

# The First East Asian Economic Miracle

## Wages, Living Standards and Foundations of Modern Economic Growth in Southeast Asia, 1880-1938

Jean-Pascal Bassino (ENS Lyon) and Pierre van der Eng (ANU)

No  
Reservation  
required

27<sup>(Thu)</sup>  
June 13:30-15:00

Mid-sized Meeting Room (No.332)

3rd Floor, Ilnamori Foundation Memorial Building, CSEAS, Kyoto University

This talk presents new estimates of the living standards of unskilled and skilled wage earners in Southeast Asia. I will present on and estimate welfare ratios in fifteen Asian cities (Bangkok, Calcutta, Canton, Hanoi, Jakarta, Madras, Manila, Penang, Rangoon, Seoul, Saigon, Singapore, Surabaya, Taipei and Tokyo) during 1880-1938 and compares them to those in Milan and Paris. I will show that welfare ratios in most Southeast Asian cities were close to the Italian and Japanese levels, and that wage premia for skilled labour were higher than in Europe and Japan. These findings suggest that there was a sustained strong demand for skilled workers, as well as savings potentials and opportunities for the development of markets beyond basic commodities. Some implications in terms of determinants of inward migration from China and India are considered. In this talk I aim to synthesize these findings to argue that some of the foundations of modern economic growth were being established before WWII.

### Bassino, Jean-Pascal

Professor, ENS Lyon  
CSEAS Visiting Research Scholar



Jean-Pascal Bassino is professor of economics at ENS Lyon, where he is in charge of the master on contemporary Asia. His research interests are related to the analysis of long-term changes in living standards, inequality, and sustainable development. Recent publications include: "Asia's 'little divergence' in the twentieth century: evidence from PPP-based direct estimates of GDP per capita, 1913-69" (with P. van der Eng), *Economic History Review*, 2020; "Sustainable development in Southeast Asia, 1700-1870", in S. Broadberry and K. Fukao (eds), *The Cambridge Economic History of the Modern World*, Vol. I, 1700-1870, 2021; and "Prenatal climate shocks and adult height in developing countries. Evidence from Japan (1872-1917)" (with T. Lagoarde-Segot & U. Woitek), *Economics & Human Biology*, 2022. He is currently completing a volume presenting GDP estimates for Vietnam 1880-2020 to be published by Toyo Keizai in a series edited by K. Odaka, O. Saito and K. Fukao.