

Abstracts of the SFB640 panel and the papers for the ICAS5-conference

Panel Title : **THE POWER OF REPRESENTATIONS OF THE FUTURE IN CREATING NATIONS, PEOPLES AND MEMORIES**
Institution : **Humboldt University, Berlin**
Convener : **Deborah A. Johnson**

Panel Abstract :

The ways in which peoples in Asia are today conceiving, envisioning and representing the future are likely to shape the actual contours of that future. There has more recently been a new critical awareness among political and cultural actors of the power relations surrounding the project of 'creating futures', and of societal or national construction more generally; over how to position oneself within this changing hierarchy; of the representational strategies that can be deployed; and, an awareness that outcomes are not always straightforward or even anticipated. Presenters in this panel will draw upon various sources (visual, textual, oral) from different parts of the Asian region to investigate the many categories, tropes, codes, metaphors and depictions that underscore understandings and representations of the future in this region. They are interested in the ways in which conceptions of the past are used to shape the future; in how understandings of 'time', 'change', 'this world' in the context of the 'next', and of the 'modern', impact on notions of the 'future'. They are interested also in the positioning of the future (whether it is central, marginal or absent); in its 'uses' and manner of its institutionalization; and in the associated roles played by individual or collective actors or movements.

Participants :

Vincent Houben

Paper Title : **The Past as Mirror for the Future: History in Southeast Asia**

Abstract :

Nation-states in Southeast Asia are relatively young and need forms of legitimising in order to get popular support. National histories that revolve around myths of unity have been constructed, projecting current statehood backwards in time. However, the past is also used as a reservoir of patterns and qualities that can mould the future of the nation. These future-oriented representations of the past pre-date the establishment of independent statehood, arising primarily from the thoughts of nationalists in the early twentieth century. This paper investigates in a comparative manner the kinds of national future tropes used in a number of countries in Southeast Asia and the ways in which they have been modified through time.

Deborah A. Johnson

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Daniel Hedinger

Paper Title : **Representing the National Past for the Future Generations: The Yūshūkan War Museum at the Yasukuni Shrine and the National Showa Memorial Museum**

Abstract :

Sixty years after the end of World War II newly built museums in the centre of Tokyo - the Yūshūkan War Museum at the Yasukuni Shrine and the National Showa Memorial Museum - represent the official interpretation of the past. These two museums serve under the pretext of remembering the sacrifices of the past to pass down a specific view of Japanese imperialism. Their aim is to show to future generations that Japanese prosperity and peace are based on the efforts of the war generation. My paper will describe the two museums as a location where memories of a painful past are represented and transferred into the future. How different are their interpretations of the past? What kind of national future is propagandised there? To highlight the major changes in the Japanese society after World War II, the paper will also review the history of the Yūshūkan War Museum in the years of the Japanese imperialism between 1895 and 1945.
