

SouthEast Asia: Past, Present and Future





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## FROM THE EDITOR'S DESK

Maria Serena I. Diokno



The first phase of the SEASREP Council's work came to an end in March this year. Three years ago five Southeast Asian universities, joined by three more the following year, signed the Memorandum of Understanding to promote Southeast Asian studies and exchange in the region. Early this year the eight universities extended the agreement for another six years, with the promise of greater cooperation among them. The second phase has thus begun.

The Council's three-year report shows its strengths and shortcomings. From 1995 to 1998, the Secretariat received 201 applications for various SEASREP grants, of which 60 percent were approved. Language training grants attracted the highest number, followed by research collaboration grants. On the other hand, applications for postgraduate study have been relatively few, in part because of differences in degree program requirements across the universities. To improve its programs, the Council intends to conduct a survey among grant recipients whose responses will help identify weak areas and hopefully suggest ways to strengthen them.

During my visits to the MOU universities, the officials displayed not only a healthy interest in the Council's programs but also a commitment to improve the institutional linkages needed to facilitate the exchange of faculty and students. Certificates of admission, appointments of advisers and language tutors, access to libraries and dormitory facilities are all an indispensable part of the exchange program that only the universities can provide.

Clearly the SEASREP programs are growing. This year has had the largest number of applications thus far, more than 40 percent over last year's number. For this we ought to recognize the aggressive networking efforts of the Council members who are trying to build a broad base of applicants for SEASREP grants and partners in future SEASREP activities. Having raised the number of applications, the next step will be to focus on their quality. Towards this direction, workshops on conceptualizing and writing research proposals are worth considering.

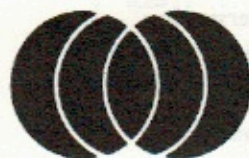
The academic scene, too, is vibrant. In January this year, the University Council of THAMMASAT UNIVERSITY approved the institution of an undergraduate degree program in Southeast Asian studies. This should open in academic year 1999-2000. Meanwhile, the UNIVERSITY OF CHULALONGKORN is seriously considering the institution of a master's program in Southeast Asian studies. If approved, the program will likely be launched in 2000.

As we review the past, we look to the future. The activities and papers featured in this issue show the wide range of possibilities that Southeast Asian scholars face. A difficult future, no doubt, but no less exciting and certainly more challenging than anything we have ever confronted. ♦



# War, Memory and the Significant Past

Diana Wong, visiting fellow, Institute for Malaysian and International Studies, Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia



On 10-11 March 1999, the JAPAN FOUNDATION ASIA CENTER, in collaboration with its partners in the region, organized the ASEAN-Japan Cultural Dialogue on *Beyond the Crisis: Reflections on Cultural Discourse in Asia*. Held in Tokyo, the dialogue aimed to provide a platform for deeper and more specialized intellectual and cultural dialogues in the ASEAN-Japan region. ♦ The dialogue covered three sessions. The first dealt with contemporary culture in Asia, and the role of the ASEAN nations and Japan in addressing questions on the survival, maintenance, and transformation of contemporary culture in Asia in the age of globalization. The second focused on new paradigms in Asian history and how to lay the groundwork for alternative, open-minded ways of rethinking the region's history. The second session was divided into two sub-themes: one, reclaiming history through Asian perspectives, which examined traditional networks of maritime trade on the one hand, and national histories on the other; and two, post-war construction of national consciousness through the experience of war. The final session took up various contemporary cultural agenda and how these are implemented and sustained. ♦ Featured here, in full, is DIANA WONG's paper, one of twelve presented in the two-day workshop, in the session on post-war construction of national consciousness.

In 1982, a 10-foot high granite obelisk inscribed with Japanese characters was accidentally unearthed at a popular beach along the Johor coast during public works on the site. Nobody knew what it was. It turned out to have been the memorial erected on the site from which the Japanese 25th Army led by GENERAL YAMASHITA launched its final assault in its Malaya campaign, on the island across the straits, Singapore, the much-vaunted "impregnable fortress" of the British empire in the Far East.

At dusk on 8 February 1941, the troops who had gathered on Lido Beach began their thrust across the straits. Within two weeks, Singapore fell. To commemorate the Japanese troops who gave their lives in the Battle for Singapore, the granite obelisk was erected on the site where it had begun. Three years later, British troops returned to accept the Japanese surrender. This proud memorial, cast in stone, eventually slid into the soft muddy ground of the beach, buried under its own weight, and forgotten.

Wars, and the historical narratives of war, have often proven to be key, critical moments in the construction of national consciousness, given the ease with which wars enter the collective imagination and can be shaped into a master narrative of national awakening and identity. Similarly, war can be redefined as an intra-mural experience of shared catharsis, with its epic force harnessed for the project of regional consciousness, as with MITTERAND's characterization of World War II, on the occasion of the fiftieth anniversary of its end, as "Europe's victory over itself".

We have been asked in this panel to reflect on the collective memory of its significant past for the peoples and nations of Asia. Looking back on the last half century, the significance of World War II for the national and regional destiny of this part of the world is undeniable. And yet, as ANTHONY REID has observed, there is a puzzling discrepancy between what is known to be the profound sea-change which the Japanese era represents in the history of Southeast Asia, and the absence of public commemoration of this fact.

Indeed, it is striking that whereas the fiftieth anniversary of the end of the war was observed with great fanfare in



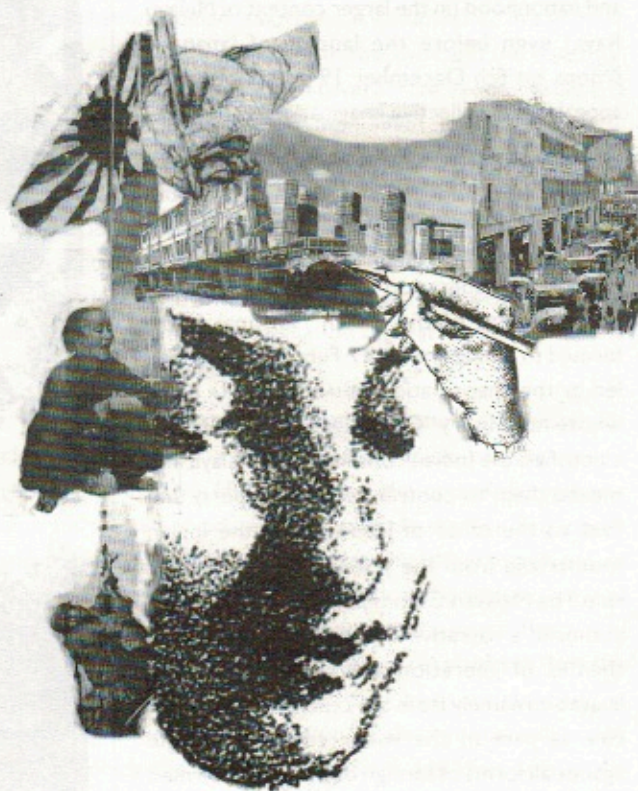
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many other parts of the world, it passed, with the exception of Singapore, virtually unnoticed in Malaysia and the rest of Southeast Asia. In other erstwhile colonies, the memory of war lent itself to the fabrication of an empire-centered, transnational script of resistance, loyalty and liberation (of the natives) fashioned by the returning imperialist forces (White 1995). In Southeast Asia, it might even seem as if the War was hardly remembered at all. Certainly, there was nothing to parallel the impressive array of supra-national and national ceremonies of commemoration, enacted by the very highest organs and personalities of state, which marked the fiftieth anniversary of the end of the war in Europe, and the impact this had on the private and popular memories of the generation which lived through the war.

In my presentation today, I shall, drawing on the experience of Malaysia and Singapore, explore some reasons for this suppression of memory and historical memory, for the politics of forgetting. I shall examine its resurrection in the national identity project of the most globalized of the Southeast nations—in Singapore—and I shall discuss what a politics of remembering could mean for the future.

YAMASHITA and his victorious army practiced a politics of remembering, for otherwise, the 10-foot high granite obelisk, which later fell into oblivion, would not have been built. Indeed, as a technique of power, the politics of memory, I would assert, began with the conquest of Singapore and the ensuing Japanese Occupation, whose explicit intention it was to erase all memory of the old colonial order. Within two days of the triumphal Japanese entry into Singapore, the city was re-named "Syonan"—light of the south. Public buildings such as hospitals and cinema halls, which were sites of mass gatherings as well as points of orientation in the city, were also re-named. Traffic signs were re-inscribed in the Japanese script, as were all other public signs and displays in the city.

The Japanese effacement of place-identity was accompanied by a new time. In Syonan, the clocks were moved forward one and a half hours to follow Tokyo time, and the year 1942 became 2602, the seventeenth year of Showa according to the victor's calendar. As importantly, a new practice of public



commemoration was introduced, based on a new calendar of festivities. Just as memory was to be effaced, a new collective memory was to be fabricated. The highlight of the new calendar was the Emperor's Birthday on April 29, but there were also "two special days of commemoration for people (sic) of Syonan and Malaya": one was the day Japan declared war against the Allied Powers (December 8) and the other when the British surrendered to the Japanese Army in Singapore (February 15). The practice of commemorations, through which a public time and a public space are constituted, and narrational identity established, was an innovative and constitutive feature of Japanese rule.

But this narrative of Japan as the "Light of Asia" unleashing her sword of righteousness to conduct a Greater East Asian War to liberate Asia from white colonial yoke did not remain contested. I shall argue that for Malaya and Singapore, the various and contesting nation-centered narratives of resistance



and liberation, as well as the diverse practices of collaboration, which constituted the lived experience of war and occupation, were not conducive to the memorialization of the war.

Formed in 1937, the *Kesatuan Melayu Muda* had scripted a narrative of Malay independence and nationhood (in the larger context of *Melayu Raya*) even before the landing of Japanese troops on 8th December 1941. Its powerful appeal to the collective imagination was to bear remarkable fruit in the immediate aftermath of the war, with the unprecedented mobilization of popular Malay support against the British-backed Malayan Union proposal. A parallel narrative of liberation was crafted with the establishment of the Indian National Army, formed in Singapore on 17 February 1942 and led by the charismatic *SUBHAS CHANDRA BOSE*, whose rallying cry "*Challo Delhi (on to Delhi)*" electrified the Indian community in Malaya and moved them to contribute gold, property and lives to the cause of liberation of the Indian motherland from the yoke of British colonial rule. The Malayan Communist Party (MCP) also authored a narrative which included the twin themes of liberation and colonial struggle, liberation namely from the cruelties of Japanese rule as part of the wider colonial struggle against all forms of foreign domination. Formed on 30 April 1930 in Kuala Pilah<sup>1</sup>, the MCP had, even before the outbreak of the war, called for the establishment of a Malayan People's Republic in its underground propaganda directed against the British.

The compelling vocabulary of liberation and nationhood forged or deepened during the war could not be ignored by the colonial authorities upon their return to Malaya. The vocabulary of liberation and nationhood introduced by the Japanese, the *Kesatuan Melayu Muda*, the Indian Independence League and the Malayan Communist Party, which had seared itself into the popular memory of the war, had undermined the use of the older colonial vocabulary of enlightened white rule and native loyalty. By the same token, the nation-centered narrative of colonial struggle, which bore the imprint of Japanese and communist thought, was not acceptable to the forces of colonial restoration. What was also no longer sustainable however, was not to engage in the fabrication of a public text on nationhood at all. The Japanese



fostering of public memory and its attendant practices had to be countered.

The British colonial memory of the war—namely, the humiliating defeat and “our failure to defend Malaya”—had to be disavowed. This enterprise acquired a fresh urgency, and a deepened meaning, in the new configuration of global power which followed upon the destruction of the old imperialist order by the war which had just ended—the era of the “Cold War”. From 1948 to 1956, Malaya became the stage for a second war out of which a British hero emerged—GENERAL *TEMPLER*, the resolute soldier who defeated the guerrillas at their own game. The commanding officer of the Japanese 25th Army, GENERAL *YAMASHITA*, who had renamed Singapore *Syonan-to* after its conquest in less than 10 weeks, had acquired the adulatory title of the “Tiger of Malaya”. It is telling that the authorized biography of GENERAL *TEMPLER*, who was commanding officer of the British troops fighting against the communist insurgency in the country barely five years after GENERAL *YAMASHITA* was executed as a war criminal, carried the title: “Templer, Tiger of Malaya”.

Disavowal was achieved through replay—the forces of liberation and colonial struggle were re-inscribed as terrorists from whom the country required deliverance, provided by the superior colonial forces with the help of the loyal natives. This race-centered sub-text of the ‘Emergency’ framed the reading of the Japanese Occupation, to which a direct line of causality was drawn. The predominantly Chinese communist guerrillas, who had fought against the Japanese, were now fighting the Malays and the British. The Japanese Occupation had generated an unfortunate-inter-racial hatred hitherto unknown in this happy country. The war as an anomaly, as an unfortunate hindrance to nationhood because of the communal tensions it incited, became the dominant public narrative of the “Japanese Occupation”.

In 1965, the city-state of Singapore was unceremoniously ushered into nation-statehood. It proceeded to wave aside history and ceremony to ground its existence solely in the narrative of survival in the present.



A "collective lobotomy" had to be performed with respect to the past. In [Singapore in] 1972, seven short years after the attainment of independence, history as a subject was removed from the primary school syllabus. Generations of schoolchildren were brought up to think that "this island never really had a history worth remembering" until it was re-inserted into the school syllabus in the mid-eighties.

A "collective lobotomy" had to be performed with respect to the past. In 1972, seven short years after the attainment of independence, history as a subject was removed from the primary school syllabus. Generations of schoolchildren were brought up to think that "this island never really had a history worth remembering" until it was re-inserted into the school syllabus in the mid-eighties. The construction of national identity had to be undertaken with no recourse to the symbolic resources of the past. The unremitting narrative of survival which became the national text of collective identity in the first decades of the puny nation-state's political existence, was one which was completely anchored in the present.

