Brendon Chee (Mr)

As an impoverished first year student in NUS, I reluctantly bid for the History exposure module after the unsympathetic laws of demand and supply severely constrained my choices. It turned out to be one of the best decisions of my life. The intricate interweavings of all that History encompasses have enthralled me ever since and when the opportunity arose for me to pursue my M.A., I simply could not resist. Outside of school, my time is divided among church, my family, my girlfriend and my friends. In a desperate bid to counteract the expansionary effects of the obscene amounts of food I ingest, I also indulge in basketball, running and going to the gym.

Thesis Title: The Historiography of Gnosticism
Supervisor: Assoc Prof Bruce Lockhart

In April 2006, the Judas Gospel gained prominence following a media campaign by the National Geographic Society that comprised a news conference, a television documentary and the launch of two books. The Judas Gospel belongs to a school of thought known as Gnosticism which, until the end of the nineteenth century, was considered to have originated as a Christian heresy. I believe the Judas Gospel’s ability to mount a serious challenge against the validity of the Bible and present-day Christianity is symptomatic of an unprecedented trend in Gnosticism which has emerged since the late twentieth century—one which sees Gnosticism confronting orthodox Christianity in what is perceivably a zero-sum game where either the former or the latter emerges as a legitimate and valid historical narrative. In my thesis, I will situate the study of Gnosticism within the larger framework of Biblical criticism in order to understand how it has developed through time. Specifically, I will synthesise the changing historical circumstances and the development of Gnosticism to produce a historiographical study of Gnosticism.

CHIA Meng Tat Jack (Mr)

An average but hardworking student who is ever passionate about history, I graduated from NUS with a BA (Hons) in 2007. I enter the MA programme with the aim to learn and find out more. My upbringing and religious belief play an important role in shaping my research interests. As such, I am very interested in the study of Buddhism, Chinese religions, Chinese diaspora, modern Chinese history and Singapore history. Apart from reading, writing and conducting research, I enjoy spending my free time cycling, jogging, watching cartoons (especially Crayon Shin-chan) and telling lame jokes.

Thesis Title: Nanan Migrants and their Temple Networks: Singapore Feng Shan Si and Beyond, 1836-2006
Supervisor: Assoc Prof Huang Jianli

Established in 1836 by migrants from Nanan (南安) county in Fujian province of China, the Singapore Feng Shan Si (Xinjiapo Feng Shan Si 新加坡凤山寺), with a history of 170 years, was gazetted as a national monument in 1978. This study attempts to introduce the Singapore Feng Shan Si as a lens through which to view the larger issue of how the Nanan migrants, as an overseas Chinese community, brought their religious belief from Southern China to Singapore, and established an extensive religious network. It aims to illustrate these temple networks and demonstrate how such linkages were shaped by the political, social, and demographic changes over this long period from 1836 to 2006. Through exploring the Feng Shan Si temple networks, this study seeks to elucidate on how religion both defines and expresses the Nanan migrants as a diasporic community in Singapore and beyond.

Jermaine CHUA (Ms)

I graduated from NUS with a BA(hons) in History in 2008 and my area of interest has always been in East Asia. I enjoy studying the histories of China, Japan and Korea (and also Taiwan); especially how the strident nationalism in these nations affects how they construct their intertwined and often contentious histories. In my (increasingly depleting) free time, I like to learn new languages (did French and Japanese, and currently picking up Korean on the way). I am also an absolute fan of The Amazing Race and LOST.

Thesis Title: The Koguryo debate
Supervisor: Assoc Prof Thomas DuBois

The ancient state of Koguryo, traditionally viewed as one of the Three Kingdoms in Korea, occupied a vast expanse of territory that spanned areas in present-day Liaoning, China to all of North Korea and part of South Korea. In recent years, China had provoked protests from the two Koreas and stirred up controversy when it claimed that Koguryo was part of a greater Chinese nation and not Korea. My research area would be focusing on how the three players use archaeological finds on Koguryo and interpret them to suit their respective political agendas. Through this, I would also like to study the interplay between archaeology, power and the construction of a politically-charged historical narrative.
Karen CHUAH (Ms)

I’m happy to be here to learn about the writing of history. My interest is in the history of both traditional and modern China. I am intrigued because even though I can read and write Chinese, somehow China’s history and culture remain very foreign to me. There is so much to find out I learn loads that’s new to me every day. I may not be smart but I am definitely very nerdy. My favourite activity is reading.

Thesis title: Fu Lei and the Experience of Modern China
Supervisor: Dr Lee Seung-Joon

I am interested in the story of the urban intellectual Fu Lei and would like to explore the ways in which he envisioned Chinese modernity. I would like to find out how his intellectual outlook could be significant to the important themes of the history of modern China. Also, his writings have remained popular. If Fu Lei is symbolically important in the Chinese imagination, has this imagining changed over time? I’m looking forward to sharing ideas with anyone who’s interested in this topic too.

