphatic, yes. *Inside Indonesia* continues to occupy an important niche in the provision of information on and from Indonesia. It remains a trusted source for in-depth and high-quality stories, from a humanitarian perspective, that look behind the headlines and to the margins of Indonesian society. The magazine is remembered by many Indonesians involved in the activist movement during the New Order period as fulfilling precisely the role intended by its founders—as a champion for their little-heard struggles, transmitting and amplifying them to the outside world.



Writer and activist Andreas Harsono believes *Inside Indonesia* has always provided—and continues to do so—crucial mentoring for activists in

Indonesia, East Timor and Australia, and points in particular to *Inside Indonesia* co-founder Pat Walsh as an exemplar. This decades-long commitment to representing and interpreting the lives of ordinary Indonesians—Muslims, labourers, children, activists, students and women—their struggles and the political and social complexities they face, resonates with Indonesians today, many more of whom have access to the magazine than previously.

Over the decades there has been a perceptible shift in the demographic of the magazine's readership and authorship. The *Inside Indonesia* website receives 3000–4000 hits a day, with most of these originating inside Indonesia itself and an equal

Nowadays the magazine is very unlikely to include articles from an overtly Australian perspective or commentary on the Australia–Indonesia relationship itself.

percentage originating from other countries outside Australia.

It is now the case that *Inside Indonesia* has more readers in Jakarta than in Melbourne or Amsterdam. Its writers, though still predominantly non-Indonesians, are also more likely to live in Indonesia or to visit there far more frequently than in the past. These changes, assisted by the magazine's transition online, have had a significant impact, if very gradually and in concert with the opening up of Indonesia's political landscape.

Quite different to the situation in the 1980s and 1990s, nowadays the magazine is very unlikely to include articles from an overtly Australian perspective or commentary on the Australia–Indonesia relationship itself. Nevertheless, precisely because of the way the magazine has changed, it is well-positioned to play a central role in strengthening that relationship, particularly in the context of Australia's changing relationship with Asia.

Through the Asian Century White Paper published in 2012, Australian policymakers expressed an explicit commitment to a 'deeper and broader' engagement with countries in the region. As Australian businesses and public institutions respond to the White Paper by seeking strategies to become more 'Asia capable', *Inside Indonesia* offers precisely the platform they need for in-depth understanding of Indonesia in particular. Like educators, who have a long tradition of placing *Inside Indonesia* articles on reading

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syllabuses for school and university students across the nation, Australian business people and policymakers can use the magazine to develop a more complex understanding of one of their closest neighbours.

Such a role for *Inside Indonesia* continues to be crucial in the context of Australia's relationship with Indonesia. Issues including separatist movements, terrorist groups and Islamic 'extremism' dominate news headlines and work remains to engage our non-Indonesian readership on the complexities of these issues beyond what they find in the mainstream Australian media.¹ In some respects the editorial for edition 6 (Dec 1985) sadly still rings true: 'Many otherwise concerned people have a mental block about Indonesia ... Indonesia appears prickly, hostile, inaccessible and unattractive. Put simply, many just do not like what they know and hear of Indonesia. *Inside Indonesia* exists to challenge this partial and alienating perception of Indonesia.'

Thirteen years into the Asian Century the number of Australians learning the Indonesian language is at levels far below those of the 1970s and 1980s when *Inside Indonesia's* founders decried the isolationism of the Australian community and its poor Indonesia-awareness. Nonetheless, Australians are visiting Indonesia in increasing numbers year on year and trade and commerce between the countries is expanding.

Regardless of the political imperatives issuing from Canberra, *Inside Indonesia's* role of delivering to an Australian readership English-language content about Indonesia that is of high quality and outside the mainstream is as vital as it ever was.

*'Bringing Indonesia alive' was the title of the editorial in the first edition of *Inside Indonesia*, November 1983.

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Thushara Dibley is a Board member, editor and web manager for *Inside Indonesia*. *Jemma Purdey* is Chair of the *Inside Indonesia Board*.

New perspectives on 1965 violence in Indonesia

By Vanessa Hearman

Scholars and activists reported on new research and investigations into the violence in Indonesia in 1965–66 at a conference held in Canberra in February.

The army, under Major General Suharto, led the persecution of leftists in Indonesia after a coup attempt on 30 September 1965 which was blamed on the Indonesian Communist Party. The violence resulted in the elimination of the Communist Party as a political force, the death of an estimated half a million people and the rise of Suharto's New Order regime.

The conference, *New perspectives on the 1965 violence in Indonesia*, was held at the Australian National University (ANU) from 11–13 February. Support from the [Asian Studies Association of Australia](#) and the [Research School of Asia and the Pacific](#) (ANU) was critical to the holding of the conference.

There was strong interest in the conference both in Indonesia and in Australia following the release of a report last year by the Indonesian Human Rights Commission arguing that the Indonesian military was responsible for crimes against

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humanity in connection with the 1965–66 violence. Around 100 people attended the conference, with two days of presentations by primarily Australian-based and Indonesian academics, community researchers and activists.

Presentations dealt with the role of the state in the violence, patterns of the violence, ethnic and religious factors, the effects on women and children and ways of addressing the violence and its legacies in many different parts of Indonesia.

