

Voices:

Media, Politics and Identity in Contemporary South East Asia

Centre for the Study of Communications and Culture



Venue: Pelita Hati Gallery of Art, 1st Floor No.8,
Jalan Abdullah Off Jalan Bangsar, 59000, Kuala Lumpur
Date: Saturdays, October – December 2011
Time: 8.00pm - 10.30pm



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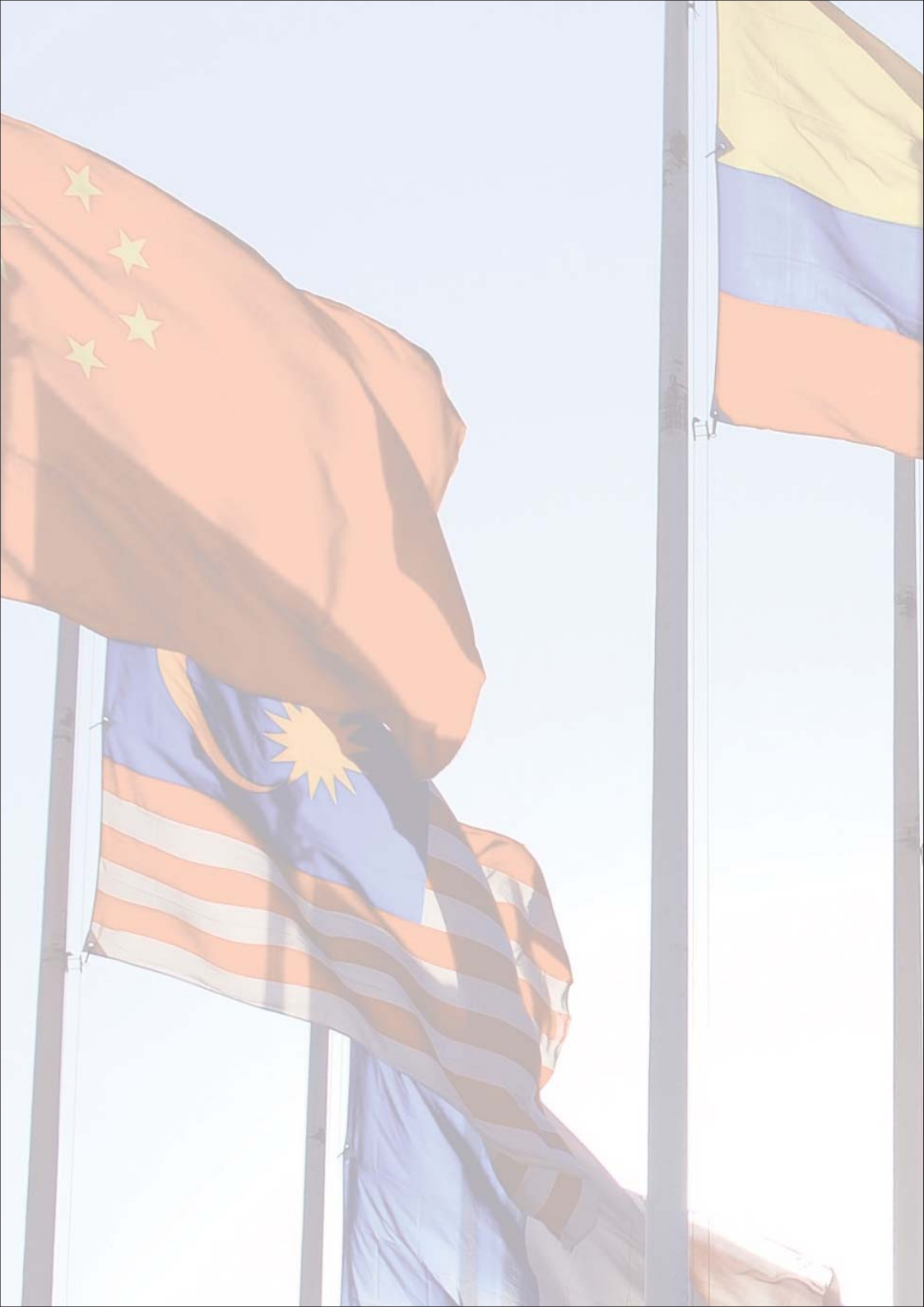
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The Centre for the Study of Communications and Culture (CSCC) has embarked on a series of projects, beginning in early 2011, to establish and maintain its role as a key centre of excellence in communications and cultural studies in the country and the region. Part of this initiative will lie with a seminar series under the general theme of Culture, Media and Identity. The series is in three parts, each comprising lectures or multimedia presentations by renowned scholars and cultural activists. The main aim of the series is to examine and evaluate the importance of culture and the media in the construction of identities in an increasingly globalised world. This, we believe, is important in a region comprising multiple cultures and at a time when greater cultural awareness, understanding and respect is needed but, unfortunately, has not been forthcoming.