E Mei (Ms)

Hi, I’m E Mei. You can call me Mei or May. I’m from Beijing, China. I spent my undergraduate years at Peking University, majoring in Chinese history and International Affairs. Films, novels, music, swimming, travelling, shopping and delicious food are the passions of my life. My favourite music is from a Taiwanese group called Sodagreen. While history is my current preoccupation, I plan to be a film-maker in the future.

Thesis Title: Culture and Commerce in the Manuchukuo Film Industry, 1938-1945
Supervisor: Assoc Prof Thomas DuBois

This thesis centers on the Manchuria film industry from the 1930s to 1940s. The Manchukuo Film Production and Exhibition Company (Man’ei) was established in 1937 under the sponsorship of the Kwangtung Army and Japanese businessmen. As a state-sponsored company, the development of Man’ei shaped the history of Manchukuo film industry. In order to be the first-class filmmaking center of the Far East commercially and culturally, the management and operations of Man’ei was simultaneously directed along two trajectories, combining the Hollywood-style commercial model with a cultural project similar to the European national film industry. Three periods of Man’ei’s history: Foundation, High Return and “Beautiful Propaganda” arose under different political environments. The commercial product and cultural project built the life of Man’ei. Even as Man’ei aimed to profit commercially through the production and distribution of entertainment films, it also had to serve an official function in shaping perceptions and images of Manchukuo and its sponsor, Japan. The breakout of the Pacific War in 1941 however entailed the transformation of Man’ei into an agency largely concerned with producing and disseminating cultural and political propaganda until the end of the War. This paper analyzes how the Man’ei negotiated the commercial product and cultural project in response to the multifaceted demands and pressures engendered by its evolving geopolitical environment.

GUO Jing Yu (Mr)

I am Guo Jing Yu (Gabriel is fine too) and I am a fresh graduate of the department’s honour’s program. My interest in history developed at a relatively late period in my schooling life (I was a science student in secondary school, commerce in JC and planned to do economics in NUS) and I am lucky to be encouraged in this aspect by friends and lecturers some of whom I have bonded very well with. At the moment, my interest is in East Asian history, especially popular and everyday culture. In my spare time, I am an amateur ecologist and chemist, maintaining a four feet fish tank of predatory fishes that I am trying to convert by the goodness of my heart to a vegetarian diet. Purists may smirk but I believe that nature can be defied somehow. Apart from that, I am an amateur mechanic physicist dealing with the motion of round solid masses on an eight-foot table of green velvet. Besides these, I spend the rest of my time pissing friends and girlfriend off and when enough storm gathers, sit quietly in a corner and wait out the rain with Jack Daniel’s and rolling tobacco, listening to some Kitaro in a self directed fantastic illusion of being high cultured.

Thesis title: Domestic Privacy in Cultural Revolution Shanghai
Supervisor: Assoc Prof Thomas DuBois

This thesis examines domestic privacy in Cultural Revolution Shanghai. Domestic privacy relative to the neighborhood was secured even amidst an open and friendly communal life. This portrayal differs from contemporary accounts and post contemporaneous observations and memoirs. Domestic private living space was allocated dependent on broad principles constant across households, including the need to grant married couples and grown daughters non disclosure. Most people did not utilize domestic privacy thus obtained to commit illicit acts nor hold illicit possessions. Individuals of bad backgrounds committed illicit acts only if it bettered their prospects, retaining illicit possessions required for such acts. Households of bad background avoided illicit acts, but retained politically dangerous forms of wealth that the former avoided. The various acts of non
disclosure committed within domestic privacy were not regarded exercises of 'privacy' as the West understands, but regarded collectively as 'things that should not be said to others'.

Hee En Ming (Mr)

The Greeks say that we always walk into the future backwards, eyes fixed on the past. I am glad to join the fraternity of those for whom this is doubly true: those who devote their time to studying and interpreting the past. To me, learning history is the active, ongoing internalization of this human condition. After graduating with a Second Class Upper, I felt that I could live with the thrill of walking backwards a little more. In my free time I enjoy movies, especially film noir, swimming.

Thesis Title: Patrick Manson and the Founding of Dairy Farm Hong Kong
Supervisor: Dr Lee Seung-Joon

Dairy Farm Hong Kong is an organization whose influence reaches far into our lives, these days it is owns a number of stores from Guardian Pharmacy to Giant and Cold Storage. Its founder is a man equally fascinating. The "Father of Tropical Medicine", Patrick Manson is also known as a medical pioneer in Taiwan and Hong Kong, and the teacher of Sun Yat Sen. While books have been written about his contributions to medicine, little research on the founding and operations of Dairy Farm in Hong Kong, which started from his attempts to provide Hong Kong residents with clean milk, has been done. As the recent incident involving melamine in China shows, clean milk has become something we take for granted. My research will hopefully shed light into the role that milk played in the crossroads of empire, a period of transition whose effects still are felt today.

