We are pleased to announce the launch of our new project, “Reconceptualizing the Cold War: On-the-ground Experiences in Asia.” It aims to build an online archive of oral history collections concerning the Cold War and decolonization in Asia, with a particular focus on the Philippines, Vietnam, Thailand, Myanmar, Malaysia, and Singapore, as well as Taiwan, South Korea, and Japan. We aim to capture the emotions, enthusiasms, and fears of the era through exploring experiences of ordinary people who went through various real and imagined wars. Through this oral history project—in a sense, an attempt at history from below, and from Asia—we aim to draw attention toward diverse local struggles, social antagonisms, and culture wars, as well as gender, ethnic, religious, and postcolonial tensions, that have often been obscured under standard narratives of the Cold War. In doing so, ultimately, we hope to destabilize the conventional understanding of the Cold War as a single, international confrontation between the two superpowers, helping historians and scholars in other disciplines to rethink what the Cold War really was.

To this end, we will convene an international workshop at the National University of Singapore on 25-26 May 2019, and invite scholars, graduate students, and independent researchers and writers who have been conducting or planning to conduct oral historical research in this field, and are interested in taking part in the project. We welcome paper proposals on any topic and on any geographical location in Asia, but particularly welcome those that involve oral history and consider the following questions: How did ordinary people experience and even take advantage of Cold War logics in their own everyday lives? How did local and historical conditions contribute to the shaping and maintenance of the Cold War world? How would the use of oral history and its focus on everyday politics destabilize standard narratives of the Cold War? What truly was the Cold War and how can we reconceptualize it?

Each workshop participant will receive round-trip airfare to and from Singapore, as well as three-night accommodation in Singapore. We welcome applications from anywhere, but particularly encourage scholars, graduate students, and independent researchers and writers in East and Southeast Asia to apply. If interested, please send an abstract (max. 500 words) and Curriculum Vitae by 1 December 2018 to the project organizer, MASUDA Hajimu (Department of History, NUS): hishm@nus.edu.sg. All enquiries should be sent to the organizer, as well.