The first series of presentations which was held from February-May 2011, titled **Voices: Public Intellectuals and Public Discourse in South and South-East Asia**, provided critical engagements with contemporary issues related to the role(s) of public intellectuals and public discourses in often-authoritarian settings. This series examined the various theoretical trajectories that the overall project could take, thus helping to formulate and guide the intellectual direction of the Centre. We hope shortly to publish a volume of essays relating to this theme.

The second series, titled **Voices: Media, Politics and Identity in Contemporary South-East Asia** will explore the changing place of media in the construction of identity and the implications of this in contemporary society. This series will also examine the politics of various media forms, and how cultural products are used to articulate and legitimate competing ideological agenda. There is an urgent need (particularly in this region) to understand what it means for people to forge identities in rapidly changing national, social and cultural contexts, and the role of media in such efforts.

This second series also focuses on the growing concern with images and narratives of the media and popular culture, and the ways in which these construct identities and play on memory, fantasy, pleasures, fears, desires, etc. within particular societies.

Language and literature continue to play complex roles in societies, not least in post colonial societies where language and (local) literature - after their initial roles as weapons of resistance - have contributed to a sense of belonging, a sense of identity in these societies. The third series of presentations, titled **Voices: Language, Literature and Identity**, will examine these roles.

Introduction

What does it mean, today, to belong to a nation? What are the implications of media on tensions, conflicts and the sense of identity and belonging? Increasingly, there is a need (particularly in this region) to understand what it means for people to forge identities in rapidly changing national, social and cultural contexts, and to question the role of media in such efforts.

Series II of *Voices* takes place alongside significant struggles in Asia with escalating racial and religious inequalities, freedom of speech, social justice, political reform, and the upholding of human rights. Rising trends of citizen journalism, independent filmmaking, and the use of social media networking have changed the place and role of media especially in the construction of cultural and national identities in contemporary society. It is also useful to examine the politics of various media forms, and how cultural products are used to articulate and legitimate competing ideological agenda.

This second series also focuses on the growing concern with text, images and narratives of media and popular culture and the controversial ways in which the subaltern in society (women, youth and the Orang Asli, among others) are (re)presented through various modes of media production amidst intense surveillance, censorship, draconic laws and institutional control. In rendering problematic the media-society dichotomy, we will attempt to discuss issues of identity and power in a “democratic” society.

In this series, five eminent speakers consisting intellectuals and independent media producers/activists from the region will address issues on media reform, social justice and democracy within the context of social, cultural and political transformations. They include people who are seriously concerned about freedom and human rights, who are committed to opening up alternative spaces for such freedom, and who are working passionately within such spaces. We hope that the sessions will encourage public discourse and participation with regard to media, identity and politics especially in highly censored societies.



Programme: October – December 2011

Venue: Pelita Hati Gallery of Art, 1st Floor No.8, Jalan Abdullah Off Jalan Bangsar, 59000, Kuala Lumpur (<http://www.pelitahati.com.my/>)

Time: 8.00-10.30pm (Saturdays)

- 08 October 2011** **Alberto Gomes**
Politics of Indigeneity: Stories from the Margins
- 22 October 2011** **Anil Netto**
Blogging and Citizen Journalism: Challenging the Dominant Discourse
- 05 November 2011** **Chua Beng Huat**
Regionalization of Media Industry and Pan-Asian Identity Formation
- 19 November 2011** **Jacqueline Ann Surin**
Found in Malaysia: Race and Belonging
- 03 December 2011** **Wan Zawawi Ibrahim**
Contesting Nation: Renegotiating Identity and Multiculturalism in the New Malaysian Cinema and its Mediation by New Media



