ICAS 4 update: the future of Asia

The fourth International Convention of Asia Scholars will be organized by the Shanghai Academy of Social Sciences (SASS) in Shanghai, 20-24 August 2005. At the time of writing, the ICAS 4 Organizing Committee is sending out letters of acceptance to nearly one-thousand participants. About 250 panels on topics varying from politics and political anthropology to genomics have been assembled, the titles and short descriptions of which are published on the ICAS website.

ICAS 4 will have as its theme ‘The Future of Asia’. While previous meetings of ICAS lacked such a theme, it is clear why the organizers of ICAS 4 desired it: their back- yard, Shanghai, is the future of Asia. The rise of this city over the past decade has been a story of superlatives. The skyline of the city has been transformed, now boasting some of the world’s tallest buildings and longest bridges. Shanghai’s unique appeal rests in its double role as a harbinger of China’s future and a testing ground for the world at large. It draws inspiration from the co-habitation of Asian, European, Muslim, and indigenous cultures and the creative forces this engender. The landmark Shanghai Exhibition Center on Yinan Road will be the venue of ICAS 4. This communist icon, which opened its doors in 1955, is a culturally significant project of Shanghai’s hitherto socialist history. Initially called the China-Soviet Friendship Mansion, its name was changed to Exhibition Center in 1956. Its famous vaulted hall has been reserved for the exibition, supporters and visitors of ICAS 4.

ICAS Book Projects

The ICAS Book Projects aim to create an international focus for publications on Asia while increasing worldwide visibility. All scientific books published in 2003 and 2004 on Asian topics were eligible. Three prizes will be awarded: (1) best study in a language of the region, (2) best study from a language other than the regional languages, and (3) best study on an emerging topic. The winners will be announced on the ICAS website.

Muslim authorities in twentieth century Indonesia

The IIAAS project Islam in Indonesia: the dissemination of religious authority in the 20th century is now in its final year. This four-year co-operative research project, involving universities in Indonesia, the Netherlands, Egypt, Australia, Canada and elsewhere, aims to study and document important changes in religious, especially Muslim, authority in Indonesia over the past century which have contributed to the shaping of contemporary nationhood. As the twentieth century has been a period of rapid social change – the result of, among other factors, spectacular rises in literacy, urbanization, economic growth and the visibility and influence of the state – the dissemination of religious authority has acquired highly dynamic and complex characteristics.

The project includes four advanced research programmes which address the most important areas of religious dissemination in Indonesia over the twentieth century: (1) ‘Islam and Fatwa: the Structures of Traditional Religious Authority’, (2) ‘Tarekat: Mystical Assemblies’, (3) ‘Dakwah Organisations and Activities in Urban Communities’, and (4) ‘Education and the Dissemination and Reproduction of Religious Authority’.

As a spin-off activity to the joint research efforts, a comprehensive list of religious personalities in twentieth century Indonesian Islam, including well-known, but also less important or not so well-known personalities, is being compiled. The initial plan was to make a collection of short biographies, but recently it was decided to create a database with bibliographical references to already existing biographies.

The aim is to collect source materials from all over the world: monographs, articles or chapters in monographs, journal articles, pamphlets, editorials, papers for conferences, forums and seminars, translations of non-western materials already available, or a combination of these. Where possible, an initial listing of the biographies will be available during the conference, the Advisory Committee reserves the right to decide on acceptance to nearly one-thousand participants. While the aim is to collect source materials from all over the world, monographs, articles or chapters in monographs, journal articles, pamphlets, editorials, papers for conferences, forums and seminars, translations of non-western materials already available, or a combination of these.

Consumerism and the emerging middle class: comparative perspectives from India and China

ICASS/JCSS/CERH/CERI Workshop Series, Number 2

India International Centre, New Delhi
7-9 November 2005

China and India - the world’s two fastest growing economies, accounting for a fifth of the world’s population - have been going through comparable processes of liberalization and globalization in the past decades. In terms of scale and historical depth, they are obvious cases for comparisons. Economic growth in both societies has enabled large segments of the population to move from frugal to consumption-oriented lifestyles. While attention has focused on the production side of the economy - where India provides services and China manufactured goods to the global market - the shift to the other side of national markets has not sufficiently been addressed. With economic growth coming greater penetration of capital and transnational business activities, it is only recently that a global-oriented capitalist consumer culture has truly manifesting itself in India and China. How have the experiences of the two societies differed?

