



Asian Scholarship Foundation

Under the Royal Patronage of *H.R.H. Princess Maha Chakri Sirindhorn*

Newsletter of the *ASIA Fellows Program*
and the *Ford Foundation International Fellowships Program*

November 2007

www.asianscholarship.org



WHERE THE WISE GATHER

Some 100 ASIA fellows, academics, administrators, and friends of the Asian Scholarship Foundation gathered at the Davis Bangkok Hotel from 8-9 July 2007 for the 7th *ASIA Fellows Annual Conference*. Two days earlier, Cohort 9 fellows also descended upon Bangkok for the *ASIA Fellows Orientation Program*. After picking up all the wise tips, they joined the plenary assembly, hobnobbed with the out-going fellows, and sat in the various parallel sessions.

The affair opened on the theme *Embodying Asia: Spheres of Production, Sites of Exchange*. To direct the proceedings, the out-going batch formed their own core group, led by Dr. Judy Celine Ick, Professor of Comparative Literature at the University of the Philippines. They read through the abstracts, singled out the topical trends, designed the parallel sessions, and thought up the conference theme. The orientation for new fellows focused on *Operationalizing Research*, conducted by Dr. Lily Rose Tope (Cohort 1), Professor of English and Comparative Literature the University of the Philippines.

Fellows went through nine parallel sessions, discoursing on diverse Asian issues such as the arts, diaspora, globalization, marginal communities, water-resource management, the poetics of space, and self and community in Asia. Seasoned presenters delivered in style and regaled their audience with reports, audio-visual slides, pie charts, documentaries, historical anecdotes, curious statistics, and creative performances. The parallel presentations allowed everyone to catch all the interesting presentations and to exchange views (even argue) on the issues. The final session brought together specialists and program alumni to outline vital discussion points and new directions for future research.

ASF also hosted the traditional cultural-night dinner. Fellows posed tirelessly for the cameras, groomed in their colorful national attires. To the thrill of the huge-ballroom crowd, the program drew fine and impromptu performances. Thai Fellows of the Ford Foundation International Fellowships Program (IFP) also trooped from the different universities in Thailand, to dine with their ASF colleagues. Their Esaan dance number was the evening's real coup, topping the votes for best performance.

The fellows gave the ASF staff a rousing applause and the standing ovation, for warmly seeing them through the hurdles of their fellowship stints. *

Message from the ASF Senior Program Officer



2

Asian Sojourns & Flavors

Good as Gold

3

7th Annual Conference & Orientation for New Fellows



4

Ford Foundation International Fellowships Program (IFP) in Thailand

6

Gathering in Udonthani

The 3rd IFP Thailand Alumni Network Meeting

Jaruwat Kiatiwongse

I'm Fulfilling Promises International Fellowships Program in Thailand

SAYS WHO?

7

IFP SNAPSHOTS



8

Asian Sojourns & Flavors From the Journals of ASF Cohorts

9

Street-Hunting in Singapore

Dr. Siu Kin Wai Michael



Asian Sojourns & Flavors From the Journals of ASF Cohorts

10

Video Days in Indonesia

Chong Chan Fui



Asian Sojourns & Flavors From the Journals of ASF Cohorts

11

A Chinese Tryst

Dr. Sabaree Mitra



Message

From the ASIA Fellows Awards Senior Program Officer

Here's our special edition—of glossy pictures, bright insights, and scintillating performances—from last July's 7th ASIA Fellows Annual Conference in Bangkok. After two years, we've gathered all of Cohort 7 and reunited them in Bangkok. This time, it wasn't proposals and plans that they were giddy about. Instead, they came with thick drafts and picture albums, fat with all sorts of anecdotes about how life abroad changed their plans, as well as their journey's silver and gold milestones.

Also present were a bunch of fellows—sharp, surprising, and shy sometimes—from Cohort 9. Our "new recruits" came to prepare for their own leg of the fellowship, to finetune their proposals and set up future peer networks. As early as September, some of them were ready to haul their luggages and fall in love with new places, from Kathmandu to Sri Lanka, from Borneo to Pakistan. So, indeed, some journeys end even as new ones take off. And all the while, new opportunities charm our fellows to work more for Asia's sake.