For further information and registration: agnes.selvaragi@nottingham.edu.my

Alberto Gomes



Professor Alberto Gomes teaches anthropology at La Trobe University, Melbourne, Australia. He has published three books and numerous articles drawing from his longstanding research of 35 years on the Malaysian Aborigines (Orang Asli). His books on the Orang Asli include *Malaysia and the Original People* (1997, Allyn and Bacon) (which he co-authored with Robert Dentan, Kirk Endicott and Barry Hooker), *Looking for Money: Capitalism and Modernity in an Orang Asli Village* (2004, COAC and Transpacific Press), and *Modernity and Malaysia: Settling the Menraq Forest Nomads* (2007, Routledge). His publications focus on the social, economic and ecological implications of commoditisation, government-sponsored

development programmes, and modernity for the Malaysian Aborigines (particularly the Semai and the Menraq who are also known as Semang or Negritos) and Indigenous/tribal communities in general. He is currently editing two books focused in Indigenous issues, one on the Orang Asal in Malaysia and the other on the Goan Adivasis. He has also published widely on cultural identities, cultural politics, diversity management and civility in Malaysia and Goa, India. Several of these publications have appeared in the two books he edited: *Modernity and Identity: Asian Illustrations* (1994, La Trobe University) and *Multiethnic Malaysia: Past, Present and Future* (with Lim Teck Ghee and Azly Rahman, 2009, MiDAS, USCI University and SIRD) and in the special issue of the *Journal of Finnish Anthropology* (2007) he edited (with Timo Kortteinen and Timo Kaartinen) on *Civility and Social Relations in South and Southeast Asia*. Inspired by Indigenous epistemologies, he is currently writing a book outlining his ideas for an AlterNative social ecology guided by the principles of ESP (Equality, Sustainability and Peace). He is a member of the anthropology committee of the Center for Global Nonkilling.

Anil Netto



Anil Netto is a free-lance writer, activist and blogger who believes that words have the power to change the world. An accountant by training - a Fellow of the Institute of Chartered Accountants in England and Wales - he worked for a dozen years in the profession. That gave him an insight into the corporate agenda. His life's journey took an abrupt turn when he hopped over to civil society activism and started writing on human rights, economic justice and environmental protection. He is currently Treasurer of the social reform movement Aliran and Senior Writer for Asia Times Online.

Chua Beng Huat



Dr Chua Beng Huat is currently Professor at the Asia Research Institute and the Department of Sociology, National University of Singapore. He has published *Life is Not Complete without Shopping*, edited *Consumption in Asia: Lifestyles and Identities*, and co-edited *East Asian Pop Culture: Analysing The Korean Wave*. He is founding co-executive editor of the journal, *Inter-Asia Cultural Studies*. He has organized several workshops on Korean TV dramas, Chinese cinemas and a year-long (2006) series of public seminars on 'Violence in Contemporary Asian Films' as part of the Cultural Studies Research Cluster programme of the Asia Research Institute.

Jacqueline Ann Surin



Jacqueline Ann Surin is the co-founder and the editor of The Nut Graph. She is an award-winning journalist who also co-founded MalaysiaVotes.com with Cindy Tham and Danny Lim in early 2008. A journalist since 1994 first with The Star, then The Edge and theSun, she is also the author of *Shape of a Pocket*. She gained an M.A. in Media Studies at Sussex University in England as a Chevening scholar, and studied journalism in the United States under the Hubert Humphrey Fellowship. In 2007, she received the Excellence in Opinion Writing Award from the Society of Publishers in Asia for her *Shape of a Pocket* column which she continues to keep at The Nut Graph. She was also named by London-based Article 19 as the Pioneering Women's Voices Candidate for Malaysia in commemoration of International Women's Day in 2007. As of September 2010, Jacqueline is part of the collective of writers and editors who is maintaining The Nut Graph as a weekly.

Wan Zawawi Ibrahim



Professor Wan Zawawi Ibrahim received his PhD in Social Anthropology from Monash University and is currently Head of Sociology and Anthropology at Universiti Brunei Darussalam. He has researched and published on a wide range of topics including Malay peasantry and rural labour, indigenous communities, and on issues of representation and identity both in traditional communities, and in contemporary Malaysian popular music and cinema. His current research projects include Youth and music in Brunei, Islamic discourse in Contemporary Indonesian/Malaysian cinema, and Naysid music in the New Era. His many published books include *Blogging and Democratisation in Malaysia: A New Civil Society in the Making* (with Jun-E Tan, 2008), *Representation, Identity and Multiculturalism in Sarawak* (ed., 2008), *The Malay Labourer* (1998), and *Cultural*

Contestations: Mediating Identities in a Changing Malaysian Society (ed., 1998). His forthcoming book is an edited volume, *Knowledge and Social Science in a Globalising World*. He has contributed many articles to international journals, and has delivered conference papers in various parts of the world including Japan, England, Australia, USA, and Southeast Asia. He is also a cultural activist, and was involved in conceptualising and organising the Sarawak Rainforest World Music Festival (1998) and more recently, the Live TV RTM Malaysia Unplugged Palestine Concert (2009). An award-winning composer and lyricist, he released a CD entitled *Dayung* (BMG lable) in 1996 – an 'unplugged' ethnic acoustic album featuring his own compositions.