Presenters from Indonesia included Professor Asvi Warman Adam from the Indonesian Institute of Sciences and Mr Nurkholis, Commissioner from the National Human Rights Commission and head of the taskforce which investigated the violence. Dr Mery Kolimon from the Eastern Indonesian Women's Network (Jaringan Perempuan Indonesia Timur, JPIT) and Nurlaela Lamasitudju from the human rights organisation SKP-HAM Palu in Central Sulawesi discussed the kinds of advocacy work done in Eastern Indonesia on this issue. Considerable advances have been made in Palu, where the local mayor, Rusdi Mastura, apologised personally and on behalf of the city of Palu to the victims of the violence.

The last day of the conference was a workshop reserved for researchers who had data collections or access to such data on this violence.

Participants agreed to create a joint catalogue showing the kinds of 1965–66-related research materials connected to each organisation and participant. The workshop was led by Ms Sri Lestari Wahyuningroem.

The conference proceedings will be edited by Professor Robert Cribb from the ANU. Dr Annie Pohlman of the University of Queensland will edit a journal special edition containing some of the papers presented at the

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conference. Ms Vanessa Hearman will initiate the formation of a research network, drawing its membership from the conference participants as a start, to further consolidate links formed at the conference.

Vanessa Hearman is lecturer in Indonesian Studies at the University of Sydney.

NSW Premier launches Asialink Sydney

Developing the Asia capability of New South Wales' workforce could mean the difference between success and failure as the state diversified its direct investment profile across the economy, the NSW Premier, Barry O'Farrell, told the [launch of Asialink's Sydney office](#) on 14 March.

Asialink had obviously reached a similar conclusion—that, if Australia and New South Wales were to make the most of their Asia-Pacific economic and cultural opportunities, 'we need to get really good at what we do, and then get better and better', the premier said.

Asialink has developed an enviable reputation over 20 years and helped skill some of our most successful Asia-Pacific business practitioners,' he remarked.

Mr O'Farrell said the Australian Government's White Paper on Australia in the Asian Century had set some national direction and also validated much of New South Wales' 2021 Strategic Plan to accelerate international engagement to achieve the state's economic growth targets.

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China's fashionable approach to breast cancer awareness

The use of celebrities to promote breast cancer awareness in China has a double purpose.

By Yue Gao

In contemporary societies, many people rely on the media for knowledge about diseases, their treatment and prognoses. It is not only an important source of medical information, but also of cultural messages and ideologies.

This heavy dependence on the media for health-related information is also prevalent in today's China, partly because Chinese doctors are no longer believed to be trustworthy and because medical resources have become scarcer.

During the past decade, the incidence of breast cancer in Chinese women has increased markedly, but their knowledge of the disease remains far from satisfactory. But as a main source for defining breast cancer culturally and communicating knowledge about it, what are Chinese women learning from the media? To what extent does the information provided meet their medical and cultural needs, and how does the depiction of the disease help shape the way women deal with breast cancer, their bodies and identities?

Since 2003, *Trend Health*, a monthly fashion magazine targeting young and vibrant urban middle-class women in China has published a themed 'Pink Ribbon Campaign' issue each October—globally recognised as breast cancer awareness month. The magazine invites three or four Chinese female celebrities to be campaign spokeswomen for that year—and in 2005 took the bold decision to photograph the celebrities unclothed.

Since the liberalisation and commercialisation of the media in



Trend Health magazine, Oct. 2007.
Photo: *Trend Health* homepage.

China following the economic reforms that began in the 1980s, tabloid formats and soft news and entertainment content—including celebrity stories—have developed rapidly in order to attract audiences and advertising.¹ This has given rise to

a flourishing celebrity culture similar to that in the West.

During the same period, China has undergone a profound social transformation, among which the retreat of government from the health care sector and the privatisation of health issues are very significant. Chinese people are now required to make their own life choices and to be 'self-responsible' in all areas of their lives, including their health. This proliferation of self-governing and neoliberal values, however, does not manifest itself in a shift in the ideology of the socialist political regime but actually helps sustain socialist rule and realise 'socialism from afar'²—as the use of celebrities in *Trend Health's* Pink Ribbon campaigns demonstrates.

On the cover of the October 2007 *Trend Health* (above), three celebrities are smiling into the camera. They appear goddess-like, their hair sleek, their faces unblemished—even Zhao Yazhi (at the bottom of the photo), who is 53. With their full breasts, flawless skin and fit bodies, the celebrities are the fulfillment of the middle-class ideal of the female body—role models for the magazine's elite young, urban

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female readers. Not only are their bodies beautiful, they are also healthy.

But the role of the celebrities as health experts and cultural intermediaries is not just to present their beautiful bodies; it is also to legitimise their healthy lifestyles, such as drinking nutritious soup, doing yoga and taking spas regularly. By juxtaposing their near-perfect bodies with accounts by the celebrities of their experience and suggestions for caring for their bodies and breasts, the magazine establishes the celebrities' status as health experts who differentiate themselves from other 'ordinary' women by adopting the neoliberal idea of being 'self-responsible' and devoting themselves to the endless project of 'self-making'.