From this perspective, 1992 appears to mark the re-insertion of history into Singapore's public culture. On the occasion of the fiftieth anniversary of the Japanese Occupation of Singapore, an extensive program of commemoration was instituted, the highlight of which was an exhibition entitled "Syonan-to". As a follow-up measure, the Ministry of Defense set up a committee to identify World War II sites for the commemorative program due in 1995, the anniversary of the end of the war. Throughout 1995, the consecutive unfolding of ceremonies marking the dedication of these eleven sites scattered throughout the island, and the holding of exhibitions (one at the National Museum on the End of World War II, another encapsulated within the theme of total defense at the Military Institute of the Singapore Armed Forces) and fora at which popular memory of the war could be articulated, made war a remembered theme in the public mind.

The lead role of the Ministry of Defense in the restoration of history to official memory in Singapore is surprising only at first glance. The theme of defense is a variation of the narrative of survival the leadership of the fledgling city-state adopted in the wake of its traumatic expulsion from its natural hinterland. The undertone of desperation often detectable in the stridency of the narration can be attributed to the underlying fear that survival could not possibly be secured in view of the crushing weight of history and geography, the logic of which condemned the project of a Republic of Singapore to a conceptual and political anomaly. Hence the disavowal of history and geography in the earlier narrative of survival.

The theme of defense however, is encapsulated in a grander narrative of disenchantment with the west and the quest for national identity, themes which reverberate in other arenas of cultural politics in Singapore (CHUA 1995<sup>2</sup>; KWOK 1995<sup>3</sup>; WEE 1996<sup>4</sup>). With historicisation, the earlier narrative of survival has also acquired a new geography of nationhood. The new topography of war created by the eleven sites of memory represents Singapore as the sole locus of war and not as the final destination in a "Malaya" campaign. This demarcation of national space and its sanctification suggests a national subject reconciled with its geography.

Indeed, I would argue that the reinstatement of history is closely related to a reconceptualization of Singapore's geography. In 1995, fifty years after the end of the war and after thirty years of independent political existence, Singapore's survival as a city-, island-, nation-state no longer appears as an anomaly. The earlier sense of fragility and precariousness of survival has given way to the conviction of success. BRIGADIER-GENERAL GEORGE YEO, the minister responsible for the commemoration campaign, has also been instrumental in fashioning a new self-conception of the national subject by re-envisioning the status of city states and their role in the contemporary regional and global economy. In a speech delivered in May 1995 in Tokyo, he argued:

"In the next century, the most relevant unit of economic production, social organization and knowledge generation will be the city or city-region. Nation-states will still exist but an increasing number of policy issues will have to be settled at the city level. This will create new patterns of competition and cooperation in the world, a little like the situation in Europe before the era of nation states."

The transformative forces of transnationalism have re-defined the meaning of geography for Singapore's survival as a nation-state. City-state status is no longer seen as a congenital defect and anomaly, but as prototypical of the new global centers or hubs on which hinterlands are built, and around which they revolve. This re-conceptualization of the national self created a space, indeed induced a necessity, for the identity resources of the past.



# What Southeast Asia Means to Me

*Excerpts from student essays edited by Miriam C. Ferrer, Department of Political Science, University of the Philippines*

**O**n 7 April 1999, 24 undergraduate students from eight universities in Southeast Asia and four faculty companions kicked off SEASREP's first Traveling Classroom program.

The 12-day trip started in Bangkok and moved on to Thai provinces in the north and northeast, and the Kingdom's ancient capitals in Sukhothai and Ayutthaya, following an itinerary prepared by SEASREP Council member and historian, Dr. CHARNVIT KASETSIRI, of Thammasat University.

The students were chosen on the basis of submitted essays on the theme, "What Southeast Asia means to me." Below are excerpts from some of the essays.

**Fitri Kartika Sari, History major, University of Gadjah Mada**

**T**he stability of Southeast Asia is needed...and the establishment of ZOFPAN (Zone of Freedom Peace and Neutrality) has special meaning in this matter. Economic development in Southeast Asia in the past was exploited to improve the welfare of the invader countries. That's why industrialization in these countries came too late. With economic pragmatism, countries in Southeast Asia with different ideologies try to establish a work relationship, not an ideology-based relationship. Therefore, ASEAN is integrated through economic pragmatism and regional stability.

**Yudi Bachriktora, History major, University of Indonesia**

**T**oday there is a new phenomenon in five Southeast Asian countries—Indonesia, Malaysia, Singapore, Thailand, and the Philippines—particularly among the youth. The phenomenon is that young people have a similar taste in their lifestyle. Right now their lifestyle can't be separated from TV.

And we can see this phenomenon not only in big cities but also in villages.

MTV as the biggest TV music program not only brings music into the house but also gives a lot of information about the "modern" lifestyle.

The youth need this information for their relationship with their friends. If not, they can't make friends. There is only one solution; they have to watch MTV everyday. Suddenly they lose their identity as individuals because they have to compromise with their social life.

The situation I've mentioned is only a small case in Southeast Asia's developing societies. But if we analyze carefully, we will be surprised that the condition will become a serious matter in the future, because the young people are only a small part of society but they will take a big responsibility in the future. If now they can't realize what's going on with their life, how can they decide the best thing to do for their countries in the future?

**Ng Wai Seng, Psychology major, Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia**

**S**outheast Asia means a land of rich cultural and historical experience. I learned much...when I studied the history of Southeast Asia back in Form Six, ranging from the Dynasty of Rama, including King Mongkut and King Chulalongkorn in Thailand, to the "shoe-problem" between King Mindon Min and the English in Burma, and the Culture System and Liberal Policy in Indonesia. Thus, going to a country of Southeast Asia such as Thailand would mean a closer encounter with these well-known characters as well as the significant events in Thailand.

**Abdul Karim Bin Saman, major in Southeast Asian Studies, University of Malaya**

**I**t is common knowledge that Southeast Asian countries are rich in heritage and traditional values. An interesting feature of Southeast Asian culture is the resemblance of many of their traditional dances. Take, for example, the wong shows



(Jara/Bali) and *randai* (Minangkabau), and music such as *gamelan* (Malaysia and Indonesia), *phi phut* (Thailand), *saing wai ah-pue* (Myanmar), *taklempung* (Western Sumatra) and *kulintang* (Philippines). One cannot deny that each culture is unique and possesses a distinct attraction. These facts give the possibility of combining all these cultures into a grand Southeast Asian cultural show that clearly could and would be a must see tourist attraction....

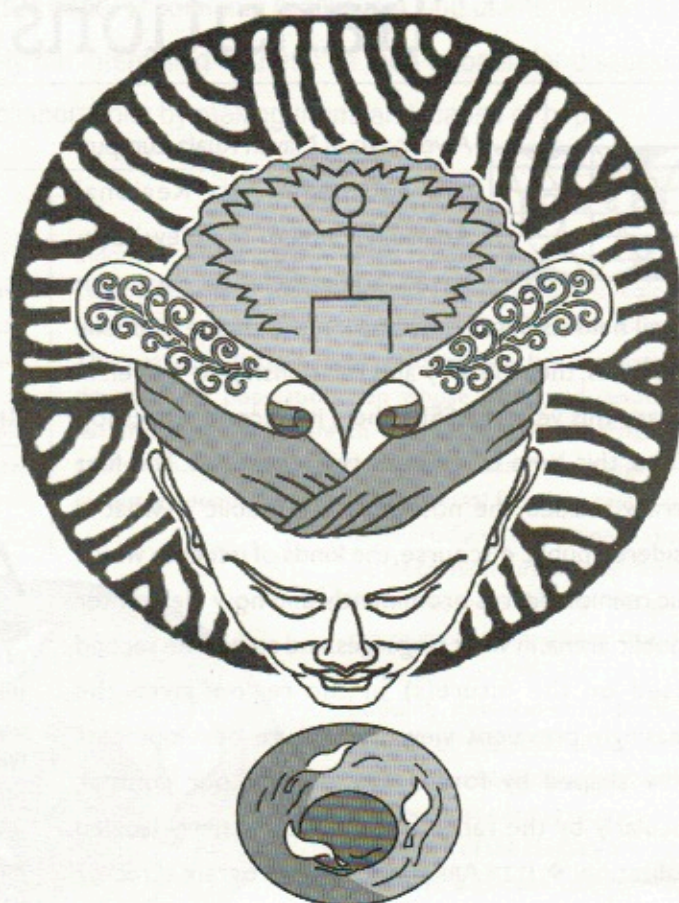
**Damcelle Torres, Sociology-Anthropology major,  
Ateneo de Manila University**

I find Southeast Asian identity and unity problematic when raised within the context of globalization. The increasingly globalized environment, on one hand, calls for a removal of local and regional barriers among nations as it advocates free trade, free flow of information, and transnationality. But at the same time, globalization forces the developing and underdeveloped nations to consolidate themselves as a region in order to gain considerable power and thus survive in the global arena.

I believe Southeast Asia is presently situated within this contradiction. As before, western influence continually impinges and even dictates on the dynamics of each of the Southeast Asian nations. Southeast Asian identity and unity then become placed in an unstable situation. Given this reality, I consider Southeast Asia as a response to the challenge of globalization and as a challenge in itself. Southeast Asia will have to integrate itself in the global world while at the same time preserve its oriental and non-Western identity.

**Mayo Uno Aurelio Martin, major in English and Comparative Literature, University of the Philippines**

Sadly, the fact that our knowledge of the world is mediated by the forces of CNN and MTV is a biting and harsh reality. The cultural complexities of, say, India, have been repackaged by Philips into exotic trivia, aired over MTV's *Out of the Box*. We are swamped by news of student demonstrations in Indonesia that were just as immediately relegated to the sidelines when President Suharto stepped out and President Habibie and the IMF-World Bank stepped in. Human rights abuses by Myanmar's junta government are criticized as their very own AUNG SAN SUU KYI hogs international news as the face of democracy in the fascist East.



This confluence of dirty politics and cultural orientalism has indeed re-established the region as the utopia of the West, a new "Heart of Darkness" (in JOSEPH CONRAD's terms) that coincides with the increasing interest in the economies of the Asia-Pacific. This jaded view of my small world informed me when I took up my first course on Southeast Asian literature.

In the absence of actual travel, as well as the excesses of mass media, literature more than made up for everything. Early on, I was introduced to the works of Thai poets CHIRANAN PHITPRICHA, WITAYAKORN CHIENGKUL and DIREK SAIRIWIT. I became familiar with the Buddhist philosophy. Used to the fierce image of Hollywood's YUL BRYNNER in "The King and I", my professor's lectures portraying RAMA IV as a stout anti-Westerner was something new.

Indeed, I learned more from the stories and poems I read than from the usual pictures of Thai traditional dancers. Thais also had a lengthy tradition of student activism and radical literature. Like most of our parents during the ferment of the late 60s and 70s, the stories also reflected the influence of MAO ZEDONG Thought. The communists of Vietnam were no

*continued on page 32*





A year ago in May in Kuala Lumpur, the Southeast Asia Regional Advisory Panel of the New York-based Social Science Research

Council held its first workshop on the theme of public intellectuals, their history and relationship to power. In February this year, the SSRC held its second workshop in Cebu, this time to address two questions. The first generally tackled the notion of the "public"—what is considered public discourse, the kinds of issues in which public opinion figures prominently, and how ideas enter the public arena, in what languages, and so on. The second focused on the future(s) of the region, given the increasingly prevalent view that future developments will be shaped by forces way outside our control, particularly by the range of forces collectively labeled globalization. ♦ ITTY ABRAHAM, SSRC program director and conference organizer, urged the workshop participants to carefully examine these futures "from the most pedestrian and literal to the most utopian and seemingly far-fetched possibilities." In considering the future(s), he stressed the need "to think about the possibilities we rarely allow ourselves to consider, because they seem too unrealistic, unlikely, or unfortunate," and to use the workshop "as an opportunity to 'take back the future!'" ♦ Eleven scholars and public intellectuals from Southeast Asia, one from Japan, another from Australia, and two from the United States took part in what was an extremely interesting discussion. Futures no doubt make a difficult subject but as the papers presented in the workshop show, our ideas of what is to come bring out the best of what we now have and the hope that the worst will not reappear in its present ugly form. Presented here are extracts from four of the papers discussed in Cebu.

# Transitions and Futures in Southeast Asia

## Anna Tsing

*Anthropology Board of Studies, University of California, Santa Cruz*

A spectre is haunting the planet: an unfettered global capitalism that knows no limits to take-over, mobility, exploitation, and the elimination of competition in the name of accumulation; a new set of rules for corporations that offer them all rights and no responsibilities; a world-wide political capitulation to the willful fluctuations of international finance. Unlike the situation in mid-19<sup>th</sup> century Europe, when first MARX announced that spectral haunting, there are few really-grabbing ideas around right now about what to do about the potentially destructive power of global capital. Even if you had an idea, where would you bring it: to your national government, to your local union, to the privately-owned media chain you wish was yours, or the transnational regional political group you wished represented you? Given capital mobility, at what sites is it worthwhile to struggle for better working conditions, for more livable communities, for more participatory politics? Will national politics be able to address the need for basic corporate responsibility? Who, if anyone, will control the ebb and flow of global finance?

Not so long ago, Southeast Asia was the darling of the international economy; only one future seemed possible, and it looked bright, at least to international economists. The "crash" has opened up the question of futures. Many futures seem possible: bright, dark, and otherwise. A cacophony of stances, deals, opinions, and programs fills the air, and even amateurs can make a stab at "future-making."

In Indonesia, the future looks particularly difficult to call. A rhetorical alliance between the democratic opposition and the international globalizers, miraculously, made possible the fall of an authoritarian regime. With such odd bedfellows together even briefly, what wonderful or terrible future might happen next?



Many of my colleagues have argued that scholarship and activism are just different enterprises and we might as well keep them apart. I don't see how this is done; scholarship is always a kind of intervention that tells us what to see and how to see it. The unlikely but interesting futures I've tried to open for discussion here are intended, then, to inspire more fruitful collaborations by making them landscapes of hope.

