Project Southeast Asia

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Oxford Thinking
The Campaign for the University of Oxford
“Oxford has a long and proud history of international engagement. Our challenge for the 21st century is two-fold: to continue to bring the very brightest minds from around the world to Oxford, and to apply ourselves to understanding, and engaging with, a rapidly changing world.”

— Lord Patten of Barnes
Chancellor of the University of Oxford
Southeast Asia is a major player on the global stage, and growing ever more so.

Recognising this, the University of Oxford has created Project Southeast Asia, with the ultimate aim of establishing a Centre for Southeast Asian Studies – a home for Southeast Asia in the heart of one of the world’s premier universities.

The Project will act as a focal point for academic and research activity, bringing together many of the most distinguished scholars in the field of Southeast Asian studies, together with the best and brightest new academic talent, for the acquisition and dissemination of knowledge about countries in the Southeast Asian region.

While emphasising core disciplines of history, politics/international relations, anthropology, human sciences, medicine, and development studies, it will also address and offer inputs into important contemporary issues facing Southeast Asia, such as regional security, infectious diseases, environmental change, ageing, and sustainable development.

The Project will support research, student degree programmes, library and archival resources, institutional exchanges and academic events. It will ensure that the most talented students, regardless of need, will be able to study Southeast Asia at Oxford.

The University warmly invites further discussions with all those who share our vision of a world-class Centre for Southeast Asian Studies.
In order to achieve our aspirations for the Project, we are seeking a total donation in the region of £20 million. Funding opportunities include:

- £2.9 million each – to endow at least two further Governing Body Fellowships/University Lecturerships in perpetuity.
- £1.7 to 2.3 million each – to endow Junior and Senior Research Fellowships in perpetuity.
- £1.3 million – at minimum, to endow the Project and its activities in perpetuity, in addition to the above.
- £1 million each – to endow full student scholarships.
- £500,000 – to endow a library for Southeast Asian Studies.
Southeast Asia is a vitally important region.

It contains almost 600 million people, collectively living in 11 nation states. Their populations are some of the most diverse on earth, including 250 million Muslims (20% of the world’s total), 140 million Buddhists (40%), and 30 million of the world’s overseas Chinese population (75%). It is a maritime crossroads between the Chinese and Indian cultures, between the Pacific and Indian Oceans, and a vital crossroads of the world economy. Nearly 50% of the world’s commercial traffic passes through the Malacca Straits, 30% of it headed for Southeast Asian ports.

Southeast Asia is an economic powerhouse in its own right. ASEAN is the 11th largest economy in the world – on a par with Brazil, Canada and South Asia – and is growing rapidly. The world’s 4th largest exporter, ASEAN supplies the world with a tremendous variety of primary products, manufactured goods, technology and services. These include half of the world’s rice exports, 75% of the world’s natural rubber, 60% of its tin, as well as significant amounts of oil and natural gas. ASEAN is also a major supplier of industrial equipment, electronics, chemicals, textiles and consumer goods. The microprocessors it manufactures drive more of the computers which fuel the information age than any other country.

In addition, Southeast Asia is an ecological treasure trove. Rich in flora and fauna, it is a distinct biogeographical region with unique species of native plants and animals. Southeast Asia is home to the Coral Triangle, the most diverse marine environment in the world, encompassing more than half of the world’s reefs and 75% of the world’s coral species. Its terrestrial biodiversity is second only to the Amazon.

In recent decades, Southeast Asia has been one of the most dynamic regions of the world in terms of both economic transformation and political change. Dramatic growth and some of the associated social, political and environmental consequences have created both tremendous opportunity and potential crisis.
The University of Oxford’s links with Southeast Asia date back to 1682, when the Directors of the English East India Company first proposed two lecturerships in Malay Language and Literature. Many British diplomats, statesmen and scholars who made their mark in Southeast Asia were educated at Oxford, including Sir Richard Olaf Winstedt (New College, 1898), founder President of Raffles College, Singapore. Winstedt was the first British scholar to make a systematic survey of Malay literature for historical purposes, and laid the true foundation of a scientific approach to the writing of Malayan history. Botanists Henry Nicholas Ridley (Exeter, 1875) and Sir William Thiselton-Dyer (Christ Church, 1863) introduced rubber trees to Malaya and helped change Malaya’s economic future.