We're also featuring Thailand's northeastern front, to find out more about the Ford Foundation International Fellowships Program. Here's our local set of young, hardworking, and enthusiastic Thai partners, filled with the same commitment! Newly minted with degrees from abroad, they could have thrived and grown rich elsewhere. But they returned to their humble folks, instead, to test new ways of reviving Thailand's northeast. Change is on its way, indeed.

This issue also toasts career milestones in ASF. From the big bosses to our fellows, here's spectacular feats and achievements that speak of fine leadership. In due time, we will score important changes because of them. Now, haven't we said we've covered all these in just nine years? Imagine what we could do if we're given ten more!

From all over Asia, cheers to our ASF heritage—grand, golden, and growing! *

Somkamol Yongkrittaya

Good as Gold

He rued losing a headdress and several costumes in Holland. But he also showed up at the sessions wearing enough pretty silks to amaze everyone. Came cultural night and **ANGGIET ARIEFianto** simply rocked his way through the *Rantak*—his martial-arts-inspired Sumatran welcome dance. The judges put down their dessert forks, whispered, and voted him *Best Performer*.



Indiana University is presenting her with an honorary Doctor of Laws degree, so **DR. JUREE VICHIT-VADAKAN** will fly to the U.S. in November. Over the years, three things have kept her busy: teaming up for development work with civil society, transparency and accountability for good governance, and equal opportunities for all Thai women. She is Chair of the ASF Board of Directors and a tireless partner in the IFP's northeast mission.



There must be as many words for *Mum* in Asia. But that's what all ASF fellows call **DR. LOURDES G. SALVADOR**, whether they're sharing the good news or just asking about the next bank transfer. On National Social Welfare Day, the Thai government recognized her as *Outstanding Volunteer for the Royal Kingdom*. Deputy PM Paiboon Wattanasiritham signed the plaque on behalf of the National Commission on Social Welfare, the Ministry of Social Development and Human Security, and the National Council on Social Welfare.



The Global Health Council flew **DR. LOYD BRENDAN P. NORELLA** (Cohort 7) to Washington D.C. to receive the *New Investigators for Global Health Award* for his research paper "*A Comparative Analysis of Community-Based Mental Health Projects in Thailand and the Philippines*," written while he was on ASF fellowship. Loyd bested more than 200 international applicants and was the lone star outside of the US mainland to be touted for this category. The NIGH, quips Loyd, is a competitive program that highlights exemplary research, policy initiatives of future leaders, and empowers participants with advocacy skills. He had them all ears, too, while presenting his findings during the recently concluded *International Conference on Global Health*.



Flying in from New York, **DR. MARY S. ZURBUCHEN** spoke about *Origins, Journeys, Returns: International Education for Today's Asia* in her keynote to the 7th Asia Fellows Annual Conference. Dr. Zurbuchen is the current Director for Asia and Russia Programs of the Ford Foundation International Fellowships Program (IFP).



[We can] widen the pathways leading toward enhanced knowledge . . . for talented people who understand what it means to remain marginalized from the globalized flow of information and resources.

Higher education in Asia, Dr. Zurbuchen said, shines among the Ford Foundation's social commitments. And the robust intellectual capital is only for toning the muscles of Asia's poor yet promising changemakers. The evidence turned up in her IFP stories and stats. Dr. Zurbuchen also relished the homecoming, after giving the ASIA Program a boot in the mid-90s, as the Ford Foundation Representative in Jakarta.

The applause was both long and crisp for **DR. GOTHOM ARYA**, conference Guest-of-Honor. Dr. Arya directs the Mahidol University Research Center for Peace Building. He sent participants gasping when he demanded quick proofs of the P.H.D. — commitments to *peace, human rights, and democracy*—stressing shared responsibilities in Asia, while terrorism continues to pound on the major league. And there are no exemptions, quipped Dr. Arya, exhorting state officials, development architects, and Asian scholars alike.

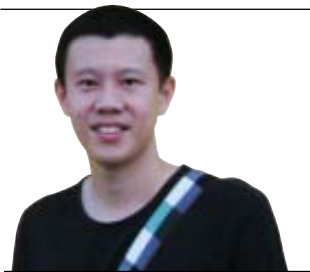
The bird in your hand—only you can determine if it is dead or alive. Peace, human rights, and democracy are in your hands. Only you can make them realized or forgotten.