In reading the articles in the magazine about breast cancer sufferers, however, there is a sharp contrast between their attitudes and lifestyles and those of the celebrities. While the celebrities have been 'constructed' as self-responsible, wise and ethical consumer citizens, those who do not adopt such a lifestyle—by implication the cancer sufferers—are unethical and are deemed to have been punished by developing breast cancer.

While the magazine depicts breast cancer as devastating for women, surviving the disease is a chance to 'grow up', and an opportunity for these women to reform their 'gender identities' and achieve class mobility. Their new lifestyles, after surgery, are not only healthy but also fashionable and accord with middle-class status. Having suffered from the disease because of their irresponsibility—and survived—they have become experts on how to stay

With Chinese society becoming increasingly stratified, and a middle class just beginning to emerge, the Chinese media is concerned more about introducing and establishing middle-class tastes and values for its audiences.

healthy, and are now also role models.

With Chinese society becoming increasingly stratified, and a middle class just beginning to emerge, the Chinese media is concerned more about introducing and establishing middle-class tastes and values for its audiences.³ Doing yoga every day, enjoying regular spas, and using luxury skincare products are portrayed as essential elements of a superior Western, healthy, middle-class ways of living—the style of

living now adopted by the breast cancer survivors.

As well as promoting awareness of breast cancer and healthy lifestyles, by integrating advertising featuring



A page in *Trend Health* magazine in 2010. Photo: Trend Health homepage.

luxury 'pink' brand products, from perfume to cars, the *Trend Health* campaigns further drag female readers into global consumerism. A recent campaign has not only been sponsored by skincare and cosmetics company Estee Lauder, but has also attracted many domestic and international companies as sponsors and advertisers.

As China's first national breast cancer awareness and prevention campaign, the Pink Ribbon Campaign

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has been highly successful in not only attracting many female celebrities to speak on its behalf over the past 10 years, but also in building brands and attracting financial sponsorship. By packaging female celebrities as health experts in the cause of breast cancer prevention, the campaign has also introduced a lifestyle that appeals to middle-class tastes and values—and to the neoliberal values of self-enterprise and self-responsibility in young urban women.

The introduction of health experts and the heavy involvement of multinational advertisers and sponsors in the campaign also further underlines the withdrawal of funding by the Chinese Government of women's health-related causes such as prevention of breast cancer.

At the same time, with the cooperation of a 'commoditised' media, celebrity health experts and transnational companies, young urban females are falling prey to global commercial forces—and being given little choice but to become self-responsible, ethical consumer-citizens.

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Yue Gao is a PhD candidate at the China Research Center, University of Technology, Sydney.

New AEF 'What works' report online

The latest report from the Asia Education Foundation (AEF) What Works series is now available online.

What Works is a series of research reports produced by the AEF under its core funding agreement with the Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations. The [What Works series](#) is based on evidence-informed practice, combining up-to-date research with illustrations of practices that demonstrate what works and what is possible to support the development of Asia-relevant capabilities in Australian schools.

[What Works 2: Leading school change to support the development of Asia-relevant capabilities](#), features stories of leadership and change from Australian schools in their bid to support the development of Asia-relevant capabilities amongst young Australians. It combines illustrations and video clips linked to change leadership frameworks, and research around key ingredients for leading successful change. See the [AEF web portal](#) for the full report.

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Local governance reform a key to helping India's rural poor

Political scams and lack of accountability have undermined efforts to help India's rural poor.

By Richard Iles

Modern India is partly defined by its unique set of democratic expressions. The country has a proud heritage of democratic representation. From an international perspective, the scale of this democratic representation is rightfully praised. The systems in place to encourage universal suffrage in a developing country with such a diverse, large and majority illiterate population are truly grand.

However, the question of whether democratic institutions aid economic and human capital development is often asked in respect to comparisons between India and its equally large neighbor, China.

One answer is that regional South Asian democratic instability, and its related military actions, has diverted resources and focus away from human development concerns within India. This diverting has slowed parts of India's human capital development through the 1970s and 1980s. In contrast, following China's own period of cultural instability, China has made substantial development gains.

Health outcome measures give an indication of the relatively slow pace of Indian human capital development. The human development advantage India had during the 1960s and 1970s, with respect to China, with lower infant mortality and maternal mortality rates, was lost by the early 1990s.

Presently, India's rural development has regained the attention of domestic policy. Given this renewed focus, it is worth enquiring whether Indian policies are effectively

delivering improved quality of life for the majority rural poor.

Isolated examples of positive development initiatives exist and give much hope that Millennium Development Goals will be reached, however overdue. One program is the midday meal program offered through all primary schools. The program ensures that children from the poorest communities have the opportunity to receive, at least daily, one regular meal. Analysis has shown that the program has encouraged higher school participation rates.¹

The failed operation of the [National Rural Health Mission \(NRHM\)](#) in Uttar Pradesh (UP) highlights the need for institutional reform.

Details of NRHM in UP give some indication to this institutional weakness. The defrauding of approximately INR 5700 crore (A\$1.1 billion) from the UP scheme, by state ministers and others, eliminated the effectiveness of the promising scheme.² As a result, many of the NRHM's schemes to employ more social workers (ASHA's), fund longer opening hours of government health clinics and provide more funding to village councils to address local needs were not widely implemented.

