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Language myths bad for policy

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The power of the past

A nation attempting to untangle the past, keeping only those bits that satisfy and discarding the rest, is like a builder erecting a new house on a termite's nest. The need for a balanced presentation of Japan's wartime history grows more important as eyewitnesses disappear from the scene. [Read more](#)



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LCNAU rallies members



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Language myths make for bad policy in the Asian Century

University language programs remain under threat, despite bipartisan political support for enhanced language study.

By Kent Anderson

While the Labor Party may have left The Lodge, one agreed policy remains in place: the 21st century is the Asian Century and Australia needs to better its language capacity to meet those challenges.

The Coalition's own targets are even more ambitious than any recent government's, calling for 40 per cent of Year 12 students to study a language. In this environment of bipartisan support for enhanced language study, some university language programs remain under threat, including the recently closed University of Canberra program.

The arguments against languages tend to boil down to three often repeated mantras: languages are expensive to teach, students aren't interested, and there is no need to study another language because English will suffice. These excuses are false and believing them results in bad policy by educational administrators and public policymakers. It is time to debunk these myths.

Myth 1: Languages are expensive

The first myth is that languages are expensive to teach, or more precisely, more expensive than other areas of knowledge. First, language teachers cost no more than science teachers, and indeed due to demographics and loadings are markedly cheaper than medical and business teachers. Second, I challenge the notion that languages are harder than other areas of knowledge such as physics and thus demand more contact hours or higher staff to student ratios to

master. A certain amount of time on any subject is demanded to become 'fluent' in it. Malcolm Gladwell in the popular research literature has put the number of hours needed to excel, regardless of discipline, at 10 000.

I also challenge the pedagogy that dictates we need higher contact hours than other disciplines, particularly in the early years. I'm not suggesting students don't need a large base of hours dedicated to language learning at the initiation, but rather that this must be done in the classroom with an attending academic. For example, the old language laboratory model grew out of the US Department of Defence learning mode where individual tutorials were no longer feasible, so mass tutorials were possible through using the cutting-edge technology of tape recorders.

The cutting-edge technology of the 21st century, however, is mobile computing and, as many have shown, the iPod and self-directed or peer-directed learning can make the hours previously dedicated to language laboratory obsolete.



Language labs: no longer cutting-edge technology?

I use the language lab only as an example, not as my concrete point, that self-direction of learning by students and modern technology mean that contact hours don't have to be more than other

disciplines. How the limited contact hours are used, however, does change when the lecturer is expecting students to have done much of what used to happen in the classroom before class. Others have written on the 'flipped classroom' and other techniques used in this new

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mode of teaching. I'm not suggesting any 'dumbing down' of language learning, only that the locus of the time students need to spend on the exercise is shifted from the supervised classroom to a more independent personal or peer setting. Language learning remains as difficult and time consuming as always, and no technology or flash pedagogy will miraculously replace that.

Looking at the other side of the cost versus income balance sheet, languages are very viable. The bulk of income for local units of a university comes from teaching load or 'bums on seats'. It is a complex formula, but the domestic language student brings in \$2200 per student and the international student even more. In contrast, a humanities student only pays \$1400 and a social science student \$1900. Languages pay well.

Myth 2: Students are not interested

The second myth is few students are interested. The evidence does not support this. Rather, what is seen is that rigid academic structures restrict students from pursuing languages, and we language academics have done poorly in accommodating the transient language learner.

Our enrolment woes begin in the state-based Year 11 and 12 senior secondary systems where excessive concentration on a few subjects, non-incentivised Australian Tertiary Admission Rank calculation schemes, and poor communication strategies have set back those students who pursue languages to Year 12 from 40 per cent to 12 per cent. The decreasing of compulsory subjects for senior secondary, such as South Australia's move from five subjects

*If we are serious about addressing language education at the university level, **we must commit** to participating actively at the senior secondary level.*

to four, squeezed out the elective of a language.

The calculation of ATARs that do not fully benefit language results, such as in New South Wales, adds to the woe. This problem is exacerbated by the failure of the systems to fully accommodate the differences between native, heritage, continuing and *ab initio* learners, which means many early learners are scared of negative impacts on their comparative results.

Even in those states where the ATAR calculation effectively gives bonuses for languages and valiant attempts are being made to navigate the tricky issues around background ability such as in Victoria, the rumour mill and received wisdom are killing us with parents, students and Year 10 councillors. In other words, the language community's communication of the facts has been deficient.

We don't have to accept this situation, however. University representatives sit on all of the senior secondary boards and academics chair many of them. For a large part, however, we have not affirmatively engaged with these boards.



The International Baccalaureate (IB) is a wonderful counter-example to the disappointing situation we have let unfold in the state senior secondary schools. Languages are a compulsory subject among the six subjects in the Year 11–12 IB

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diploma. Languages are fully valued in the calculation of the final IB mark. Importantly, because of the multiplicity of subjects and the compulsion to include all six subjects, the IB mark calculation does not disadvantage those who comparatively do not excel at languages.

Finally, in contrast to the decrease in the number of students pursuing languages within the state senior secondary system, the IB with its compulsory language requirement has increased markedly over the recent period. There is much for universities to learn from the market success of the IB, including the somewhat counterintuitive lessons of setting the bar high, compulsion of breadth, and not penalising weaker language learners.

Turning to universities to show there is no lack of students wanting to learn languages, the University of Melbourne and the University of Western Australia offer well-known examples. Both universities saw significant increases in language students when rigid curriculum rules were released.

Most of these breadth learners are not the paradigmatic language student of earlier times. These students are not language majors who are interested or able to make the commitment that those traditional students do. Many of us have bemoaned unwillingness of these students to throw themselves on the altar of dedicated language learning, but I think that is unfair and unrealistic.

While sometimes this teaching is derogatorily referred to as 'service teaching' and these learners as 'tourists', I argue strongly that the language community should welcome and accommodate them and their

*English by itself leaves an individual, and **more importantly** a country, extremely vulnerable.*

motives, that differ from our own. We should do this because such 'service teaching' makes our programs not only financially viable but downright lucrative. Moreover, some of these 'tourist learners' will convert and commit to being the experts.

Once we accept that these types of learners are welcome, I think a natural progression is to tailor programs to accommodate both the committed and the casual learner. The Ivy League universities, which have a compulsory breadth language requirement, do this. There are ways to teach the two streams in some classes, but for the full satisfaction of both cohorts it is important to understand and cater for their different learning needs and objectives.

Myth 3: English is good enough

The third myth is the recurring argument from monolingual sceptics that language learning is not necessary because English is sufficient to operate in Australia and globally. This is a very old chestnut and likely it drove much of the monolingual British stance for the past few hundred years. I very much understand, accept and agree that English is an important and powerful language and that Australians as predominately native speakers are better positioned at the turn of the 20th century than those who have no English ability.

We know there is a cognitive advantage in studying a second language—learning a foreign language makes you or your children smarter. Probably most importantly, we know that learning a second language makes you more globally engaged and empathetic—you meet

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more people and have more fun. Moreover, these humanistic reasons for learning a language tend to be the most effective long-term motivation for learners. Even from a utilitarian perspective, the bilingual English learner has a distinct advantage economically over the native English monolingual. This point is most clearly shown in small and medium-sized enterprises where, for all economies, the overwhelming bulk of trade and employment takes place. Chinese small business owners who learn English can now compete globally in English, but also out-compete monolingual English business owners for Chinese customers.

This is enormously important in the Asian Century as intra-Asia trade is a vastly larger market than Australian export. Thus the supply chain between Korea and Taiwan might equally be negotiated in Japanese or Mandarin, instead of English.

Finally, some would have us rely solely on our migrant communities for our utilitarian language needs. All will agree these communities are an enormous asset of Australia and should be celebrated and leveraged. Some will argue these are not dinky-di Australians because they lack blue eyes and a broad accent, so we should be worried when our senior secondary enrolments are dominated by them.

I disagree, and strongly support all language learning without devaluing someone who comes better prepared or inclined to a language by birth or environment. What I worry more about, however, is that Australia's attitude towards languages means that whatever advantage these recent migrants bring, this asset is largely squandered within a generation.

*Australia's attitude towards languages means that whatever advantage these recent migrants bring, this asset is **largely squandered** within a generation.*

Migrants to Australia are under enormous pressure to assimilate, including becoming monolingual English speakers. Thus many second-generation migrants, while they have oral skills, are functionally illiterate and by the third generation have fully assimilated to be good monolingual 'Strine-speaking Australians. Our resolute defence of English as enough means Australia's language policy does not leverage the linguist asset of our migrants, but squanders the resource within a few years.

All are agreed we are entering the Asian Century, and that demands better language skills for Australians. Debunking the three myths of language learning—that it is expensive, unpopular, and unnecessary—will advance us towards better policy for the era.

This is an abbreviated version of the keynote address at the Languages and Cultures Network for Australian Universities (LCNAU) conference in Canberra on July 2013. See [LCNAU rallies members to defend language programs](#).

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Philippine pork-barrel scam closes in on Aquino

President Aquino's sincerity in following the 'straight path' is being questioned in the face of a giant fund-abuse scandal.