Dr. Arya spoke with humor, drawing in his audience right away with stories about Thailand's peace-building efforts. Wise words, indeed, as the man also chairs the National Economic and Social Advisory Council (NESAC).



Asian Sojourns & Flavors - The 7th ASIA Fellows Annual Conference





Jaruwat Kiatiwongse is the IFP Program Officer in Thailand.

Gathering in Udonthani

The 3rd IFP Thailand Alumni Network Meeting

As former *Fellows-Elect*, *Fellows*, and now *Alumni* of IFP Thailand, twelve peers met on 20-21 October 2007 at Udonthani's Chumchon Khamtana Nongkung School, in their continuing commitment to the Northeast.

This third meeting brought for the first time 7 alumni from Cohort 1 and another 5 from Cohort 2, after completing their graduate degrees. The meeting covered bonding activities as well as talks on several issues about IFP's present and future.

Points of discussion included a possible structure for IFP Thailand Alumni Network and its would-be strengths, considering the academic and professional capabilities of the network's existing human capital. After all, IFP alumni represent diverse backgrounds and disciplines.

The discussion also covered preservation of the Northeast's identity amid the influx of globalization. After travelling abroad briefly for graduate studies, the alumni started looking at their region from the outside. The opportunity clearly gave them a different vantage point as well as observations that they might never have scored without travelling. Their current efforts are at protecting and maintaining this important legacy from the previous generation so that it could be passed on to the new generation.

Another issue covered was knowledge sharing among alumni. The alumni agreed that this is one significant



future path for the network and the community's movement. Knowledge sharing requires an exchange of skills and tools that can benefit other alumni both personally and professionally. Among others, benefits cover project management, proposal writing, and policy advocacy. From time to time, alumni members of diverse backgrounds will be equipped with necessary skills for their individual community development initiatives, and possibly, for collective activities.

Theerada Namhai (Cohort 1) summarized the concept of the Asset-Based Community-Driven Development (ABCD) training that she and Poonsombat Namla received at the *Coady International Institute* in Canada in October 2007. The ABCD training recognizes everyday community experiences, wisdom, skills, and capacities. This approach includes all types of assets—human, financial, social, physical, and natural—but pays close attention to how people access, organize, and mobilize their assets to move an agenda forward.

In addition to informal meetings and small joint projects, the group also

committed themselves to meeting formally twice a year in their locale, to maximize available resources and link alumni in the same province to work together.

The meeting venue, Chumchon Khamtana Nongkung School, is a community school in one of Udonthani's remote areas where Siritwattana Dongkham (Cohort 1) teaches English.

As of November 2007, the Ford Foundation International Fellowships Program (IFP) has granted 48 fellowships in Northeast Thailand—6 for doctoral studies and another 42 for the Master's degree. After completing their Master's degree, 13 fellows have returned and joined the IFP Thailand Alumni Network since its establishment in July 2006. *

Knowledge sharing is one significant future path for the alumni network and the community's movement.

SAYS WHO?

One Sunday in November, some IFP alumni showed up in Khon Kaen to shoot for a campaign video. Wise words they all had as they dressed up, asked for Take 2s, and beamed.



I came from a family of farmers . . . I was asking a lot of things when I was young. Why is it that, all their life, farmers have been poor? And how come they don't want their own children to grow old tilling the land? After I got my education, then I began to understand our complicated situation. Now I hope to use this knowledge in helping others to understand.

JONGKOL PARA,
reflecting on her personal origins

IFP has given me the opportunity to discover the world outside of Thailand and also many new skills to live up to challenging expectations.

PASSKORN BOUASREE,
on his IFP discoveries



For me, a wise person is someone who is not afraid to solve problems and offer something different. I think that problems can make a person wise because she has to think carefully when facing difficulties. Additionally, smart acting can help people to make something better out of unexpected situations.

PETCHARAT SAENPOCH,
on wisdom and social involvement



The Northeast is the biggest region in Thailand. If we compare it with other regions, it is quite poor. There's a lack of opportunities here because our resources are limited, especially the ideal human resources.

