



AUSTRALIAN RESEARCH COUNCIL ASIA PACIFIC FUTURES RESEARCH NETWORK

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ARC Asia Pacific Futures Research Network

PROJECT SUMMARIES

Third Round 2005

PA30503

Applicant: Dr Devleena Ghosh, Dr Barbara Leigh, Dr Elaine Jeffrey
Affiliation: Institute for International Studies, University of Technology Sydney
Project Title: "Postgraduate workshop/masterclass on Women in Asia"
Awarded: \$ 7645

Set to follow the "Women in Asia" Conference of September 2005, this project enhanced the scale and focus of postgraduate research (through a forum with international experts), encouraged more inter-disciplinary approaches to research (by initiating long-term networks and mentoring relationships at an international level) and facilitated collaborative and innovative approaches to planning and research (with the participation of government and community organizations, publishing and business sectors). It developed from an acknowledgment of the problem that while large international conferences with parallel panels are crucial venues for postgraduate students to meet and network with other scholars, it is often difficult for them to acquire research training because of the lack of opportunity to obtain intensive feedback and consultation on their work. The significance of this one day workshop/masterclass thus lay in its catering to the specific research training needs of postgraduate students, specifically through detailed feedback given by a cross-section of established academics in response to the students' presented papers. A further objective of the project was achieved in the form of the publication of selected refereed papers in the e-journal *Portal* and in the preparation of a book along the conference theme of 'Shadow Lines'.

PA30504

Applicant: Dr Michael Roberts
Affiliation: Department of Anthropology, University of Adelaide
Project Title: "Sacrificial devotion in comparative perspective: Tamil Tigers and Beyond"
Awarded: \$10,000

This two-day workshop was devoted to a comparative review of zealous commitment in regions of the Asia-Pacific that has generated extreme political movements and/or suicidal attacks. Scholars explored three key related fields of study: Tamil nationalism and the Tamil Tigers (including their migrant networks), various bodies of Islamic radicalism in Southeast Asia, and the Japanese war ideology of the early 20th century and the *tokkōtai* (i.e. kamikaze) operations of 1944/5. The cross-continental scope for the project was far

reaching, bringing specialists in Sri Lanka and Southern India and Southeast Asia together with Australian scholars from the diverse disciplines of history, anthropology, sociology, politics, international affairs and English literature. The overall approach to the project acknowledged the value of the exploration of specific cultural ingredients that encourage individuals to join a dangerous cause and offer their bodies in sacrifice – *uyirayutham* (“life gifted as weapon”, as the Tamil tigers say). With critical issues concerning the Tamil Tigers guiding the thematic direction of the workshop, scholars at various academic levels - postgraduate students, early career researchers, mature lecturers and senior researchers – brought individual regional knowledges and experiences to collectively participate in workshop presentations and discussions.

PA30506

Applicant: Dr Anna Whelan
Affiliation: University of New South Wales
Project Title: “Fostering multidisciplinary research and approaches to sexual and reproductive health and rights in the Asia Pacific Region”
Awarded: \$ 7260

The main objective of this project was to promote robust multidisciplinary partnerships for sustainable sexual and reproductive health and rights research (SRHR) in the Asia-Pacific region. It convened a five day workshop in the interest of achieving the following distinct aims: Firstly, to identify research priorities within the Asia-Pacific region for SRHR as perceived by regional organizations, academics and practitioners, with a special emphasis on the cultural dimensions of SRHR. Secondly, to identify future collaborative research projects, priorities and agendas link to practice around key issues, across disciplines and countries and focusing on policy change and implementation. Thirdly, to generate opportunities for postgraduate and postdoctoral researchers and early career researchers. Fourthly, to promote greater communication between researchers and practitioners working in SRHR across the Asia-Pacific region. And lastly, to develop a regional support network of researchers and practitioners working in SRHR for research and collaboration. The workshop framework addressed strong interrelationships between SRH and the three key areas of gender, human rights and the broader regional development agenda. Whilst particular attention was drawn to the primary outcome of establishing new cross-disciplinary and multi-country research, it also fostered the active contribution of all postgraduate and postdoctoral participants, enabling them to enhance their skills in cross-disciplinary research through intensive workshop sessions.