The findings of my own research—interviews with elected village heads in districts of UP—indicate that none were aware of the designated NRHM funding for their local village councils.

The growth of the protest movement behind Anna Hazare in 2011 demonstrates the counterbalancing strength of India's democratic heritage. This movement rose directly in response to the uncovering of several political scams—2G, Foodgrains in UP and the

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Commonwealth Games—and greatly increased public attention, and anger at political corruption. In spite of this public protest and now political movement, institutional weaknesses within UP must raise concerns about the development-oriented effectiveness of central government untied funding to state governments.

The present central Indian government has increased untied rural development funding by INR 40 000 crore (\$A8 billion). The rural development minister stated at the time of the announcement, that '[T]he biggest problem today is that all rural development work is based on national guidelines that cannot take care of the specific problems of states'.³ While the funding will provide some benefit, the effectiveness of giving such a large sum of untied funding should be questioned given some states' track record of misappropriating funds. It is hard not to think that the untied funding is more aimed at promoting cooperative federalism, and its related political benefits, than seeing public money maximising its leverage to increase the quality of life for the rural poor.

In the context of weak accountability and governance structures, India's federal system offers greater incentives for political actors to maximise their own political and financial interests.⁴ Focusing attention on reforming the governance structures of UP's 50 000 local village councils is a more achievable goal in efforts to promote rural human capital development.

Elected village leaders oversee community development and education at the local *gram panchayat* (typically a collection of 4–7 villages). Many villages in UP continue not to have covered

drainage and are not electrified, despite funding being allocated over time to *gram panchayats* to address these issues. Effective village drainage is known to be a factor in reducing mosquito borne diseases that continues to strangle much of rural north India. The lack of accountability for UP's 50000 *gram panchayats* is a major factor that has allowed misappropriation of much well-intentioned funding.

In line with Australia's apparent renewed desire to engage with India, one fruitful avenue of dialogue and action is by working with Indian institutions to improve local village governance. Such efforts from Australia would help to build on India's proud history and modern vibrant democratic expressions. Australian academic institutions are well-positioned to collaborate with Indian counterparts to actively promote local governance reform. In so doing, they will be using one of India's national strengths—democracy—to promote ongoing effective human capital development.

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Richard Iles is a PhD candidate at Griffith University. His thesis is on consumer demand for Indian health services.

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LCNAU plans response to White Paper language goals

Established in 2011, the Languages and Cultures Network for Australian Universities will reach an important milestone this year.

By Anya Woods, Colin Nettelbeck and John Hajek

This year marks the close of the successful establishment period of the Languages and Cultures Network for Australian Universities (LCNAU), and the anticipated evolution of the network as an independent legal entity, representative of its status as Australia's peak body for all languages in the tertiary sector. Asian languages have figured prominently in LCNAU's work since its establishment in 2011.

Our final project reports have been submitted to our 2011–12 funding body, the Office for Learning and Teaching, and our focus has now turned to securing new funding to ensure our work can continue well into the future. We remain grateful to OLT for its support and, among other goals, we hope to submit a new proposal to it later this year, which will enable us to consolidate the work of LCNAU.

The new proposal will form part of LCNAU's response to the release of the White Paper *Australia in the Asian Century*, which includes a series of ambitious language-related goals. LCNAU has an important role in voicing the significance of language learning both for individuals and the nation, and we believe that cost-effective research-based strategies for enhancing Australia's Asian language capacity are needed.

We further believe that the successful prioritisation of a selection of languages—Indonesian, Chinese, Japanese and Hindi in this case—will depend on an environment that

encourages a strong general language-learning culture. In other words, student interest and motivation for learning particular languages is greatest in an environment that supports a broad spectrum of language learning, and promotes multilingualism as a positive personal, social and national attribute.

These convictions underpin the LCNAU's work (see our [guiding principles](#)), and the development of this new project proposal to support Asian language teaching and learning in the context of the White Paper is a natural application and extension of our core principles. We look forward to reporting to you on the outcome of this new proposal.

The proceedings of the 2011 colloquium have now been published. Entitled *The next step: introducing the languages and cultures network for Australian universities*, the volume was officially launched at the conference of the Applied Linguistics Association of Australia in Perth last November. As reported previously in [Asian Currents](#) (October 2012), the proceedings contain numerous significant contributions by Asianists, including Anne McLaren, Jun Ohashi and Hiroko Ohashi, Wenying Jiang, Richard Curtis and Kayoko Enomoto. The proceedings are available for purchase and also for download (as individual chapters) from our [website](#).

Plans are well advanced for the 2013 colloquium, to be held at Australian National University from 3–5 July. There has been strong interest in this second biennial event, which has resulted in 75 abstracts being accepted for presentation across the various formats. Each of the four priority languages of the White Paper will be featured in presentations, along with a number of Asian

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LCNAU plans response to White Paper language goals

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languages of smaller enrolment. Registration details and a draft program will be available soon on the [website](#).

Foremost among LCNAU's goals for 2013 is its establishment as a legal entity, which will facilitate our effectiveness as an independent voice for the sector. This will create enduring governance and operating structures that will allow LCNAU to function nationwide in ways that can fully represent the whole sector.