By Ronald D. Holmes

More than halfway through his single six-year term, President Benigno S. Aquino III's vow to follow a straight path (*tuwid na daan*) is now seriously questioned amid a giant scandal of fund misuse and abuse.

This latest saga of corruption in the Philippines, referred to as the pork-barrel scam, stemmed from the July 2013 revelations that bogus non-governmental organisations (NGOs) had been skimming off billions of pesos of public money between 2007 and 2009—specifically from the Priority Development Assistance Fund (PDAF), a congressional slush fund.

In a subsequent [report](#) from the Commission on Audit (COA), the whistleblower's testimony was confirmed. The COA report noted that over PHP 2 billion (roughly US\$47 million) went to the alleged bogus NGOs established by Janet Lim-Napoles, who is said to have close links with government officials, legislators and members of the Executive branch.

Up until late September, President Aquino was relatively unsullied, as the reported predation took place prior to the beginning of his term in 2010. The president's initial response to the scandal was to direct the Department of Budget and Management to reduce the categories of projects that could be financed by the PDAF and to require all NGOs to get Department of Social Welfare and Development accreditation to pre-qualify as a PDAF implementing agency.

This response was not sufficient to quell the pressure on the Executive to abolish the legislative 'pork' altogether. Just three days before a planned protest against the pork-barrel was held, President Aquino partly succumbed to the pressure when he announced the abolition of the PDAF. This decision, however, did not stop groups from pushing through with an anti-pork protest held on 26 August 2013 in Rizal Park in Manila and several other locations in the Philippines and worldwide. The Manila protest, labelled #millionpeoplesmarch, drew about a 100 000 participants.



President Aquino

Amid investigations by the Commission on Audit, the Ombudsman, the Department of Justice and the Senate, it became clear that other variants of pork have been misused. Former national treasurer Leonor Briones explained that these other forms of pork are lumped as special purpose funds and cover more than half of the annual budget, rendering the PDAF a mere 'piglet'. Briones's observation goes straight to the overarching problem. There is too much pork in the Philippines, and the fat has perpetually greased the wheels of giant patronage machines throughout the archipelago.¹

The particularistic nature of public spending in the Philippines is evidenced further by more recent revelations on the use of funds under the current administration. While President Aquino and a few cabinet members initially extolled the supposedly equalising effect of the PDAF, a recent [report](#) by the Philippine Center for Investigative

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Journalism (PCIJ) covering the first half of the Aquino administration (July 2010 to June 2013) reveals the weak connection between the disbursements of legislators and the development needs of the country.

In their report, PCIJ reveals that nearly one-quarter of the PHP 43.6 billion (US\$1 billion) released in the first three years of the Aquino administration financed the construction of multipurpose buildings—ubiquitous structures that serve as venues for meetings and special events in many Philippine communities (and are often hijacked by local residents as a convenient location to dry grain).

Close to one-quarter of the PDAF disbursed within the same period was used to construct local roads and bridges,

projects that were described by current

Department of Public Works and Highways

secretary, Rogelio Singson, as piecemeal. Clearly, these projects are far from the type of programs that will equalise investments or opportunities for areas that receive scant public funds. These projects also waste scarce resources that would have been better spent on larger and more efficient investments. Equally clear is that the top PDAF projects are those that enable legislators to claim credit for highly visible projects with weak developmental impact.

Though President Aquino could readily rationalise such particularistic expenses as practices rooted in the crooked system in the past, the fact that he maintained PDAF when he came to power indicates a major gap in his reform orientation, layering existing practices with new

administrative rules rather than using his substantial political capital to eliminate an inefficient and corruption-riddled practice such as PDAF.

Though it can be argued that Aquino avoided an early confrontation with Congress—a situation faced by former president Joseph Estrada in 1998 when he declared in his first address to Congress that he would abolish the pork-barrel—the misuse of PDAF in Aquino's time shows the limitations of the administrative changes he instituted in the disbursement of the PDAF, chiefly the weakness of administrative agencies in securing the integrity of disbursements in the face of pressure from elected officials. It is therefore not surprising that Aquino's sincerity in trekking the *tuwid na daan* is being questioned.

The attacks on the president have started to pile up since late September. First came the allegation

that he used additional pork allocations, coursed through a party ally in the Senate, to reward

The attacks on the president have started to pile up since late September.

senators who voted to convict the former Chief Justice of the Supreme Court. The allegation came from Senator Jinggoy Estrada, one of the senators charged with plunder in relation to the current pork-barrel scam. In response, Aquino's Budget secretary, Florencio 'Butch' Abad, denied that the releases to the senators were 'bribes, rewards or incentives' and argued that they were part of the Disbursement Acceleration Program (DAP) designed by his department to 'ramp up spending and help accelerate economic expansion'.

Instead of defusing the criticism, Abad's response drew a more damning censure as the DAP was argued to be unconstitutional. Under

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the 1987 Philippine Constitution, the heads of the branches of government are only authorised to augment any item in the General Appropriations Act (the budget) for their respective offices on items already included in the appropriations.

As [argued by a critic](#) of the DAP, the Executive overstepped the constitutional prerogative by directing savings to augment non-existing items in the Budget, thereby taking on a power that is reserved only for Congress. The issue of the DAP's constitutionality has since been elevated to the Supreme Court. The court's decision, should it rule that the DAP is unconstitutional, may just provide the needed ammunition for select groups that have already spoken of an impeachment case against Aquino.

This recent pork-barrel scam is simply a repeat of prior controversies related to the misuse and abuse of public funds in the Philippines. A quick search of the news headlines in the Philippines from the 1950s to the present provides a clear indication that pork has continually caused controversy. Indeed, the practice of pork-barrelling in the Philippines has a long history that can be traced back to the American colonial era, when Philippine legislators, in the 1920s, first passed a Public Works Act separate from the general appropriations act.² The main question, then, is why, despite being found to be inefficient, and given its continuous misuse, have politicians been allowed to 'pig out' on public funds?

It is not too late for President Aquino to change the course of this lamentable history. As he has, remarkably, maintained significant majority and trust ratings during his term, he can leverage this public support to pressure what appears to be a more receptive Congress to

*The practice of pork-barrelling in the Philippines has **a long history** that can be traced back to the American colonial era.*

pass legislation to eliminate—or at least drastically curb—the inefficient, particularistic and corruption-riddled pork-barrel.

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The power of the past

The need for a balanced presentation of Japan's wartime history grows more important as eyewitnesses disappear from the scene.

By Walter Hamilton

One of her legs is amputated above the knee: the elderly woman uses crutches to move about the souvenir shop in the Hiroshima Peace Memorial Museum. Though she is buying something for me to remember our meeting by, I already know I will never forget it.

Suzuko Numata lost her leg as a result of the atomic bomb. Around 140 000 people were killed outright that day, 6 August 1945, or died from the bomb's effects within five months. When her soldier-fiancée failed to return from the fighting, young Suzuko wished she would die too. But she survived, and when I met her 50 years later I found someone free of self-pity or resentment. Unlike many of her compatriots, her gentle eyes were open to the full story of her nation's troubled past.

'While I was still at school I was mobilised to serve at a military arsenal where we students were given the job of polishing artillery shells,' Suzuko told me, as we sat on a park bench near the famous ruined dome of the Hiroshima Industrial Hall. 'I felt proud to think the shells would soon be dropping on our Chinese enemy. I became a little militarist.'

'When the A-bomb exploded, the building I was in collapsed. Four days later they had to amputate my leg—without anesthetic. I was in hospital for a long time; I lost all desire to live and was consumed by feelings of anguish and hatred. Only later did I reflect on the other victims of war—including those killed by the shells that I had proudly polished.'

Over many years as a correspondent for the ABC in Japan I had the opportunity to interview people who experienced the war and the military occupation that followed. Recently I published a book, *Children of the Occupation: Japan's Untold Story* (NewSouth Books), about the mixed-race children who were fathered by Australian and other Allied servicemen stationed in Japan between 1945 and 1956. These individuals also suffered, albeit in different ways, and, like Suzuko Numata, hope their testimony may prevent future generations from repeating the mistakes of the past.



Suzuko Numata: open to the full story of her nation's past. Photo, [Hiroshima spirit](#) website.

On Iwo Jima I watched veterans and bereaved family members pour sake down deep shafts in the ground to comfort the many unrecovered dead. My presence was generally welcomed, and afterwards an old lady shared her lunch with me. In Tokyo I met survivors of the massive firebombing raid of 9–10 March 1945. One woman who had lost her family in the conflagration invited me into her home and patiently related her harrowing tale. In tears, she held in her hand a singed fragment of her sister's clothing.

I attended a reunion of Japanese Imperial Navy officers where the celebrity guests included the famous actor Koji Tsuruta. 'The war put a cat and a rat in a cage,' he told the gathering. 'There should have been a hole to let the loser out. But the Americans wouldn't allow that.' Tsuruta omitted to mention that he had served in the naval air arm that

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sent kamikaze pilots to their certain death. On the 50th anniversary of the end of the war, I dropped by the history club at Waseda University, one of the country's leading institutions. I asked the students whether they subscribed to the view 'history is written by the winners'. Most did. I asked whether the United States had been justified in using the atomic bombs. None. I asked how many had heard of the Kokoda Track. None.