I'm not talking about number or the drive to work but about skills and quality of life, since these are the basis for development. We can only develop the country if we help the biggest and poorest part right now. Otherwise, it becomes worse and takes more time and money to recover.

SURAPONG KHAMTANIT,
on why developing human resources matters



Promises can sometimes be broken. But I'm adding my best abilities and my spiritual devotion so that our promises don't break at all.

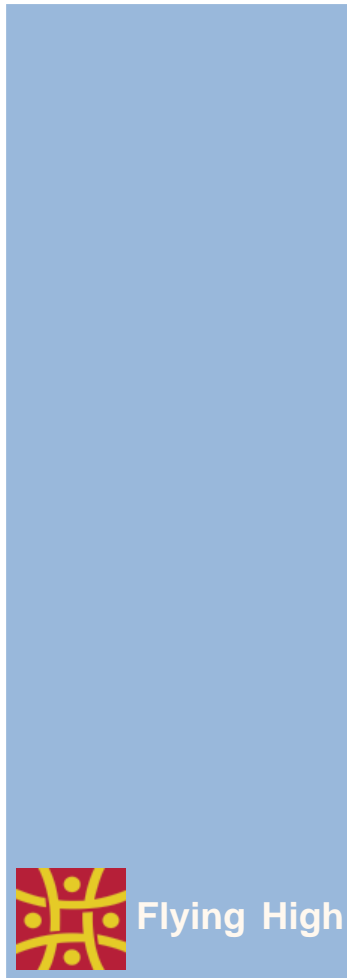
THEERADA NAMHAI,
on how to sustain her IFP promises

Let me tell you that in Bangkok there are a lot of Esaan people. Why do they have to work there when the Northeast is a rich place, with many paddies, forests, and rivers? But many of us are so poor that we have to try our luck in Bangkok. They can't read or write when they go to the city. In our society, we are treated as second-class people. And that breaks my heart.

DAODEN LAOPHA,
on why he remains
in the Northeast



 IFP Orientation & Skills Assessment Workshop





Street-Hunting in Singapore

Dr. Siu Kin Wai Michael (Cohort 8), fresh from his ASF stint in Singapore, is ready for yet another fellowship at the University of Berkeley in California, on design work for urban street furniture, this time.

I have visited Singapore several times before. My first impression of the city was the same as most people's: it was clean and well organized, the people behaved properly, and they spoke English in a special way (Singlish, as some people call it). But was this the real Singapore? This question drove me to seek a more in-depth understanding of the Lion City.

The support of the Asian Scholarship Foundation allowed me the exciting experience of carrying out a research project in Singapore. I spent six months there as a visiting scholar, affiliated with the *National University of Singapore* (NUS). The focus of my research was to study how people in this multicultural city conduct their everyday lives in public space. I wanted to see whether Singaporeans live according to the common perceptions of people abroad, namely that the Singaporean government regulates and programs their lives and that they follow all the rules due to strict controls and serious penalties.

My findings illustrate that, like people in other cities, Singaporeans have their own ways of re-constructing their public living environment to have a better quality of life. It's interesting that, on the one hand, Singaporeans criticize certain government policies.

Yet on the other hand, they seldom confront or challenge the government directly. Instead, they like to change their living environment bit by bit and continuously seek "opportunities" for a happier life according to their needs and preferences. We only have to look at shop owners tactically extending their business areas into public areas.

When I arrived at the city, I asked a student whether Singapore has

deal. The cultural activities and celebrations were all interesting to me. The mixed, multicultural life as well as traditional physical constructions attracted me a lot. In general, Singaporeans were friendly. Compared to my home city—Hong Kong—Singapore's city life was relatively less tense. I liked the trees and fresh air on the NUS campus, the heritage, customs and activities of different cultural groups and



Here, shop owners tactically extend their business areas into public areas.

different seasons. He replied: "We have different seasons here, sure. We have hot, hotter, and hottest seasons!" Yet the longer I lived there, the more I liked it, though it was really hot and humid. I appreciated this small city that looked like a microcosm of the Asian continent. I could see people from different races and various cultural and social backgrounds. I could taste different kinds of foods.