The process has been greatly aided by pro bono advice from a major law firm. We expect to have membership information available shortly before the colloquium in July, and look forward to inviting your involvement.

Your participation in the LCNAU process is vital to our ability to strengthen the tertiary languages sector. We invite you to browse our [website](#) and view the various clusters we have put in place so that colleagues can work together on sharing information and new research ideas. These clusters include Auslan; Indigenous Languages; Languages: Policy and Pathways; Leadership and Professionalisation; Technology Enhanced Language Learning—TELL—; and a [new cluster](#) for heads of schools. Suggestions for new clusters are always welcome.

LCNAU's network structures are designed to maximise sharing of good practice among the highly professional and competent people who teach, research and manage our nation's language and culture programs.

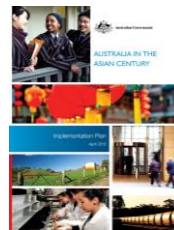
Our most fundamental purpose is to be an ongoing, mutually enriching resource for university colleagues in all languages across the country. To stay up to date with LCNAU's

activities, please check our website, follow us on social media, and sign up for our regular email updates.

Dr Anya Woods, Professor John Hajek and Emeritus Professor Colin Nettelbeck are members of the LCNAU leadership team.

Government releases Asian Century implementation plan

The Federal Government has now released its implementation plan as a follow-up to the release of the



Australia in the Asian Century White Paper in October 2012

The release of the plan (See [Implementation Plan](#)) was timed to coincide

with the Prime Ministers' trip to China with some of her senior ministers and the accompanying delegation by senior Australian business leaders to the Bo'ao Forum and other significant meetings and dialogues with Chinese business leaders and government.

The document details the governance structures the government will put in place to work with state and territory and local governments, businesses and educational institutions, unions, academics and community groups to achieve the White Paper's 25 objectives, as well as the progress made since the release of the White Paper.

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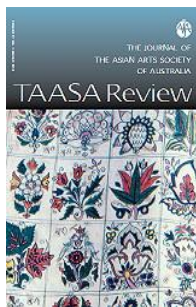
TAASA calls for Asian arts essay prize entries

The Asian Arts Society of Australia—TAASA—is calling for entries for its 2013 TAASA Asian Arts Essay Prize.

TAASA is offering prizes of \$1000 for winning essays on Asian arts topics in each of two categories—for undergraduate, honours or masters candidates, and for PhD candidates. In both categories, entrants must be studying at an Australian University at 31 August, 2013.

The subject should encompass any aspect of the arts of Asia in any medium—ancient to contemporary. Essays should be no more than 3000 words and written in a style consistent with an accepted academic standard for footnotes and use of images.

An expert panel of judges will assess the entries and decide the winners.



The final submission date for entries is **31 August 2013**. The award announcement date is 31 October 2013.

The prizewinning entries will be published in the society's quarterly, peer-reviewed journal *TAASA Review*.

All enquiries to Dr Ann Proctor at: aproctor@bigpond.net.au

Exhibition explores Japan's evolving architecture

The Japan Foundation, together with the Architectural Institute of Japan, is holding an exhibition that explores the evolution of Japanese architecture (see [Coming events](#)).

The *Parallel Nippon* exhibition, at Sydney's Japan Foundation Gallery, is on until 1 May and features the designs of Japan's most influential architects, including Kengo Kuma, Tadao Ando, Toyo Ito, Kenzo Tange and SANAA.



Sendai Mediatheque
Toyo Ito & Associates,
Architects Sendai,
Miyagi Pref., Japan
2000: Photo: Nakasa
& Partners Inc.

The exhibition includes more than 100 large-scale photo panels of landmark designs such as Toyo Ito's Sendai Mediatheque (pictured), architectural models and video footage.

Parallel Nippon is presented and divided into four themes: Urban, Life, Culture and Living, a cross-sectional view of society. Part one, on display from 2–13 April, focused on the first two themes, 'Urban' and 'Life'. Part two, from 17 April – 1 May, examines 'Culture' and 'Living'.

The exhibitions cover the period 1996–2006—the transition from the 'bubble' to 'post-bubble' period, a time when Japan's birth-rate was declining, the population was aging, and there was increasing social awareness and urban migration.

Parallel Nippon first opened at the Tokyo Metropolitan Museum of Photography in 2007 and is now touring internationally. The exhibition will travel to Perth, Brisbane and Canberra later this year.

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Labour migration in the Asia-Pacific

By Marshall Clark

The question of labour migration in the Asia-Pacific, with an emphasis on its racialised nature and its ongoing cultural history and heritage, was the focus of a research symposium held at the Australian National University (ANU), 14–15 February.

The symposium—*Labour migration in the Asia-Pacific: race, history and heritage*—was supported by the Asian Studies Association of Australia and the ANU's College of Arts and Social Sciences.

It was held at an important time for the understanding of the racialised dimensions of labour migration, especially as many labour-receiving countries in the Asia-Pacific region have a long history of accepting migrant workers.

The focus on the Asia-Pacific was deliberate, as this region is historically home to some of the world's busiest hubs of international labour migration.



Prof. Mae Ngai

The symposium was opened by the first of three international keynote speakers: historian **Professor Mae Ngai** (Columbia University), who delivered a paper comparing the history

of Chinese labour migration in the Californian goldfields with the experiences of Chinese gold miners in the Victorian goldfields of the 1850s.

