

**Australia and Asia in the 21st Century: Globalisation,
Culture and Identity, the University of Western Australia,
Perth, 17 -18 May**

Program

**8.50 – 9.00 - Welcome to participants and overview of the
'Australia and Asia in the 21st Century Project**

Gary Sigley, Chair of Asian Studies and Director, Confucius Institute at
The University of Western Australia

9.00 – 10.15 - Setting the Scene

David Walker, Deakin University
The Flow of Asia: vocabularies of engagement

Romit Dasgupta, University of Western Australia/ Department of
Japanese Studies, National University of Singapore
*Romancing Urban Modernity in Tokyo, Taipei and Shanghai: The
Film "About Love" and the Shaping of a Discursive East Asian Popular
Culture*

10.15 – 10.45 - Morning Tea

10.45 – 12.00 - China

Louise Edwards, University of Technology, Sydney
*Dressing for Power: Scholars' Robes, School Uniforms, Military Attire
in China*

Kam Louie, University of Hong Kong
On the Idea of Modern Chinese Culture

12.00 – 1.00 - Lunch

1.00 – 2.15 - Asian Popular Culture

Leng Leng Thang, National University of Singapore and The University
of Western Australia
It's an Asian thing: Cosplay and cultural identity in Singapore

Jonathan McIntosh, The University of Western Australia
*Indonesians and Australians Playing Javanese Gamelan in Perth, WA:
Community and the Negotiation of Musical Identity*

2.15 – 2.45 - Afternoon Tea

2.45 – 4.00 - Asian and Australian Transnationalism

Kevin Dunn, University of New South Wales
*Chinese transnationalisms in Sydney and Brisbane: mobility,
communication, identity and belonging*

Andrea Gaynor, The University of Western Australia
Histories of Australians in Hong Kong: a diasporic perspective

**4.00 – 5.00 – Concluding discussion: themes, concerns,
interventions**

Facilitated by Gary Sigley and Andrea Gaynor.

Abstracts

Romancing Urban Modernity in Tokyo, Taipei and Shanghai: The Film "About Love" and the Shaping of a Discursive East Asian Popular Culture

Romit Dasgupta (National University of Singapore and The University of Western Australia)

The focus of this paper is the growing visibility across much of East (and to an extent, Southeast) Asia, of an increasingly common regional popular culture. Fifteen or twenty years ago popular culture spaces and practices in Tokyo, Taipei, Seoul, Beijing or Singapore would have been quite distinct from one another. However since the 1990s, intra-regional political, economic, and socio-cultural factors have facilitated the shaping of what Chua Beng-Huat refers to as a border-crossing "East Asian popular culture" (Chua 2004). The contours of this "East Asian popular culture" extends across a range of spaces and practices, including music, fashion, design, public space, and visual culture. Significantly, axiomatic to this emergent popular culture has been the consumption of a commodified slick urban modernity symbolized through discourses of youth, (male and female) beauty, and romance. Moreover, regional nodes of "cultural cool" – in particular Japan, South Korea and Taiwan – have had a discernible influence in the shaping of the contours of this border-crossing regional popular culture. Japan in particular, has exerted considerable influence on the shapings of this regional popular culture.

This paper looks at how the dynamics and complexities (and contradictions) in the shaping of this discourse of a Japan-mediated regional popular culture get played out in one specific popular culture text – the 2005 joint Japan-Taiwan-China (PRC) film, *About Love*. The film consists of three inter-linked "filmlets" set respectively in Tokyo, Taipei and Shanghai, and directed by individual film-makers from each of these locations. The stories within the "filmlets" revolve around the lives of a set of visually stylish young people moving between each of these locations, and dealing with issues of separation, love/longing/romance, belonging and nostalgia.

My paper focuses on the "Japanese" stylistic and thematic markers in the construction of this film as a representative "East Asian" popular culture text. Significantly, the film was produced at a time when political relations between Japan and China, and between China and Taiwan, were at an especially low-point. In this respect, this paper argues that through the commodified consumption of a proximate urban modernity, the film, like other products of this border-crossing regional popular culture, *may* provide a counter-reading to official and semi-official discourses of national identity and inter-state relations in East Asia.