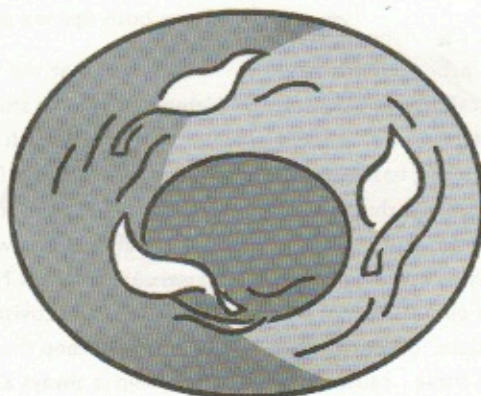
My recent research has asked about spaces of hope in a generally depressing global political landscape, and I have looked for them in certain kinds of "critical collaborations." Critical collaborations are those in which the collaborative process is part of what is being negotiated politically.... In studying the environmental movement in Indonesia, I have been particularly interested in critical collaborations that forge new definitions of the relations between national and transnational activism, between city and countryside, and between science and social justice. I'm thinking here of the ways that Indonesian environmentalism has blossomed from transnational support at the same time as building a strong national politics; of the ways that urban activists attempt to work together with rural community spokespeople in raising environmental injustices to national and international attention; and of the ways that engineers, conservation biologists, and social justice activists have made common cause. Such collaborations don't always work out very well, even for the participants, not to speak of others. However, in these emergent sites, fragmentary beginnings of a vision are being formulated to take us beyond the conflation of nationalism and state-building development that characterized the Suharto regime's programs. Perhaps new regionally- and globally-relevant futures can be glimpsed here.

Where do we look for the future? It's easy to follow our television screens to watch national political and religious figures and corporate CEOs debate the state of national leadership; if we don't like their visions, we can turn to the students demonstrating in the streets. If the television takes us to the countryside, it is probably to see country people coping or starving. But isn't this the "future" that the conflation of nationalism and state-building development has led us to look for? We have learned that the space of national future-making combines youthful national idealism, inchoate, peasant masses waiting to be led, and national elite management. In

Indonesia, it was hard work to put together this picture of "the nation-state with a future." The youthful anti-colonial nationalist legacy was harnessed for the postcolonial state. The peasants disciplined by colonial rule became national development populations, on whose labor and resources national elites might enrich themselves, with international assistance. Internationally certified national managers of resources, populations, and international franchise capital had to be produced and trained. There is a lot to this future-making cluster; it's not easy to dismiss. Yet given the multiple grim visions that are continuing to emerge to put state-building development back in control of the national agenda, it might be useful to consider the idea that the most exciting future visions at the turn of the century are those that offer a glimpse beyond state-building development as nationalism.

Such glimpses work on their own erratic time-lines; they are unlikely to respond with the alacrity and fullness of the news that follows the fall of one regime and the shaky attempts to rise of another. They stretch back into the old regime's undoing and forward into the emergent politics that has kept business as usual from returning; yet even on this long time-line, there are only fits and starts. And still, it is here that I sense some of the most hopeful possibilities, and in difficult times.

Consider, just as an example, the politics of advocating community-based natural resource management. Let me be the first to admit how problematic this concept can be, involving, as it necessarily does, struggles over just what "community," "natural resources," and "management" might mean. However, when social justice-oriented environmental organizations have taken up this project, it has led to some rather interesting possibilities for the future of nationalism. First, marginal groups who once were excluded from all national politics (e.g., shifting cultivators, forest users, subsistence fishermen) have become part of national populism





in an unprecedented way. Development-oriented nationalism knew rural people only as peasants: dependent, poor people to be approached through technical improvement schemes; in contrast, these communities are imagined as independent and already improved. In the process, indigenous and internationally certified knowledge are asked to work together, side by side. Meanwhile, activists have struggled to show the national significance of these local struggles in relation to building a national culture of law, cultural pluralism, and democracy at the same time as accepting international network support and information. While I'm not at all sure what a national politics and economy that took community-based natural resource management really seriously would look like, I think activists' attempts to use and struggle with the concept is productive, and even transformative. After all, what was Suharto-regime "development" but the systematic expropriation and destruction of community-based natural resource management?

It was the Suharto regime, too, that produced the new middle classes from which environmentalism and kindred activism have emerged. The new middle classes developed distinctive Suharto-era cosmopolitanisms, and it has been the cultural specificity of these cosmopolitanisms that makes critical collaboration both easy and attractive and a difficult, unpromising challenge. The new middle classes have no trouble finding their way among internationally circulating causes, whether human rights, international Islam, or corporate entrepreneurship; however, they translate these causes into Indonesian terms and tie them to local and national histories. Thus, for example, the environmental movement owes its legitimacy to the nation-wide student fascination with "nature loving," as this creates a cosmopolitan adventuresome outdoor spirit. Yet even as nature loving, Indonesian style, vitalizes environmental activism and facilitates alliances with foreigners, it creates a national culture purposely out of touch with the "nature" known by villagers. Nature loving makes critical collaboration between city and countryside challenging, because it produces young activists who romanticize peasant lifestyles without understanding them; it also makes their activism possible.

The negotiation of spheres of "public" action has been critically entangled with the emergent national culture of the new middle classes. What counts as "public" changes and is contested. For example, nature loving developed as early New Order students moved themselves out of politics into private pleasures, such as hiking and camping; but in the 1980s it returned many adherents into public debate through environmental activism. Many activists have said it was the promise of critical collaborations, with both foreigners and

with community spokespeople, that drew them from nature loving into environmentalism. Critical collaboration can be a forum for attention to the multiplicity of "public" spheres that compete and erase each other within and beyond the nation. Thus, it was often in realizing that their nature outing formed the same site as some villagers' threatened livelihood that students were moved to "publicize" their understandings of nature. Furthermore, many student nature lovers experienced the call of pluralistic public, political spaces as an opportunity created by their liminal condition in relation to the moral closure of the new middle class family, with its privatizing pull away from contested public spheres. No wonder many young activists joked and worried about their ability to marry properly; the new middle class family under the Suharto regime was an instrument of closure against the kind of critical collaborations that pulled activists' loyalties beyond class and ethnic reproduction. Thus emergent middle class national culture both opened public spaces and closed them down.

Scholarship at the edge of politics is caught in the very dilemmas it tries to study. What should it make public? When does it interfere with democratic process to report on its tactical underpinnings? My attempts to work as an engaged scholar thinking about activism with and beyond academics have not always met with full approval; such is the nature of critical collaboration. Many of my colleagues have argued that scholarship and activism are just different enterprises and we might as well keep them apart. I don't see how this is done; scholarship is always a kind of intervention that tells us what to see and how to see it. The unlikely but interesting futures I've tried to open for discussion here are intended, then, to inspire more fruitful collaborations by making them landscapes of hope.

### Janadas Devan

*Leader writer, Straits Times Singapore, and currently Fellow, International House of Japan's Asia Leadership Fellow Program*

I will advance two propositions before attempting an answer to a generalized question—"What are we going to do about it?"—concerning the current global economic crisis.

Proposition ONE: Socially meaningful life exists locally, in a particular time and place, or it does not exist at all.



We do not even have an immediate knowledge of society in the mass. Someone living in Tokyo, say, has no direct contact with something called Japanese society. What that person has a direct knowledge of is his or her own family, circle of friends, colleagues in the work-place, and so on. This is not to deny that something called Japanese society—or Chinese society or American society, for that matter—has no reality whatsoever. Far from it. Societies, nations, obviously act. Through the agency of government, they go to war, legislate, establish police forces, provide social safety nets, determine the socio-economic life of countless people.

What I am suggesting is that there are different levels of immediacy governing our existence as social beings. We tend to forget this when we read, say, a newspaper. By virtue of its ability to place events from different locations (Kosovo, Burundi, Washington, and Kuala Lumpur) on the uniform space of a page, newspapers (like the rest of the mass media) foster the impression that all these geographically-separated events can exist in a common mental space that we all share. That common mental space does indeed exist, but the immediacy of its reality is in inverse proportion to its distance from the directly experienced facts of daily life.

This brings us to Proposition TWO: The global economy is a fact completely at variance with the first proposition.

The global economy doubtless exists—it implicates even those with no access to potable water or electricity—but it has no location. It is a vast transactional system involving people who are far more unlikely to meet each other than are people who live in the same country, and are far less likely to understand each other when they do meet. If the first stage of industrialization involved the commodification of labor—or the reduction of all value to exchange value—the latest stage of capitalism involves the reduction of all nation states and local communities to the status of symbols circulating in a space without location. The global economy, in other words, is everywhere and nowhere.

We can, indeed, consume, use, exchange these symbols—we can indeed ascribe arbitrary values to them (115 yen to one US dollar, say)—but the primary mode of meaning of these symbols cannot be deciphered by referring to the

particularities of any one community. How can it when US\$1.5 trillion changes hands daily in international currency exchanges, many more times than the total value of all 'real' goods and services traded on any given day? The value of any particular commodity in the global market—including currency—is determined, not by reference to its intrinsic use or exchange value, but rather by reference to the totality of symbols which circulate in that space.

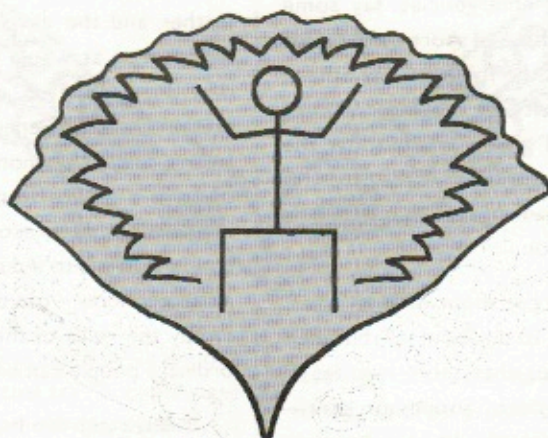
The problem is how do we connect the first mode of social existence—here and now, in particular communities, in particular spaces—with that other, equally real mode, the global, which in essence has no location?

The solution cannot involve shutting off the local from the global. For one thing, it is not as though the world was an intrinsically better place when the global economy did not

exist. The Volk, the Fatherland, "Deutschland Über Alles", "One People Under God"—all that gave us the "War to End All Wars" at the beginning of this century; Auschwitz, Dachau, and the Rape of Nanking in mid-century; and the just concluded Cold War when the world bristled with tens of thousands of nuclear warheads, all cocked and ready to cook the globe many times over.

For another, the global economy is not really the ideological creation of Wall Street, as some of its critics have claimed, and therefore easily changed by merely rewriting the script. No doubt, the global economy as it functions now, is shaped by the views emanating from the major metropolitan centers of the world—New York and London mainly, but also Tokyo and Frankfurt—but that is not the same as saying that these views created the conditions for a global economy.

That economy is fundamentally the creation of technology. It actually makes more sense to blame MAXWELL and FARADAY, the 19th century discoverers of electro-magnetism, for the instabilities of the global economy than it does to blame GEORGE SOROS. SOROS and all his ilk can do what they do because (a) technology has created the conditions for a global economy, and (b) that technology also enables them to manipulate the symbols of this global economy. Hedge funds simply cannot operate without powerful workstation





Is there a socius, a community, that connects the hill tribes of Borneo to the salarymen in Tokyo, or the families that live in cardboard shantytowns in Bombay to the software geniuses in Silicon Valley? Is there a society which answers to a global "we"?

computers, telecommunications, and sophisticated risk analysis models that have to be systematized in operational computer software.

So "What are we going to do about it?"—the same question that many had asked during earlier crises of capitalism. The question must be asked again, and somehow answered in the current crisis, but we should be conscious of how difficult it is to ask that question now, let alone answer it.

Curiously, the "what" is not the most difficult part of the question. Establish a global bank of last resort to provide liquidity to countries in financial emergencies, say some economists; make the destabilizing flows of short-term capital sticky by imposing some version of the Tobin tax, say others; strengthen the regulatory authority of the International Monetary Fund, says the French government; allow the imposition of temporary capital controls, says the Japanese government; strengthen domestic banking regulations, say the Anglo-Saxon governments; and so on.

Economists and governments argue about what is "what" in the question "What are we going to do about it?", but their very ability to argue thus indicates that there is a set of technical solutions one might consider. Sooner or later—hopefully, sooner—the G7 countries should sort out their differences and agree to implement some combination of the various proposals that have been advanced. There is nothing like a hangman's noose to concentrate minds, an English poet said once, and hopefully that holds true even if the hangman's noose is made out of fickle hot money, belonging for the most part to influential people who also fund political parties in the US, Britain, Germany and Japan.

But even if some reasonable technical solution were to be agreed upon, it does not mean the crisis of globality would be over. The fact is the current crisis is just the latest, and certainly not the last, manifestation of what has been called "a crisis of complexity". The world's population will increase from today's 5.5 billion to some 8 or 9 billion within the next 50 years, and that will pose extraordinary pressure on the globe's already depleted finite resources. Also, the present rate of technological change, rapid as it is, will probably accelerate further. Telecommunications and computer technologies will reshape production processes, make the flow of goods and

services and money infinitely faster over long distances than they are now, and a whole host of new products, new markets and new ways of making things will emerge.

That is the good news. The bad news is that nobody has any idea how to manage all this. As anyone who works in an office knows, a simple thing like e-mail can be a wonderful thing, but also an awful pain when one has to answer 20 or 30 e-mails even before starting the work day. That is just a small example of how technology has developed at a much faster rate than our capacity to handle it. A host of nations, containing the majority of the world's population, may well be left behind further, and the developed world itself will suffer serious dislocations as whole sectors of the economy decline, and new ones spring up. According to Mr. TAICHI SAKAIYA, the present Director-General of Japan's Economic Planning Agency, Japan's current economic crisis is fundamentally a reflection of Japan's failure thus far to make the transition to an information-based economic regime. That Japan—the first country in Asia to industrialize, and by far, the most powerful Asian economy—can trip up so spectacularly, illustrates how swiftly the rules of the game can change, and how helpless ordinary people can be in the face of such changes.

It illustrates too how the crisis of global complexity is in essence a crisis of governance. This crisis in governance is made all the more acute because governments, which have always depended on orderly, hierarchically-organized flows of information, are unable to cope in a borderless information regime where it is difficult (sometimes impossible) to tell what new novelty will emerge to upset established routines of economic or social existence. We might indeed define the present global economic crisis as the collapse of orderly transactions—the sudden revelation that the operation of global capital has yet to be routinized, predictable—in the face of which, governments, no less than citizens, are frequently helpless.

So "What are we going to do about it?" The what, as I said, is a technical question that technicians can more or less figure out—in the laboratory, as it were. The trouble is the laboratory solutions are meaningless if the "we" and the "it" in the question cannot be defined. Therein lies the difficulty of our age.