Other Oxford-educated prominent figures in Southeast Asia include Sir Henry Gurney (University, 1919), Governor of Malaya 1948–51; Sir Edward Gent (Trinity, 1920), Governor of Malaya 1946–1948; Sir Donald MacGillivray (Trinity, 1925), the last Malayan High Commissioner 1954–57; Sir William Goode (Worcester, 1926), Governor of Singapore 1957–59, Yang di-Pertuan Negara of Singapore 1959–60, and Governor of North Borneo 1960–63; and Lord Gore-Booth (Balliol, 1928), ambassador to Burma 1953–56, among many others.

Oxford has also educated or provided visiting fellowships to many famous leaders of Southeast Asia, including: King Vajiravudh of Siam (Christ Church, 1899) and former Thai Prime Minister Abhisit Vejjajiva (St John’s, 1985); Crown Prince Al-Muhtadee Billah of Brunei (Magdalen, 1997); the Yang di-Pertuan Agong of Malaysia, Sultan Abdul Halim of Kedah, along with the Sultans of Pahang, the crown princes of Kedah and Perak, and the consort of the Sultan of Johor, Raja Zarith Sofia (Somerville, 1979); Timor-Leste’s First Lady Kirsty Sword-Gusmão (Refugee Studies Centre, 1990) and previous President, the Nobel Peace Prize winner Dr José Ramos-Horta (St Antony’s, 1987); and Daw Aung San Suu Kyi of Burma (St Hugh’s, 1964).
Oxford’s expertise in Southeast Asia is spread across several departments and centres.

**Humanities**

Southeast Asian history, art and archaeology, religion, culture, and philosophy, supported by extensive holdings at the Ashmolean and Pitt Rivers Museums and the Bodleian and other libraries, feature among Oxford’s interests.

The history of Southeast Asia has been taught at Oxford for as long as it has existed as an independent field of enquiry, and emphasises maritime and mainland Southeast Asia as culturally unified regions. Peter Carey MBE (Emeritus Fellow of Trinity College) taught at Oxford for nearly 30 years and has written the most complete biography of Indonesia’s leading national hero, Prince Diponegoro (1785–1855). He was made MBE in 2010 for services to the disabled of Southeast Asia. For his work advising the Timor-Leste foreign ministry, he was awarded the Timorese Independence Medal by the Timorese government and made a Grand Official in the Order of Prince Henry the Navigator by the Portuguese government. Currently, Kevin Fogg (Al-Bukhari Fellow at the Oxford Centre for Islamic Studies and Lecturer in the Faculty of History) works on the relationship of religion, state, and society in 20th century Southeast Asia, especially Indonesia.

Similarly, Southeast Asian linguistics and religious traditions are studied in their own right, rather than as sub-divisions of linguistic and religious studies. At the Faculty of Linguistics, Philology, and Phonetics, Mary Dalrymple (Professor of Syntax) has conducted extensive research into the languages of Indonesia, in particular the syntactic properties of languages of East Indonesia.

Likewise, Oxford has been a major centre for Buddhist studies for many years, with Pali taught to a very high level. The Buddhist Studies Unit’s lecturers include the Venerable Dhammasami (founder and the head of the Oxford Buddha Vihara), and Richard Gombrich (Boden Professor of Sanskrit Emeritus). The Oxford Centre for Buddhist Studies, a Recognised Independent Centre of the University, has been involved in the formation of the International Association of Buddhist Universities and maintains significant links to Southeast Asia. Oxford is also one of the biggest centres for the study of Islam outside of the Middle East. The Oriental Studies Institute, Khalili Research Centre and Middle East Centre are world leaders in the field. Two Recognised Independent Centres on Islamic Studies and Hindu Studies also produce important research.
Social Sciences

The Social Science Division is committed to developing a greater understanding of all aspects of Southeast Asian society, from social organisation to the impact of political, legal and economic systems on societal welfare to human rights and security.

Oxford has been a leader in Britain on the anthropology of Southeast Asia since the 1950s. Professors of Social Anthropology Maurice Freedman (1970-75), Rodney Needham (1976-90), and Robert Barnes (1991-2011) worked on Malaya and Indonesia. At the Institute of Population Ageing, Philip Kreager (Senior Research Fellow) researches comparative demographic systems with particular reference to the construction of collective identity, family and kin systems, age and social structure in Indonesia. He was Director of the Ageing in Indonesia study from 1998-2007.

The effects of the complex economic, social and political processes of change in Southeast Asia are addressed by the Oxford Department of International Development and the School of Geography and the Environment. Paul Jepson, course director of the MSc in Nature, Society and Environmental Policy, researches conservation governance and was previously Indonesia Programme Director for BirdLife International from 1991-1997.