Consumerism and the emerging middle class are two of the world’s largest diasporas, often avoid consumers of films and television from their ‘home’ countries. This session will examine the role of television and cinema in the formation of Indian and Chinese modernities, both within the countries, and for their diasporas. It will also redefine the televisual and cinematic experiences of Asia in an ever-changing global context.

Advertising. Contemporary advertising in India and China has reached international recognition and acclaim. How have advertising strategies in the two countries changed over recent years? Is there increased customer control and empowerment in consumer decision-making? How have advertising strategies in China and India been affected by the emergence of strategies aimed at targeting rural markets? Are consumers affected?

China has the material standards and economic power to be at the center of global advertising strategies. The Party failed to foresee? How does women’s entry into the workforce further change lifestyle patterns and purchasing behaviour? What does the use of ‘Hinglish’ in Indian advertising reflect?
India has a huge potential for tourism and now offers a variety of tours for both foreign and domestic tourists, including cultural, heritage, religious, adventure, train, rejuvenation, tribal, beach resort, even textile tours. China is already an important tourism destination in Asia, and ranks sixth in the number of arrivals in the world. It is estimated that, by 2020, China will be the world's number one tourist destination and the fourth largest nation of tourists (Asian Jiefu online). Domestic tourism in China is growing vigorously and can be linked to the emergence of a new, urban middle class. This session will address issues such as Chinese perceptions of modernity and responses of ethnic minorities as they encounter state-sponsored modernization. How has television and print media transformed religious pilgrimages into a consumer experience in India? What changes occur for middle class Indians when, from believers and worshipers, they become audiences / consumers? How do such audiences relate to anti-consumerism in their modern histories? Gandhi’s emphasis on frugality, traditional crafts, and the spinning wheel was an answer to imperialist capitalism. China’s communist movement condemned bourgeois values of consumption and the aesthetic values of feudalism. In both cases these resistances have their ironies, such as the development of khadi into modern chic in India and the cottage industries in China’s communist movement which offer alternative, and often individual, solutions to create new identities and/or alter old ones. Anti-consumerism in both India and China have witnessed strong currents of anti-consumerism in their modern histories. How does the super new modern architecture fit with the old? How has city life changed? How are Chinese and Indian cities coping with this change? How does the government manage both growth and environmental issues, collective and individual interests?

It is well known that ‘twice migrant’ Indians in the UK from the Caribbean and East Africa share little with each other, seemingly fragmented by their migration experiences. Outsiders (scholars, or the Indian Government) may define them as one, but they do not speak the same languages, visit the same temples or mosques, and hardly intermarry. In fact, the labels ‘East African Asian’ and ‘Caribbean Asian’ suggest these are new constructions of identity.

The main aim of the workshop is to bring together senior scholars in the field of Indian diaspora studies to discuss the political and limits of the ‘diaspora’ concept. The conference will stress how different migration experiences, migrants, reception in host countries, and length of time abroad explain differences in identity formation among Indian diasporans. This approach goes against the general ‘Asian diasporas’ literature, which tends to unify and homogenize migrants in terms of culture, religion, language and homeland, speaking of the Indian diaspora and the general ‘Indian diaspora’. The general literature uses broad ‘checklists’ of factors to define diasporic groups: dispersal to two or more locations; collective mythology of homeland; primordial, nor infinitely flexible, which we need to explore more. How do middle class Indians differently cope with India? These questions are all related to the main question of this conference: how does the migration experience create new identities and/or alter old ones in the local and global process of assimilation and integration in the diasporas of South Asia?

While differences are acknowledged in terms of class, religion, gender and language, these differences are experienced in India in different ways. How can the diaspora concept or if it cannot explain the socio-economic and cultural differences between Caribbean Asians, East African Asians and other South Asian migrants in London? How can the diaspora concept help us to understand changing attitudes towards India and the South Asian diaspora through generations? How does the diaspora concept help us to understand changing attitudes towards India and the South Asian diaspora through generations? People’s in diaspora are part of global and local histories. Historians need to emphasize the dynamic process of changing attitudes towards the homeland, host land and diasporic community. A historical and comparative approach may help us to understand some of these dynamics.

