

CALL FOR PAPERS

**ENGAGING THE CLASSICS IN MALAY AND
SOUTHEAST ASIAN STUDIES:
WHERE TO FROM HERE?**

A Conference-Workshop organized by the Institute of
Southeast Asian Studies and Malay Studies Department,
National University of Singapore,
with support from Majlis Ugama Islam Singapura (MUIS) and Jamiyah

17–18 June 2010

Southeast Asian Studies as a discipline is certainly no stranger to self-critique. From the examination of colonial values in its early anthropological investigations, the inherent Cold War strategic interests in area studies, to the perceived threat or challenges posed by postmodernism and cultural studies, Southeast Asian Studies has occasionally taken a critical look at its own methodological and theoretical predispositions and practices.

However, while the intellectual trends and political influences on Southeast Asian Studies have been interrogated, far less scholarly attention has been paid to the authorial capital and status of Southeast Asian works themselves. The high levels of authorial capital enjoyed by key texts in Southeast Asian Studies — otherwise known as “classics” — need to be subjected to closer scrutiny and re-evaluation given the Western dominance over Southeast Asian Studies, the exclusion of non-English texts from the canons, and the absence of new and regionally-cognizant ways of framing Southeast Asian subjects. Such classics include the early colonial works of giants like Furnivall and Firth, the contributions of Geertz, Anderson and Scott during the height of area studies in the 1970s to 1980s, as well as the interventions of Southeast Asians themselves like Thongchai, Iletto, Rafael, Sartono, and Alatas.

This conference-workshop is jointly organized by the Institute of Southeast Asian Studies (ISEAS) and the Malay Studies Department, National University of Singapore. It seeks to achieve three broad objectives: firstly, to interrogate the authorial capital of these classics as well as to re-assess their contemporary relevance; secondly, to offer younger Southeast Asian scholars (or “home scholars”, to borrow Thongchai’s term) the platform to

creatively appropriate or re-interpret such classics for alternative and novel modes of intellectual inquiry; and thirdly, to identify or lay the conceptual pathways for emerging classics.

This two-day conference-workshop, to be held at ISEAS, will endeavor to address the following issues:

1. How may the categories “classics” or “canons” be defined? Is there a need to re-assess the criteria for defining the classics or canons in the field?
2. How do local scholars engage the classics and what are the outcomes of such engagement? Are there classics in the vernacular worth highlighting, and if so, how are their insights translatable to other Southeast Asian contexts?
3. In general, the classics engage with issues related to social change and the transformation of Southeast Asia, such as the impact of colonialism and global capitalism on local economies and societies, especially the agricultural sector, and the transition to modern nation-states. Are these issues still relevant today? Are there other issues that should capture our imagination and occupy our scholarly efforts?
4. In engaging the classics, what are the implications on the trajectory of the development of Southeast Asian Studies? Is there scope for suggesting a new canon of “emerging classics”? If so, what are they and in what way(s) do they define our reflections on Southeast Asia?

Southeast Asian Studies scholars are invited to submit abstracts (250 words) to the conference-workshop organizers. Papers should attempt to address one, if not more, of the issues laid out above. The deadline for the submission of abstracts is **15 November 2009**. Selected participants will be notified by 15 December 2009. Full length papers (6,000–8,000 words) are due on **1 May 2010**.

Abstract submissions should be sent to:

engagingtheclassics@gmail.com

Conference-related inquiries may be sent to any of the following conference organizers:

Dr Rommel A. Curaming (**mlsrc@nus.edu.sg**)

Dr Syed Mohd Khairudin Aljunied (**mlsasmk@nus.edu.sg**)

Dr Hui Yew-Foong (**yfhui@iseas.edu.sg**)

Dr Terence Chong (**terencechong@iseas.edu.sg**)

CALL FOR PAPERS

**Conference on Historical Fragments in Southeast Asia:
At the Interfaces of Oral History, Memory and Heritage
Organised by Institute of Southeast Asian Studies
and Singapore Heritage Society**

23-24 June 2010

The Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, together with the Singapore Heritage Society, is revisiting oral history in Southeast Asia two decades since it co-organised the first conference. Historical Fragments in Southeast Asia serves as an important platform to explore the interfaces between oral history, memory and heritage. Traditional oral history work in the region has largely been concerned with questions of objectivity and reliability. Memory studies, by contrast, has attempted to analyse the ways people remember or forget fragments of the past. Both oral testimonies and memories are also closely connected with the emerging and topical field of heritage in its intangible, cultural and everyday forms.

Important Note

Proposals should make an attempt at this preliminary stage to consider oral history's convergences with memory and/or heritage and not merely situate the discussion within the originating discipline or methodology. Proposals should be centered around oral history or ethnographic work. We welcome submissions from, among others, historians, anthropologists, sociologists, geographers, architects, public officials, activists, and social workers, as well as approaches from academic and advocacy perspectives.

Submission of Proposal

Those interested in presenting a paper are invited to submit a proposal which includes a working title, 500-word abstract, CV, and an indication of your funding requirements by 14 December 2009 to Dr Loh Kah Seng kahseng@iseas.edu.sg.

Suggested Themes

- Crisis of Memory
- Politics of Memory
- 'Difficult' Heritage and Identity
- Trauma and Reconstruction

For more information on the conference, go to
<http://www.iseas.edu.sg/cfp2310.pdf>

CALL FOR PAPERS

ISEAS Conference The Culture of Value and the Value of Culture: The Socio-economic Life of Southeast Asian Art

**1–2 July 2010
Singapore**

The production of art is a political, ideological and economic activity. It can only be properly comprehended within the political economy of artists, the state, private or public funders, auction houses, academics, critics, patrons and audience-consumers. This conference seeks to examine how this political economy shapes the economic value, cultural capital, and artistic importance of Southeast Asian art. It will examine what the late Pierre Bourdieu termed 'cultural intermediaries' who are responsible for the politics of inclusion and exclusion of Southeast Asian art, as well as the forces which inform these politics.

From nationalism to global market demands, such forces have been vital to the presentation and representation of Southeast Asian art. It is thus important to untangle and examine the exertions of such forces as well as the agents enacting them for a clearer understanding of the culture of value and the value of culture embedded in the region's contemporary and civilisational art forms.

In contrast to the vibrancy of contemporary Southeast Asian art or the civilisational importance of ancient Southeast Asian artifacts, very little scholarly work has been invested in the sociological and economic investigation into the production of the region's art. This conference seeks to:

- Define and understand the political economy within which contemporary and civilisational art forms are produced, presented, represented and consumed.
- Examine the politics of inclusion and exclusion enacted by cultural intermediaries.
- Provide fertile avenues for further research into Southeast Asian art.

For conference details and themes, please visit

www.iseas.edu.sg/valueculture

Conference Convenors:

Mr Ben Loh, Research Associate: **benloh@iseas.edu.sg**
Dr Terence Chong, Fellow: **terencechong@iseas.edu.sg**