Who is the "we" in a global economy? What does the "it" in the question refer to? Can "it" refer to a non-location, or must it assume a "society", a global socius, in order for the question to be meaningful? But does a global society exist?

It is possible, we know, to collect a huge number of nations into a United Nations, but does that mean anything beyond the motley collection of diplomats who descend ever so often in New York and Geneva and pass mostly forgettable resolutions? Is there a socius, a community, that connects the hill tribes of Borneo to the salarymen in Tokyo, or the families that live in cardboard shantytowns in Bombay to the software geniuses in Silicon Valley? Is there a society which answers to a global "we"?

The recognition of identity, a shared awareness of humanity, is not given in the nature of things. The recognition does take place, undoubtedly, but it is not like bumping into a chair in the dark. Prior to the perception of identity, prior even to the recognition of shared humanity, there is the claim of manifest kindred. The recognition of humanity, in other words, takes place by virtue of a claim—an assertive, affective, intellectual act. It comes into being as the result of an assertive act of recognition that produces what it predicts.

Take, for instance, that tremendous statement in the US Declaration of Independence: "We the People". Or consider, the statement which begins the pledge that school-children in Singapore utter every morning: "We the citizens of Singapore". There is no meaningful social life unless a group of people can say something similar.

The difficulty is how can such a "we" be invoked for the globe. The global economy is an anonymous collection of symbols. Most likely, institutions to govern and regulate the global economy will be established long before a global "we" is established. It is not at all certain that these institutions will represent in any meaningful way the interests of ordinary people. Most likely, global governance will attempt to do what governments have done for the past three hundred years in Europe, the past one hundred and fifty years in Japan, and for the past four decades in East Asia: namely, subject populations to precisely that pattern of behavior that best support the

interest of capital. The violence of that subjection should not be under-estimated.

Many have spoken of how that possibility might be avoided, how we might connect, more humanely than at present, local communities to the anonymous global economy. Among progressive intellectuals, the notion that there can be a transnational civic society (or an alliance of people-centered groups across nation states) existing in continuous tension with global governance (or the collection of sovereign states that make up international bodies), is much in vogue.

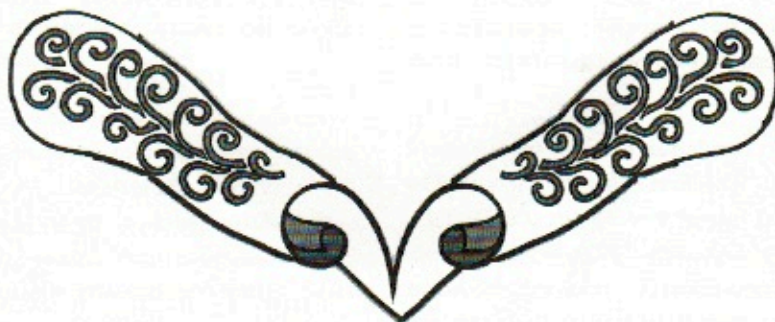
I am personally skeptical of such beliefs. For one thing, the historic aim of civic groups has always been to change the nature and function of states, not to replace them. For another, the capacity of governments, including international

organizations, to absorb civic groups into their agenda, and thus recuperate them as extensions of state power, should never be underestimated.

But despite these caveats, the emerging progressive analysis is inescapable. In particular, the

assertion that there has to be a tense relation between civic society and sovereign states, between transnational civic society and global governance, is a valuable strategy for progressive groups to adopt. It represents a small dream, not a big dream, but perhaps that is for the best.

It is best to dream a dream that does not promise Paradise; it is safer to dream a dream that demands discipline, intelligence, vigilance, care, patience—a dream that does not refuse the claim of the ethical universal "we", but takes care that that "we" does not refer to the wrong thing.





I do not believe that the Asian crisis is, in essence and effect, primarily an "Asian" crisis. Not just because Russia and Brazil are undergoing similar crisis. I think it is, most importantly, a crisis of "casino capitalism", the rampaging, uncontrolled expansion of international financial flows only marginally connected to trade in goods and services

### Joel Rocamora

*Executive director, Institute of Popular Democracy and  
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The best way to approach an enterprise as hazardous as predicting the future is to think of it as a game, one where you can transform the perils of misperception into the joys of the chase. I suppose a seminar of "public intellectuals" is an appropriate occasion for this kind of game, one where we can shed our reticence—an occupational hazard for intellectuals—and joyfully embrace being exhibitionist, my preferred meaning of "public". The game I enjoy best is geopolitics—I am sure because I do not bear the burden of actually making decisions.

Let me start with what two Indian economists said about the Asian economic crisis. "The 'East Asian miracle' could be described as the second major attempt in the postwar period—after the oil price hikes of the 1970s—to significantly alter the distribution of income across the regions of the world. The current economic crisis in the region suggests that this effort, like its predecessor, has failed in terms of its ultimate goal—that of achieving a sustainable and substantial transfer of income from the core capitalist nations to a section of the periphery." (CHANDRASEKHAR, C.P. and JAYATI GHOSH, 1998:63)

There are several reasons for us to ask whether we should mourn the end of the "miracle". The breakneck speed of East and Southeast Asian growth in the past couple of decades was achieved at the sacrifice of the rights of workers and the degradation of the environment. Some analysts say that that pace of growth is achievable only under the leadership of authoritarian governments. Taking off from these critiques, others now conclude that the lesson we should draw is that high speed economic growth is, of necessity bad, and we should opt for considerably slower growth.

I take issue with this vantage point. Accepting slow growth as a matter of principle means accepting continued poverty for tens of millions of our people for much longer than I find acceptable. The crisis plus continuing high rates of population growth plus slow growth in the next few years means that it will take, for countries such as Indonesia, more than a decade to return to their pre-crisis per capita GNP. The Philippines is a good example here. It took us more than a decade to recover from the 1983-85 contraction of our economy.

Another reason is that accepting slow growth means continuing to accept arrogant American bullying for many more years. There are, I am sure, many more reasons for American arrogance than our region's dependence on the American market. But one of the things I regret most about the Asian crisis is that the pace of growth of intra-Asian trade and investment is going to considerably slow down, in the process also slowing down the decline of our dependence on the American market. Instead, our economic weakness has meant greater vulnerability to IMF control of our macroeconomic policy and bargain basement sell offs of large chunks of our economies.

Do we then confront a future of economic and political weakness and enforced obedience to American economic and political pressure? Not necessarily. Not if my hunch about the implications of the Asian crisis is accurate. I do not believe that the Asian crisis is, in essence and effect, primarily an "Asian" crisis. Not just because Russia and Brazil are undergoing similar crisis. I think it is, most importantly, a crisis of "casino capitalism", the rampaging, uncontrolled expansion of international financial flows only marginally connected to trade in goods and services. Let me take it further. The so-called Asian crisis is the first major crisis of post-Cold War globalization.

There is considerable literature showing that the most significant aspect of the current phase of the expansion of international capitalism—globalization minus the hype about technology and Michael Jackson/Jordan—is not growth in trade or investment but international financial flows. I cannot even begin to grasp the meaning (in ways that I can relate to my own use of money) of 1.5 trillion US dollars sloshing around the world every 24 hours. Of course, one irrefutable "meaning" is damage to Asian economies. As if it was humanly possible adding to the already scandalous burden of poverty among our people.

The Asian crisis is not going to mean that the tap will suddenly be closed on these financial flows. The era of almost completely uncontrolled flows is now over. Everyone, from MAHATHIR to GEORGE SOROS, from WALDEN BELLO to STANLEY FISCHER, is talking about imposing controls, about a new international "financial architecture". What is being fought out is what kind of controls and who has a hand on the levers.



Controls, whatever are actually, eventually agreed upon will radically change these financial flows. The very idea of controls is anathema to casino capitalism. Can you imagine controlling gambling in casinos? Some of the controls being seriously discussed will kill large chunks of these financial flows. The Japanese-European proposal for setting up a band within which the major currencies—the dollar, yen and Euro—will be forced to operate will automatically excise speculation on the three currencies, a major chunk of currency speculation in the past. Another set of proposals, controlling short-term stock market and other investments, will reverse a major thrust of neo-liberal “globalization”, the removal of controls on macroeconomic policy from the state.

Even more interesting from a Southeast Asian vantage point, is the way the crisis and maneuvering around the new “international financial architecture” is changing, relations between the three major economic blocs, and their nation-state leaders. The US, working, through the IMF, is doing its best to salvage as much of what it has achieved in liberalization of capital accounts in the past decade, even as it is forced to deal with the reality of near universal demand for controls on international capital flows. The IMF, in a grand act of political chutzpah, is demanding a change in its charter that will enable it to make liberalization of capital accounts one of the conditions for IMF loans.

The Japanese government seems, finally, to be waking up to the fact that its interests in Asia are different from those of the US and require different measures from those peddled by the IMF and the US Treasury Department. Where in October 1997, it allowed the US to discourage a Japanese US\$100 billion bailout fund separate from those set-up bilaterally by the IMF, the Japanese late last year set up a US\$30 billion fund and are reported to be considering adding to the amount. More significantly, the Japanese are slowly moving away from their designated role as financier of American trade deficits. In the last few months, Japanese capital has been moving away from the US back to Japan and to Europe.

The Asian crisis has already affected the US economy in that it forced the Federal Reserve to lower interest rates three times in a row last year, in the process forcing the value

of the dollar down. The Brazilian crisis, which can still get worse, will slowly work its way into the US. If, as many economists expect, the American stock market bubble finally bursts, the by now almost decade long period of rapid American economic growth will end. If, in the same period, the European and especially the Japanese economies pick up, then we will see a reversal of the balance of economic power between the three regional blocs. Longer term trends, not least the end of the heydays of casino capitalism, could mean more than cyclical shifts in this balance.

What does this mean for Asia, in particular Southeast Asia? It should mean greater room for maneuver for our governments. Perhaps, being mesmerized by American power, in its grossest form occurs only in the Philippines. Because of the region's dependence on the American market and on the American security umbrella, recently magnified by the increase in IMF influence, the US, in fact has way more power in the

region than I'm comfortable with. This does not mean that I am enamored of Japanese or European capitalism. Only that I believe it is easier to negotiate achieving at least some of our national goals in a situation of competing outside capitalist powers than one dominated by only one power.

The regional geopolitical context is only one of the factors that will influence the Southeast Asian future. Our national political context is a more important factor. Here,

the Asian crisis has actually helped. Southeast Asian authoritarianism was built on a Faustian bargain, economic growth at the sacrifice of political rights. The crisis breaks this bargain.

SUHARTO would not have fallen without the economic crisis. For all of their faults, the CHUAN and KIM DAE-JUNG governments are certainly preferable to their predecessors. I would not call myself a fan of ANWAR IBRAHIM in a way that apparently my President is, but gross violations of his rights have highlighted MAHATHIR's authoritarian rule and at least placed the abolition of ISA on the agenda. The opportunities for advancing democracy in our countries is greater now than at any other time in the past couple of decades. How to transform these opportunities into sustainable actualities is the challenge.





The decline of the Maoist underground in the Philippines means that there isn't a single "national liberation movement" in the region that has even the remotest chance of achieving power. The collapse of Marxist Leninist "socialism", whether actual as in the USSR and Eastern Europe or ideological (virtual?) as in Asia, means that progressives in the region have to construct progressive political projects within the context of unchallenged capitalism. If we have to choose, I prefer to have a choice between capitalisms instead of being bamboozled by a triumphalist Washington Consensus.

### Kasian Tejapira

*Faculty of Political Science, Thammasat University*

In the launching episode of a popular weekly round-table discussion TV program called "*Kho khid duai khon*" ("May I Venture an Opinion") on the topic of "Thai Society in the Age of Economic Boom" in early 1994, the following exchange concerning an ideal society took place between ANAND PANYARACHUN, the favorite former Prime Minister of the globalizing Bangkok middle class, and SULAK SIVARAKSA, the famous veteran radical conservative social critic and anti-globalizer:

**Anand:** I just want to ask Ajarn Sulak one question. If I happen to entertain your idea of a proper direction of development, can you tell me which society on earth you would enthusiastically commend and suggest that we follow? ... Let me ask you first whether there exists such a society today.

**Sulak:** That's precisely the issue sir, namely that such a society is very hard to come about (roar of laughter)....

A moment later, the program's host, Dr. JERMSAK PINTHONG, a university lecturer in economics better known for his regular appearances, searching questions and pungent comments in numerous TV and radio news commentary and talk-show programs, posed the same question again to SULAK:

**Jermesak:** In short, you acknowledge, do you not, that there isn't yet any country that conforms to what you said?

**Sulak:** Yes, I do. (another roar of laughter)

The most haunting, resounding voice in the preceding scene was neither that of ANAND or SULAK or JERMSAK for that matter, but the roaring laughter of the select studio audience of leading academics, activists, intellectuals, journalists, businessmen and politicians, that is the intellectual-cum-political cream of Thai society, who powerfully expressed their common cynical incredulity of utopia in contemporary, globalized Thailand.

But what is a utopia? How important is it? If it is generally absent from the public's mind in a certain society, so what? Why should a society waste its precious time and mental energy dreaming about things that do not exist and contradict reality? Wouldn't it be nice to disbelieve it, to dispense with it altogether? As ANAND later said in the same program:

**Anand:** "In my case, somehow I think I have to remain in the real world..."

But somehow, one couldn't help feeling that these criticisms from the standpoint of "reality" are actually wide off the mark for they completely miss the essence of utopia.

Literally speaking, the meaning of utopia is "nowhere" (in Latin) or "no place" (*ou not + topos* place in Greek). It is an imaginary, ideal society, an idealistic product of the power of political imagination. It reflects a collective ability to think of radically different future(s) and alternative way(s) of social life. It helps preserve and project a fragile, visible image of another kind of freedom which we may have forgotten.

In other words, it represents the ability to dream at a societal level.

Hence, by definition, it is none of utopia's business to exist. It has nothing to do with *existence* but everything to do with *imaginability*. It consists of the capacity to imagine an alternative beyond the present-as-given and envision the potential for change inherent therein. It encourages optimism, nurtures people's hope, morale and determination to change the world and human life and society for the better.