During my stay in Singapore, besides research activities, I enjoyed its cultural, social, and leisure life a great

deal. The cultural activities and celebrations were all interesting to me. The mixed, multicultural life as well as traditional physical constructions attracted me a lot. In general, Singaporeans were friendly. Compared to my home city—Hong Kong—Singapore's city life was relatively less tense. I liked the trees and fresh air on the NUS campus, the heritage, customs and activities of different cultural groups and

I look forward to sharing more of my experiences and research findings during the 8th ASF Annual Fellows Conferences. Or, if you can't really wait to know more about Singapore, why not simply experience it by living there? *



Video Days in Indonesia

Chong Chan Fui, (Cohort 8), Chris to his many ASF admirers, is from Malaysia, was educated in Canada, and has travelled widely across Indonesia, looking at experimental film and video there.

Identifying and defining cinema in any sort of specifics is an impossibility simply because it is perpetually moving. Perhaps, we can only define cinema by the trail it leaves behind. Like a good hound dog, I've captured the scent and earnestly followed its trail. And the trail has led me throughout Indonesia.

My ASF research involved framing the range of experimental film/video in Indonesia's post-1998, post-Suharto period. It took me to various cities throughout Indonesia, such as the mega-metropolis Jakarta, Bandung, Bali, and Yogyakarta.

So far, I've discovered the strong independent spirit of film/video makers especially in micro-communities (groups of friends, artists) outside of Jakarta's main hub and their initiative in creating work without any infrastructure. Because public administration extends no infrastructure at all, film/video artists take it upon themselves to create their own medium, with their own voice,

in their own way. The video camera may be considered commonly as a 'democratic,' inexpensive, and accessible tool, but in some of these communities, it's a rarity, indeed.

My adventure has also made me discover that being Asian means using what's there immediately and not having to wait until the 'proper' means are available. Around the world, it's true that there are highly sophisticated ways of



Indonesia's film/video artists take it upon themselves to create their own medium, with their own voice, in their own way.

surprised by one chance encounter after another. From trains, planes, and automobiles, there was never a moment's rest. My camera kept rolling, the tapes were always aplenty, and, soon, I was reeling myself, racing to transcribe the stories. It's hard to pinpoint which one moment is worth remembering as everything has now melded into one singular moment. All the good and bad experiences always even out, by the time I get to the final frame.

I think that Asian students will gain much from my documentary research. Students of the creative fields studying within the Asian regions will benefit most, since here's a platform for discussion on how creativity emerges strictly from an Asian context.

As an ASF Fellow, I find great responsibility in transferring my experiences. Points of view really fascinate me—a point of view based on how one lives, resolving into yet another point of view, based on how one responds. *

storytelling—whether through film, digital videos, the internet, or publishing. But most important of all is to tell the story with a great sense of immediacy. This epiphany is crucial. We must create: (1) Asian history, (2) for the future, (3) now!

My research brimmed over with amazing stories. It was like being in a wild treasure hunt full of twists and turns—meeting one character after another, being





A Chinese Tryst

Dr. Sabaree Mitra (Cohort 8), whose writings on Chinese literature, gender, and politics have been steadily published, belongs to the faculty of the School of Language, Literature, and Culture Studies of New Delhi's Jawaharlal Nehru University.

In Bangkok last year, I received the ASIA Fellows Award for a 6-month research in China on “Activism of Chinese Women Writers during Reform and Globalization” from the Asian Scholarship Foundation. Jumpstarting in Beijing, I linked up with Peking University’s *Women’s Studies Centre*.

During our orientation, many ASF peers were naturally drawn to my subject. Indian academia certainly thinks it’s important, especially those in humanities and creative writing. It’s the gateway to understanding China, which is very similar and yet very different from India in many ways. Not to mention that in many areas of knowledge, exchange between the two countries is somewhat sketchy.

The best thing was that my subject seemed to excite Chinese intellectuals—humanities scholars and women writers alike. It’s true that Women’s Studies has been a keen area of research and activism in China since the 1990s. Yet for some reason, it’s never the trend in Chinese scholarship to juxtapose women writers’ issues with the challenges that Chinese women faced during the 80s and 90s. As a result, quick links flashed through, in research materials and academic interactions volunteered by the scholars and writers whom I met. It’s not an exaggeration that, this time, I had a most intellectually-stimulating stay in China.