Yasukuni Shrine: Class 'A' war criminals are among those enshrined there.

The need for a balanced presentation of history grows more important as eyewitnesses disappear from the scene; and yet, compared

with the Germans, for instance, the Japanese seem prepared to accept a distorted or incomplete recollection. While the Germans have laws against the use of Nazi insignia, the Japanese display the spoils of Japanese militarism at places such as Yasukuni Shrine in Tokyo. Class 'A' war criminals are among those enshrined there. At the Defense Ministry, where daily tours are conducted through the hall once used by the International Military Tribunal for the Far East, the only document on display is the dissenting opinion of Justice Pal of India, who would have acquitted all the accused on the grounds that Japan was provoked into waging war.

It is not only the victors who write history.

If Japanese publishers want to supply textbooks to public schools they should first have them screened by the Education Ministry. These approved textbooks include a small number prepared by ultra-nationalist groups that deny or downplay episodes such as the Nanjing

Massacre and the exploitation of 'comfort women' by the Japanese Imperial Army. Though most textbooks offer a more balanced treatment, there is a larger problem: the history curriculum is so overcrowded teachers often run out of time and rush through the 20th century or skip it altogether.

As a result, most young Japanese are woefully ignorant of the recent past. On school visits I would ask students whether they knew Japan and Australia were once enemies. Blank faces. Recently I heard about a businesswoman who quizzed some of her young employees and found not one of them knew Japan had been at war with America! So much for the atomic bombs!

Japan is not alone, however, among East Asian nations in suffering from a selective or faulty memory. If anything, Japanese school textbooks are more balanced than those used in South Korean or Chinese schools. None of the South Korean history textbooks examined for a recent research project made any mention of the atomic attacks on Hiroshima and Nagasaki. Chinese students are fed only the approved Communist Party version of events that, among other things, ignores the role of the Nationalist forces of Chiang Kai-shek in taking the fight up to the Japanese in the 1930s.

In all three countries we are witnessing a trend towards the abuse of history as a tool of patriotism. Each claims victim status: South Korea because it was colonised; China because it was invaded; Japan because it was the target of weapons of mass destruction. These disparate narratives are preventing a heart-to-heart dialogue and endangering the peace.

The current standoff in the East China Sea between maritime surveillance vessels of China and Japan, in the dispute over a few uninhabited islands, is the most obvious manifestation of the legacy

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of mistrust. The Senkaku/Diaoyu Islands' only value is that they are located in an area with undersea reserves of oil and gas. The economic dimension, however, is secondary to the political. For the past two decades Japanese have agonised over what the rise of China might mean for their future, even their very existence. The islands are the 'line in the water' many feel must be defended. Inflaming the issue at the man-in-the-street level are complex and unresolved feelings about the past: a Chinese view that Japan got off lightly after the war and a Japanese view that a vengeful China will grab whatever it can. A separate dispute between Japan and

South Korea over Dokdo/Takeshima, a group of islets in the Sea of Japan, is also harming relations.

Japan's ruling Liberal Democratic Party—which has been in power for all but four of the past 58 years—is now in the hands of a right-leaning leadership group. Prime Minister Shinzo Abe enjoys exceptionally high approval ratings that, to some extent, reflect the appeal of his patriotic rhetoric (though the main factor is his initial success in lifting the country out of its economic malaise). Abe says his focus is on 'future-oriented' policies, which include measures to redress what he and other like-minded politicians and commentators regard as Japan's cringing attitude towards the past. Perhaps the most controversial aspect is a push by the LDP for constitutional change to legitimise the country's armed forces and make it easier for governments to use force in offshore conflicts. Abe's actions may not, in the end, match his rhetoric (as was the case during his first stint as prime minister), but the general direction is clear. Some refer to this as making Japan a 'normal' country.

Others argue, however, that the supposed abnormality of renouncing 'war as a sovereign right of the nation and the treat or use of force as means of settling international disputes' (Article 9 of the 1947 Constitution) has underpinned seven decades of peace and prosperity. The absence of wars or participation in wars, as Australians know too well, is the 'abnormal' condition one would wish for in a turbulent world. Japan's other 'abnormality' is that it is the only nation to have suffered an atomic attack. It has a unique status in international forums arguing for disputes to be settled through diplomatic rather than military means. If, by licensing itself constitutionally as a military power, it loses this moral authority, there could be grave consequences.

History is a complex mix of error and sin, miscalculation and misjudgement, fear and hubris. A nation attempting to untangle the past, keeping only those bits that satisfy and discarding the rest, is like a builder erecting a new house on a termite's nest.

History does not repeat itself; that old saying is too simplistic. But history is a great teacher. As Suzuko Numata lay on her hospital bed in 1945 her first instinct was to wipe the painful memories from her mind. Only gradually did she find the courage and humanity to include in her reflections the many others who were grieving and suffering. The Chinese 'her' bombs had killed were victims too.

Suzuko died in 2011, aged 87.

You can read Suzuko Numata's full story on the [Spirit of Hiroshima website](#).

*Walter Hamilton reported from Japan for the Australian Broadcasting Corporation for 11 years and recently published *Children of the Occupation: Japan's Untold Story* (NewSouth Books).*

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Testing times ahead for Timor-Leste's hard-won democracy

A pending loss of political skills and a looming economic crisis will test Timor-Leste's newly consolidated democracy.

By Damien Kingsbury

As the results came in from Timor-Leste's 2007 parliamentary elections, an international journalist commented that, with a change of president and an impending change of government, the country had passed the 'turnover test' for democratic consolidation. It was a hopeful observation by a reporter in search of a news angle.

As a term intended to describe requirements for making new democracies secure, democratic consolidation commonly includes the establishment of continuing democratic institutions, including an electoral commission, regular elections, constitutional consistency and independent, equally and consistently applied rule of law.

It was, of course, too soon in 2007 to say that Timor-Leste had consolidated its democracy. To the extent that Timor-Leste has done so since, there remain questions about its completeness and, more importantly, its longer term viability.



Voters queue to cast their ballots in the 2012 elections.

The 2007 elections followed four years of mounting instability, in turn following the country's troubled history of invasion and occupation by Indonesia for 24 years until 1999, and formal independence in 2002. As a result of Indonesia's brutal rule and then its destruction of the country, Timor-Leste, and its institutions, had to be rebuilt from the ground up.

The 2007 elections followed four years of mounting instability, in turn following the country's troubled history of invasion and

Yet following independence, Timor-Leste quickly descended into increasing disorder, culminating in 2006 in a split within the army. This then spilled into confrontation between the army and the police, gang warfare, the deaths of dozens of people, the burning of thousands of homes and the displacement of around 15 per cent of the population. The country was divided into pro- and anti-Fretilin camps, approximately aligned in an east and west geographic orientation. The country was close to becoming a failed state.



Mari Alkatiri: resigned as prime minister under intense pressure.

Under intense pressure, prime minister Mari Alkatiri resigned, being replaced by non-Fretilin foreign minister Jose Ramos-Horta. International military and police forces returned to

provide stability, and the United Nations to help rebuild the country's collapsed institutional base.

Against this background, the three rounds of Timor-Leste's 2007 elections—two for the presidency and one for the parliament—channelled this discontent through a regulated, competitive framework. Although marked by some violence, the elections were widely regarded as having met international criteria for being free and fair.

While most of the 'striking' soldiers had agreed to cantonment, in February 2008, a handful of renegades attacked the home of President Jose Ramos-Horta. The president was seriously wounded and renegade leader Major Alfredo Reinado was killed. The widespread sense of shock generated by this

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event and the removal of a key destabilising actor appeared to settle the political environment. Added to a windfall profit from a spike in oil prices, the government was able to return around 150 000 'internally displaced persons' to their homes with cash grants of \$5000, and make severance payments of \$8000 to the 'striking' soldiers. Despite still having international peacekeepers and a large international aid presence, the 2012 elections, run by the East Timorese, were peaceful and remarkably successful. Upon the announcement of a new coalition government there was brief and limited violence. But the way in which parties had contested the elections indicated that democracy had been consolidated in Timor-Leste as 'the only game in town'.

The apparent consolidation of Timor-Leste's democracy in the 2012 elections was achieved against considerable odds.

Despite high levels of international assistance, institutional capacity remained weak. Problems included poor skills and knowledge, systems and processes, and attitudes and behaviours. Parliament and its committees regularly failed to meet a quorum and the legislative process was backlogged. This was not helped by legislation being drafted in Portuguese, in which most parliamentarians were illiterate, but the language of parliament being Tetum. Government jobs were commonly seen by employees as a sinecure rather than a service.

Importantly for rule of law, Timor-Leste's legal system had too few trained judges, there was a backlog of cases and limited access to justice for more remote communities. Timor-Leste's multiple languages added further complications, with laws written and judges trained in Portuguese, lawyers often trained in

Timor-Leste went into the 2012 elections appearing, at last, to be a country at peace with itself.

Indonesian, and most plaintiffs or defendants speaking either Tetum or a 'home' language. Court translators were also often poorly skilled. This complex of problems meant limited meaningful access to the judicial system.