Discussants



Amir Muhammad
*Writer/independent
filmmaker*



Premesh Chandran
CEO, Malaysiakini



Sharaad Kuttan
BFM radio host



Mark Teh
*Art practitioner/
theatre director*



Anna Har
Director, Pusat KOMAS

Series I (February - May 2011)

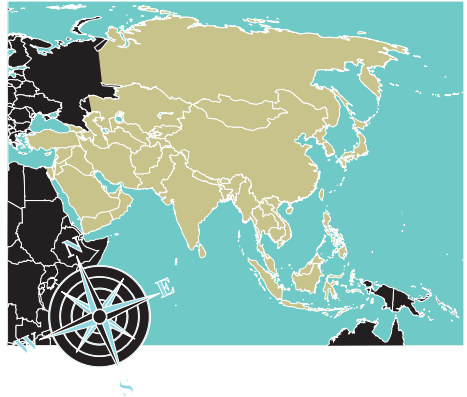
Voices: Public Intellectuals And Public Discourse In South And South-East Asia

Series II (October - December 2011)

Voices: Media, Politics and Identity in Contemporary South East Asia.

Series III (February - May 2012)

Voices: Language, Literature and Identity



The Centre for the Study of Communications and Culture (CSCC) is located within the School of Modern Languages and Culture at the University of Nottingham (Malaysia Campus). Researchers at the Centre are dedicated to carrying out interdisciplinary research into the role and politics of communication and culture in this era of globalization; in line with the Centre's mission to operate as an international, regional and national centre of expertise for high-quality research. CSCC provides an intellectual network for researchers, postgraduate students and professionals in the fields of media, communication and culture.

The first of its kind in Malaysia, the Centre aims to bring together local and international scholars in a setting designed to produce results that will inform wider policies. The Centre was also established to fill a research void in the country and regionally in the

area of communications and culture, especially at a time when the promises of information and communication technologies (ICTs), digitalization and globalization need to be addressed side by side with their inherent impacts on local cultural practices.

The Centre also offers a range of postgraduate courses - the MA Cultural Studies, MSc Cultural Studies and Entrepreneurship, and research programmes at the doctoral level. The Centre is also linked to undergraduate programmes such as the BA (Hons) International Communications Studies and the BA (Hons) International Relations.

Together with the core activities of research, teaching and publishing, the Centre organizes lectures, seminars and events that are of interest to researchers, professionals and students.

<http://www.nottingham.edu.my/smlc>

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CNN International collaborates with the School of Modern Languages and Cultures on the CNN iReport University programme, mentoring UNMC student journalists as CNN Student iReporters.



Malaysiakini.com offers daily news and views in English, Malay, Chinese and Tamil, delivering over 37 million page views and 750,000 video downloads per month to over 1.6 million absolute unique visitors (Google Analytics, August 2008).



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The Centre for Independent Journalism, Malaysia (CIJ) is a non-profit organisation that aspires for a society that is democratic, just and free where all peoples will enjoy free media and the freedom to express, seek, and impart information.



Pusat KOMAS is a human rights popular communications centre set up in August 1993 to empower especially the indigenous peoples, urban poor, workers and civil society organisations to advocate for human rights in Malaysia.



GB Gerakbudaya Enterprise Sdn. Bhd. distributes books that embody social awareness, critical and alternative perspectives, and the hidden histories of Malaysia, Southeast Asia and the wider world we live in. GB is the sole distributor for the alternative London-based publishing house, Zed Books (Zed) in Malaysia.



Matahari Books is a publishing company, set up by writer/independent filmmaker Amir Muhammad, that specialises in non-fiction books about Malaysia. Its first book in 2007 was Volume 1 of "Malaysian Politicians Say the Darndest Things", which was an immediate best-seller.



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