



**Inter-Asian Connections II: Singapore
CALL FOR WORKSHOP PAPERS
DEADLINE – MAY 31, 2010**

**Workshop Title:
How Asia Became Territorial**

Workshop Directors:

Itty Abraham
University of Texas at Austin
itty@austin.utexas.edu

See Seng Tan
S. Rajaratnam School of International Studies,
Nanyang Technological University
issstan@ntu.edu.sg

Asia today has more inter-state disputes over territory than any other continent in the world. The majority of its states – Japan, Korea, China, Taiwan, Philippines, Vietnam, Indonesia, Malaysia, Cambodia, Thailand, Pakistan, India, Bangladesh, Afghanistan, etc. – find themselves embroiled in deeply contentious and long-standing disputes with neighbors and others over bits of land and/or in the maritime domain. What is most alarming is that these disputes are not merely historical legacies of imperial cartography that can be resolved in the well-tempered meeting rooms of international diplomacy. Struggles over disputed lands repeatedly generate the nationalist ire of domestic Asian populations, fuelled further by nostalgia for some idealized past, frustrated economic and political aspirations, and tensions between the competing yet symbiotic dynamics of globalization and nationalism. Subaltern histories and armed insurgencies seeking self-determination may complicate further the fray of disputed official histories. The net effect is to create a situation where the most likely cause of inter-state conflict in Asia today is a situation emanating from a territorial dispute. However, we believe that these very practical concerns cannot be fully understood unless scholars look beyond territorial disputes per se.

Territorial disputes raise questions of history, historiography, conquest, colonization, legitimacy, legality, nations, nationalism, boundaries and borders – issues that invite interrogation by critically minded political scientists, geographers, international legal scholars, historians, and anthropologists. Disputes, however, are not our primary interest. Rather, this workshop proposes to examine critically the foundational relation underlying disputes, namely, the self-reinforcing equivalence between “state” and “territory” that is the unquestioned condition of modern sovereignty.

Among the questions we would like to see raised are historical concerns -- when and how did the state-territory equivalence emerge in Asia; How are “geo-bodies” (Winichakul 1994) constructed in different Asian countries; - - as well as theoretical, spatial, cultural, and political issues: How are multiple territorial sovereignties understood, represented, contested, and resolved; How did/do ideas of territory travel within and beyond Asia; What were/are the technologies of territorial sovereignty; how and where do “zomias” (van Schendel 2005), SEZ’s, and utopias emerge; What does state-and-territory do to borderlanders; How can we conceptualize the many relations between territory and citizenship, involving diasporas, foreigners, sojourners, strangers, exiles, minorities, fifth columnists, and aliens; How are “real” and “virtual” maps imagined, produced, and deconstructed through popular culture and everyday life?

The objective of this proposed workshop is an inter-disciplinary discussion that leads to the untangling of the dense historical, ideological, and political relations that made Asia territorial.

For additional details and application guidelines, please visit the Conference website - <http://www.ssrc.org/pages/conference-on-inter-asian-connections-ii-singapore-december-8-10-2010/>.