Two recent and related developments are of importance. The vast growth of mass media and the internet has in one way or another reconnected Indian diasporans with India. Bollywood videos and music are sold throughout the world, the internet now joins numerous sites where people share views, discuss politics and virtually reunite with the ‘homeland’. In addition, since September 2000 the Indian government, in contrast to its earlier policy of indifference, has adopted a policy of seeking stronger ties with the Indian diaspora (not diasporas). Despite the technological and political developments, reconnection, however defined, is not an obvious and natural process. It has ‘local’ and ‘global’ meanings. People in diaspora choose to reconnect; choose what (and what not) to reconnect to. In some cases they may choose not to reconnect at all and still be ‘Indian’. This occurred among Indian groups in East Africa, who initially strengthened their economic and cultural ties with India through trade relations and taking brides from the homeland. However, many Indian businessmen in East Africa today show little economic interest in India, despite the initiatives of the Indian government. On the contrary, the overall image of Indians in India among Gujarati businessmen in East Africa transformed from ‘reliable family or community members’ to one of ‘unreliable, corrupt and, untrustworthy others’.

These issues raise questions related to the concept of diaspora as well as to migration and relocation issues. How was the ‘Indianess’ of South Asian migrants embedded in their host countries? Though many overseas Indians haven’t visited India for three generations or more, they created myths, stories and opinions about it. Others visited India frequently (or just once) and shared their stories with friends and family members. What is the importance of the image of India in their local identity creation? How do local Indian communities respond to the growing importance of mass media and the internet and the new policy of the Indian Government to strengthen their ties with India? These questions are all related to the main question of this conference: how does the migration experience create new identities and/or alter old ones in the local and global process of assimilation and integration in the diasporas of South Asia?

Most scholars are aware that ‘South Asian’ identity is neither unchanged and primordial, nor infinitely flexible, which one may paint, fill in, or use depending on circumstances. South Asian identity is constantly negotiated in changing contexts. This assumption holds as much in South Asia as it does in the South Asian diasporas. A historical and comparative approach may help us to understand some of these dynamics. What is the use of the diaspora concept if it tends to unify the ‘diaspora’? Is the diaspora ‘checklist’ helpful in understanding migration experiences or does it close our eyes to variations and differences? In other words, is the diaspora concept useful in our empirical research or not?

Organizers: G. Oonk, Erasmus University Rotterdam H. Schulte Nordholt, Erasmus University Rotterdam / University of Amsterdam / IAKS Contact: Oonk@fhk.eur.nl

Chinese Cultures Abroad Directory

The Chinese Cultures Abroad Directory is now available online and, if you wish, you can receive e-mails or e-newsletters with the latest information on Chinese cultural activities worldwide. For more information, please contact: habezett@t-online.de

Invitation to join the Nagani Project

The Nagani (Red Dragon) Book Club was founded in 1937 in Rangoon, by a group of Burmese independence fighters who tried to transmit international knowledge and literature into Burma. Modelled on Victor Gollancz’s Left Book Club, its aims were to print books in Burmese language containing the essence of the contemporary international literature, history, economics, politics and science at a low price. Up to 1941, the club published more than 70 books, issued a newsletter and was popularised by a still popular song that was sung by a film star.

The current Nagani Project intends to study various aspects of Burmese/Myanmar’s intellectual and literary history and to encourage and establish joint research by Burmese (and non-Burmese) individuals living both inside and outside Myanmar, and to establish a network of people interested in Myanmar’s past as well as future intellectual life and literature.

The current project, as a first step, aims to provide an overview of the Nagani Book Club’s publications. Towards this end, we are looking to publish “book-reports” on Nagani publications in English, of 8,000-12,000 words. After about 40 reports are submitted, a seminar will be held to discuss the results and decide on the focus for further joint research. The Singapore conference on Burma in July 2006 will provide a first opportunity for this discussion.

For more information, please contact: Hans-Bernd Zollner University of Hamburg / Asian-African-Institute habezett@t-online.de
The conference aims to bring together his- torians, anthropologists, sociologists and linguists. The regional scope of the con- ference includes Indonesia, Malaysia, Philippines, Thai- land, Laos, Burma, Vietnam, China, Korea and Japan. Languages belonging to all the major linguistic families present in the area will be considered. Paper proposals including 350-word abstracts and 5-line biographical sketches should be sent to Valerie Yeo at arizeyw@nus.edu.sg by 6 April 2005. Some funding will be available for those who travel to Singapore; postgraduate stu- dents, and others unable to fund them- selves. It is hoped that the conference will lead to an important book.