More positively, Timor-Leste's electoral institutions, the Technical Secretariat for Electoral Administration (STAE), which runs the election process, and the National Electoral Commission (CNE) which oversees it, functioned well. The STAE and CNE were established in 2001, had significant carriage for the 2007 elections and ran the country's 2012 elections with little external assistance.

As a counterpoint to electoral organisation, voter turnout in Timor-Leste has also been high—an indicator of 'democratic acceptance'. Turnout for the 2001 Constituent Assembly election (transformed into the parliament in 2002) was 86.03 per cent, for the 2002 presidential election 97.26 per cent, 81 per cent and 86 per cent respectively for the presidential and parliamentary elections in 2007, just over 73 per cent for the presidential election in 2012, and 74.78 per cent for the 2012 parliamentary elections. The official voter turnout rate in 2007 and 2012 was significantly below the actual turnout rate due to voters who had died not been removed from the voter rolls and some double registrations.

Timor-Leste has enjoyed universal suffrage and had five-yearly elections on three occasions. Each of those elections was deemed by independent observers to meet the internationally accepted criteria as being free and fair competitive

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processes devoid of significant fraud, while basic civil liberties were generally respected. However, while the party system was active and unrestricted, apart from the highly structured Fretilin party, it was also weak, with a heavy reliance on charismatic leadership and low levels of institutional capacity.

Regardless of the extent of formal commitment to democratic practice, underlying poverty continued to have the potential to challenge the country's democratic process. Low levels of material development, along with a residue of widespread post-traumatic stress disorder, helped to create a fragile sociopolitical environment. Broad human development indicators improved, if unevenly, with per capita GDP rising to over \$3000; however, with mean incomes were closer to \$730 and poverty declined only slightly to 37 per cent of the population. Many in rural areas have seen only modest improvement in their lives since 2002. The UN special rapporteur on extreme poverty estimated that a majority of the 75 per cent of Timorese living in rural areas were 'entrenched in intergenerational cycles of poverty' and that some 58 per cent of children suffered from chronic malnutrition.

Critically, 70 per cent of the population was under 30 years of age while unemployment, notoriously difficult to determine in a country that has never had much formal employment, remained disturbingly high. One view that was widely discussed, although rarely formally articulated, was that the rapidly



Presidential election rally, 2012.

Low levels of material development, along with a residue of widespread post-traumatic stress disorder, helped to create a fragile sociopolitical environment.

growing population and its limited opportunities for employment represented a demographic time bomb.

Timor-Leste underpinned its overall economy with receipts from the country's Petroleum Fund. Oil and gas receipts provide 95 per cent of state revenues and 81 per cent of GDP (2011 figures). Established to provide for government expenditure based on withdrawals from the interest only, the fund has increasingly been used by the Gusmao-led governments for major projects and recurrent expenditure. Given this high level of reliance on resource income, a dispute between the Timor-Leste government and Woodside Petroleum over the location for the processing plant for the development of the Greater Sunrise liquid natural gas (LNG) field in the Timor Sea was critical to the country's future. Plans for the project had stalled and possibly ended the generation of a further \$11 billion to the fund's \$13 billion base.

Beyond this, the Gusmao-led government intended to invest \$US5 billion in a LNG processing facility as the basis for a future domestic petrochemical industry. Given there was no LNG upstream supplier and the country's low skills base, and competition from established industries such as in Singapore, Timor-Leste's economic future—for all its resource opportunities—was looking hazardous.

This sense of hazard is enhanced by the government's 2013 budget of \$1.648 billion being

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approximately four times the sustainable rate. If this spending approach continues, the Petroleum Fund will be depleted by 2024. However, if large infrastructure projects currently being planned proceed, the fund could be depleted well before then.

On this basis, Timor-Leste looks, sooner or later, to be headed towards an economic crisis. Coming from an already low and fragile development base, the social consequences of this economic crisis would likely play out in the political field.



Xanana Gusmao: expected to leave active politics soon.

If, as expected, Prime Minister Xanana Gusmao and other senior political leaders leave active politics over the time frame of the decline in petroleum-based resources, the political experience and potential

capacity to unify disparate groups into a stable parliamentary majority will diminish.

The departure of key political leaders before the country has transitioned to a post-resistance leadership generation will be set against a fragile material base and a looming economic crisis. Timor-Leste's hard-won democracy—despite its broadly positive trajectory to date—faces significant future challenges.

Professor Damien Kingsbury is Director of the Centre for Citizenship, Development and Human Rights at Deakin University. He is author or editor of four books and numerous papers on Timor-Leste's politics.

New 'What works' resources focus on ICT

New resources from the [Asia Education Foundation's](#) (AEF) 'What works' series focus on the use of information communication technology (ICT) to teach Asian languages and studies, and intercultural understanding in the classroom.

[What works 4](#) uses feature stories and video clips from nine Australian schools to demonstrate how teachers are using ICT to develop students' Asia-relevant capabilities.

The 'What works' series is aimed primarily at teachers and school leaders, and is based on evidence-informed practice, combining up-to-date research with illustrations of practice that demonstrate 'what works' and 'what is possible' to support the development of Asia-relevant capabilities in Australian schools.

As part of the momentum for widespread Asia capability in Australian schools, [What works 4](#) features illustrations of how teachers in Australian schools are using ICT to teach Asian languages, Asian studies, and intercultural understanding.

Previous 'What works' publications are: What works 1: [Building demand for Asia literacy: what works](#) (June 2012); What works 2: [Leading school change to support the development of Asia-relevant capabilities](#) (March 2013); What works 3: [Achieving intercultural understanding through the teaching of Asia perspectives in the Australian curriculum: English and History](#) (June 2013).

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The numbers game: counting civilian deaths in Sri Lanka's war

Estimating the number of civilian deaths in the final stages of the war in Sri Lanka is proving problematic.

By Kath Noble

The generation-long war in Sri Lanka came to an end in May 2009, with the military defeat of the the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) by government forces. Tamil diaspora groups claimed there had been genocide, but the dominant narrative was of a bloody but essentially fair fight, as captured in the congratulatory resolution passed in the UN Human Rights Council barely a week later.

Even the United States, which backed an alternative and more critical statement, privately felt the same way—a cable published by *Wikileaks* quotes its Ambassador at Large for War Crimes Issues as having said at around the same time, 'The Army could have won the military battle faster with higher civilian casualties, yet chose a slower approach which led to a greater number of Sri Lankan military deaths'.

However, this near-consensus has gradually been eroded, and pressure is now mounting for an international investigation.

Although there have been a number of revelations of extrajudicial killings—including the apparent murder of the young son of LTTE chief Prabhakaran—the momentum behind what is an increasingly popular global campaign stems from estimates of the number of civilian deaths in the last stages of the fighting, which have gone up considerably.

The figure most commonly cited in the press was once 7000. Now it is 40 000, 70 000 or even 147 000. However, this inflation is not the

result of any new information. A recent study entitled *The numbers game* by a Sri Lankan expatriate writing for personal reasons under the pseudonym Citizen Silva has made an important contribution to the debate on what happened in his country by explaining where these estimates come from, questioning the assumption generally made by journalists that we cannot come to any conclusions without an international investigation.



Civilians being displaced as a result of Sri Lanka Army's military offensive, January 2009.

The 7000 is based on specific casualty reports, as recorded by a network of informants set up by the UN in

January 2009. This included more than 200 of its local staff and the local staff of international NGOs—who had been prevented by the LTTE from leaving with their foreign colleagues in October 2008—plus various medical officers, government agents, clergy, education department staff and community leaders.

They compiled reports from around the Vanni (the name given to the mainland area of the Northern Province of Sri Lanka) for the purpose of keeping the international community informed of the ground situation. Their figures were leaked at the time—17 810 civilian deaths up to 13 May, of which 7737 had been verified by more than one source. (Verification was considered important to account for the pressure that was being brought to bear on the informants by the LTTE, which was keen to present as appalling a picture as possible so as to provoke an intervention under the doctrine of 'Responsibility to protect'.)

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After 13 May, this monitoring became impossible due to the intensity of the fighting. The UN extrapolated on the basis of what it believed to be the daily body count to reach a total of around 11 400 civilian deaths in five months, and later, on the basis of information about a single incident, increased its estimate to 20 000. At the time, the United States thought this was an exaggeration. The State Department said in its *Report to Congress on incidents during the recent conflict in Sri Lanka*, 'The UN did not rigorously seek to exclude the deaths of possible LTTE conscripts'.

Nevertheless, the UN has since decided that estimates of 40 000 or 70 000 are credible.

These figures—and the still higher one of 147 000—are based on the number of people supposedly unaccounted for in the Vanni.

The 40 000 corresponds to 330 000 minus 290 000, or the population in the No-Fire Zone at the end of February 2009, according to an assistant government agent by the name of Parthipan, minus the number of internally displaced persons (IDPs) who had been registered by the government in collaboration with the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs by the end of May 2009.

The 70 000 corresponds to 360 000 minus 290 000, or the number of people in the Vanni in January 2009, according to the government agent for Mullaitivu, Imelda Sukumar, minus the number of IDPs at the end of the conflict.