The Department of Politics and International Relations has long addressed Southeast Asia from the international and institutional perspective. Currently, Professors of International Relations Yuen Foong Khong (Nuffield) and Rosemary Foot (St Antony’s) both work on the international relations of the Asia-Pacific. Prof Khong has written on the Vietnam War and ASEAN security. Prof Foot researches security issues, terrorism, human rights, and institutional developments in the Asia-Pacific region. Matthew Walton (Aung San Suu Kyi Senior Research Fellow in Modern Burmese Studies at St Antony’s College) works on religion and political thought in Southeast Asia, with special emphasis on Burmese Buddhist political thought, and also specialises in ethnic and communal conflict in Myanmar.

Letter from Sultan Iskandar Muda of Aceh to King James I, 1615
Bodleian Library, University of Oxford, MS Laud. Rolls B
Medical & Life Sciences

Oxford is an internationally recognised centre of excellence for biomedical and clinical research and teaching. In particular, the University’s strength in global health is unparalleled.

The legendary Sir David Weatherall (Regius Professor of Medicine Emeritus) bridged the clinical and molecular aspects of the thalassaemias, and his work continues to constitute the model for the study of many genetic diseases worldwide. It was in the Royal Army Medical Corps in Singapore that he met the anaemic child who would lead him into his research field. He continues to work tirelessly on initiatives to study and prevent common diseases of childhood in Southeast Asia.

The Oxford Centre for Tropical Medicine’s outstanding success in Southeast Asia has directly influenced World Health Organisation policy – currently recommended treatments for malaria, typhoid, dengue shock syndrome, melioidosis, tuberculosis, meningitis, diphtheria and leptospirosis are all based on their work. With units in Thailand, Vietnam, Laos and Indonesia, it also hosts the regional and Indonesian offices of the Southeast Asian Infectious Diseases Clinical Research Network. Professors of Tropical Medicine Nick White and Nick Day were instrumental in the development of artemesinin-based therapy as the central strategy for malaria control, while Professor Jeremy Farrar and colleagues at the Hospital for Tropical Diseases in Ho Chi Minh City are at the leading edge of clinical research on avian influenza.

The Oxford Mindfulness Centre works on the application of practices drawn from Southeast Asian Buddhist tradition in psychological therapy.

Oxford’s links with Southeast Asia extend to the plant sciences. Professor Jeff Burley, as director of the Oxford Forestry Institute, was responsible for a 10-year project with the Forestry Institute of Malaysia and chaired an external review of the Centre for International Forestry Research in Indonesia.
The study of Southeast Asia has a long tradition in the University of Oxford. For as long as the modern field of Southeast Asian studies has existed, academics have been engaged in ground-breaking research. Courses in Southeast Asia have been offered in Oxford to enthusiastic student audiences for generations, as has a popular seminar series in contemporary Southeast Asian studies. However, no single body has ever brought together these disparate threads of expertise and bound them together.

Recognising Southeast Asia’s tremendous importance, we propose the creation of Project Southeast Asia, with the ultimate aim of the creation of a Centre in Southeast Asian Studies in Oxford University.

The Project will present the opportunity to maximise the vast potential that Oxford offers for Southeast Asian studies by integrating a large number of academics and students within the University’s departments and faculties from across the social sciences and humanities. This will enable scholars from many different fields of expertise – including politics/international relations, history, anthropology, and development studies – to take advantage of the synergies inherent in collaboration and shared resources.

In addition to bringing together many of the most distinguished academics in the field of Southeast Asian studies, the Project will attract the best and brightest new talent for the acquisition and dissemination of knowledge about countries in the Southeast Asian region.

Rich in resources – including the Bodleian Library and Departmental and Faculty libraries, the Pitt Rivers and Ashmolean Museums – Oxford is particularly well-placed to promote the study of Southeast Asia.
Project Southeast Asia will be dedicated to a multi-pronged approach that brings scholars together to study critical themes, including:

**Southeast Asia across time**

The pre-modern Southeast Asian civilisations were subsequently conditioned by Indic, particularly Buddhist and Islamic, influences; by Chinese culture and commerce; by western colonialism; and by modern globalisation and the spread of information technology. A rich, unique, multi-layered heritage has emerged. In particular, the impact of and response to colonialism has a continuing influence on democracy and governance in post-colonial Southeast Asia, as well as on the relationship between state and society, and will be a key theme.
Southeast Asia as a unique and dynamic region

The Project will examine Southeast Asia both as a unit and as a region of considerable complexity and diversity. It will develop transregional approaches to the study of all 11 Southeast Asian countries, as well as seeking to understand Southeast Asia within broader Asian, and global contexts.