Edgar LIAO (Mr)

I’ve graduated recently with my B.A. (Hons) but after loitering about NUS for four years as if it was a second home, and thoroughly enjoying my tango with Clio, I couldn’t resist two more years’ worth. Other than History, I indulge in soccer, volunteer work, computer games, and occasional playwriting as an alumnus of the Theatreworks' Writers’ Lab. I’m a junkie for unhealthy food, including Pepsi and chicken wings; only a few individuals (mostly female) can offer me organic food or vegetables and get away with it. I think about losing weight all the time.

Thesis Title: Reclaiming the Ivory Tower: Student Activism in the University of Malaya and Singapore, 1949-1975
Supervisor: Dr Quek Ser Hwee

The historical activism of the English-educated students in Singapore’s first University has been little understood and remembered. This thesis presents a longitudinal study of student activism in the University of Malaya and Singapore, from its birth to the dramatic events of 1974-1975 that spelled the diminution of student political activism. It taps on the publications of the University’s students and student organizations to reinstate the student activists and leaders’ voices and agency to Singapore history. Their ideals, identities and imaginings of the new independent nation they were to inherit are shown to be the precipitating and catalyzing impulses underpinning the transgressive and non-transgressive facets of their activism. The eventual evolution and fate of student activism in the University has to be understood in relation to the dynamics of student politics within the University and the students’ responses to the evolving socio-political environments in Singapore between the 1940s and the 1970s.

Sammy Kanadi (Mr)

Hi, I’m Sammy. I was born and lived in Indonesia until I came to study in Singapore in 2007. Studying history had always been something I wanted to do, so I couldn’t be more delighted when opportunity to join NUS History Department came. From Agincourt to Angkor, Cyrus to Caesar, Exploration to Enlightenment, I always enjoy reading stories from the past. One theme, however, constantly keeps me curious: nationalism. It becomes more intriguing when I think about the nature of my home country. Lacking almost anything in common, how was it possible for the peoples throughout the archipelago to forge a nation called Indonesia? I will try to answer my curiosity during my study at NUS. In my spare time I enjoy reading, doing exercise, hunting for good foods, and sending troops all over the world in a computer game.

Thesis title: Inscribing a Nation: Poedjangga Baroe and the Development of Indonesian Nationalism
Supervisor: Professor Merle Ricklefs

My dissertation will explore the development of the idea of nationalism in the *Nederlands-Indië* during the early period of the twentieth century. Although on the eve of independence the development of nationalism was intensely fostered throughout the colony through military and diplomatic measures, in the beginning it was not the case. *Pribumi* (native Indonesian) intellectuals—physicians, teachers, artists, and even
engineers—struggled to spread the idea of nationalism throughout the archipelago. Given their small numbers—compared to the colony’s total population—their efforts were by no means easy. Utilizing means available according to their respective professions, these individuals struggled to promote the idea of constructing a single nation out of the various groups existed in the colony. Poedjangga Baroe, a cultural periodical published by three pribumi intellectuals from 1933 to 1942, was one of such means. Initially published simply as a medium for writers of that time to communicate each other’s idea, the publication later gained reputation as the one imbued with the spirit of Indonesian nationalism, particularly for its role in developing and promoting one of the most prominent aspects of the Indonesian identity: the Bahasa Indonesia. How much then, in the larger historical context of nationalism development, did Poedjangga Baroe contribute to the efforts of building the Indonesian national identity? That is the question I seek to answer in my research at NUS.

Nurenee LEE (Ms)

I graduated from NUS with a B.A. (Hons) in English Literature and am pursuing an M.A. in History with the aim of learning more about the world, from a different angle. My research interests centre on various dimensions of environmental history: environmentalism, forests, and diseases (in relation to empire and cultural memory). I also have a soft spot for all things related to the Polar Regions. Other passions include music, books, eating, and ambling my way around the world.

Thesis Topic: Asian Environmentalisms
Supervisor: Assoc Prof Timothy Barnard

Although media coverage surrounding the debate on climate change, sustainability, and other green issues seems largely driven by the American and Western media, there are and have long been indigenous environmentalisms in a number of Asian nations, most prominently Japan. My research explores the historical development patterns of environmentalism in Asia, with a focus on the Malay world, and the influence of Japan (and perhaps other Asian cultures) on shaping regional themes. I intend to trace discourses on environmentalism which have developed within the Malay world in the last half-century and how have they related to Japan, a major agent in Southeast Asian deforestation, yet also home to the most prominent Asian environmental movement. In this way I hope to move beyond the simple dyad of “East vs. West” in environmental discourse.

Lim Tse Siang (Mr)

After graduating with a B.A. (Hons) from this department in 2009, joining the Masters programme here is the next step in pursuing a dream. With an innate passion in the history and archaeology of maritime Southeast Asia, this lifelong chase has also led me to develop a strong interest in European interactions and imperialism in the same region. As the world is my classroom, backpacking travels usually ends up conveniently justified. Contemplation over the intricacies of historical research will land me on a hammock by the sea in Kreung Raya, at a happy little pizzeria in downtown Phnom Penh or a nice reggae establishment in Ubud.