And the 147 000 corresponds to 429 000 minus 282 000, or the population of the Vanni in October 2008, according to the district offices of Mullaitivu and Kilinochchi, minus the number of IDPs in July 2009.

The UN has since decided that estimates of 40 000 or 70 000 are credible.

The report points out that the 290 000 IDPs were not the only people to come out of the Vanni. In May 2009, another 12 000 people were being held by the government on suspicion of being LTTE cadres, while an unknown number paid to escape the camps.

More crucially, it exposes serious discrepancies in the population figures by comparing them. It notes that there is a very obvious problem with the figure for October 2008. If it is accurate, 69 000 people had vanished into thin air by January 2009.

Also, the same assistant government agent Parthipan who estimated the population in the No-Fire Zone at the end of February 2009 as 330 000 said that it was 305 000 at the end of March 2009 and 150 000 at the end of April 2009.

Meanwhile, the number of registered IDPs had increased from 36 000 to 57 000 and 172 000, implying that 4000 people went missing in March and 40 000 in April. If such huge numbers had been killed, this would have been captured by the informants' network. Even TamilNet—a website associated with the LTTE—claimed only 2600 civilian deaths in April and 1700 in March.

The report notes that the population figures were put together from lists maintained by village leaders, whose involvement in inflating the numbers for their own private gain or to serve the LTTE agenda has long been accepted. It also points out that while the first organisation to suggest a total of 40 000 stated that, even if the counts had been conducted in good faith, they definitely included LTTE cadres. None

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of the other individuals or agencies who have used the same method have taken this into account.

A local human rights group has claimed that the LTTE maintained a strength of 15 000 until the very end by means of absolutely ruthless conscription. They have said, 'They were conscripted and used briefly like disposable objects, were brought by the dozens, about 50 a day on average, on trailers of tractors and buried unceremoniously, about three in the same hole, one above the other, covered and forgotten.'



Displaced persons from the civil war in makeshift shelter.

In short, *The numbers game* categorically denies the credibility of any estimate arising from the second method. It acknowledges that the first method, too, is

flawed, since at least some people may have died without being seen or without their death being recorded by the network of informants—not all bodies would have been transported to medical facilities.

To get over this problem, *The numbers game* works from data on the number of injuries, on the basis that the injured would have all sought help.

The report starts by estimating ratios of the number of deaths to the number of injuries during the various stages of the final phase. The calculations begin from 20 January 2009, when the government first declared a no-fire zone, and it is assumed that the situation became worse as time went on until the end of the conflict on 19 May, in particular with the Army's incursion into the No-Fire Zone on 20 April,

A local human rights group has claimed that the LTTE maintained a strength of 15 000 until the very end by means of **absolutely ruthless** conscription.

and from 9 May as the operation to capture the No-Fire Zone commenced. It uses a ratio of dead to injured from serious injuries of between 40 per cent and 50 per cent—worse than the 33 per cent to 50 per cent range that was accepted by the panel of experts appointed by the UN Secretary General—and a ratio of between 20 per cent and 40 per cent for lesser injuries, based on the findings of a local human rights group from their interviews with eyewitnesses. The resulting average ratios of dead to injured range from 60 per cent in January to 90 per cent in May.

These estimates are then combined with another conclusion of the local human rights group, that at least 50 per cent of the injured were shipped out of the No-Fire Zone by the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) between 10 February and 9 May, to give the totals shown in the table. (Figures for the periods up to 10 February and after 9 May were calculated by comparing eyewitness accounts from various sources.)

Period	Injuries	Deaths
20–31 January	2100	1300
1–28 February	4000	2500
1–31 March	3800	2400
1–19 April	3100	2000
20–30 April	2500	1900
1–8 May	900	800
9–14 May	2000	1800
15–16 May	1000	900
17–18 May	2100	1900
Total	21 500	15 500

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The total body count is around 15 000. The approach is checked by means of three case studies—a report by the head of an NGO connected to the LTTE about shelling on 9 and 10 March, the Army's incursion into the No-Fire Zone on 20 April, as described by the TamilNet correspondent and staff of the ICRC, and interviews, by the international media, of local doctors when a mortar hit the admissions ward of a makeshift hospital on 12 May. In all of them, calculating the number of deaths from the number of injuries results in exaggeration.

When compared to other estimates of the total body count at various points in the final phase, this method also comes up with higher figures.

Unfortunately, *The numbers game* has been ignored by almost all media.

It is easy and comfortable for journalists to call for an international investigation to settle the matter, but making this happen is not so simple.

After three decades of fighting, opinion in Sri Lanka is deeply polarised. No intervention will be automatically regarded as impartial by the majority of all communities—any comment on what happened in May 2009 has to prove its worth by engaging with serious analysis that presents a contrary view.

Failing to do so also risks contributing to the further polarisation of society.

Kath Noble is a journalist. She worked in Sri Lanka from 2004 to 2010, and has since been engaged in postgraduate studies at Jawaharlal Nehru University in India, focusing on the political economy of the postwar reconstruction in Sri Lanka.

China set for carbon pricing: new study

As Australia moves to scrap its pioneering carbon-pricing scheme, China is expected to have seven pilot pricing systems in place no later than 2015, followed by a national scheme, according to a new survey from the Australian National University.

The survey—a joint initiative between the Centre for Climate Economics and Policy in the [ANU College of Asia & the Pacific's Crawford School](#) and Beijing-based NGO China Carbon Forum—collected the opinions of 86 China-based carbon pricing experts.

The survey found strong confidence that China will introduce carbon-pricing mechanisms in coming years, that the price of emitting carbon will rise over time, and that China will have both a national emissions trading and a carbon tax by the end of the decade.

Study co-leader and Director of the Centre for Climate Change Economics and Policy, [Associate Professor Frank Jotzo](#), said that nationwide emissions trading was set to become a reality in China.

'This would quite possibly be in tandem with a carbon tax and would give a boost to China's efforts to limit emissions growth and stop growth in coal use,' he said.

'If the world's largest emitter embraces carbon pricing then this will send a strong signal the world over.'

See full report on ANU College of Asia & the Pacific [website](#).

The report *China carbon pricing survey 2013* is available online at the Centre for Climate Economics and Policy [research page](#).

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China's demographic turning point

Planners in China face the major challenge brought about by the very low fertility and other demographic changes.

By Zhongwei Zhao

Four decades ago, China's total fertility rate was around 5 children per woman. It fell to about 1.2 in 2010 according to the result of the latest census. Even after taking into account the impact of under-enumeration, China's current fertility is still well below the level of replacement. To understand this great change, it is useful to start with a brief introduction to China's national family planning program.

While population control was already discussed and family planning services were also in existence in a few Chinese cities in the first half of the 20th century, China's nationwide family planning program did not start until the early 1970s. This program was a part of the government-led responses to the rapid population growth, which were observed in many less-developed countries in recent decades.

In 1970, population in Mainland China already reached more than 800 million and was still growing at a speed of nearly 3 per cent per annum. This, together with the continuous social upheavals caused by the Cultural Revolution and the low level of economic development, created enormous difficulties for the country to improve its standards of living and to build up a strong economy. It was in this circumstance that the Chinese government launched its nationwide family planning campaign.

During most of the 1970s, the major focus of China's family planning program could be summarised by the slogan of 'later, longer, and fewer', which called people to marry and give birth at later ages, to have longer birth intervals, and to bear fewer children. This campaign

received overwhelming support from the population. As a result, China's fertility fell rapidly during the decade.

Despite that, the growth of the Chinese population was still faster than the official target. Consequently, the government led another campaign between 1979 and 1983 to implement more radical family planning policies. This campaign, especially the one-child policy, met with considerable resistance from the population. Partly for this reason, these policies have been modified and relaxed since the mid-1980s. The revised policies condemned coercion and encouraged flexibility and persuasion. Their emphasis was also gradually shifted toward the integration of population control, improvement of client-centred services and reproductive health, and women's empowerment.

It is noteworthy that family planning policies and regulations implemented among different population groups and in urban and rural areas have been more diverse than those realised by most people. If all these fertility policies and regulations were followed strictly, China's expected fertility level would be close to 1.5 children per woman. In other words, about 50 per cent of couples could still have the second birth, assuming all other couples each had one child only.

The family planning program has played an important part in China's fertility transition. While falling fertility had been observed in some cities in the 1950s and 1960s, China's nationwide fertility decline did not begin until the early 1970s. During that decade, the government-led family planning program helped to bring fertility down from about 6 to around 2.5 children per woman.

In the 1980s, China's total fertility rate fluctuated between 2.3 to 2.9. These fluctuations were largely

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observed in period fertility rates. Cohort fertility continued to decline during this time. In the early 1990s, China's fertility recorded another sharp reduction and fell to below replacement. After that, it further decreased to around 1.6 in the year 2000. This trend did not stop in the first decade of the 21st Century. According to the 2010 census, the observed total fertility rate was only around 1.2 for China's national population. Even after taking into account the impact of under-enumeration, the average fertility for the decade might still be lower than 1.5 children per woman.

It is important to note that in the 1970s and 1980s, China's family planning program made a significant contribution to the rapid fertility decline. But in the past two decades, the further fertility reduction has been increasingly driven by the changes in people's fertility desires and intentions that have taken place during recent rapid socioeconomic development.