Another international keynote speaker, anthropologist **Professor Timo Kaartinen** (University of Helsinki), spoke on the interactions between migrant labourers of different ethnicities in the ports of Kei, Banda and Ambon, in eastern Indonesia.



Prof. Timo Kaartinen

In the same panel, historian **Associate Professor Kornel Chang** (Rutgers–Newark, State University of New Jersey) presented a paper on the history of labour disputes involving Chinese and Indian labourers on the US–Canada borderlands.

Rounding out an excellent panel, ARC Future Fellow **Professor Laurajane Smith** (ANU) presented a paper on the emotional responses of visitors to Australian migration museums.

A highlight was the film screening of *Dreams of dutiful daughters*, which was introduced by the filmmaker, Ma Khin Mar Mar Kyi. This powerful documentary, which is based on one-on-one interviews, reveals the devastating personal and economic impact of labour migration for



Workers crossing the Moei or Thaung-yin River separating Thailand and Burma. From the film *Dreams of dutiful daughters*.

Burmese women migrant workers in Thailand.

The two-day gathering of key thinkers, writers, artists and practitioners attended by 40–50 participants included 22 paper presentations. It is envisaged that the papers presented will be used as a basis for a volume of essays, to be edited by Professor Kaartinen and Dr Marshall Clark (Australian National University).

Dr Marshall Clark is a senior lecturer, the Australian National University and a convenor of the Labour migration in the Asia-Pacific: race, history and heritage' symposium.

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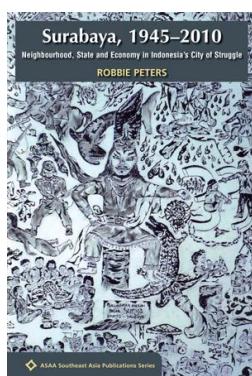
Forthcoming books from the ASAA publications series

East Asia series

Japan's New Left movements
(forthcoming, 20 August 2013) By Ando Takemasa.

The Fukushima Daiichi nuclear accident that followed the recent tsunami and earthquake in Japan shocked the world.

This book examines the relative strength of vested interest groups, such as business, bureaucrats, the media and academics, which stand to gain a lot from the promotion of nuclear power, and asks why Japanese antinuclear movements were not able to prevent them from facilitating nuclear energy policies. This question is inextricably linked to the issue of the powerlessness of Japanese civil society, and Takemasa Ando seeks to untangle this intersection between social movements and civil society in postwar Japan.

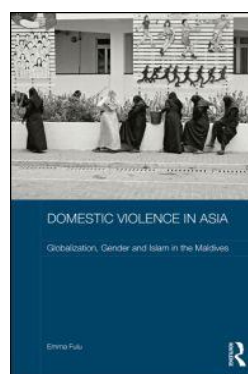


Surabaya, 1945-2010: neighbourhood, state and economy in Indonesia's city of struggle
(2013). By Robbie Peters. Paperback 272pp.

This study of urban society in one of Indonesia's main port cities views Surabaya from below—from the experiences of the people who occupy its alleyways, riverbanks and muddy roadsides of a crowded low-income neighbourhood (*kampung*). Robbie Peters describes the struggle of the *kampung's* residents for survival in the shadow

of Indonesia's tumultuous economic growth and political reform, and how they have subtly contested the efforts by the state to control the movement and settlement of people, limiting its ability to construct an urban citizenry that excludes newcomers. Peters is Director of Development Studies at the University of Sydney.

Women in Asia series



Domestic violence in Asia
(13 August 2013). By Emma Fulu.

In an exploration of patterns of domestic violence in Asia, Emma Fulu argues that forces of globalisation, consumerism, Islamism and democratisation are changing the nature of domestic relations, with shifting ideas surrounding gender and Islam being particularly significant. Based on extensive original research in the Maldives, the book notes that domestic violence has been relatively low in the Maldives compared to other Asian countries. This, Fulu argues, is a result of a history of relatively equal gender relations, an ideology of masculinity associated with calmness and rationality where violence is not considered acceptable in dealing with problems, and flexible marriage and divorce practices.

The book shows how these factors are being undermined by new ideas that emphasise the need for wifely obedience, increasing gender inequality and the right of husbands to be coercive.

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Books on Asia

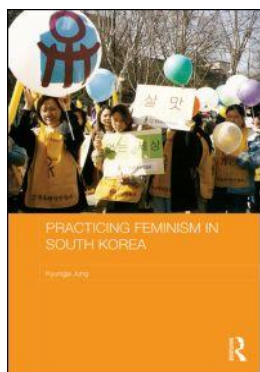
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Growing up female in postcolonial Malaysia (31 October 2013). By Cynthia Joseph.

In a rich, detailed analysis of the experiences of young women growing up in postcolonial, rapidly modernising Malaysia, Cynthia Joseph considers the impact of ethnicity, socioeconomic status, school experiences and achievement.

The book discusses the effects of Malaysia's ethnic affirmative action programs and of the country's Islamisation.

Using interview and questionnaire data gathered over a long period, Joseph sets out and compares the life trajectories of young Malay, Indian and Chinese women, thereby depicting individuals' transformations as they experience maturing into adulthood against a background of social and economic changes, and varying levels of inter-racial tension.