Thesis Title: 14th century Singapore: The Temasek Paradigm.
Supervisors: Dr Mark Emmanuel, Assoc Prof John Miksic

Using available artefacts that has been uncovered from various sites (Fort Canning, 1985, Parliament House Complex, 1994, Empress Place, 1997, St. Andrew’s Cathedral, 2004, and possibly Old Supreme Court, December 2009) as well as studies on archaeological remains in Singapore (Miksic on Fort Canning Site, 1985; Omar Chen on Parliament House Complex Site, 2001), I would like to extract as much information as I can about the old settlement, through archaeological methods of analysis (classification of pottery sherds, study of decorative patterns, etc.) In the process, I hope to find out more about the settlement then: What kind of culture did that society have/share? What kind of technologies (iron working, pottery making) did the people possess? Can we see a settlement pattern that subscribes to a ‘Port of Trade’? If so, what kind of trading network or settlement pattern did Singapore/Temasek share with the other contemporary regional port polities? (Ayudhya (Mainland Southeast Asia), Melaka (Malay Peninsula), Banten (Island Southeast Asia)). In doing so, I would like to evaluate scholars Derek Heng’s reconstruction of fourteenth century Singapore, as well as Kwa Chong Guan’s and Professor John Norman Miksic’s conceptualization of Singapore then as a ‘Classical Malay-Port Polity.’
Brandon Albert Lim (Mr)

Like a good number of fellow graduate students, I spent 4 very memorable years as an undergraduate in the NUS History Department, eventually graduating in 2009. My biggest pastime - other than reading extensively about history of course - is being a "laptop-and-couch" soccer and rugby fan. This means I fervently follow the online news about the soccer and rugby world, read my newspapers from back to front (sans the 'Money' section) and have never actually kicked a soccer/rugby ball in the past decade. Being a graduate student is unlikely to change all that, but it at least gives me the chance to further pursue my interest in history and meet lots of like-minded folks out there.

Thesis title: Myth and Monument: Historicising Peranakan Landscapes in Singapore
Supervisor: Dr Chua Ai Lin

This is a study of how the Singapore state, acting through agencies like the Singapore Tourism Board and the National Heritage Board, propagates and sustains a foundational myth of the Peranakan cultural heritage in three of Singapore's 'Peranakan landscapes' - Joo Chiat, Emerald Hill and Blair Plain. These sites were unofficially demarcated as Peranakan enclaves by dint of their being former residential areas dominated by the said community. While the motivations for so doing are plenty, one must ultimately understand them vis-à-vis Singapore's socio-political milieu in the 1980s and 1990s. It will then be apparent how ideas of history and myth, beyond serving as marketing tools that bolster these sites' commercial and cultural values, also insidiously shape the image of 'Peranakan-ness' in the Singapore collective memory.

Liu Guoyi (Mr)

As a future inductee of that noble profession known in Singapore variously as General Education Officer, or just school teacher, I have embarked on this journey as a graduate student of the department with the aim of learning more about history which hopefully will better equip me to handle the exacting demands of my future career. My quest here, on a more personal note, also represents the renewal of a life-long affair with history, with which I have been most intimately acquainted with and enraptured by since the days of my childhood. History, academic pursuits and work aside, I am an inveterate collector of action figures, models and movies-related memorabilia. While I have little passion for physical activities, my progressively widening girth (owing perhaps to my claim to fame as foodie) has compelled me to concede the utility of the occasional jog or swim which I undertake these days with some regularity.

Thesis title: Sino-Thai Relations during the Fifth Reign (1868-1910)
Supervisor: Assoc Prof Bruce Lockhart

Sino-Thai relations in the past two centuries can at best be described as a roller-coaster ride of sorts, with multiple ‘ups and downs’. While the latter century has been the subject of greater academic interest, the 19th century has not fared as well. This thesis proposes to examine the relations (both official and informal) between Siam and Qing China during the reign of Rama V and attempt to elucidate the various factors affecting these ties or lack thereof.

Mok Mei Feng (Ms)

Also a graduate of the History Department, it is an understatement for me to say that I am delighted to be back with the History Department once again. A fan of Asian history, I can often been seen lying on the AS1 benches in deep contemplation, with a book on my face. Outside the world of books, I enjoy softball, bowling, swimming and raveling.