Apart from my current project, this stint proved to be extremely refreshing for my career as a Chinese-language teacher and a scholar watching China. Since my last stay (on Cultural Exchange Scholarship in 1988-90), this was the longest stretch that I’ve lived there. Although I went back in 1997 and 2002, my visits lasted for only a couple of months. Thus, the recent ASF tryst provided me with more time to study the fast pace of social transformation in China.

Viewed in totality, these four visits, spread over almost two decades, brought alive for me the journey

that China has made in all spheres of its existence.

The very experience of this grand overview of a nation’s journey is

Continued on page 12

There is no doubt that China values Indian partnership for an overall Asian fraternity.



ASF Partner Institutions

Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Nepal, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, and the Republic of Maldives

University of Pennsylvania Institute for the Advanced Study of India (UPIASI)

India Habitat Centre,
Core 5A 1st Fl., Lodi Rd.
New Delhi 110003, India
Tel (91-11) 2460-4127
Fax: (91-11) 2460-4126
E-mail: upiasi@del2.vsnl.net.in

Brunel, Cambodia, Hong Kong, Japan, Laos, Malaysia, Myanmar, Singapore, South Korea, Taiwan, and Thailand

Asian Scholarship Foundation (ASF)

29 Vanissa Bldg 4th Fl., Chidlom,
Ploenchit Rd., Pathumwan,
Bangkok 10330, Thailand
Tel (66) 2655-1615 to 7
Fax: (66) 2655-7977
E-mail: info@asianscholarship.org

Indonesia

Indonesian International Education Foundation (IIEF)

Menara Imperium 28th Fl., Suite B
Metropolitan Kuningan Superblok Kav 1
Jl. H. R. Rasuna Said, Kuningan
Jakarta 12980, Indonesia
Tel: (62-21) 831-7330; Fax: (62-21) 831-7331
E-mail: iief@indo.net.id

People's Republic of China

Institute of International Education (IIE)

Huatong Bldg. A, Room 439
Che Gong Zhuang Xi Rd. No.19A
Beijing 100044, China
Tel: (86-10) 6848-6213
Fax: (86-10) 6848-6215
E-mail: jiyn@iiebeijing.org

Philippines

Philippine Social Science Council (PSSC)

Commonwealth Avenue
Diliman, Quezon City 1101, Philippines
Tel: (63-2) 922-9625
Fax: (63-2) 924-4178
E-mail: projects@pssc.org.ph

Vietnam

Center for Educational Exchange with Vietnam (CEEVN)

So 5, Ngo 52, Pho Giang Van Minh
Quan Ba Dinh, Hanoi, Vietnam
Tel: (84-4) 723-6825
Fax: (84-4) 723-6827
E-mail: ASF@ceevn.org

A Chinese Tryst (Continued from page 11)



absolutely mind-boggling. It helped me trace changing Chinese perceptions about the world, about people from other cultures, and, most importantly, about India. This time, it was very clear that China not only considers India a civilization with which it enjoyed ancient interaction. China also looks up to India as a very respected member of the world community and, specifically, the Asian family.

There is no doubt that China appreciates India's achievement in many areas of knowledge and values Indian partnership for an overall Asian fraternity. Not the least, this visit has perked up and recharged my Chinese-culture cache with all the new concepts, phrases, and idioms of a fast-developing and culturally globalized China.

Before concluding, let me dwell a bit on what it means to be an ASIA Fellow. For one, it means ample resources (surely any researcher's dream!) and constant field support and encouragement abroad. More importantly, it means the special, first-hand chance to study and understand another Asian culture. Don't forget that for most of the 20th

century, Asian scholarship was largely the call of the West. But at the turn of the 21st century, ASF suddenly gave Asian scholars that rare prestige of participating in the legitimate cause of "Asianizing Asia." Of course, I am honored to have enjoyed that chance.*

Newsletter Staff

Executive Director
Dr. Lourdes G. Salvador

ASF Editor
Somkamol Yongkrittaya

IFP Editor
Jaruwat Kiatiwongse

Managing &
Production Editor
Kunaporn Patthawaro

Editor-At-Large
Danilo Francisco M. Reyes