

“Pride and Loathing in History–
the search for a cultural identity in China
and in Brunei”

Wednesday, 12th October 2016 at 2:30 p.m.

IAS Meeting Room 2.27, Level 2, FASS Building

Abstract

Dr. Shu Chunyan will share her research findings on Chinese search for a cultural identity, and invite the audience to engage in a discussion around the question “who am I?” Chinese or Bruneian, the identity question affects every aspect of our academic and social life, and its socio-political and economic significance will only grow in an increasingly globalized world. The identity search for Brunei as a nation might be somewhat shorter but is definitely no less complicated. What represents Bruneian culture and what does it mean to be a Bruneian? Along with growing interaction with the outside world, how can one perceive Brunei's place in South East Asia, Asia, and in the world? These are the questions that Shu has been puzzled with since arriving in Brunei as an expatriate, an outsider. Such questions are both relevant and important to any intellectual and scholar; and it is worthwhile to revisit them time again.

The talk will delve into the question of ‘who am I?’ by introducing the Chinese national character discourse, which originated when Western military, economic, and cultural presence shocked Chinese elites in the late 19th century. It remains important in contemporary cultural debate. This discourse is intertwined with sentiments of both pride and loathing towards the nation's history, and the intellectual tendency to correct such an attitude is characterized by emotions. Shu argues that intellectual assertions of the intrinsic value of cultural tradition today should not simply be viewed as a manifestation of cultural nationalism, but as voices to reject a cultural metamorphosis and a rectification of self-negation and self-orientalization.

Speaker's Profile



Shu Chunyan holds a PhD from Leiden Institute of Area Studies, Leiden University, the Netherlands (2013) and an MA from School of Journalism & Communication, Beijing University, China (2005).

Her dissertation “*Pride and Loathing in History: the 'National Character' Discourse and the Chinese Search for a Cultural Identity*” is available online: <https://openaccess.leidenuniv.nl/handle/1887/21638>