Some people may not be convinced that China's fertility could have reached such a very low level, nor do they believe that profound changes could have taken place in China's pronatalist culture and tradition. It is interesting that a few decades ago, when people debated whether Mainland China could achieve as rapid an economic growth as Asia's 'four small dragons' did, many of them were very confident that this would happen, and they have now been proven correct. Yet, when it comes to fertility changes, many people have become less confident about the possibility that fertility decline observed in South Korea, Taiwan, Hong Kong, Singapore and Japan could also take place in Mainland China. However, a comparison has found that after

falling below replacement, fertility changes in these populations have been rather similar. None of them has bounced back to the replacement level.

Because of its recent demographic changes, especially the extraordinary fertility decline and the impact of population momentum, China is now at another important demographic turning point. In the next 10 to 20 years, China's national population will experience a slow growth and this will be followed by a long-term decline. India will replace China and become the most populous country in the world. The numbers of China's working-age population will reach a peak in a few years' time and then start to fall. The 'demographic window' will gradually close.

China's fertility is very likely to stay at below or far below replacement in the near future, and this will have a profound impact on the age structure of the population. Because of that and the increasing longevity, the speed of population ageing will accelerate in the next two decades. As a result, the proportion of China's old population will grow significantly. In addition, rural-urban migration will continue to increase. Urbanisation and urban conglomeration will reach a level that has never been achieved in Chinese history. These major changes set up China's demographic backdrop for the next 20 to 40 years. The socioeconomic impact and policy implications of this backdrop are so crucial that they must be considered carefully in our planning for the future.

Zhongwei Zhao is a professor at the Australian Demographic and Social Research Institute, Research School of Social Sciences, College of Arts and Social Sciences, the Australian National University.

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China's growing culture of philanthropy

China's second national charity fair reflects strong encouragement of a growing role for public philanthropy in the communist state.

By Elaine Jeffreys and Su Xuezhong

Around 141 000 people attended China's second national Charity Fair in the city of Shenzhen last month.

Although this was slightly fewer than the estimated 150 000 people who attended the first national fair, also in Shenzhen, in 2012, it reflected the continuing strong growth of a culture of public philanthropy in the communist state.

The organising theme, 'Charity makes China even more beautiful', was a broad reference to former president Hu Jintao's call at the 18th Congress of the Chinese Communist Party in 2012 for China to continue with rapid economic growth, while creating and maintaining its 'beautiful' environment and culture.

The Ministry of Civil Affairs concluded that the second fair—held at the Shenzhen Convention and Exhibition Centre from, 21 to 23 September—was a success, based on a 142 per cent increase over the previous fair in the number of grassroots philanthropic organisations that attended.

As with the first fair, this year's event aimed to bring together people from across China who are involved in philanthropic initiatives, and to showcase those initiatives and promote exchange. Nearly 830 exhibition stands, divided into eight sections, occupied the large central hall of the convention and exhibition centre.

The eight sections comprised a variety of organisations—social, corporate, ecological and environ-

mental, disaster relief, and charities run by municipal governments.

There appeared to be a substantial increase in the number of small philanthropic organisations, but a decrease in the number of government-run provincial and charity federations. Government austerity measures introduced in December 2012 perhaps reduced the number of people who attended the fair as provincial government-sponsored delegates



Shenzhen Convention and Exhibition Centre. Photo, Su Xuezhong.

Only 80 corporate social responsibility (CSR) initiatives and foundations were featured in 2013, compared to around 140 in 2012, which may also reflect a decreased representation from state-owned enterprises. But a strong presence from the private corporate sector was evident in the sections on environment, disaster relief, and philanthropic innovation, suggesting that various CSR initiatives were presented as part of other initiatives.

A new display section was devoted to ecology and the environment. Organised by SEE, a CSR organisation founded by nearly 100 entrepreneurs in 2004 that is dedicated to promoting entrepreneurial innovation and environmental protection. The section contained 66 exhibits showcasing corporate involvement in environmental protection. These included exhibits of activities ranging from combating desertification in Inner Mongolia to promoting responsible fishing on the Yangtze River.

Small, grassroots organisations

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were also strongly in evidence. They included community groups and social work organisations advertising services for the elderly, people living with physical and mental challenges, and families with children suffering from autism, leukaemia and other medical conditions.



Adopt a cat message.
Photo, Elaine
Jeffreys.

They also included community and social work organisations providing sports, music, creative writing, and other

recreational and cultural activities for disadvantaged youth. In addition. There were organisations promoting environmental and conservation initiatives, ranging from marine conservation and the restoration of local wetlands by birdwatching enthusiasts, to the spaying and adoption of feral cats and dogs.

Parallel sessions of workshops and salon activities were held over the three days of the fair.

The mounting of a second charity fair in Shenzhen is significant because it highlights a national policy commitment to developing private philanthropy in China. The PRC's 10th Five-Year Plan for National Economic and Social Development, for 2001–05, first proposed developing philanthropic enterprises to strengthen the country's inadequate social security system, especially in the context of ageing population trends.

The 11th Five-Year Plan, for 2006–10, was more expansive, flowing from its overarching policy goal, under the leadership of the President Hu Jintao and Premier Wen Jiabao administration (2003–2013), of creating a

'harmonious socialist society', by addressing rising social inequality and creating an environment for more sustainable growth. It advocated the expansion of philanthropic organisations in general, and especially organisations that would assist with education and provide relief for vagrant minors.

The 12th Five-Year Plan, for 2011–15, is even more ambitious. It proposes introducing a system of tax incentives to create a comprehensive system of registered private industry, trade, and professional associations, and urban and rural community organisations that will support and perhaps even take over some of the social welfare service functions of government in terms of developing the economy and acting as public charities.

Shenzhen has been at the forefront of various philanthropy-related developments or experiments in China in recent years. In 2008, independent, non-profit organisations working in the fields of charity, social welfare and social services were permitted to register directly with the city's civil affairs departments, without having to first find a government supervisory body as required in most other parts of China. Shenzhen now has nearly 5000 registered organisations working in these areas.

Shenzhen also has an active, government-sponsored volunteer program of around 850 000 individuals, many of them high school, college and university students who are expected to engage in voluntary work as part of course requirements. The Shenzhen Municipality People's Government plans to further increase the number of registered volunteers in the city by 2015 with the goal of meeting 30 per cent of the city's anticipated social services.

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Shenzhen's commitment to promoting volunteering was evident in public service advertisements and volunteering stations around the city. Free pocket- or wallet-



Li Yundi: providing celebrity endorsement. Photo, Su Xuezhong.

sized maps of the Shenzhen subway state that volunteers are leading the city's 'civilizational progress'. Public service advertisements at bus stops

and other busy spaces in both 2012 and 2013 show an image of Li Yundi, a renowned classical pianist from Chongqing who trained at the Shenzhen Arts School, providing an international celebrity endorsement of volunteering. A slogan next to his image states: 'Everybody respects a volunteer, everybody wants to be a volunteer', above a hotline number for the Shenzhen Municipality Volunteer Services.

*These activities suggest philanthropy will become **a normal activity** and vocation for some young people in China.*

Hundreds of U-stations staffed by volunteers have also been placed around the city, providing basic information for residents and tourists, such as directions and free city maps, and contact details for community social workers. Banners in front of some U-stations, and slogans on the back of buses, exhort people to 'learn from Lei Feng: contribute to the lives of others; improve yourself'. Lei Feng is a propaganda-style socialist role model from the Maoist 1960s, who is famous for his altruism and love

of the Chinese Communist Party and the Chinese people. His name and persona have been revitalised since early 2012 as the celebrity face of government-supported campaigns to promote volunteering.

These activities suggest philanthropy will become a normal activity and vocation for some cohorts of young people in China. They further suggest that some of the concepts and discussions around philanthropy in Western societies—such as an assumed division between the state and civil society, and the third or non-government sector—may not be suited to understanding the development of philanthropy and volunteering in China.

Elaine Jeffreys is an Australian Research Council Future Fellow and Associate Professor in China studies at the University of Technology Sydney.

Su Xuezhong is a PhD candidate at the University of Technology Sydney. His thesis topic is on creating a philanthropic citizenry in China.

Adelaide to host international Asian scholars convention

Adelaide will host the Ninth Biennial International Convention of Asian Scholars (ICAS), the largest convention of Asian studies scholars outside of the United States, in 2015.

ICAS particularly emphasises participation by early career scholars from around Asia.

The organisers are looking at ways to bring together Australia's Asia expertise and welcome participation by Australia's Asia educators working in schools, government and tertiary institutions.

ICAS 9 will be held at the Adelaide Convention Centre, 5–9 July 2015. More information is available from the convention's [website](#) or from the convenor, [Dr Gerry Groot](#).

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Vivekananda and Chicago 1893: bridging East and West

This year marks the 150th anniversary of Vivekananda's birth and his contribution to understanding among religions.

By Peter Friedlander

Whosoever comes to Me, through whatsoever form, I reach him; all men are struggling through paths which in the end lead to me. Quote from the *Gita* made by Vivekananda in his opening address to the Parliament of Religions in 1893.

