

# Friday Seminar



## Conceptualizing Links between Money and Memory: A Study of Chinese New Year Hongbao

Date : 22 Oct 2021

Time : 1:00 - 2:30 pm



Meeting ID:  
975 9158 1818

Passcode:  
311935



The association between money and memory is a difficult one, given the supposed objective neutrality of the former and the subjective nature of the latter. Since the 1980s, the perspective of money's neutrality has been challenged by the studies that explore the social dimensions of money. Focusing on the ritualistic exchange of *hongbao* (red packets filled with new banknotes) in the Chinese community during the Chinese New Year (CNY), we study the mnemonic dimensions of a monetary gift. We find that as a gift, *hongbao* embeds money within the frameworks of individual and socio-cultural memory. The exchange of *hongbao* during CNY does this by blending two types of universalities – time and money. The absence of direct counter-gift symbolizes the persistence of memory through infinite debt which forges intergenerational links and communal solidarity. Money, given its neutrality, emerges as a suitable bearer of the social and mnemonic dimensions of the exchange. Enveloped in a red packet, it becomes capable of bearing multiple social, cultural and symbolic meanings.

**ALL INTERESTED ARE WELCOME!**



**Speaker: Dr. Louis Augustin-Jean**  
Department of Development Studies, University of Malaya

Dr Louis Augustin-Jean is Senior Lecturer at Universiti Malaya, Department of Development Studies. He previously taught in France, Japan and Hong Kong. He specializes in economic sociology with a focus on China. He recently co-authored *The Economic Roots of the Umbrella Movement* and co-edited *Risk and Food Safety in China and Japan*.



**Speaker: Dr. Vandana Saxena**  
Department of English, University of Malaya

Dr. Vandana Saxena teaches at Faculty of Arts and Social Science at Universiti Malaya. She has previously taught in universities in India, Malaysia and Vietnam. Her areas of interests include Southeast Asian culture and Memory Studies. Her recent book, *Memory and Nation-building*, explores World War II memories in Malaysian literature.