Thesis title: Centering the Man in the Margins: Re-examining Liu Yung-fu
Supervisor: Assoc Prof Bruce Lockhart

Liu Yongfu (Lưu Văn Phúc, 刘永福) was the leader of the Black Flags, a band that roamed the Sino-Vietnamese border region in the nineteenth century. Born in south China, and active in Vietnam, his greatest claim to fame was his contribution to the Vietnamese/Chinese anti-imperialism cause, as he killed Frenchmen Francis Garnier (d. 1873) and Henri Riviere (d. 1883). Consequently, both Chinese and Vietnamese scholars were eager to claim his successes for the Chinese nation, or the Vietnamese nation. Through an examination of the Sino-Vietnamese border region in the longue durée, I argue that Liu should be contextualised in the local history of the region. In doing so, I will also examine how scholars’ contemporary concerns affect the writing of history.
Morragotwong PHUMPLAB (Ms)

Hello! My name is Morragotwong and you can call me 'Ying'. I am from Thailand. After I graduated from the Southeast Asian Studies Program in Thammasat University, I continued my studies and obtained my first Masters' Degree in Linguistics at the Institute of Language and Culture for Rural Development in Mahidol University, Thailand. Despite being a newcomer to history, it is my pleasure to be here. I am interested in Southeast Asian History, in particular, Vietnam and Thailand. Outside work, I love traveling, eating, reading, music, movies, and sports.

Thesis Title: The Diplomatic Worldviews of Siam and Vietnam in the Pre-Colonial Period (1784-1858)
Supervisor: Assoc Prof Bruce Lockhart

The growth of ancient states in Southeast Asia brought about prosperity and interactions between polities, cultures and societies. These in turn led to the desire to expand territories to guarantee the preponderance of the state. Interstate relationships can be characterized by different formations including countering and balancing relations between center states and the tributaries. From the late eighteenth to the early nineteenth century, Siam under the Chakri dynasty and Vietnam under the Nguyen dynasty can be seen as competitors striving to be seen as the center of the region over the overlapping Khmer and Lao vassals. The Siamese and Vietnamese worldviews were in turn shaped by the influx of cultural influences from India and China which helped construct the identity of the state and formed the basis of cultural expansion and political formation in the region. This difference in worldview in turn led to a clash of diplomatic relations and, in some instances, to military confrontation as well.

This study focuses on three key historical aspects - first, an examination of prominent themes and notions of Siam's and Vietnam's in the forms of 'external' projections following the formation of the history between 1784 and 1858; second, a comparative examination of the functioning of different systems and mentalities that informed Siamese and Vietnamese dealing with their Khmer and Lao vassals; lastly the ramifications of this 'parallel' worldview in society and the manner by which it refracts the relationship between these two countries.

MUHAMMAD AIDIL bin Ali (Mr)

I’m a pretty laidback individual who loves nothing more to just spend the time in bed, sleeping and slacking the day away. Unfortunately being a History postgrad student has meant that such moments have become rarer, and I’m more likely to be found in the postgrad room mugging away. When I do get away from the workload, I try to have time to just chill, enjoy the breeze and have a relaxing time.

Thesis Topic: 18th century Malay world
Supervisor: Assoc Prof Timothy Barnard

My thesis will look at the 19th Century judicial administration of the Riau Lingga Sultanate. I will hope to further illuminate the current understanding of the Dutch colonial presence in Southeast Asia, which has been largely focused on Dutch activities in Java. Therefore, my thesis will assess the nature of the administration, and whether there had been substantial changes with the presence of the Dutch Residents in Java.

Leonora SEAH (Ms)

I graduated from NUS in 2005 with a First Class Honours BA degree in History. After two years in the working world, I returned to the History Department to pursue an MA. I’m particularly interested in East Asian and Singapore history. During my spare time, I listen to an eclectic array of music, watch Korean dramas and support Manchester United.

Thesis Title: British Policy and the Japanese in Singapore, 1890-1930
Supervisor: Assoc Prof Albert Lau

The Japanese community in Singapore had evolved into a sophisticated network of socio-economic, intellectual and political relations by the inter-war period. Yet British policy towards this Japanese community has hitherto been a neglected area of Singapore history. My research will address this topic by examining British perspectives on Japanese maritime commerce. Such commerce comprised complex webs based on immigration, customs, shipping, and political activities. My research will therefore extend our understanding of the Japanese in Singapore beyond the lens of international relations. I also aim to contribute to the globalization of Singapore’s history by contextualizing it against the backdrop of global maritime networks.
DEPARTMENT OF HISTORY
MA CANDIDATES

Sheena Kumari (Ms)

A recent graduate of the Department, I’m glad to be back to further my interest in the subject. My interests include history, literature, period films and the arts. When not engaged in scholarly endeavours, I spend most of the time reading (anything ranging from the classics to contemporary fiction), hanging out with old friends, procrastinating and daydreaming. Too many clouds, too little time.

Thesis Title: The Politics of Separation in British Burma (1928-37)
Supervisor: Dr. Maitrii Aung-Thwin

One of the most important, and also overlooked, event that had a great impact on both India and Burma was the latter’s Separation from British India in 1937. The Simon Commission to Burma in 1929 declared ‘Separation’ as the only solution to what they saw as deteriorating political relations between India and Burma due to their divergent interests. Yet the decision itself provoked much furor within and beyond Burma and would only be implemented in 1937. This reappraisal takes into consideration both internal changes in Burma as well as external trends which affected British policies; from complex negotiations with Burmese nationalists, constraints faced due to the political situation and nature of public opinion back home, to changes on the international front as well as developments on the Indian subcontinent which greatly affected the decisions of British policy-makers. Hence, my research explores in greater depth the historical context in which the Separation decision was undertaken. Separation was in many ways a watershed event in the decolonization process in Burma, culminating after a long, arduous process of negotiations and debates which consumed the political imaginations of not just the Burmese and Indian nationalists in their visions for independence but also reveals plenty about the nature and evolution of British policies towards their colonies in Asia.