This year sees celebrations to mark the 150th anniversary of the birth of Swami Vivekananda (1863–1902) and the contribution of his teachings to world religions. It is being celebrated at numerous events around the world and facilitated by the Ramakrishna Mission and the broader community. In Australia, Sydney, Melbourne, Adelaide and Canberra are all host cities to such celebrations. Speakers at the Canberra meeting had the pleasure of addressing a packed hall of admirers of Vivekananda from Canberra and Sydney.

As I looked at the audience while I spoke, I felt a strong sense of the ways the world has been transformed in little more than a century. On the one hand, we are now a globalised community in terms of our geographic origins. On the other hand, the audience's interest in intercultural understanding testified to the ways it has become possible for people from different religions to develop deep interests in one another's religions.

Vivekananda, who was born Narendranath Datta, grew up in Calcutta, one of the great cities of the world in the latter half of the 19th century and also a scene of

intense intercultural contact. Along with the Indian and English communities, people from

countries as diverse as Armenia and China also lived there.



Swami Vivekananda in Chicago, September 1893.

Vivekananda studied in the new English educational system, but also manifested a deep interest in spirituality, which was fuelled by his becoming a follower of the

great sage Ramakrishna. After undertaking a number of tours throughout India, he appears to have been equally impressed by India's spirituality and its dreadful inequality and poverty. Hearing of the forthcoming World's Parliament of Religions in Chicago, to be held in 1893, he resolved to go there and take part in it, as an element of what he conceived of as a mission to the West.

It seems we might never have heard of Vivekananda had it not been for this decision, for he only became known by the name Vivekananda when we was about to depart on his voyage to the West. But for his journey, he might only have been known to the world as Narendranath Datta.¹ His journey was also a paradigm of the kind being undertaken by other South Asians around this period, such as that by Anagarika Dharmapala, a Buddhist Singhalese representative at the parliament, and of course, later, Rabindranath Tagore. Routes from India to the United States at

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this period led via Singapore and Shanghai, and then to Japan and the West Coast of America. This gave Vivekananda his first opportunity to see East Asian cultures and appreciate the links between Asian religions and cultures that could be seen through Buddhist temples and traditions. The great Columbian Exposition of 1893 was a world fair organised in the tradition of the first French expositions and then the Crystal Palace Exposition of 1855 in London. The aim of such events was to show how



The Chicago parliament: Vivekananda clearly made an impression.

development around the world led inevitably to its finest expression in the exhibitions themselves, and the great cultures of the nations staging them. Vivekananda made five speeches at the parliament and attended a number of parallel panels at the main parliament, which was held over a period of days: he clearly made an impression on the crowd. His addresses included 'Why we disagree', in which he spoke of how the Indian saying about frogs in a well, all thinking their own world to be the universe, reflected what religions knew about each other. He also spoke about Hinduism and Buddhism. Notably, he devoted one speech to an appeal for economic development rather than

'The Christian is not to become a Hindu or a Buddhist, nor a Hindu or a Buddhist to become a Christian.'

Christian missions for India, which pointed to his ongoing concern with the physical as well as spiritual wellbeing of humanity.

Judith Snodgrass, in her study of representations of Japanese Buddhism and the Parliament of Religions², noted that, in reality, the focus of the event was very much on Christianity. What is more, to no little degree, like the exhibition itself, the intention was to present the world's religions in such a way as to point out the natural evolution of all religions towards what the organisers saw as their culmination, North American Protestant Christianity.

The idea of using the opportunity of the parliament to show that your own tradition was the highest form of religion seems, to a great extent, to have also been the approach of all the Buddhist delegates, who each argued that their own national form of Buddhism was the highest. There is an echo of this logic in Vivekananda's own speeches, and in his opening address he asserted Hinduism's paramount status when he spoke of it as 'the mother of religions'. However, by his closing address to the parliament he appears to have heard enough of delegates arguing for the superiority of their traditions, and no doubt the need for conversion from various missionary delegates. He roundly condemned the idea of

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conversion, and said, 'The Christian is not to become a Hindu or a Buddhist, nor a Hindu or a Buddhist to become a Christian'. But each must assimilate the spirit of the others and yet preserve their individuality and grow according to their own law of growth'.

As somebody who has studied the Buddhist contributions to the parliament, I am struck by Vivekananda's address to the general session called 'Buddhism, the fulfilment of Hinduism'. In this, he said he would not criticise Buddhism but, in praising Buddhism, he said of the Buddha that 'it was his glory that he had the large-heartedness to bring out the truths hidden in the *Vedas* and through them broadcast all over the world'.

This appears to be a similar argument to the one he employed when speaking of Hinduism as the mother of all religions. By claiming that the Buddha taught what was hidden in the *Vedas*, he was asserting that Buddha acknowledged the validity of the *Vedas*.

However, this is in sharp contrast to any statements attributed to the Buddha, and all Buddhist traditions, which never accepted the *Vedas* as basis for proof—which makes me wonder how much he had read from Buddhist sources and to what extent he had discussed his ideas with Buddhists.

We can now see the way Vivekananda and the other delegates at the parliament approached the issue of speaking about their traditions as a first step towards dialogue. It was a stating of each religion's assertion of its own validity. What

*The missionary zeal of some of the attendees may have made a **profound impression** on the minds of all those who attended.*

has happened, hopefully, is that different traditions have subsequently gone beyond the stating of positions, and actually listened to each other.

We also have to acknowledge that the missionary zeal of some of the attendees may have made a profound impression on the minds of all those who attended, and this must have led to Vivekananda's final, impassioned plea to the delegates asserting the rights of all religions to continue to exist with each in their own way working for the greater good of humanity.

If some people still dream of the exclusive survival of their own religion and the destruction of the others, I pity them from the bottom of my heart, and point out to them that upon the banner of every religion will soon be written, in spite of resistance: 'Help and not Fight', 'Assimilation and not Destruction'; 'Harmony and Peace and not Dissension'.

References

1. R Rolland 1965. *The life of Vivekananda and the universal gospel*, Advaita Ashrama, Calcutta, p. 32.
2. J Snodgrass 2003. *Presenting Japanese Buddhism to the West: orientalism, occidentalism and the Columbian Exposition*, University of North Carolina Press.

Peter Friedlander is senior lecturer in Hindi-Urdu, at the Australian National University College of Asia and the Pacific.

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LCNAU rallies members to defend language programs

The battle to defend language programs is set to continue in the wake of the 2013 federal election.

By Anya Woods, Colin Nettelbeck and John Hajek

The Languages and Cultures Network for Australian Universities (LCNAU) held its 2013 Colloquium at the Australian National University (ANU), 3–5 July, and warned about the need to continue defending language programs in Australia.

The 2013 colloquium was an even greater success than the inaugural colloquium in 2011. Over 200 participants attended from Australian universities and other organisations, with a broad range of Asian, European and Australian Indigenous languages represented. More than one-third of the 70 or so presentations featured research by Asianists, covering Indonesian, Hindi, Chinese, Korean and Japanese.

Innovations in technology were a focus of many presentations. [Richard Curtis](#) (Charles Darwin University) discussed the use of social media in engendering authentic Indonesian language learning experiences. [Peter Friedlander](#) (ANU) examined whether a new diploma in Hindi-Urdu via TELL (Technology-enhanced language learning) can assist in making Hindi-Urdu more available at tertiary level. [Anne McLaren](#) (University of Melbourne) explored the role of mobile e-technologies in promoting motivation in tertiary Chinese literacy programs. [Gi-Hyun Shin](#), Yong-Ju Rue, Ghi-Woon Seo, Joo Yun Yang and Clara Kim (University of New South Wales) discussed the broadening of the concept of the language classroom in the globalised era, in the context of Korean. [Mark Gibeau](#) and Jun Imaki (ANU) examined ways in which technology can be incorporated into large-

enrolment Japanese classes to deliver 'mechanical' course components and free up staff to focus on task-based communicative activities with their students.¹

One of the highlights of the colloquium was the public address by [Professor Kent Anderson](#) (a Japanese expert at the University of Adelaide), whose provocatively titled presentation 'Languages, the *Asian Century White Paper* and three myths obstructing our success' triggered lively discussion and debate on how to demonstrate the value of language programs to largely monolingual policymakers (see [Language myths make for bad policy in the Asian Century](#)).

This was particularly pertinent in the wake of the recent axing of the Japanese, Chinese and Spanish



Kent Anderson: triggered lively discussion.

programs by the University of Canberra (UC).

The staff of those programs attended the colloquium and presented their classroom-based research—some of which they will not

have the chance to complete. This was a sign of exemplary courage and commitment. The LCNAU team remains deeply perturbed by the UC languages closures, which proceeded despite a vigorous and well-argued campaign of support by UC staff, students, LCNAU and others.

The battle to defend language programs is set to continue in the wake of the 2013 federal election. LCNAU was actively involved in the discussion process for the Asian Century country strategies, attending public consultations and writing a [lengthy submission](#).

However, and where there may have

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LCNAU rallies members on language programs

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previously been incentive and imperative to support and build Asian language programs at all levels of education, we cannot be sure whether these will be maintained. LCNAU is nonetheless committed to offering support and advocacy wherever it can.