References:

Chua Beng Huat, 2004, "Conceptualizing an East Asian Popular Culture", *Inter-Asia Cultural Studies*, 5:2, pp. 200-221.

Chinese transnationalisms in Sydney and Brisbane: mobility, communication, identity and belonging

Kevin M Dunn (UNSW); Susan Thompson (UNSW); Umut Ozguc (UNSW)

The paper draws on results of a 2005/6 telephone survey (n:1178) in Sydney and Brisbane on transnational communication and movement, funded by the ARC (2002-5). The project examined the experiences and perceptions of four transnational communities (Hong Kong, PRC, Turkish & Greek-Australians), and the paper reports on mobility, communications, and the relationship to identity and belonging. Most respondents had at some time, travelled back to their origin country, and the rates of family visiting Australia was also very high. Transnational movement is dominantly non-economic in focus. The telephone is the dominant technology for regular communication, and letter writing is the dominant technology of infrequent communication (once or twice yearly). However, email is emerging as a competitor technology for monthly and more frequent communication. Finally, we examine the relationships between mobility and communication. Mobility (immigration and visitation) is positively associated with communication. These rates of mobility and communication are not however associated with a lesser sense of belonging in Australia.

Dressing for Power: Scholars' Robes, School Uniforms, Military Attire in China

Louise Edwards

University of Technology, Sydney

The clothing worn by China's leadership is a fruitful site for the exploration of their search for political legitimacy and authority. Clothing is a useful tool in the public performance of political power. China's leaders adopted a wide range of different fashion styles in their attempts to present themselves as credible leaders in times of dramatic social and political change. With the host of different clothing styles promoted, adopted and then discarded by the nation's leaders and activists, the politically active Chinese person could not help but be acutely aware of the ideological significance of clothing. This chapter explores dress and politics as China moved from a Qing monarchy, through the formation of Asia's first and very fragile Republic in 1912 up to the present time. It argues that during these years three major trends in the transformation of dress codes for political leaders emerged: the shift from an elitist, rarefied style signifying remoteness from the people to one that indicated growing proximity with and responsive to the people; the continued importance of sartorial invocations of scholarly virtue replete with its associations with wise leadership; and the increasingly confident adoption and adaptation of European fashion to a new Chinese style.

Histories of Australians in Hong Kong: a diasporic perspective

Andrea Gaynor

The University of Western Australia

The concept of an 'Australian diaspora' rose to prominence between 2001 and 2004 when a flurry of research established that close to a million Australians - over 4% of the population - were living abroad on a long-term or permanent basis. This diaspora is generally understood to have formed in recent years, but it is rarely situated within a longer history of emigration (permanent or otherwise) from Australia. In this paper, I trace the journeys of diverse people from Australia to Hong Kong over the past 150 years, and the connections they have created and maintained between the two places. In doing so, I adopt a diasporic perspective concerned less with numbers and more with the identities, institutions and discourses that have accompanied changing patterns of relocation.

On the Idea of Modern Chinese Culture

Kam Louie

University of Hong Kong

This paper forms the basis for the Introduction of a book I am editing for Cambridge University Press. The meanings of 'modern', 'Chinese' and 'culture' have undergone fundamental changes in the last century. This paper explores each of these terms to arrive at some understanding of Modern Chinese Culture. I define "modern" as basically the twentieth century. Such a definition is not controversial but I will draw out some implications it may have for thinking about the topic. "Chinese" is much more difficult to describe. As well as people and things in China, the term "Chinese" also include people and things of the 'national minorities' and the Chinese diaspora, scattered throughout the world. The diversity of Chinese identities sets the scene for discarding the notion of an essential and fixed Chinese culture.