SHU Sheng-Chi (Mr)

I am currently pursuing an MA in History. My undergraduate studies with the NUS History Department helped to deepen a passion that has started from a young age. It also opened me to a broad range and varieties of issues over the past and the ways it has been presented. The postgraduate level is for me an essential stage to master the historian’s craft. In my free time, I dabble in Classical Music and enjoy collecting vintage recordings (both studio and live) of renowned conductors, instrumentalists and opera singers between the 1900s and 1960s. To me they constitute a very special form of historical documents.

Thesis Title: Transregional Networking in the Chinese Journalistic Diaspora: Hu Wenhu/Sin Chew Jit Poh and Guomindang China, 1929-1937
Supervisor: Assoc Prof Huang Jianli

This study examines diasporic journalistic relations in the joint historical contexts of the Nanjing Decade (1927-1937) in the history of Republican China and the growing anti-Japanese motherland nationalism in the Nanyang/Singapore Chinese migrant community. It explores specifically the socialization circuit of Hu Wenhu (1884-1954) and his Sin Chew Jit Poh newspapermen within Guomindang China. By doing so, the study demonstrates that the reputational ascendency of Hu and his newspaper over their main local Singapore rival Chen Jiageng (1874-1961)/Nanyang Siang Pau was due significantly to their success in constructing dynamic transregional journalistic linkages with important professional counterparts in Guomindang China. Such connections in turn contributed to a vibrant diasporic journalistic sphere teeming with a myriad of social-informational activities. In pushing forward these arguments, the study seeks to further our understanding of the diasporic dimension of historical Chinese journalistic development and thereby expand the frontier of extant historical scholarship on Chinese journalism.

Suhaili Osman (Ms)

Hello! I’m Suhaili and I’m excited to be pursuing my M.A. in the History Department. After stints as an educator and foreign service officer, I decided to return to my first love of asking questions (and seeking answers) about the world around me which led me back to the halls (and multiple staircases) of NUS. My interests have expanded greatly since my salad days and I’m looking forward to dusting off the cobwebs from the dark recesses of my brain and generating new synapses. When I’m not up to my eyeballs in readings or busy scouring museums, I mess around in my kitchen doing a third-rate imitation of Nigella Lawson aka ‘the Kitchen Goddess’. My dream holiday would be a pastry course at the Cordon Bleu in Paris. Gael Garcia Bernal as a travel companion would be icing on my cupcake.

Thesis title: Exhibiting Islam: A study of representations of Islam in selected museums of Southeast Asia
Supervisor: Assoc Prof Maurizio Peleggi

My thesis is an examination of selected museums in Southeast Asia that contain Islamic galleries and/or displays material culture that claim to represent ‘Islamic culture’ and
'Islamic civilisation'. As museums are arguably sites for the exposition and creation (as well as re-creation) of multiple identities, national governments have a vested interest in how the self, especially in relation to others, is created and displayed for public consumption. Hence it is of interest to examine the extent to which Muslim Southeast Asia creates a Muslim identity that is.

TAN Kia Lih (Mr)

I graduated from NUS in 2007 and after a short tryst with legal studies in Australia, have returned to pursue my love for history at NUS. My passion for history is a driving force in my life. People tend to ask me why I am studying what I am studying and I can only reply that my love for the subject is something innate. Perhaps it was too much Ben-hur and El-Cid when I was a little boy. Anyhow, I am truly glad to have been blessed with the opportunity to pursue further studies in the subject. My hobbies consist of reading, reading and reading (Particularly Byzantine, Ottoman and East Asian history) while whatever time which remains is spent training for long distance runs, watching historical dramas, learning to play golf and shooting at SAFRA. I look forward to a rich, fulfilling and enjoyable academic experience during my course of study at the department. Deo gratias.

Thesis title: The Indian National Army: A force for Nationalism?
Supervisor: Assoc Prof Brian Farrell

My thesis seeks to examine if the Indian national Army (INA) was really a force driven by nationalist sentiment or one merely so on the surface. It also seeks to explore its role and contribution to the Indian nationalist movement. The topic aims to tackle the complex history of an organisation whose members were recruited from an Imperial military establishment which evolved out of the Age of Imperialism, were influenced by nationalism and swept up along the tides of conflict in the conflagration that was World War II.