Practising feminism in South Korea (6 September 2013). By Kyungja Jung.

The Korean women's movement, which is widely seen in both Western and

non-Western countries as exemplary in terms of women's activism, experienced a dramatic change in its direction and strategy in the early 1990s—a typical example of the new approach being an increasing focus on sexual violence issues.

The antisexual violence movement has had a huge impact in bringing women's issues on to the public agenda in Korea, and has been claimed as the heart of the women's movement in Korea. This book examines feminist practice in Korea,

focusing on and analysing the experiences of the first sexual assault centre in Korea. Based on extensive original research, including interviews with activists and extensive participant observation, the book explores why feminist activists in South Korea have organised vigorous protests on sexual violence, what has been the impact of the movement, and what have been the strategies and challenges in achieving their objectives.

Young Muslim women in India (31 October 2013). By Kabita Chakraborty.

The reality for marginalised Muslim girls in the city of Kolkata (formerly Calcutta) in India is far more complex than the one often constructed during discussions that view their lives through a lens of repression and poverty within the patriarchal Islamic community.

Based on extensive, original research, this book portrays a different and an under-represented perspective of young Muslim girls in the *bustees* (shanty towns) of Kolkata.

Through a series of personal narratives, photos and artwork, Kabita Chakraborty demonstrates that, in spite of the dominant discourse surrounding their lives, the consumption and behaviour patterns of young women in these *bustees* challenge the monolithic representations of what it means to be a Muslim girl in Indian society.

Chakraborty explores how the young Muslim women live, manipulate, and resist the stereotypes of Islamic femininity, by carefully negotiating the risks and adopting multiple identities inspired by modernity, globalisation, and, most of all, Bollywood culture.

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Books on Asia

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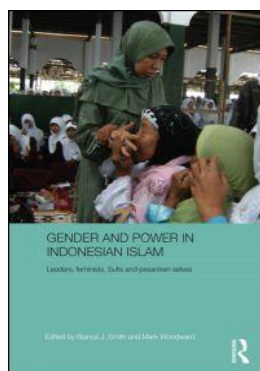
Women and sex work in

Cambodia (31 December 2013). By Larissa Sandy.

Prostitution is strongly embedded in local cultural practices in Cambodia. Based on extensive original research, Larissa Sandy explores the nature of prostitution in Cambodia, providing explanations of why the phenomenon is so widely tolerated.

The book outlines the background of the French colonial period with its *filles malades*, considers the contemporary legal framework, and analyses the motivations for sex work. Sandy examines in particular how women become locked into debt bondage.

Overall the book provides significant contributions to wider debates about sex work, sex trafficking and the constrained nature of women's choices.



Gender and power in Indonesian Islam

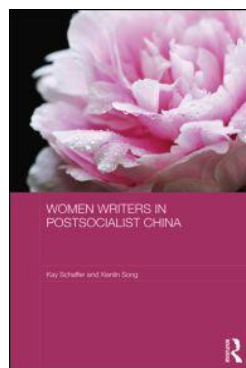
(21 August 2013). Bianca Smith, Mark Woodward (eds).

In its discussion of gender and Islam in

pesantren and Sufi orders in Indonesia, this book contributes to the decolonisation of the anthropology of Islam in Indonesia.

The book confronts ideological and intellectual tropes of (neo) colonialism in two ways. First, it deconstructs categories denying the 'authenticity' of Indonesian Islam on the basis of comparison with the Arab Middle East. Second, it critically examines the salience of expatriate and diasporic Middle Eastern Muslim feminist discourses and secular Western feminist analyses in

Indonesian contexts. By considering the distinct but related Muslim gender cultures in *pesantren* and Sufi orders in Java, Lombok and Aceh, the book examines the broader function of *pesantren* as a force for redefining existing modes of Muslim subjectivity, and for cultivating new ones.



Women's writing in post-socialist China

(31 July 2013). By Kay Schaffer and Xianlin Song.

In recent years there has been phenomenal growth in women's writing in China. This book

examines how that growth has transformed women's lives.

The book focuses on four genres of women's writing—life narratives and autobiographical fiction, popular literature, historical biographies and oral narratives—emerging out of the transcultural flow of ideas between Western and indigenous Chinese feminisms. It argues that the discrete historical and political contexts that shape the writing have a direct bearing on global feminist theory and practice. This critical study of selected genres and writers highlights the shifts in feminist perspectives within the contemporary local and global cultural landscape.

Marriage, gender and Islam in Indonesia—women negotiating informal marriage, divorce and desire (1 September 2013). By Maria Platt.

How do women deal with marriage in Lombok, eastern Indonesia? Maria Platt draws on women's narratives of their marital trajectories, recounting their stories of courtship, marital discord, and experiences of divorce, remarriage and polygamy.

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Books on Asia

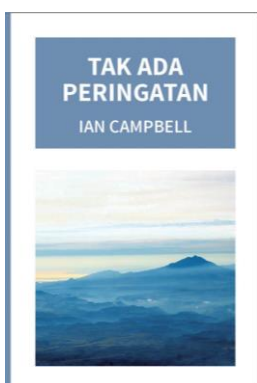
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In this strongly Islamic part of Indonesia up to 70 per cent of marriages are informal and unregistered, legalised only under Islamic but not state law.