*The **implications** of the White Paper are now uncertain*

We believe we are now in a stronger position to offer this support to the tertiary languages sector as a result of our formal incorporation as an association in mid-2013. The 2013 colloquium, held as it was shortly after our incorporation, was therefore an opportunity to celebrate this achievement and to invite membership.

Your membership as individuals is of great importance. LCNAU began life as a grassroots movement of collaboration and support among practitioners of university languages and cultures. If it is to continue that role, it will need a membership that is numerous and active.

Your membership will also support us financially. External support and sponsorship from a number of universities and schools have allowed us to operate a part-time secretariat, enabling us to monitor the state of languages in the education sector and respond to a number of pressing issues important to Asian and European languages and studies.

However, continuing participation from individuals who share our vision remains essential.

Note

1. Selected colloquium presentations are already available on the [LCNAU](#)

[website](#) and refereed proceedings now being prepared will feature papers by many Asianists from across the country. (Proceedings from the 2011 colloquium are available for download as individual chapters, or for purchase as a complete volume.)

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



LCNAU membership

The benefits of individual membership include:

- eligibility to vote in LCNAU elections and stand for committee membership (and therefore to play a direct role in the development of policy and practice)
- eligibility to present at future colloquia
- access to planned member-only areas of the LCNAU website, including virtual clusters
- member-only discount on registration for colloquia
- member-only discounts on purchases of LCNAU publications.

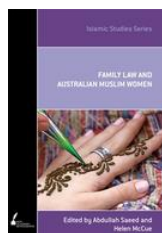
For further information, including a membership application form, see the [LCNAU website](#) or contact [Anya Woods](#).

Symposium marks Whitlam China visit

The historic visit to China by Australian prime minister Gough Whitlam 40 years ago was marked recently by a symposium organised by the China–Australia Research Network, at the National Centre for Australian Studies, Monash University. The symposium, on 16 October, also celebrated the recent expansion of Australian Studies in China.

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New books on Asia



Family law and Australian Muslim women. By Abdullah Saeed and Helen McCue (eds). Paperback and e-book, Melbourne University Publishing. Paperback: \$59.99. E-book: \$49.99.

This book is timely as there are few recent texts that provide students and researchers with an analysis of how Muslim women negotiate Western legal systems and Islamic law, or how existing formal and informal dispute resolution processes enable such negotiations. Several of the contributors are lawyers and have worked in areas of family law and dispute resolution, and all are academics with research experience in this field.

Each of the themes covered in the book enhances, in a seamless and integrated way, the main theme of the experiences of Muslim women. The authors have sought to contribute to the wider legal, social and academic debates on Islam that are taking place globally.

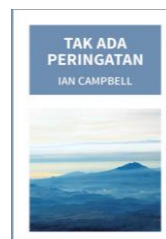
The first key theme is that of Islamic family law reform. The review and analysis of this reform, in both its historic and modern contexts, contextualise the book's remaining themes. A second key theme is that of legal pluralism and the intersection between Islamic and secular family law. The focus is the strategies Muslim women use in Muslim minority countries, such as Australia, to negotiate these two legal systems, particularly in the process of divorce. The third theme explores how Muslim women utilise both Islamic and secular legal processes in dispute resolution over family law matters.

The book's strength lies in the identification of new processes of legal pluralism and legal accommodation that are an insight into the multiple ways Australian Muslim women negotiate Australian

family law and Islamic law in the key areas of marriage, divorce, property settlement and inheritance. The book illustrates the various ways in which Muslim women carve out an identity as a specific faith community in Western secular societies, while maintaining the essence of their Muslim identity.

Family law and Australian Muslim women is part of Melbourne University Publishing's Islamic Studies Series.

Indonesian-language poet commended



A researcher at Macquarie University, Sydney, Ian Campbell, has been highly commended for a book of his own Indonesian-language poetry.

Ian's 2013 collection of poems, *Tak ada peringatan* (No warning) (See [Asian Currents](#), April 2013) was highly commended for its artistic merit in the inaugural Australian Arts in Asia Awards, sponsored by the Australian government.

The collection partly features poems which have been previously published in mass media and literary journals in Jakarta and Bandung, West Java, between 2002–2012.

A former Australian public servant, Ian completed postgraduate research in Indonesian Studies, with a 2008 book, *Contemporary Indonesian language poetry from West Java*, and other research publications.

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Bulletin board

Call for submissions for ASAA 14



AsiaScapes
Contesting Borders

8-10 July 2014 • University of Western Australia

The Asian
Studies
Association of

Australia (ASAA) is calling for panel and abstract submissions for its 20th biennial conference (ASAA 14), to be held at the University of Western Australia, 8–10 July in 2014.

The conference theme—*Asiascapes: contesting borders*—will seek to emphasise the involvement of Asia as a region of origin, transmission and reception of peoples, technologies, money, images, ideals and ideologies throughout the world.

Panels and individual papers are invited from all areas of Asian Studies. Panel submissions are due by 29 November 2013 and abstract submissions by 7 February 2014. See [conference website](#).

Sponsorship Opportunities

ASAA 2014 is seeking to partner with a range of sponsors in creating a world-class event for Western Australia. A range of individually tailored sponsorship opportunities will be made available to interested parties.

Major partnerships are strictly limited and will be available on a first come first served basis. In addition to the chief partnership categories, there are a number of specific individual partnerships available, including advertising and satchel inserts. If your organisation has special needs, the organisers would be pleased to tailor a suitable package.

For further information on sponsorship and trade opportunities contact:
ASAA 2014 Conference Secretariat
EECW Pty Ltd
T: +61 8 9389 1488
F: +61 8 9389 1499
E: info@eecw.com.au

Proposals call for first AAS-in-Asia conference:

The inaugural Association for Asian Studies (AAS)-in-Asia conference, *Asia in motion: heritage and transformation*, will be held at the National University of Singapore, 17–19 July 2014.



The conference has been organised by Association for Asian Studies, the Asia Research Institute, and the Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences of the National University of Singapore. The submission deadline for proposals is 31 October, 2013.

The conference seeks to attract a wide range of panel proposals from humanists and social scientists, as well as practitioners from the worlds of policy, civil society, journalism, and other professional fields.

The Singapore conference will be followed by conferences in Taipei in 2015 and Kyoto in 2016.

These conferences will not replace the AAS annual conference held each spring in North America, and differ significantly in size and structure.

Further information available from the [conference website](#).

Jobs

Lecturer in Chinese and East Asian Thought, University of Sydney, School of Languages and Cultures, Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences. Ref: 1975/0913. Full-time, continuing, remuneration package: \$104K–\$124K p.a. (includes salary, leave loading and up to 17% super). **Closes 27 October 2013**. See [website](#) for further details.

Early career position in Modern Chinese Culture (fixed term), University of Auckland. The School of Asian Studies in the University of Auckland invites applications for the position of Lecturer in Chinese Culture, starting February 2014 for a fixed term of two years. **Closes 3 November 2013**. See [website](#) for further details.

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Coming events

17th Japanese Film Festival. This year, the festival has added Brisbane, Perth and Canberra to its two flagship cities, Sydney and Melbourne. Dates and locations: **Brisbane: 16–20 October**, Events Cinema Brisbane Myer Centre; **Perth: 23–27 October** Hoyts Westfield Carousel and State Library Theatre; **Canberra: 30 October–3 November**, Capital Cinema Manuka; **Sydney: 14–24 November**, Event Cinemas George Street; **Melbourne: 28 November–8 December**, Hoyts Melbourne Central and ACFI Cinemas, Australian Centre for the Moving Image. The festival will also travel to **Townsville (26 October)**, in addition to the already existing programs in **Cairns (3 November)** and **Darwin**. Further information: [Website](#); Facebook: [japanesefilmfest](#); Twitter: [@japanfilmfest/#jff17](#). The festival is presented and run by the Japan Foundation, Sydney.

'Fighting women' during and after the Second World War in Asia and Europe, conference, The Netherlands, 12–13 June, 2014, The Institute for War, Holocaust and Genocide Studies, Amsterdam. See [Bulletin board](#).

20th NZASIA Biennial International Conference, Environment, dislocation and cultural space, Auckland, New Zealand, 22–24 November 2013, hosted by the University of Auckland. More information on [conference website](#).

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. See [conference website](#).

Inaugural AAS-in-Asia conference, Asia in motion: heritage and transformation, National University of Singapore, 17–19 July 2014. Further information available from [conference website](#).

International Convention of Asian Scholars (ICAS 9), 5–9 July 2015. **Adelaide Convention Centre.** See [website](#) for further information, or contact the convenor, [Dr Gerry Groot](#). See [Adelaide to host international Asian scholars convention](#).

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. It also 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 Studies Review

Asian Studies Review 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. The invited review articles and book reviews published in *Asian Studies Review* provide a vital point of articulation between the scholarship on display in the research articles and the broader world of Asian Studies.

Asian Studies Review is associated with the [Asian Studies Association of Australia](#). All research articles in this journal have undergone rigorous peer review, based on initial editor screening and refereeing by two anonymous referees.

Asian Currents is edited by [Allan Sharp](#). Unsolicited articles of between 1000–1500 words on any field of Asian studies will be considered.

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