PA30508

Applicant: Dr John Funston
Affiliation: National Thai Studies Centre, FAS, Australian National University
Project Title: “The Tsunami in Thailand—views of Thailand’s top forensic expert”
Awarded: \$ 1800

This project’s primary intention was to broaden an understanding of the Tsunami in Thailand, paying particular attention to forensic issues in order to apply new knowledge in the event of similar future disasters. The critical component of the seminar program was the participation of Thailand’s deputy director of the Central Institute of Foreign Science, Ministry of Justice, Dr Khunying Pornthip Rosjanasunand, who, initially placed in charge of forensic issues by the Thai Prime Minister, was later controversially asked to stand aside for police forensic experts. Dr Khunying Pornthip has been a trail blazer for women in the area of forensic science, and a fearless campaigner for justice. Her title of ‘khunying’ (the highest title awarded to women) was recently conferred by the King in recognition of such contributions.

During the seminar program, Dr Khunying Pornthip specifically addressed the imbalance in Australian discussion of the tsunami which has focused rather more on Indonesia than Thailand. She had not previously travelled to Australia, thus her visit gave not only Thai specialists but postgraduate students and postdoctoral researchers in a range of areas including forensic science, human rights and gender issues an opportunity to gain from her depth of knowledge and experiences. An additional outcome of the project was its complement to the annual Thailand Update, which, this year, focused on Thailand's south, the area worst hit by the tsunami.

PA30509

Applicant: Dr John Funston
Affiliation: National Thai Studies Centre, FAS, Australian National University
Project Title: "Visit of Dr Duncan McCargo on Thai Politics to Brisbane, Sydney, Melbourne"
Awarded: \$ 950

This project provided an opportunity for Australian scholars of Thailand and Asia to meet and network with one of the world's most influential specialist on Thai politics and Asian politics. Dr McCargo has published extensively on Thai politics and a host of broader topics from governance to the media, including significant research on the media in Japan. As a faculty member at Leeds University, he has spent several long spells in Southeast Asia and, following a year in Cambodia, has completed a twelve month appointment at the Prince of Songkhla University in the Thai province of Pattani. Dr McCargo's willingness to visit additional Australian universities whilst attending the 2005 Thailand Update Conference at ANU was met with the full support of this project. It facilitated seminar meetings with postgraduate and postdoctoral students and took up the opportunity to expose him to Australian expertise on Asia.

PA30510

Applicant: Professor Krishna Sen, Dr Wanning Sun and Dr Denise Woods
Affiliation: Media-Asia Research Group (MARG), Curtin University
Project Title: "Media and Identity in Asia"
Awarded: \$ 10,000

This project convened an international and inter-disciplinary conference to enhance academic exchanges, networking and connections between Australia and the region. It aimed to generate increased linkages with media practitioners and academics (including postgraduate students) in Asia and provide further opportunities for collaborations and partnerships. The conference was co-convened by early-career researchers, guided by an advisory group of senior academics and sought to fulfill the original objectives of the Group to bring together media practitioners and scholars and, especially, early-career researchers from the Asia Pacific into close collaboration with their Australian counterparts. It explored the significant role played by the media and communication in Asia in constructing political and cultural identities in a post-September 11/post-Tsunami world, and examined current concerns relating to the production and reproduction of cultural identity. In light of new complications to these long standing concerns since the Bali bombings and the emergence of new media technologies such as instant messaging, the critical purpose of this conference was to re-think the shape of national, local, ethnicised and gendered identities as formulated by and in the Asian media in the 21st century. Postgraduate students were involved at each stage of its organisation, acting as members of the conference committee and working closely with senior academics.