"Culture" is the most complex of the three concepts to describe. Looking at 'high culture' first, in Chinese, the term 'culture' (*wenhua* literally translates as being transformed by *wen*, or writing) has elitist overtones. Thus, in colloquial Chinese at least, to say that somebody has culture (*you wenhua*) means that they have an education. Recently in 'Cultural Studies', however, the non-written everyday objects such as cinema, television, kungfu and sex though not 'wen' in the traditional sense are now more studies as 'culture'.

While the meanings of 'modern', 'Chinese' or 'culture' are always in flux, I would like to see if the three together do form a coherent idea that can be meaningful communicated.

It's an Asian thing: Cosplay and cultural identity in Singapore

Elizabeth MacLachlan, National University of Singapore

Leng Leng Thang, National University of Singapore and The University of Western Australia

Cosplay - short for costume play - is the practice of dressing up as manga/anime characters and meeting in public spaces to take photographs, engage in role play, buy/sell fan art, and socialize. It is said to have originated in Japan in the 1980s, but is widely acknowledged by its fans today to be a global practice. In this paper, we draw on ethnographic fieldwork conducted in Singapore to evaluate the ways in which cosplay creates senses of community and cultural identity among its practitioners. Our research focuses on the centrality of "Japanese-ness" as an index of quality and authenticity that places Singapore-as-Asia in the middle of a global hierarchy that defines Japan as best and the West as worst. The ways in which this discovery of regional orientation among youth identity undergirds existing State discourses is an issue this paper will address.

Indonesians and Australians Playing Javanese Gamelan in Perth, WA: Community and the Negotiation of Musical Identity.

Jonathan McIntosh

The University of Western Australia

This paper centres on a group of Australians and Indonesians who form a gamelan ensemble based at the Indonesian Consulate in Perth, WA. A gamelan is an orchestra of drums, bronze instruments and gongs from Indonesia and this paper aims to investigate how those who participate in this ensemble negotiate and construct intercultural musical meaning. Moreover, by adopting a phenomenological analysis, the paper will examine the notion of globalisation as a reflexive process to discuss how members of this ensemble give local meaning to gamelan music in the West Australian context

The Flow of Asia: vocabularies of engagement

David Walker

Deakin University

The paper will review the history of Australian representations of Asia from the mid-nineteenth century to the present, noting in particular representations of Asia that stress fluidity and unpredictability. It will be suggested that fluid Asia has been assigned characteristics not unlike those attributed to women and the crowd. The implications of this analysis for recent discussions of the threat posed by political Islam will also be addressed. In such discussions 'the proper treatment of women' is commonly represented as both an established Australian value and one now under threat. The paper will seek to relate current concerns about Islam to the longer history of survivalist anxiety in Australia.

Biographies

Romit Das Gupta

Romit Dasgupta is a lecturer in Japanese Studies in the Discipline of Asian Studies at UWA, but is currently a Visiting Fellow in the Department of Japanese Studies at the National University of Singapore.

While his primary research focus is Japan, his research interests extend out to include forms of popular culture across Asia and in diasporic Asian communities; constructions of genders and sexualities (in particular, masculinities) in Asia; and negotiations of "in-between" identities. His PhD research was on the construction of masculinities in the corporate sector in Japan; the thesis, *Crafting Masculinity: Negotiating Masculine Identities in the Japanese Workplace* was awarded a Chancellor's Commendation in 2005, and the 2005 Asian Studies Association of Australia President's Prize and DK Award for the best thesis in Asian Studies. Aspects of his research have been published in various edited collections and journals. He is also the co-editor of the volume *Genders, Transgenders and Sexualities in Modern Japan* (London, Routledge, 2005). His most recent publications are "The Film *Bishōnen* and Queer(n)Asia Through Japanese Popular Culture" in Matthew Allen and Rumi Sakamoto (Eds), *Popular Culture, Globalization and Japan* (London/New York, Routledge 2006), and a review of Gayatri Gopinath's *Impossible Desires: Queer Diasporas and South Asian Public Cultures* in *Intersections: Gender, History and Culture in the Asian Context* (Issue 14, Nov. 2006).