The problem with utopia thus lies not in its non-existence but rather in the fact that people have come to disbelieve in it or be disinclined even to think about it. Such a society is thereby deprived of an important asset and instrument of thought, dream and imagination and can see no alternative course of action other than submitting to the blinkers and tyranny of a reified "reality".

Consequently, it is held to be self-evident that the System is unalterable and invulnerable, human nature is past redemption, pessimism is correct, and any attempt to change





## The Malolos Republic and Asian Democracy

Founded on 23 January 1899, the Malolos Republic stood as the symbol of Philippine independence. Twelve days later, that independence was shattered by the outbreak of war with the United States.

In January this year, the Philippine National Centennial Commission commemorates the birth of the republic in a three-day conference held in Manila. Below are abstracts of some of the papers read at the conference.

### Economic Ideas during the Malolos Congress

Emmanuel S. de Dios

The dearth of written histories of the economic policies of the Revolution and more fundamentally, of the economic thought then prevailing has led many to conclude that the economic agenda of the revolution was minimal or, at best, provisional in character. An analysis of the economic ideas during the period of the Malolos Congress suggests, however, that the acts of the government were based on a specific tradition in economic thought, particularly the continental liberal school of political economy.

It is true that the Malolos government did not elaborate on the economic demands of the Filipinos and focused almost exclusively on the issues of public finance and the disposition of the friar lands. But neither did the Propaganda movement, whose only economic treatise was Gregorio Sancianco's *The Progress of the Philippines* (1881). That, too, was wholly concerned with the issues of taxation and revenue. The approach of the treatise falls within the tradition of continental economic literature, which considered economics not as a distinct discipline but as part of the study of law, as a necessary preparation for statecraft, as one of several components of the policy-inclined "Cameral Science."

One explanation for the orientation toward taxation and revenue generation was the Malolos government's preoccupation with the impending war with the Americans. But another possible influence on the economic decisions of the Malolos Congress stemmed from their members' exposure to Spain's liberal experience with agrarian reform. This could explain why the second economic issue propounded by the Congress – the return of the friar lands – did not fully address the domestic agrarian problem. Indeed peasant demands for landownership did not figure at all in the economic legislation of the Malolos Congress.

Drawing from their understanding of Spain's own experience with reform, it is evident that the Malolos Congress did not merely invent its economic ideas as it went about the business of governance. While the war with the United States was no doubt the principal concern, the statesmen of Malolos combined what they had learned as students with their understanding of the conditions confronting them at the time.

### The Ilocano Freedom Struggle and the Malolos Republic, 1898-1902

Digna B. Apilado

The struggle for freedom in the Ilocos provinces was integrated into the nation's history through the government at Malolos. The expeditionary forces of Manuel and Casimiro Tinio to Ilocos, the reorganization of local and provincial governments, the establishment of a regional military command headed by the Ilocano *principalia* (local elite), the active participation of Fr. Gregorio Aglipay in the Malolos government, and the Guardia de Honor movement among the Ilocano masses served as milestones in the region's history. All these have become part of the national history.

These events were brought to the fore with the establishment of a national revolutionary government at Malolos and its subsequent reincarnation, the Malolos Republic. The outbreak of the Philippine-American War in the Ilocos brought about the convergence of various contending forces, and the unfolding events within the region finally revealed the strengths and the fatal flaws of the Malolos Republic. The ideals



of freedom, national independence and service to the nation embodied in the Malolos government sustained the Ilocanos' armed struggle against the United States for over two years against enormous odds. But the elitist character and the internal power struggle within the national leadership doomed the Republic, and it was with the prospect of a united people's successful defense of their national independence.

## The Rise and Fall of the Republic in Cebu, 1989-1901

Resil B. Mojares

The Philippine Republic was established in Cebu through the election of a provincial junta the day after the formal and peaceful takeover of the provincial capital by the revolutionary forces. The need for a united front in the face of American aggression made it imperative that a coalition government of revolutionary leaders be formed, coming from the middle and lower classes and the wealthy *ilustrados* of the province. However, the social division as well as the issue of who participated in the revolution and who did not was a constant source of tension within the government.

With the republican government internally divided, the Americans did not have a hard time wresting control of the capital. The presence of Americans in the city even split the republican leadership into moderates and militants, the struggle between the two consuming much of the attention of the local leaders. With the moderate government under its supervision, the Americans had to contend with only the militant forces. Despite the popular sentiment against American aggression, the internal division led to the collapse of the resistance movement.

In retrospect, the Republic was virtually unchallenged in the province for only two months. It valiantly tried to preserve itself in the course of the war against the Americans and came to an end less than two years after it was inaugurated. It collapsed because of the aggression of a superior foreign power. But it collapsed, too, because the social and political conditions of the province (and of the country) did not support the effort of preserving the Republic against the challenge of a superior American force.

## The Lumad in the Philippine-American War

Heidi K. Gloria

Armed violence was the most visible form of struggle against colonial rule although the struggle took different forms. The resistance by the *lumad* – a Visayan term for Bagobo, Manobo, Mandaya, and other indigenous peoples of the island of Mindanao – spanned a range of forms of struggle against American colonial oppression. On the one hand, *lumad* opposition to the American-imposed system of tribal warfare (which included the conscription of native labor for American-run abaca plantations) sometimes resulted in deaths of Americans and *lumad* people.

On the other hand, non-violent resistance against American colonization was also employed. The religious dance, *lud*, attracted large assemblies of Muslims and non-Muslims and that the Americans arrested indigenous priests and used other means to control the movement. *Tungud* was another social movement of the *lumad* that took place towards the end of the first decade of the American period. Unlike the *lud*, however, this religious movement died when the people eventually uncovered the deception perpetrated by the movement's priests.

The *lumad* social movements transcended geographical and ethnic boundaries as well as personal and group animosities. When compared to the armed revolution whose failures were largely due to fractious alliances, these indigenous forms of social movements are cause for revaluing their worth in the over-all Philippine revolutionary struggle for independence.

## The Jesuits and the Revolution in Mindanao

Jose S. Arcilla

The Philippine revolution was not really felt in Mindanao although a month after its outbreak, the deported revolutionaries at Fort Victoria in Lanao mutinied. Quickly routed, they dispersed into the forests of northeastern Mindanao. In Cotabato, a military coup was discovered in time, preventing a disturbance from occurring. The next two years were normal, as though nothing had taken place in Luzon. Aguinaldo's return to Hongkong after Dewey's victory in 1898 led to some disturbances in Mindanao. In Surigao, the Gonzalez brothers assumed power and imprisoned the missionaries. In Baguio, Prudencio Garcia also assumed power, but he did not touch the Jesuits. In Surigao, however, disgusted with the Gonzalez brothers, the people contacted Garcia, who obliged by deposing the brothers and releasing the imprisoned missionaries.



In Davao, meanwhile, the departure of the Spanish community occasioned local armed strife between the newly installed Filipino officials of the interim government and those who had been left out. The presence of the Jesuits there resolved the impasse. Although the Jesuits had decided to remain in their missions, political uncertainty forced the Jesuit Superior to recall them to Manila. The last group of Jesuits left Mindanao in 1899, with only a few of them returning in 1902 when the war had subsided.

## The Malaysian Democratic Experience

*Dato' Dr. S. Sothi Rachagan*

Using the electoral process as a basis for assessing the democratic experience of Malaysia, a number of criteria for fair and free elections emerge, such as an impartial electoral supervisory body, an organized system of political parties, and limits on media coverage of electoral campaigns. Related factors are the Elections Commission; the constituency delimitation in order to ensure the equality of seat sizes; the franchise for elections to federal and state legislatures; candidature requirements; election campaigns; the polling and counting of votes; and election petitions.

Even as the Malaysian electoral system provides for free elections, it suffers from a number of infirmities. For example, the system of settling electoral petitions, which does not allow for any appeal after the decision is made by the Election Judge, has not been successful. The 1990 amendment of the Elections Act of 1958 now makes it possible to determine how a particular village voted, and since polling stations can have fewer than a hundred voters, the individual voter's choice can also be identified. Such knowledge could easily be used to punish or reward voters. Moreover, since the law does not stipulate a minimum campaign period, the ruling party has an advantage especially when elections are called at short notice.

Despite these flaws, the Malaysian electoral process remains robust as indicated by the current 90% registration rate of eligible voters and the 70% average turnout during elections. Almost all the seats are contested, and from one-third to one-half of the votes cast since independence have been against the ruling coalition. Although the coalition has not been dislodged at the federal level and its core remains intact, the number of parties in the coalition has varied over time. At the state level the coalition has actually been replaced in several general elections.

## Social Democracy and Federalism: The Malaysian Experience

*Vejai Balasubramaniam*

The economic crisis in the Southeast Asian region puts pressure on the commitment to create a representative model of democracy. Asian democracy, oftentimes seen as a variant of authoritarianism, generally confines citizens' rights to their participation in elections. Hardly do citizens have a role in the bargaining that takes place when dividing the spoils of electoral victory. Malaysia makes an interesting case because of its experience with federalism. Examining the electoral process in the context of state-federal relationships adds its own dimension to the practice of democracy.

Consider the relations between the Sabah state government and the Malaysian federal government from 1963-1995. While majority of Sabahans see Malaysia as a means by which they can share in the state's wealth and thus ensure modernization, they are also concerned with being subsumed by peninsula-based economic and political interests. These concerns create tensions between the state and federal governments, at times leading to calls among Sabahans for a review of the agreement of federation and at other times, outright separation from the federal government. To check the impasse, elections are held. Often seen as the arena of struggle between the state and federal political elites, elections are drawn along ethnic lines, with the Muslims supporting the pro-federalist party and the non-Muslims, the pro-Sabah party. Invariably, the pull towards or away from centralization has in large part depended on the nature of the relationship (friendly or opposing) between the federal and the state governments.

In the final analysis, the success or failure of a federalist state depends on the commitment of the state to the federal system. But such commitment in turn is dependent on the federal system's recognition of the historical factors that led to the formation of a federalist state in the first place. The Kuala Lumpur-Sabah relations show how representative democracy has both fulfilled and at other times frustrated the democratic aspirations of Sabahans.



# Post Colonial Society and Culture in Southeast Asia

Moises Garcia Jr., research associate  
Third World Studies Center, University of the Philippines

Yangon, Myanmar was the site of a three-day conference in December last year, organized by the Universities Historical Research Centre, Yangon University. Entitled *Post Colonial Society and Culture in Southeast Asia*, the conference examined various aspects of Southeast Asian life since the time of independence. Presented here are abstracts of six of the twenty-one papers read in the conference.

## Reflections in Myanmar Novels of the Last 50 Years

U Than Htut and U Thaw Kaung

The historian records while the novelist creates. For a factual account of society and culture and of social and cultural change, the latter is not the preferred source. However, as U Than Htut and U Thaw Kaung point out, "Tradition and history have ... deeply permeated the nature of Myanmar novels of the post-Independence period ..." Consider, for example, Thein Pe Myint's award-winning work, *A Shei ga Ne-wun Htwet Thi Pa-mar* (As Sure as the Sun Rising in the East, 1958), which deals with the anti-colonial struggle from 1936-1942. Buddhism also occupies a significant place in the Burmese novel, as in Sein Sein's *Yoe-ma Taung-gyi Tha Hpyo Like Chin Tawt* (If Only the Rakhine Yomah Hills Can be Levelled, 1966). The clash between traditional and western cultures is portrayed in Gyarnai Gyaw Ma Ma Lay's *Mone ywe Ma hu* (Not Out of Hate, 1953). For students of Myanmar, its novels are a welcome source of insights on Myanmar society. Farmers and fishermen in the delta and urban dwellers in Yangon become real-life mirrors of social, economic and political conditions.

## Historical Writings, Historical Novels and Period Movies and Dramas: An Observation Concerning Myanmar in Thai Perception and Understanding

Sunait Chutintaranond

Through time, the image of the Burmese in the Thai consciousness has not changed as much the manner in which it is conveyed and reinforced. Centuries ago, the Burmese were depicted as the scourge of the kingdom of Ayudhya, existing for the sole purpose of raping, killing and plundering the peaceful Thai people. The early political leaders realized the importance of rewriting the past to ensure the Thai's hatred for the Burmese. Programmed into early childhood through stories and poems, the anti-Burmese sentiment is now

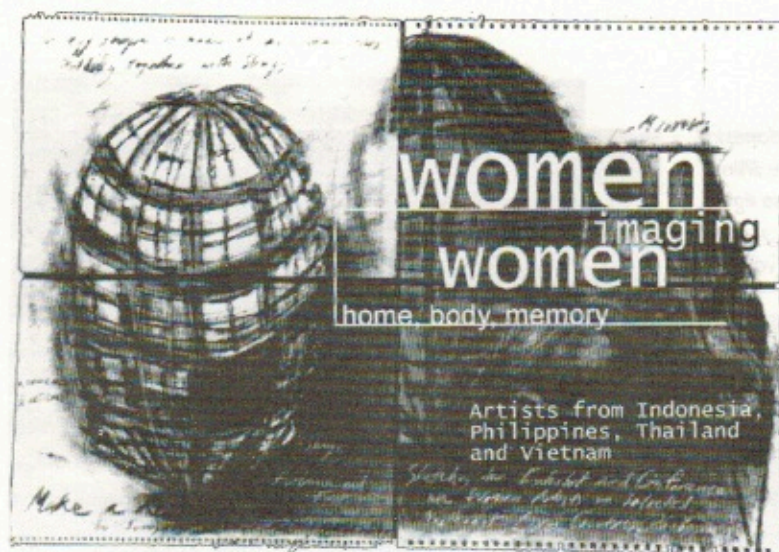
transmitted via the powerful and highly accessible media of cinema and television, in which every aspect of production can be scripted and directed to overemphasize a particular aspect of Burmese barbarism or ineptness. The top hit drama *Nai Khanom Tom*, shown on prime TV in late 1996 to early 1997, is one such example.