Southeast Asia in interdisciplinary perspective

Scholars will take advantage of synergies arising from Oxford’s world-leading expertise in anthropology, history, politics, development studies, human sciences, medical sciences and religious studies, among others.

Contemporary Southeast Asia

Issues facing Southeast Asia include the pressing areas of ageing, armed conflict, terrorism, piracy, energy security, environmental protection, infectious diseases, urbanisation, industrialisation, and migration. The Project will seek to make practical and important contributions to policy-making in Southeast Asia and globally in these areas as well as more generally in the fields of security studies, demography, public health, the environment, sustainable development, technological change, public sector management, political communication and the impact of displacement on Southeast Asian culture and society.
The Project is likely to comprise:

- Governing Body Fellows/University Lecturers in fields pertaining to Southeast Asia
- Senior and Junior Research Fellows, researching aspects of Southeast Asia
- Students of Southeast Asian Studies, some on fully funded scholarships
- Visiting fellows from Southeast Asian institutions
- Academic activities such as conferences, publications, seminars and language courses
- A library and archival resources
- A full-time Administrator to oversee the day-to-day running of the Project

The Project will provide a critical interface for the University’s relations with business, governmental and non-governmental institutions involved with Southeast Asia. It will also forge closer links between the University of Oxford and Southeast Asia, hosting visitors and delegations from the region, and disseminating knowledge about the ongoing research and teaching within the University and beyond.

Further steps to be considered for the ultimate creation of a Centre in Southeast Asian Studies include the creation of a Professorship in Southeast Asian Studies and the development of a Master’s Course in Southeast Asian Studies.
University Lecturers are distinguished and successful academics in their disciplines, who have demonstrated world-leading excellence in research and teaching, and a proven capability for institution building and development.

Lecturers in the fields relating to Southeast Asia, e.g. history, politics/international relations, anthropology or environmental studies, will be appointed.

One of the chief responsibilities of post-holders will be to build Project Southeast Asia into a full Centre of Southeast Asian Studies. This includes a responsibility for further fundraising.

They will also be excellent teachers on Southeast Asia, tasked with delivering lectures, supervising graduate students, and devising graduate and undergraduate courses on, or relating to, Southeast Asia.

“I am fascinated by the people and cultures of Southeast Asia and have made many lifetime friends there. A well-resourced Centre for Southeast Asian Studies would provide what is needed at the University of Oxford.”

– Dr Robert Barnes, Professor of Social Anthropology
St Antony’s College

The University seeks a donation of £2.9 million to fully endow each Governing Body Fellowship/University Lecturership
Research Fellows are academics at the cutting edge of research. Typically appointed to fixed term contracts of two to three years, they represent the best and brightest members of the academic community.

Research Fellowships allow the Project to regularly bring in new ideas and insights, offering academics opportunities to work and research in the University for a limited period of time.

Postholders will offer a clear and structured research project on an aspect of Southeast Asia that can be carried out in Oxford. They will have demonstrated international distinction in their work, with potential for greater success.

“Southeast Asia still holds a vast, untapped wealth of knowledge. A Research Fellowship at Oxford is a springboard for young talent towards a lifelong career in research dedicated to this fascinating region.”

– Dr Sirichai Chongchitnan, Darby Research Fellow in Applied Mathematics
Lincoln College

The University seeks a donation of £1.7 to £2.3 million to fully endow each Junior and Senior Research Fellowship
Students are the backbone of any successful academic programme. The Project will be committed to ensuring that the most academically able students, regardless of background, will be able to study Southeast Asia at Oxford. Scholarships will enable these students to attend the University of Oxford at both the undergraduate and graduate levels.

Generations of Southeast Asian students have immeasurably enriched Oxford’s academic and cultural life, and on graduation have gone on to make important and critical contributions in the political, economic, academic and cultural fields of their home region.

While more than 300 students from the 11 Southeast Asian nations already pursue full-time courses of study at the University of Oxford at the undergraduate and graduate levels, scholarships will also enable more talented students from Southeast Asia to attend the University.

“Innovative research is multidisciplinary in nature. Support for a centre for Southeast Asian studies would enable researchers like myself to benefit from the wide-ranging expertise that the University of Oxford offers.”