Platt examines the consequences of this. They include the fact that, in Islamic law, divorce can only be initiated by a man, whose pronouncement of divorce is final and binding. Women divorced in this way, from unofficial unions, lack the legal rights available to those whose marriages are formally registered by the state.

The book outlines how women cope with the difficulties which arise as a result of this situation.

Tak ada peringatan' (No warning). By Ian Campbell.



This small volume of Ian Campbell's selected Indonesian language poetry, *Tak ada peringatan* (No warning) has recently been published in limited numbers. It contains 20

poems and two short prose pieces written by Campbell in Indonesian over the years. Fourteen of the poems have previously been printed, between 2002–12, in major Jakarta or Bandung (West Java), newspapers or literary journals, the last such publication being of two poems in *KOMPAS* in Jakarta in January 2012.

The book is catalogued at the National Library of Australia—Dewey Number 899.22112 and ISBN 9781922204073 (Indonesian Poetry—Collections).

It is still relatively rare for books of creative writing in Bahasa Indonesia

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by Australians, especially of non-Indonesian heritage, to be published. The primary readership in this case is expected to be in poetry circles in Indonesia, with a possible launch in Bandung, West Java in May 2013.

Asian Studies Review



Asian Studies Review, the flagship journal of the Asian Studies Association of Australia, is a multidisciplinary journal of contemporary and modern Asia.

The journal sets out to showcase high quality scholarship on the modern histories, cultures, societies, languages, politics and religions of Asia through the publication of research articles, book reviews and review articles. It welcomes the submission of research articles from across the broad spectrum of the social sciences and humanities on all the regions of Asia and on international and transnational issues in which Asia is the major point of focus.

Asian Studies Review sets out to publish a balanced mixture of articles in both traditional and emerging disciplines. State-of-the-art essays and surveys of major intellectual trends in Asian countries are particularly sought. The journal also incorporates a strong book review section, and guest-edited "special issues" are an increasingly prominent feature.

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Coming events

Conferences

ANZCA 2013 conference, 3–5 July 2013, Fremantle, WA. The 2013 Australia and New Zealand Communication Association's annual conference, hosted by Murdoch University's School of Arts. See [website](#).

18th Biennial Conference of the Japanese Studies Association of Australia, Canberra, 8–11 July 2013, at the Australian National University, hosted by the ANU College of Asia and the Pacific. The conference theme of, *Cities, nature and landscapes: from Nara to the networked city* focuses not only on the social impact of disaster, but on learning from the past experiences as we move towards the future of living spaces and human communities and on the 'networked' cities of the future. Further information from the [conference website](#).

Asia Education Foundation first national conference, Melbourne, 12–14 August 2013: See [website](#) for details.



South Asian childhoods: contemporary and historical perspectives, Canberra, Conference 18–19 July 2013, Australian National

University. The conference will provide an interdisciplinary platform for scholars and NGO representatives who work in the areas of childhood and education in South Asia. See [website](#) for details.

Changing India: from decolonization to globalization. Conference to be held at Victoria University of Wellington, New Zealand, on **28–29 August 2013** under the auspices of the New Zealand India Research Institute. See conference [website](#) for more information.

12th International Conference on Thai Studies, Sydney, 22–24 April 2014. The triennial conference will be held at the University of Sydney and will adopt the theme 'Thailand in the world'. Further details from the [conference website](#).



ASAA 2014 Biennial Conference, 8–10 July 2014. The 20th ASAA biennial conference, *Asiascapes: contesting borders*, will be held at the University of

Western Australia, Perth. The conference invites presentations addressing shifts, continuities, innovations and tensions in Asia and welcomes engagement from scholars and practitioners in the humanities, social sciences and other sciences, as well as interdisciplinary explorations of Asia and Asia–Australia relations. Further details and a call for papers will follow.

Art and culture

Parallel Nippon: contemporary Japanese architecture 1996–2006, 2 April–1 May 2013 (closed 14–16 April), Part two: Culture & Living, **17 April–1 May,** Japan Foundation Gallery, Level 1, Chifley Plaza, 2 Chifley Square. See [report](#) and [website](#) for details.

4A Centre for Contemporary Asian Art's (4A) exhibition, *In possible worlds* (opened 18 April). The exhibition is part of 4A's Early Career Artist Initiative, bringing together a selection of recent works by Australian artists Elly Kent, Claudia Nicholson and Tianli Zu. Developed over a year-long process of curatorial guidance with 4A. See [website](#) for details

About the ASAA

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

The association supports two refereed journals, the *Asian Studies Review* and the *e-Journal of Foreign Language Teaching*. It holds a biennial academic conference which offers members and other scholars the opportunity to hear the latest in research and to develop contacts with other scholars.

The association sponsors four book series, covering Southeast Asia, South Asia, East Asia and Women in Asia and makes regular submissions to governments and universities on issues of importance in Asian studies. [JOIN NOW.](#)

Asian Currents is edited by [Allan Sharp](#). Unsolicited articles of between 1000–1500 words on any field of Asian studies are welcome for consideration.