Kevin M. Dunn

Kevin Dunn is Associate Professor of Geography, School of Biological, Earth & Environmental Sciences, at The University of New South Wales. His areas of research include: the geographies of racism; immigration and settlement; Islam in Australia; and local government and multiculturalism. He teaches cultural and social geography. Recent books include *Landscapes: Ways of Imagining the World*, and his recent articles are published in *Society and Space*, *Ethnicities*, *The Australian Geographer*, *Studia Islamika*, *Urban Policy and Research*, and the *Australian Journal of Social Issues*. He is a Fellow of the New South Wales Geographical Society and past Secretary.

Louise Edwards

Louise Edwards is Professor of China Studies at the University of Technology, Sydney, Australia and Convener of the Australian Research Council's Asia Pacific Futures Research Network. Her most recent book, *Gender, Politics and Democracy: Women's Suffrage in China*, is published by Stanford University Press (2007). Other publications include *Men and Women in Qing China* (1994, 2001), *Censored by Confucius*, (1996) (with Kam Louie), *Women in Asia: Tradition, Modernity and Globalization*, (2000) (with Mina Roces) and *Women's Suffrage in Asia*, (2004)(with Mina Roces). Her current research includes an exploration of women and war in China.

Andrea Gaynor

Andrea Gaynor is Chair of Discipline and Senior Lecturer in History at The University of Western Australia. Primarily an environmental historian, she pursues various questions relating to the historical relationships between people and places. She has published on topics as diverse as landscape art and feral cats, and in 2002 co-edited (with Mathew Trinca and Anna Haebich) *Country: Visions of Land and People in Western Australia* (W.A. Museum, 2002). Her latest book is *Harvest of the Suburbs: An Environmental History of Growing Food in Australian Cities* (UWA Press, 2006).

Kam Louie

Before joining Hong Kong University in November 2005, Professor Kam Louie was Professor of Chinese Studies at Australian National University and Queensland University. He has taught at Nanjing, Murdoch and Auckland Universities. He is a Fellow of the Australian Humanities Academy and a member of the Australia-China Council. He has over 10 books under his name, and was for nine years chief editor of *Asian Studies Review* and has served as editorial board member of several journals.

Jonathan McIntosh

Jonathan McIntosh is Associate Lecturer in Ethnomusicology in the School of Music, UWA. He holds undergraduate and postgraduate degrees in ethnomusicology, music and social anthropology from the Queen's University of Belfast, Northern Ireland, UK. Specialising in the performing arts of Bali, Indonesia, his doctoral thesis focused upon children's practice and performance of dance, music and song. He has also conducted applied research concerning the use of gamelan as a community musical tool.

Leng Leng Thang

Leng Leng Thang is associate professor and head of the Department of Japanese Studies, National University of Singapore. She is a socio-cultural anthropologist with research interest on aging, intergenerational relationships, gender and cultural flows between Japan and Asia. Her recent publications include *Old Challenges, New Strategies?: Women, Work and Family in Contemporary Asia* (co-editor, Leiden: Brill Academic Publisher, 2004), "Negotiating work and self-experiences of Japanese working women in Singapore" In *Overseas Japanese and Japanese Transnational Migrants in a Global World: From the Past to the Present*. Adachi, N. ed. London: Routledge. 2006 (co-author); "Defining a Second Career: Volunteering among seniors in Japan". In *Work, Employment, and Society in Contemporary Japan: Sociological and Anthropological Perspectives*. Matanle, P. ed. London: Palgrave Pub. She is currently on sabbatical at the University of Western Australia (2007).

David Walker

David Walker is Professor of Australian Studies at Deakin University. He has written extensively on Australian representations of Asia, including *Anxious Nation: Australia and the Rise of Asia, 1850-1939* (UQP, 1999), winner of the Ernest Scott prize for history in 2001. *Anxious Nation* is now being translated into Chinese. He is currently writing on engagement with Asia in the period from World War two to the 1970s. He is an annual Visiting Professor at Renmin University, Beijing, and a former consultant to the Australian Studies program at Universitas Indonesia, Jakarta.