– Abdillah Noh, DPhil student in Malaysian Political Economy
St Antony’s College

The University seeks a donation of £1 million to fully endow each student scholarship
The Project will support teaching by building a coherent research programme of study for academic and graduate students. In particular, the range of Southeast Asian course options for Master’s students will be expanded and knowledge of Southeast Asia embedded within survey and theory courses.

The Project will also build partnerships with, and encourage meaningful exchanges among academic institutions, community organisations and individuals with an interest in Southeast Asia.

Ultimately, the Project will seek to provide intensive and comprehensive language training and direct experience of Southeast Asia.

Finally, a leading, world-class research centre needs excellent administrative staff and infrastructure in order to provide support to scholars and students.

**Conferences, lectures and seminars**

Conferences, lectures and seminars facilitate cutting-edge multidisciplinary and comparative research by offering opportunities to present and publish new work, and promoting debate and discussion among academics.
Administrator

An administrator will run the Project on a daily basis.

Dedicated office space

Bringing academics, students and staff together in a central location enables the creation of synergies and the free flow of ideas and discussion among scholars.

Library

The Project will be underpinned by library and archival resources related to Southeast Asia, and seek their expansion and improvement in order to provide researchers with the best possible resources for their work.

The University seeks a donation of a minimum of £1.3 million to endow the Project’s activities and infrastructure
Professor Mary Turnbull (1927–2008) was a teacher and friend to many of independent Malaya’s first generation of administrators. One of only two women ever to serve in the Malayan Civil Service, she wrote the first rigorous history of the Straits Settlements and the definitive history of Singapore. She joined the University of Malaya in 1955 and later became Head of the History Faculty at the University of Hong Kong. In later life she was very active in promoting Southeast Asian studies at the University of Oxford. Her books and papers have been donated to Project Southeast Asia and will serve as the foundation stone for the Project’s library and archival collection.
Endowment of 1st University Lecturership (£2.9 million)

Endowment of Junior Research Fellowship (£1.7 million)

Endowment of 2nd University Lecturership (£2.9 million)

Endowment of Administrator (£1.7 million)

Endowment of Library (£500,000)

Endowment of Student Scholarships (£1 million each)

Further Endowment of Librarian, Junior & Senior Research Fellowships, University Lecturerships

Endowment of Professorship in Southeast Asian Studies (£3.5 million)

Creation of Centre for Southeast Asian Studies
The University of Oxford has a long tradition of acknowledging the significant backing of its most generous philanthropic supporters. A benefaction will merit appropriate levels of recognition and acknowledgement that the University is able to offer, including naming opportunities. Further information can be provided on request.

These are some of the forms of recognition the University is proud to offer:

**The Vice-Chancellor’s Circle**

The Vice-Chancellor’s Circle was launched in 2009 to recognise those individual, foundation and corporate benefactors who have provided generous support to the collegiate University. In addition to receiving regular communications from the Vice-Chancellor and other senior officers, members will be invited to special meetings of the Vice-Chancellor’s Circle. These occasions will showcase the breadth of intellectual talent at Oxford and the significant contribution to society of alumni and friends. The Circle will engage members in the diverse, ever-vibrant life and work of the collegiate University.

**Chancellor’s Court of Benefactors**

For substantial benefactions, the Chancellor can invite the University’s most significant donors to become members of the prestigious Court of Benefactors. The Court meets annually in Oxford in the autumn. These occasions provide an important opportunity for benefactors to have personal contact with the Chancellor, the Vice-Chancellor, Heads of Colleges and senior academics, to meet with other members of the Court and to develop an ever more personal relationship with the University and the Colleges.
The Clarendon Arch

Members of the Chancellor’s Court contributing £5 million may have their generosity to the University honoured by the engraving of their name in the Clarendon Archway, near the entrance of the Bodleian Library. Names so inscribed include the most generous benefactors in Oxford’s history: Sir Thomas Bodley, Queen Elizabeth I, John Radcliffe, IBM UK and many others.

The Sheldon Medal

The highest honour the University of Oxford can bestow upon an individual benefactor is the Sheldon Medal, reserved for a benefactor who has made a significant and strategic difference to the life of the University. The Medal may only be awarded to one person each year and is restricted to members of the Chancellor’s Court of Benefactors. The presentation of the Medal is made by the Chancellor in Oxford’s historic Sheldonian Theatre.
Credits

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