## National Theatre: Building National Culture Identity

Zulkifli Mohamad

The national theatre is a symbol of national culture and identity. Newly independent Southeast Asian countries launched the rebuilding of their national culture identities through the establishment of national theatres. The Malaysian government's efforts to forge a national identity in a multiracial society led to the revitalization of performing art forms and the "overconstruction" of large venues for this purpose. In the Philippines, the national theater was established in the turbulent post-war period and remained a strong institution in preserving the national dances. The Philippines "owes" the establishment of its national center to the former First Lady Imelda Marcos, whose intention was to find the Filipino soul during a time of "national amnesia". In Thailand, the creation of the Fine Arts Department in 1961 and the founding of the national theatre in 1961 marked a new beginning for the country's arts and culture program. Although long before, the formation and promotion of the national image enjoyed the patronage of the palace and the king. From difficult beginnings, Singapore's national theatre overcame Chinese and Western influences before establishing itself as "a creative knowledge-based society." However, efforts to preserve the culture heritage are now geared towards cultural tourism, with each country becoming more conscious of its national identity in order to secure its place in the global tourism market.





Flaudette May V. Datuin, project director and faculty member, University of the Philippines Department of Art Studies

**E**mergent concerns in Southeast Asian women's contemporary expressions in the visual arts were discussed in an exhibit-conference which gathered the region's most active and serious scholars, cultural workers and artists from Indonesia, the Philippines, Thailand and Vietnam. Entitled *Women Imaging Women: Home, Body, Memory*, the exhibit-conference presented and analyzed the implications of women's thematic and visual strategies and their potential in remapping paradigms in regional art history, art criticism and aesthetics.

This activity was the second of a series first held at the University of the Philippines Vargas Museum in 1998. Phase I brought together four Filipina artists, Yasmin Almonte, Francesca Enriquez, Karen Ocampo Flores, and Cristina Sollesta-Taniguchi. In this second phase held on March 11 to April 25 at the Cultural Center of the Philippines, they converged with artists from three other Southeast Asian countries: Arahmaiani, Dolorosa Sinaga, Erica Hestu Wahyuni, and Ni Made Sri Asia from Indonesia; Pinaree Sanpitak, Phaptawan Suwannakudt, and Surojana Sethabuttra from Thailand; and Dinh Y Nhi, Dinh Thi Tham Poong, Kim Kuy Ho Thi, and Dang Thi Khue from Vietnam.

These women represent a broad spectrum of women's expression in contemporary visual arts in the four countries, ranging from works using the traditional mediums of oil on canvas, clay, lacquer and bronze to the more cutting edge formats of installation and performance. Their works display diverse thematic strategies, from narrative techniques that are more directly representational, autobiographical, and context-specific, to those that are obliquely abstract and transcendental.

Some of the women find their pictorial expression in traditional nude, genre and still life, focusing on objects, bodies, and landscapes as visual resource; while other opt to transcend and question these traditions and move on to fresher aesthetic

grounds. Still others maintain some form of connection to media and techniques that have endured the test of time and have remained unique to each context, such as Thai mural painting, Balinese modern painting and Vietnamese lacquerware.

Veering away from the conventional country reports of official ASEAN gatherings, the conference held on March 11-14 was structured according to the following themes: Present Power; Telling Lives, Living Tales; Shifting Spaces; and Gender, Grief, Grievance. The plenary centered on the theme of Subjecting Women: Art and Agency In Current Locations.

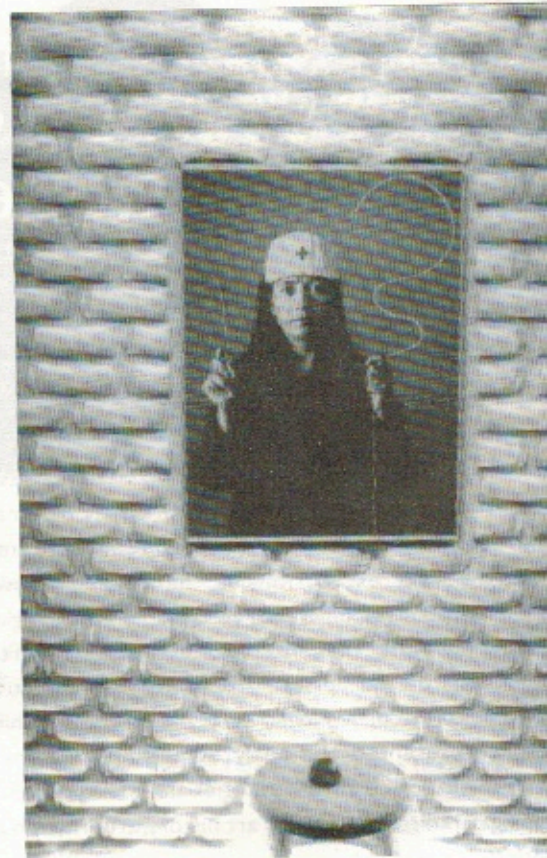
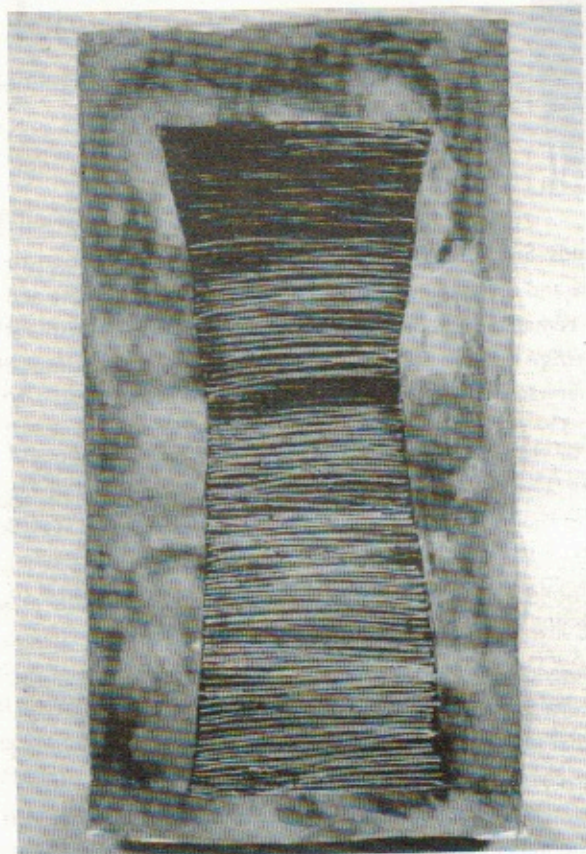
*Present Power* discussed the ways in which women artists and cultural workers "consolidate power in the art world - one that is fought for and fought over, and so is not inert and rather changed," in the words of conference director Patrick Flores of the UP Department of Art Studies (DAS). To enliven this theme, Maria Victoria Herrera of the UP DAS explained the involvement of women artists, educators, and administrators in the culture and arts industry in the Philippines. Kim Kuy Ho Thi of Vietnam talked about how Vietnamese artists are transforming the traditional medium of lacquer and re-deploying it for modernist ends.

The session on *Telling Lives, Living Tales* "spoke of stories of women artists as told by artists and critics who are themselves part of the story." Vietnamese art historian and artist Dang Thi Khue focused on four generations of Vietnamese women artists, while Filipina artist Karen Flores reflected on the problem of the personal and the political in her work. This she did by exploring her upbringing as student, woman, and co-worker of a collaborative group who makes satirical murals.

*Shifting Spaces* discussed the conditions under which women make art as well as the access of women artists to public spaces of dissemination like museums and galleries. Mary Northmore, an Indonesian of British origin, talked about her

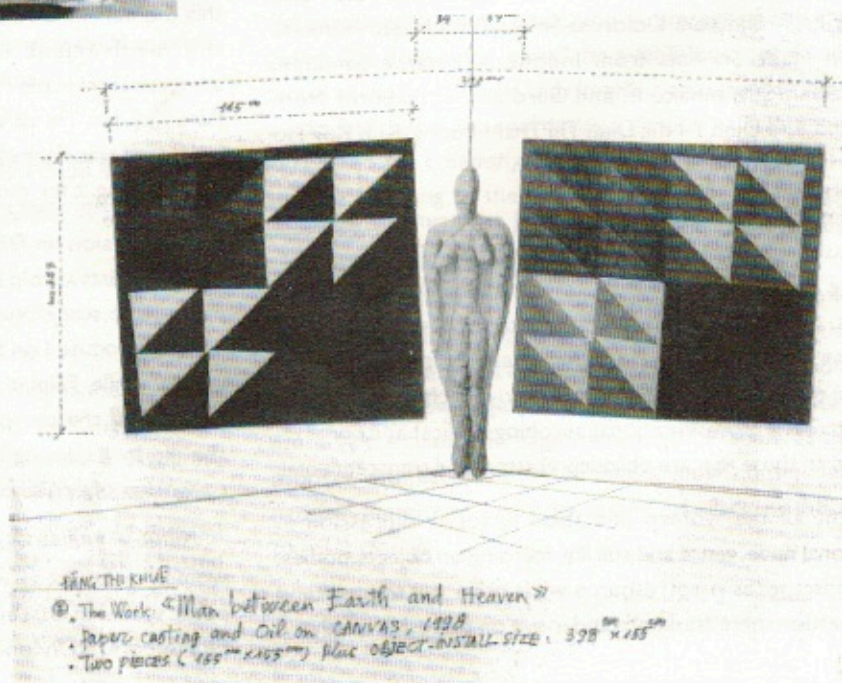


**Arahmalani (Indonesia)**  
**"Do Not Prevent the Fertility of the Mind"**  
 sanitary napkins, photo, laboratory bottle, blood, neon lights,  
 stool  
 variable  
 1997

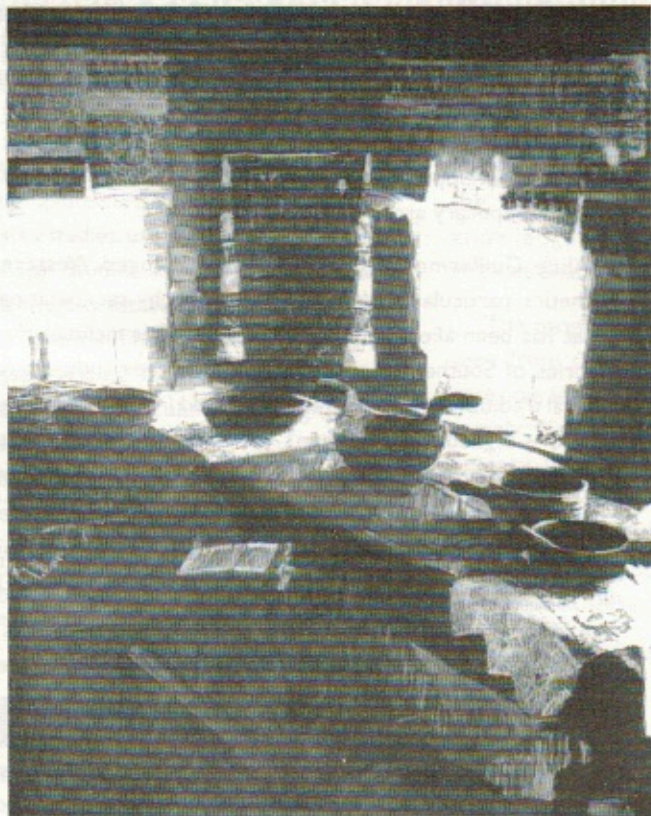


**Pinaree Sanpitak (Thailand)**  
**"Womanly Abstract II"**  
 acrylic, ink, pastel and charcoal on paper  
 205 x 105 cm  
 1998

**Dang Thi Khue (Vietnam)**  
**"Man Between Heaven and Earth"**  
 two pieces of oil on canvas  
 155 cm x 155 cm each  
 paper cast of human figure  
 398 x 155 cm  
 1998



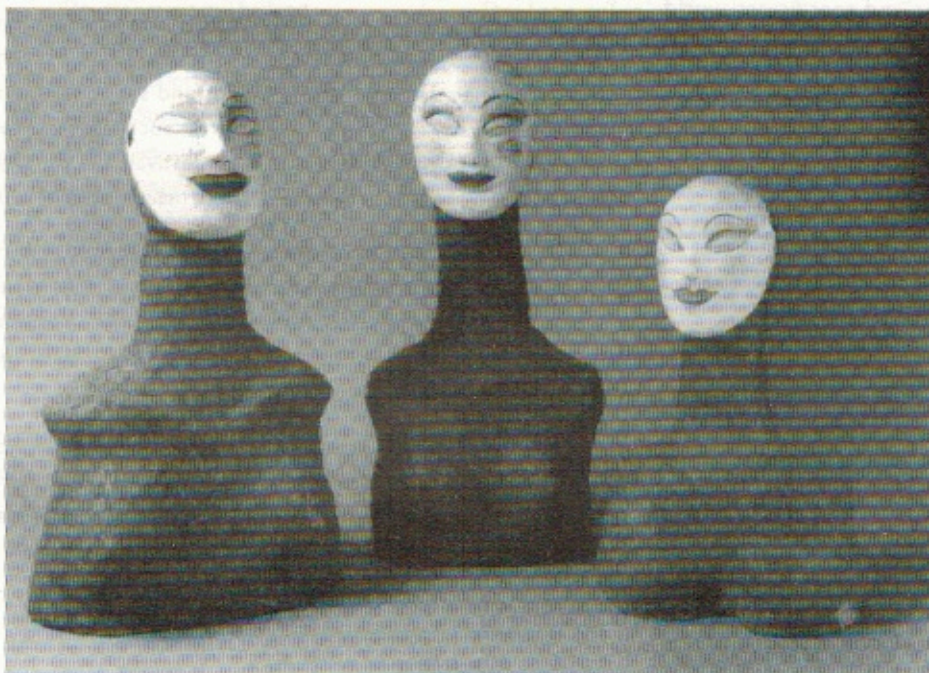




**Francesca Enriquez (Philippines)**  
*"I, Me, Myself (Wish You Were Here) I"*  
 oil on canvas  
 96.5 x 76.2 cm  
 1998



**Dolorosa Sinaga (Indonesia)**  
*"Wailing II"*  
 copper plating  
 37 x 12 x 5 cm  
 1996



**Cristina S. Taniguchi (Philippines)**  
*"Mannequins"*  
 50 terracotta figures  
 2 ft to 5 ft tall  
 1999



experiences as director of the Seniwati Art Gallery for Women in Bali, one of the few — if not the only — gallery of its kind in Asia. Thai artist Phaptawan Suwannakudt discussed her childhood experience in relation to her life as a Thai mural painter. As she put it: "My father was a mural painter, my mother was a nun and I become a mural painter."