For enquiries, please contact: Geoff Wade, CRNFS, Singapore, arizeyw@nus.edu.sg Anthony Reid, Director, ARID, aridir@nus.edu.sg www.ari.nus.edu.sg/conf2006/ naming.htm

Asian Expansions: the historical processes of polity expansion in Asia

12-15 May 2006
Asia Research Institute
Singapore

Many of the nation states of Asia are products of territorial expansions over time. Others, although smaller today than their largest historical scales, are also products or vestiges of territorial expansion. The expansions by which Asian polities grew, however, were diverse in nature, varied in mode and of differing lengths in process. While historical expansion by European states and European empires has been a subject of intense research in recent decades, Asian expansions is a field which remains largely understudied. The processes of decolonization and nation-building in Asia over the last half century have pro- duced a much nationalized history positioned on a long-term ‘natural’ historical genealogy of contemporary polities. The mecha- nisms by which Asian polities have devel- oped and expanded over time have thus generally been understudied and, in some areas, entirely ignored. Yet it is crucial to an understanding of the modern world that the evolution of Asian polities be explored not only in terms of political sys- tems (the Northeast Asian bureaucratic forms versus the Southeast Asian ‘charis- ma’ mandalas, for example), but also in terms of expanding territories. In looking at the emergence of modern states, the autonomous Asian processes of bureau- cratization and accretion need to be compared to those of Europe. These are very major issues in terms of how the world we know has come to be, and how the problems which face many nations have come to be created. Victor Lieberman has recently drawn attention to processes of expansion and integration which show ‘strange parallel- isms’ across Eurasia, yet the Asian end of the equation remains understudied. While scholars such as Lattimore, Di Cosmo, Elvin and Purdue have investi- gated frontiers and expansions of the polities of China and Central Asia, com- parative studies of Asian expansions are still lacking.

This workshop is intended to open a space for such comparative studies. By examining the aims, modes, mecha- nisms and processes of polity expansion in Asia, some generic conclusions about the nature of such expansion will be forthcoming. Was polity expansion always accompanied by military ven- tures? How important was bureaucratic support for expansion? What role did environmental play as an inducer of or obstacle to expansion? Was incorpo- ration of surrounding areas into an eco- nomic network central in the expanding polity a frequent precursor to, or perhaps a common effect, of political expansion? Was cultural affiliation a useful or desir- able condition for the absorption of sur- rounding polities or peoples? How much active acculturation of occupied peoples did expanding polities engage in? Was control over people or territory the key con- cern of the rulers of historical Asian polities? How have such concerns changed? It is hoped that papers will address both specific examples of polity expansion as well as address possible patterns which might be shared with (or differ from) other examples of Asian expansions.

The issues involved in such an exploration are, admittedly, enormous and a work- shop of this scale will only be a prelimi- nary step in beginning to address some of the connections and commonalties between diverse historical processes. It is hoped, however, that by bringing attention to the need to study the history of polity expansion in Asia, new ways of under- standing historical and contemporary Asia will emerge.

Paper proposals including a 400-word abstract and a short biography of the pro- poser should be sent to Valerie Yeo at arizeyw@nus.edu.sg by 6 April 2005. Those selected to participate will be advised within two weeks of this date and will be required to submit completed papers by April 2006.

For enquiries, please contact: Geoff Wade (arizeyw@nus.edu.sg) Zheng Yangwen (arizeyw@nus.edu.sg) Bruce Lochhart (brc@nus.edu.sg) Anthony Reid
Secretariat
Valerie Yeo (arizeyw@nus.edu.sg)

Etudes mongoles et sibériennes, centraasiatiques et tibétaines

The journal Études mongoles et sibériennes, centraasiatiques et tibétaines (EMCAT) is the editorial policy remains open, as before, to individual essays, monographs, and to a single theme essayed to a guest editor. All suggestions or proposals of themes are welcome and should be sent to the editor:
Kata Buffertille
Centre d’études mongoles et sibériennes
katia.buffertille@ephe.sorbonne.fr

Siksačkar: peer-reviewed journal of the Center for Khmer Studies

Siksačkar welcomes articles related to Khmer and Southeast Asian Studies. Arti- cles must be either in Khmer, English or French. Accepted articles are published in their original language and translated into Khmer. The deadline for No. 8 (Spring 2006) is 21 December 2005.