Malcolm Tan (Mr)

After graduating from NIE, I taught for six and a half rewarding years in a secondary school in Singapore, before finally taking my passion in history further, by enrolling in the current Masters program with the department. History has been my passion since the age of eight, when my parents first brought me to visit Fort Siloso and the Sentosa Wax Museum, where I first saw the two famous (or infamous) scenes of the British and the Japanese surrenders during World War II in Singapore. I have never looked back since then, and have been pursuing my quest for historical knowledge from secondary school right to my current graduate study. History aside, my other interests are nature, trekking, backpacking, reading, surfing the net, discussing current affairs, theology and listening to jazz, instrumental and classical music. I try to keep fit by jogging once or twice a week.

My key fields of historical interests are military and colonial history. To me, military history is not just about wars, battles and fighting. It undoubtedly has its context in all these but yet it is more than the sum of these. Military history is also the study of the successes, failures and impact of human organizations and societies. Essentially, once we get to the core of it, I believe that what makes an army perform well in battles and wars are often quite similar to what makes a business enterprise or a civilian organization prosper or succeed respectively, and it is the attempt to identify common lessons and characteristics, applicable across both the military and civilian context, that makes this field of history fascinating.

Thesis title: The Role of Institutional Forces in the Making of the British Tactical Disaster in the Malayan Campaign 1941-1942.
Supervisor: Assoc Prof Brian Farrell

My thesis seeks to answer to what extent and in what ways was the British military system itself responsible for the British tactical disaster in Malaya and Singapore. Although many authors have spilled much ink over the last six decades in analysing the reasons for the British defeat in the Malayan Campaign, most tended to see the deficiencies and flaws of the British Imperial Army in Malaya in isolation, without making the connections between them to identify the main overarching problem behind all these. There are sufficient hints that ultimately the reasons for the British tactical defeat in the Far East are mainly the same as those responsible for their tactical defeats in North Africa and Europe in the early years of the Second World War, as they all share a common origin in the British military system itself. This thesis will therefore attempt to take a “global” rather than a “local” approach in analysing and explaining the reasons for the British tactical disaster in the Malayan Campaign.
TAY Wei Leong (Mr)

Hi, I am Wei Leong. I graduated from the department of history in NUS with a BA (Hons) degree in 2005. After that I taught in a local secondary school as a history and social studies teacher for 4 years. History is my number one passion and I am a student of social-intellectual history working in the field of Chinese history. My other interests include reading, traveling, watching movies, listening to music (jazz and old school pop songs are wonderful!) or simply lazing and sipping kopi somewhere with my buddies.

Supervisor: Prof Prasenjit Duara, Assoc Prof Thomas DuBois

My current research is on Tao Xisheng, a prominent Chinese Marxist historian in the twenties and thirties of the twentieth century. My research focuses on how modern Chinese intellectuals such as Tao Xisheng forged a new understanding of Chinese history in the face of western imperialism, nationalism and revolution.

Panu WONGCHA-UM (Mr)

My name is Panu Wongcha-um and you can call me Panu. I was born and lived in Bangkok, Thailand but I spent the last ten years of my adult life going to school and university in Melbourne, Australia. I did my Bachelor of Arts at the University of Melbourne and did my Honours thesis on piracy in the Malacca Straits. Although I had work experiences in places like the Thai Ministry of Foreign Affairs and H.M. King Bhumibol's NGO, the Chaipattana Foundation, my main passion remains in the learning of history, not to mention the student lifestyle that comes with it. In my pastime I do the ordinary things like listening to music, playing music, reading, drinking, exercising, going to see live bands, and traveling.

Thesis Title: What is Thai Cuisine? The Construction of the Thai Culinary Identity from the Dawn of Rattanakosin to the Present
Supervisor: Assoc Prof Maurizio Peleggi

This thesis looked at the construction of a modern Thai culinary culture, a process that began from the fall of Ayutthaya in 1767 through to the globalized cultural landscape of the present day. From the way the Chakri localized foreign culinary influences that arrived in Siam via early modern traders, through to adaptation of Western cookbook writing method, the construction of Thai culinary identity has always been a process initiated from Bangkok’s court, the cultural center of the country. After the fall of absolutism in 1932, the role of the court and its aristocracy shifted to the Bangkok middle class who then shaped the Thai gastronomic culture by navigating through the dynamic of nationalism and globalization of the twentieth century. In short, the Thai culinary culture that we know today, both the ‘high’ and the ‘low’, came into being through two centuries of Bangkok’s interactions with foreign trades and western modernity.

XIANG Hongyan (Ms)

I earned my BA in Wuhan University of China. Now I am a MA candidate here. When I am not studying, I like doing sports and traveling. I am also quite interested in architecture and painting. I’ve read almost all the biographies about famous painters of Picasso’s period when I was an undergraduate. Reading and listening to music are what I am always doing.