*Gender, Grief, Grievance* did not dwell on the thematics of victimage, but on the "aesthetics of grief or the ways in which people are hurt on the grounds of gender and how they overcome this grief by expressing grievance in art." In this context, Indonesian artist Arahmaiani foregrounded her present pains and the ways by which she renders this pain into form as a woman artist in Indonesia's present political situation. She said the situation in her country has worsened despite token moves towards "democratization." Flaudette May V. Datuin of the UP DAS talked about the invisibility of women in Thai art world and scholarship, as well as the artists' strategies in overcoming these difficulties both in their art and their practice. Her discussion emerged from her experience as an outsider who lived and worked in Thailand in 1994 to 1996.

The plenary aimed at consolidating gains in theoretical and artistic practice with regard to future strategies in women's art and feminist politics. Astri Wright, a Canadian scholar on Indonesia, discussed the work of three self-taught women artists from Indonesia, focusing on the ways in which these women have struggled against specific local socio-cultural norms that determine how gender and specific art world

expectations are shaped. "This discussion," she said, "takes against the background of issues involved in the beginnings/developments in writing the histories of modern and contemporary art in Southeast Asia."

Alice Guillermo of the UP DAS challenged Western aesthetics, particularly Western modernism, by recuperating "what has been alienated by colonization." This included histories of Southeast Asian countries and their indigenous cultural traditions, most of which originated from women and therefore argued for a women's movement, a women's consciousness "grounded in their social situation at the same time that it advances a liberative consciousness."

Towards the end of the conference, Datuin, the plenary director and curator, suggested some activities which could take off from the exhibit-conference and chart new directions. Among them are traveling exhibitions; more aggressive research and publication activities, including the exploration of alternative venues like websites; exhibits which could revitalize around specific themes such as self-portraits, lands, and the refashioning of the goddess, among others. Those marginalized by sexual orientation (lesbians) and by geography (women working in places away from the urban centers) should be accorded the appropriate attention in future activities.

In sum, the exhibit-conference became a venue for exploring the ways by which women make sense of their lives and their various locations through art, in constantly changing grounds. Critics, curators, researchers and artists can connect and transform each other through such connections. The activity also demonstrated how Southeast Asian women, with a little help from generous friends and supporters, can take the initiative in organizing events such as triennials and festivals, but also in small and intimate spaces outside of more mainstream venues.

Organized by the UP DAS, the exhibit-conference could not also have been possible without the support of the Foundation Asia Center, the Southeast Asian Studies Foundation, the Exchange Program (SEASREP), ISIS, International Maritime Center, the Cultural Center of the Philippines.

Other cooperating agencies were the Government Insurance System, Chromagraph, Inc., Pinaglabanan Gallery of Prints, Singapore Airlines, Vietnam Airlines, Airways, Lane Moving and Storage, and Gallery Framing.



The artists with the curator and project leader Flaudette May V. Datuin.



## Master's Degree Program in Thai Studies, Chulalongkorn University

Thai Studies as an academic field of study is not generally offered as a complete curriculum but in the form of area studies, usually as part of Southeast Asian Studies. In 1991, Chulalongkorn University established a master's degree program in Thai Studies to address the gaps arising from the absence of a complete curriculum for a higher level study of Thailand. The Faculty of Arts had ample experience, having established an undergraduate program in Thai Studies several years earlier. Offered in English, the master's program aims to meet the demand of foreign

students wanting to specialize on Thailand and equip Thai students with the language ability to share their knowledge with the broader international community of scholars.

The program is multidisciplinary, as seen from the courses offered. Four core courses are required of all students, namely: Modernization and Traditional Society in Thailand; Contemporary Thailand; Thai Buddhism; and Seminar in the Theory and Method of Thai Studies. After completing 36 course credits, the student is expected to write a thesis.

In November 1995, the program was broadened to cater to the needs of students who do not intend to obtain a master's degree but nonetheless wish to pursue an academic interest in Thailand. Called occasional students, they are free to select their courses and need not complete the curriculum or write a thesis. ❖

### Courses

#### Required (12 credits)

Modernization and Traditional Society in Thailand  
Contemporary Thailand  
Thai Buddhism  
Seminar in Thai Studies Theory & Method

#### Electives (24 credits)

Social and Economic Change and Development in Thailand  
Peoples and Cultures of Thailand  
Myth and Folklore in Thai Society  
A Cultural Survey of Asia-Pacific Countries  
Thai Intellectual History  
Museums and Thai History  
Science and Technology in Thai Society  
Concepts of Disease and Medicine in Thai Society  
Social History of Health in Thailand

Capitalism and Economic Development in Thailand  
Men and Women in Thai Society  
The City in Thai History  
Thailand in the World Community  
Foreign Communities from Thai Perspectives  
Thai World Views  
Multilingualism in Thailand  
Thai Language in its Social and Cultural Context  
Thailand and Neighboring Countries  
Thai Art  
Thai Literature  
Human Geography of Thailand  
Human Rights in Thai Tradition  
Special Topics in Thai Studies  
Information Resources in Thai Studies  
Directed Reading in Thai Studies  
Independent Study

### Number of Enrolled Students, 1991-1995

Number	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995
New students		10	10	10	10
Second year students		10	10	10	15
Total	10	20	25	25	30
Number of graduates	5	10	10	10	

Excerpt from "Master's Degree Program in Thai Studies," Thai Studies Section, Faculty of Arts, Graduate School, University of Chulalongkorn, 1991



## The Little Known World of Malay Oral Tradition

Maria Serena I. Diokno, from Dr. Chairil Effendy's report on his visiting professors grant, 1998

Among the six ethno-linguistic groups in West Kalimantan, Indonesia are the Sambas Malay, whose oral literature, sadly, is losing its social luster. As Dr. Chairil Effendy, head of the Malay Culture Studies Center, Tanjungpura University in West Kalimantan pointed out, in a series of lectures he gave at the Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia as a SEASREP visiting professor, Sambas Malay poetry once played a significant role in the community's social life. Today, unfortunately, its use is confined to wedding and other rituals where the art has lost much of its robust spontaneity.

Sambas Malay prose, however, remains active. *Becerite*, or the recitation of oral texts in the everyday language of the people, is done by both males and females. The texts range from tales of animals and origins of plants to human lives. Sometimes the stories are told for instructional purposes; at other times they are used to legitimize norms and tradition, and even for protest against indifferent leaders. The *pencerite* or story-tellers first hear the stories from their parents or other *pencerite* and then pass them on to others in the family and the community.

*Bedande* is another form of story-telling that may involve dance, music and other activities. Pure *bedande* is story-telling plain and simple, in which the



*pedande* holds a pillow while seated, closes his eyes and relates his tale by tapping both his hands on the pillow. Only one story is told this way, the *Raje Ngalam*, which is sacred to the community as it reveals the origins of the group's ancestors and teaches values about life. The story is told only in the evening after the Muslim prayer and is governed by a series of rituals including an offering by the listeners. The pure *pedande* learns his craft formally from a teacher and must pass strict requirements before he is accepted as a student.

Another form of *bedande* is accompanied by music, which consists of a drum, a large gong and a small one. Different stories are told in this fashion, and the *pedande* acts out the role of the character he relates. Similar to the tales of the *becerite*, the *bedande* accompanied by music differs only in the manner of presentation.

Sometimes both music and dance accompany *bedande*, although this form of story-telling is quickly vanishing among the Sambas Malay. In certain parts of Kalimantan, during story-telling, the *pedande* invites the group of all dancers to come forward and dance, while the story-teller takes his rest.

In the course of his visit to the Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia, Dr. Chairil found that a number of Malay experts in Malaysia, knowledgeable in West Kalimantan oral literature, were limited. In general, he notes, the West Kalimantan Malay culture has been neglected even by foreign scholars, many of whom have focused on the Indonesian community as an exotic, attractive area of study. Ironically, Dr. Chairil found that scholars in his own university in West Kalimantan themselves do not pay enough attention to Malay culture. This situation can be attributed to the Indonesian government's policy of promoting Indonesian culture. As a result, Malay culture in West Kalimantan and in other regions such as Riau suffer from the threat of extinction.

Thankfully, the Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia has the *Insan Alam dan Tamadun Melayu* which, at the moment, is working on old manuscripts. In time, Dr. Chairil hopes that Malay oral literature will receive greater attention. ❖



# Learning Spanish in the Philippines

Nazli Aziz, master's student in Southeast Asian studies,  
University of Malaya



UNDER THE SEASREP, I received an opportunity to take a Spanish language course at the University of the Philippines, Diliman from August to November 1998.

This was my first visit to the Philippines. Before I left for Manila, friends of mine advised me, "Omigod! Why Manila? If I were you, I wouldn't go there ... I heard there are so many security guards there ... I feel insecure! You should go to Spain! You'd learn better there." And I simply said, "Que sera, sera!" In fact, I proved to them that nothing bad happened to me and I am going to miss this sprawling city forever.

I arrived at Manila's Ninoy Aquino International Airport on Sunday evening. Unfortunately, it was raining cats and dogs. What traffic! It was dark and the taxi driver didn't know exactly where Teacher's Village was. We got lost for almost two hours around Quezon City. *Por dios!*

Soon after I started the classes, I realized how difficult the Spanish language is. I really had difficulty pronouncing words — talking like singing! But my tutors were very helpful and gave me a glimpse of the language in its past and present cultural context. The Spanish language is indeed beautiful.

Studying Spanish allowed me to know the Philippines and the Filipinos. I didn't go outside Metro Manila except to Baguio as my time was limited. The Philippine archipelago consists of 7,107 islands and 2,500 aren't even named. Even if I only spent a day on each one, I would need 20 years to do them all!

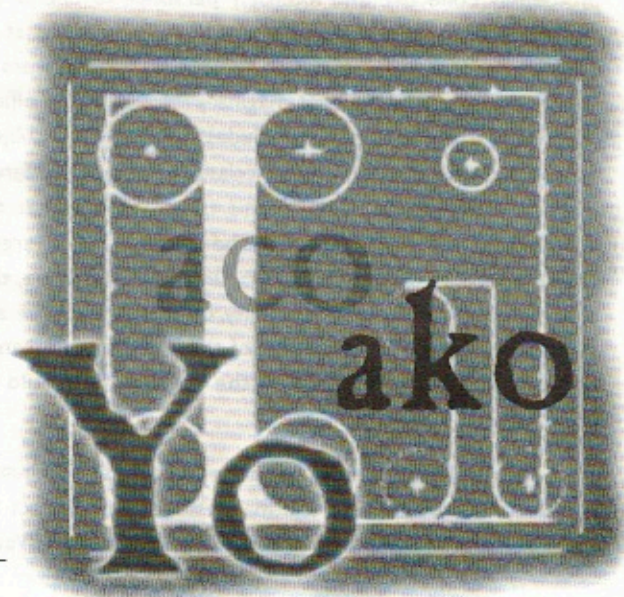
The Philippines is unique as the only Christian country in Asia. The Philippines, as the locals like to remind me, is "where Asia wears a smile." Unlike other countries in Southeast Asia, the Filipinos' natural openness shocked me during my early days there. They just say whatever they want to. *Tapos*, things became

clear to me. Filipinos are sociable and tolerant. They are friendly and helpful. Believe me, you will achieve a lot more by being polite or sharing a joke — a great way to find friends in the Philippines.

Personally, I think the most interesting place in Manila is Intramuros, the Spanish walled city. Badly damaged during World War II, the place gave me an idea of Manila in the past. But today it's crowded with urban residents and garbage. *Sayang!*

There's plenty to do after hours in Manila. The easier way to observe Filipino attitudes is to ride every public transport here — jeepney, tricycle, taxi, FX (mega taxi), bus and LRT. The Filipinos are very keen on their nightlife, which certainly doesn't depend solely on tourists. I was told there is scarcely a town in the Philippines without at least one disco. The nightlife scene is buzzing.

Finally, I'm very grateful to the staff of the SEASREP Manila, the Third World Studies Center and the Department of European Languages. They were all very accommodating during my stay in Manila. Really, I didn't feel out of place. *Salamat po!* ❖





# **War, Memory and the Significant Past...** (Continued from page 7)

In Singapore, the state appropriated war memory to author a founding myth for its narrative of survival. The collective experience of shared suffering and hardship during the war and the occupation was crystallized into the founding myth of Singaporean nationhood. A new politics of memory in the service of nation-building drew on the war as its defining moment. In so doing, it shifted the temporal boundary of its significant past from 1965, the year of its legal constitution, to 1942, the year of colonial defeat and political awakening.

The silencing of history has never been disingenuous nor disinterested. Neither however, is the production of history. The "return of history" to the public imagination in Singapore is a significant development not merely for the cultural politics of the country, but, given the entangled histories which the war bequeathed to the region, for the terrain of cultural discourse within it.

The implications are tremendous and I could proceed in various directions. I will, however, in conclusion, limit myself to raising two issues, without necessarily developing them further in this presentation:

1. War, as has been formulated in the brief for this panel discussion, has been "a widely shared human catastrophe". The memories of pain and suffering, loss and grief, sacrifice and survival, solidarity and comradeship, victory and defeat, are so variegated and divergent, so unevenly distributed, so profoundly collective and intensely personal, so unendingly rich in tone, texture and color, that they should not, at all cost, be entirely surrendered to the official myth-makers of the nation-state. The national imaginary invoked by the official historiography of war invariably hides the distinctive subject positions as determined by gender, class and ethnicity, different localities and temporalities. This is not to say that the "communal imaginary" should not be invoked. It is to argue, as SAKURA FURUKUBO of Hokkaido University has done, that alternative narratives of community, of a more inclusive and pluralistic nature, in recognition of the plurality of meaning and memory with respect to the war itself, should be constructed.

2. War, in its generality, "has been a widely shared human catastrophe". In its historical manifestations, its impact has been generally regional in scope. The First World War is



remembered as the Great War, or specifically, the Great European War, in parish churches in England which reverently the names of all who fell in the trenches of Flanders. The Second World War is remembered as the war in which Europe gained a victory over itself.