A new on-line version for shorter articles comes out every six months. The deadline for the first, June 2005 issue is 10 April 2005.

Contact: Michay RELY, Editor-in-Chief
Manuscript to: siksačkar@khmersudies.org

Moussons
Social Science Research on Southeast Asia
Recherche en sciences humaines sur l’Asie du Sud-Est

ARTICLES
Adrian L. Lapain
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Grenier Fiellard
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Euric Broudeon
Culturalisme et historiographie du Cambodge ancien: à propos de la hiérarchisation des sources de l’histoire khmère
Olli Roumolin
Encounters in Borderland: Social and Economic Transformations in Ratanakiri, Northeastern Cambodia
NOTES
Didier Bertaud
Le combat contre la drogue en RDP Laos: une analyse à travers la presse, 1998-2003
Jean Baffie, Andréa Feillier, & Gilles de Gant
Armées d’Asie du Sud-Est: un livre, deux pays, trois commentaires

Announcements
Annual Bank Conference on Development Economics
23-24 May 2005
Amsterdam

The next Annual Bank Conference on Development Economics (ABDE) will be held in Amsterdam 23-24 May 2005. This year’s conference will focus on “Securing Development in an Unstable World?” and will be jointly organized by the World Bank, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Minister of Development Cooperation and the Ministry of Finance of the Nether- lands.

Each year, the ABCDE brings prominent researchers and policymakers from around the world together with the senior leaders of the World Bank and other multilateral and bilateral agencies, to dis- cuss major development challenges. It is usually attended by a broad audience of 500 academics and development experts.

Contact: Nina Maqami
nmaqami@worldbank.org
www.worldbank.org/abcde-europe

Naming in Asia: Local Identities and Global Change
24-26 Feb 2006
Asia Research Institute
Singapore

The cross-cultural and cross-disciplinary study of personal names is one of the most promising endeavours in the fields of history, social anthropology, sociol- ogy and linguistics. It holds the key to a number of important issues, including the definition of personal identities, the position of the individual in society, reli- gious and cosmological representations, social change, gender and history. In Asia, a great variety of personal naming systems are present. Each bears on the way society defines personal and social identity. The colonial period and subse- quent pressures of globalization are reflected in various systems of naming, typically intended to combine some link with indigenous practice (tenuous in some colonial cases), ethnic identifica- tion, legibility to government, and utility within a globalising system.

Papers are encouraged either to explore the dynamics of a particular naming sys- tem, or to pursue various thematic issues more broadly across several societies. The following topics are among those encour- aged:

• Comparative study of personal names – typology of naming systems
• The politics of naming: naming and the state
• What is a name: worldviews, cosmologies, representations
• Names and religious identities
• Name-changing and religious conversion
• Names and inheritance. Do patriline- ages continue to exist according to the World Bank’s definition?
• Structural role of naming in different societies
• Regional naming systems: global and local
• Islamic naming in Asian societies
• Names in daily use, the politics of conversation
• The linguistic structure of naming systems

With the aim of better accounting for this perspective, a new journal, Moussons, is launched. Its following coverage of Siberia was reflected in the new title Etudes mongoles et sibériennes, delineating the contours of a cultural area in Northern Asia. This ori- entation, however, led to the neglect of important aspects of Mongol reality, con- nected with the Turks of Central Asia through language, geography, history. Other aspects of the history and culture of the Mongols link them to the Tibetans.

With the aim of better accounting for this perspective, the journal is now moving to cover both Central Asia and Tibet. Although one is Muslim and the other Bud- dhist, it is not a matter of claiming to deal with Buddhists or Islam in their own right, but of studying these worlds comparative- ly as parts of a vast whole extending from the Arctic Sea to the Himalaya. The journal seeks to contribute to knowledge on the region’s peoples and to clarify questions of interest to the scientific community. This step is conveyed in the modification of the name of the journal, which becomes Études mongoles et sibériennes, centraasiatiques et tibétaines (EMCAT). The editorial policy remains open, as before, to individual essays, monographs, and to a single theme essayed to a guest editor. All suggestions or proposals of themes are welcome and should be sent to the editor:
Katia Buffertille
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Manuscript to: siksačkar@khmersudies.org

Moussons is a joint publication of ISBEA and LAESEA.