Thesis Title: Missionaries and secret societies during the anti-Christian movement - Franciscan missionaries in Enshi in late nineteenth century
Supervisor: Assoc Prof Thomas DuBois

In late-nineteenth century China, an anti-Christian movement swiped the entire country. Previous scholars have explained the causes of the movement from the perspective of cultural conflict, Western imperialism, China’s anti-foreign tradition, and so on. However, these explanations are not equally applicable to every region of China during the anti-Christian movement. This thesis tried to provide a new perspective of the causes of the anti-Christian movement by studying the relationship between Belgium Franciscan missionaries and the secret society Gelaohui in Enshi in late nineteenth century. This thesis argues that Franciscan missionaries in Enshi were quite experienced at dealing with the local society in nineteenth century. They generally had good working relationships with different groups of people except the secret society Gelaohui. The Gelaohui not only confronted with those missionaries, but was also the main organizer and actor during the anti-Christian movement took place in Enshi and the entire Yangtze River Valley.
YONG En En (Ms)

As a lover of History I am really happy to be able to pursue my M.A. studies at NUS, immediately after completing my B.A. degree. While much of my undergraduate studies were devoted to the study of military history, I am also interested in cultural and political history as well as historiographical concepts and methodologies.

Thesis title: The Nanyo Kyokai and Southeast Asia
Supervisor: Assoc Prof Teow See Heng

The Nanyo Kyokai (South Seas Association) was a semi-government organization founded in 1915 in line with greater Japanese interest in Southeast Asia, referred to by the Japanese as the South Seas following the colonization of Taiwan and increased economic opportunities as World War One disrupted trade between the region and Europe. An organization that grew to have three branches in Japan besides it’s Tokyo Headquarters, and nine branches in Taiwan and Southeast Asia, the Nanyo Kyokai championed economic expansion in the region, while also gathering intelligence. Despite having a long existence of close to thirty years and a major producer of information on the region, little has been written about the organization, especially in English scholarship. Many questions remain to be explored about the organization, such as whether it was a novel form of organization in the context of Japanese organizations and colonialism when it was founded? How does it fit in against a broader history of Japanese organizations at home and overseas? How did its function change as Japan’s relationship with the West and China deteriorated in the inter-war period? The association apparently stopped all activities and may have ceased to exist after the war, in a world in which it had become irrelevant, but a current NGO, the International Communication Foundation (ICF), claims to have been reorganized from the Nanyo Kyokai in 1999. What links exist between these two very different organizations and what has made the Nanyo Kyokai relevant or attractive for a modern day NGO to draw upon its history are also questions I would be looking into.

Jackie YOONG (Ms)

I spent an enjoyable four years as a NUS History undergraduate and am glad to have the opportunity to further my interest in the subject with the department for another two years. History aside, I love travelling, museums, postcards, chocolates and curling up with a good read at Starbucks.

Supervisor: Assoc Prof Maurizio Peleggi

Through an analysis of eleven museum exhibitions of Peranakan culture in postwar Singapore, this thesis shows how the postwar Peranakan cultural identity and category were established and evolved, and how its perceived representativeness has expanded through the decades. It argues that Peranakan cultural identity and category were created in the 1980s, and defined as exclusive to the community. The 1990s exhibitions significantly invented the concepts of Peranakan “art” and “aesthetic”, and suggested Peranakan heritage as “national” heritage. The 2000s exhibitions are notable for attempting to deconstruct the established stereotypes, and proposing Peranakan heritage as “regional” and “global” heritage. These observations were enabled by a combination of favourable government cultural policies, international and larger forces, and efforts by the Baba community since the 1980s. In contrast, unfavourable circumstances of the 1950s-1970s forced the Babas, a prewar elite community, to withdraw from the public eye and few were interested in Peranakan heritage.

Zhuang Kuan Song (Mr)

I am Victor / ks / kuansong / beng / chyna beng and am a graduate from NUS’s history honours program. It is thus my pleasure to be here doing my MA back at the same department. I used to ride, and I still love to and am hoping to one day own a VFR 800 so any contributions to the Victor bike fund is very much welcome. In my spare time, I like to think I’m Fabio Cannavaro back when he was at Parma (not his current form at Real) and sometimes, I do fantasize that I am Franz Beckenbauer during my amateur kickabouts on Sundays. I engage in a healthy dose of feel good volunteer work, with the community as well as at the museum. Nevertheless, what really pleases me to be back here at the department is how everyone thinks I look like a fresh undergraduate, which I think could be attributed to either my good genes, or the KOSE face mask that I have been constantly using =). 

Thesis title: The Deaf, The Blind and the 'Crippled': Experiencing Disability in Post War Singapore
Supervisor: Dr Sai Siew Min

The ableist bias in history and the historical nature of disability studies have made this research topic very much an interesting one to pursue. Other than being the routine counselor during my weekly, ‘weekdays with Ronnie’s’ sessions (Ronnie’s one of my interviewees), pursuing such a topic makes me feel at times like a social worker/counselor/sociologist. That aside, this multi disciplinary approach hopes to show how
the treatment of disability is very much related with societal values, and should not be forsaken or neglected in favour of non-disabled men.