In a recent paper on World War II in Prof. WANG GUNWU wrote, "The question we have to ask is: whose war was it?" There is no single answer. For his parents, who were Chinese intellectuals born in China and working in the "Nanyang" when the war broke out, it was a war over the control of Asia, and they "chose to submerge their memories to embrace the larger Chinese collective memory of the Sino-Japanese War which dated back to 1936. For himself and his generation, it was a war between the Chinese and the Japanese—"a classic imperialist war over the control of Asia, which dated back to the Russo-Japanese War of 1905. For those who rallied behind SUBHAS CHANDRA BOSE, his clarion call to "Challo Delhi" (on to Delhi), it was a war of colonial liberation which redefined the boundaries of the significant past a century back into the declining years of the

empires.

The question—whose war was it—remains unanswered. Indeed, in view of the conspiracy of silence that has surrounded the memories of the war, the question still remains to be formulated. One answer is already given in the narrowly-conceived nation-state framework which is inadequate. And a significant past which stops at 1942 carry too little weight. ♦

- 1 This date was confirmed by HO-CHI MINH, who attended the founding congress as the Comintern representative, in a communication by ABDUL RAHMAN EMBONG.
- 2 CHUA, BENG HUAT (1995). "Culture, Multiracialism and National Identity in Singapore". Department of Sociology Working Papers 125. Singapore: National University of Singapore.
- 3 KWOK, KIAN WOON (1995). "Beyond Cultural Defense and Cultural Triumphalism: Globalization and the crisis of Western forms of modernity", unpublished paper presented at Globalization: Local Challenges and Responses, University of Sains Penang, Penang, 19-21 January 1995.
- 4 WEE, C.J.W.-L (1996). "Staging the New Asia: Singapore, Lee, pop Music and a Counter-modernity". In Public Culture 8(3).



## Concept of People in Southeast Asia: A cursory Consideration

Withaya Sucharithanarugse

The concept of people is a very contentious subject. Normally defined as persons in relation to a superior, either as the subject of a king, the nobility or the ruling class, in politics people refers to the whole body of enfranchised or qualified citizens considered as the source of power. In practice, the people are both glamorized and exploited depending on the circumstances. In the two great Asian traditions of China and India, the emperor who governed by the mandate of heaven had to look after the people. In the context of colonialism, the people were called upon to seek independence through nationalism. Otherwise, people are inclined to exist independently of the ruling elite, without any sense of community or sovereignty. However, the prevailing concept allows people to be prone to state policy. A new concept should accord people its proper role in politics as an active participant in the political process, not a mere subject of the arrogance and contempt of rulers.

## From Siam to Thailand: What's in a Name?

Charnvit Kasetsiri

For almost 60 years the controversy has persisted. In 1939, pre-liberation strongman Phibun proposed that Siam become Thailand, reasoning that Siam did not correspond to race and contradicted the nationality of the people. Siam was a province of the Khmer, the former ruler of the Thai nation, and Siam had been used in written, not spoken, language. Briefly, from 1945 to 1948, the Southeast Asian country known today as Thailand existed as Siam in the English and foreign languages. In 1949 the present name was upheld by a narrow margin and was maintained during the nine-year reign of Phibun. From 1958 to 1968, the Thailand-Siam question was discussed and debated upon at length. The "final" verdict fell in favor of Thailand. Curiously, it was during the 1960s when the monarchy returned to power. Soon after the Thanom-Prapat military regime was overthrown, the name debate was resurrected, but received substantially less attention. The issue was presumed dead only to be disturbed by, of all things, a 1980s folk-rock band who blasted the nation with a hit called "Made in Thailand." This proves that no matter how firmly established Thailand is in the national consciousness, it is not certain that Siam will stay forgotten.

## The Political Economy of *Hmuang-kho* in Socialist Myanmar

Kyaw Yin Hlaing

*Hmuang-kho*, a Myanmar term which refers to all illegal economic activity, was by no means a creation of the post-liberation government. But when the Revolutionary Council that took over in the 1962 coup tried to exert control over the entire Myanmar economy, the *hmuang-kho* sector was presented a window of opportunity. Failing to make available in sufficient quantities even the most basic needs of the people through its system of controlled allocation and distribution, the government gave the *hmuang-kho* a captive market. Myanmar's poor and poorest as well as its business people were driven to find ways of obtaining essentials and non-essentials alike through the black market. The *hmuang-kho* acquired these either from redistributed public store goods or through smuggling or the illegal border trade. The government, which did not intend to allow an illegal private sector to usurp its hold on the economy, naturally tried to put an end to *hmuang-kho* expansion by improving the distribution and production system, clamping down on the black market, and demonetizing large currency. But it failed. The *hmuang-kho* provided more than just unavailable goods. It gave Myanmar's unemployed masses jobs and the legally employed, additional income which the socialist government could not provide. While *hmuang-kho* contributed to the culture of corruption within the bureaucracy and higher government, shutting it down completely would have resulted in the collapse of local communities which had accepted *hmuang-kho* as a necessary evil. ❖



# What Southeast Asia means to me... (Continued from page 9)

more dangerous than the Red Scare as "Platoon," "Full Metal Jacket", and "Miss Saigon" would have us believe.

In my second Southeast Asian literature class, I saw the complex relations among the countries as reflected in the novels of LLOYD FERNANDO and CATHERINE LIM—the Sino-Malayan racial riots that tore Malaysia apart and gave birth to Singapore; the wariness with which they traded with Indonesia and the Western countries. My homogeneous concept of the region had by then, become a thing of the past. I was amazed by the way Singapore resurfaced as an economic power in the global market, a far cry from their previous history as an insignificant British trading post. These countries, like mine, had the ghosts of colonialism to exorcise.

Singaporean poet, EDWIN THUMBOO, advocated a new kind of nationalism that was antithetical to my common notion based on race and ethnic affiliation. His poems presented a modern nation rooted in the economics of things. Ramon Magsaysay awardee PRAMOEDYA ANANTA TOER talked about Dutch colonial relations in Indonesia. I had commented rather bitterly that these people seemed to be hung up on their past. But then it hit me that this was no more than what I've been harping about. Indeed, talking about oppression leaves a bitter taste in the mouth no matter how beautifully spiced up the stories and poems are. A common bond that ironically I hadn't fully realized, being so caught up in the upbeat and modern world of MTV's English-speaking veejays. But then again, was I really to blame? I was burdened with 20 years of thinking we had nothing in common with these people except television, microwave, and skin color...

It is the image perhaps of Indo-nesian poet CHAIRIL ANWAR that soothes me in these times. And of the fact that, as one of my professors enthusiastically put it, ANWAR is in many ways similar to rebel-poet EMAN LACABA. And yet in many ways, altogether different.

There is no one true solution to a problem. Especially one that concerns your being, and inquires into the depths of a nation's history.

## Sutthida Siriboonlong, History major, Chulalongkorn University

Southeast Asian countries have their unique culture. Although each country has its own culture, which is different from those of others and may not be in contact with the region, there still exists the identity of this region's culture. The identity I refer to is that we have adopted and adapted two of the most magnificent sources of world culture, India and China, and turned them into a unique culture of our own. The most familiar example for me is the Buddha. I personally believe that the Thai artist can create the most beautiful and elegant Buddha by mixing Indian and Thai art harmoniously. Further-more, many parts of this region used to be prosperous kingdoms in ancient times such as Dvaravati, Srivichai or Ayuthaya. This shows that Southeast Asia is a region that has a long prominent and civilized history.

For me who was born and grew up in a Muslim society in southern Thailand, which many people think must be full of violence and terrorist crime, I realize that although we have different religion, tradition, culture, way of life or even language, we can live together peacefully. I am so sure that this can be the same in Southeast Asian society. We have to make a chance to approach each other, tune in on our common ground and create co-operation. The Southeast Asia Tolerance Classroom Program is one such step.

## Thanapon Chaipasi, History major, Thammasat University

Land of variety, the expansion of great western powers, the status of a colony, independence and great changes are the things that could define the word "Southeast Asia".



*Transitions and Futures... (Continued from page 18)*

the world for the better would always end up in *futility* or *perversion*. (STEVEN LUKES, 1995). Thus convinced, people would remain passive and idle politically as "the contract of mutual indifference" and resignation (a la Norman Geras) becomes the order of the day (GERAS, 1998). Each would have no choice but try to survive individually within the System-that-be while perforce abusing other fellow victims according to the overwhelming logic of the System.

And yet, come to think of it, it is actually not reality itself that is at fault but rather a reified and fetishized notion of "REALITY" which dominates the public's idea of what is real and what is not in society. Thus, the ideology of GLOBALIZATION has in recent years become globally and regionally hegemonic....

Hence, for instance, capitalism, materialism and consumerism are of course real but this reality also has an inherent ideological dimension built into it, as evident in such catchy phrases as "Civilization", "Development", "Modernization", "NICs", "Globalization", "Informational Society", "the Fifth Tiger", "the Asian Miracle", "Regional Financial Hub", etc. In this regard, one would do well to bear in mind that the most effective of all ideologies is the one that puts a spell on people so subtly that they fail to perceive its ideological character but presume and conclude too hastily that it is an unchallengeable and unquestionable natural and necessary order of things. Consequently, they are either unable to or dare not imagine an alternative non-capitalist, non-materialist, non-consumerist reality as well as acknowledge the historical contingency, impermanence and internal contradiction of the neo-liberal, global unholy trinity. Any mere mention of a vision, project or dream that goes against this sacred reality is therefore almost universally regarded as a thought-crime deserving of the collective thought-police's severest public censure, namely by being mercilessly and enjoyably laughed at preferably on TV!

The loss or more precisely collective unimaginability of utopia is perhaps the highest cultural political price we have paid for the global collapse of socialism and the concurrent triumph of capitalism. ❖

*The Malolos Republic... (Continued from page 21)*

## Islam in the Democratization of Contemporary Indonesia

Taufik Abdullah

For nearly 20 years, Indonesian Islamic leaders and organizations had adopted the position of "abandoning the state and returning to the *ummat*," that is, abstaining from practical politics but intensifying the "Islamization" of the Muslims. During this time of "withdrawal," Islamic discourse in Indonesia became very lively. Many university students joined religious discussion groups (*usroh*) and established NGOs. A process toward the creation of a healthy civil society began. In 1990 the President approved and even supported the establishment of the ICMI, the Indonesian Association of Muslim Intellectuals. It was, as many rightly believed, the beginning of the change of heart of the president toward Islamic groups. For the first time, Muslims felt they could express their opinions without fear.

But the honeymoon came too late. The economic crisis and the ensuing political crisis gave the people opportunities to remind their leaders of the deep social wounds that had been inflicted by the New Order regime. M. Amien Rais, chairman of the Muhammadiyah, who had been campaigning for the need of "succession" (*suksesi*), emerged as the leader of the *reformasi*. Amidst student demonstrations and social unrest, Soeharto was abandoned by once trusted confidants. He stepped down and the era of reform as well as the period of political euphoria began.

To date, 131 political parties have been founded in anticipation of the June elections; 29 classify themselves as Islamic parties. In the last eight months, the past was condemned, the present cursed, and the future distrusted. In all this, Islam continues to play a role in the creation of a vibrant democratic system in Indonesia. ❖



# ANNOUNCEMENTS

Southeast Asian Studies Bulletin 1/99 April-May

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## CONFERENCES

- **4th ASEAN Inter-University Seminar on Social Development**  
June 1999, Pattani, Thailand. Theme: Southeast Asia into the 21st Century: Critical Transitions, Continuity and Change.

For inquiries, contact:  
ASEAN Seminar Secretariat  
Department of Sociology  
10 Kent Ridge Crescent  
Singapore 119260  
Tel. +65-874-3827  
Fax +65-777-9579  
E-mail: sochay@leonis.nus.edu.sg or  
sochokc@leonis.nus.edu.sg

### 第九届国际东亚科学史会议

- **9th International Conference on the History of Science in East Asia**  
23-27 August 1999, Singapore. Topics: science and technology policy in East and Southeast Asia and impact of science and technology in East and Southeast Asia. Conference papers in all areas of the history of science, technology and medicine in East and Southeast Asia are invited.

For inquiries, contact:  
Ms. Kathleen Ke, Coordinator  
Conference Secretariat  
Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences  
5TH Level, Shaw Foundation Building  
National University of Singapore  
10 Kent Ridge Crescent  
Singapore 119260  
Tel. +65-874-4541  
Fax +65-777-0751  
E-mail: faskkm@nus.edu.sg  
Website: <http://www.fas.nus.edu.sg/conf/ICHSEA.html>

- **International Symposium on Southeast Asia Towards the 21st Century: Reform & Development**  
October 1999, Guangzhou, People's Republic of China. Topics: Economic and political development tendency of Southeast Asian countries; ASEAN and other countries and regions; change and pattern of international relations in Southeast Asian region after the financial crisis; and Southeast Asian regional security system.

For inquiries, contact:  
Institute of Southeast Asian Studies  
Jinan University, Guangzhou 510632  
People's Republic of China



- **10th Asian Workshop on IT**  
25-29 October 1999, Banig, Malaysia. Theme: Impact of Information Technology on Home, School and Work Settings: Social and Psychological Perspectives.

For inquiries, contact:  
Secretariat  
TAWITI '99  
c/o Department of Psychology  
Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia  
43600 Bangi, Selangor Darul Ehsan  
Malaysia  
Tel. +603-829-3921 / 829-2208 /  
829-2210  
Fax +603-829-3541  
E-mail: tawiti99@sun1.ftsm.ukm.my

- **Seminar on the Role of Thailand in APEC in the Past and the Next Decade: Challenges, Opportunities and Priorities**  
16-17 July 1999, Ambassador City Hotel, Chomtien, Pattaya Chonburi, Thailand.

For inquiries, contact:  
The Office of Vice Rector for International Affairs  
Thammasat University  
2 Phra-Chan Road  
Bangkok 10200, Thailand  
Tel. +662-224-8104  
Fax +662-224-9423 / 224-8099

- **Public Lecture on Aspects of Kingship in Southeast Asia**  
by Prof. Stanley J. Tambiah (Harvard University), 26 May 1999, Pridi Bnnomyong Library, Thammasat University. Organized in celebration of the 6th cycle of His Majesty King Bhumipol's 72nd birth anniversary, the lecture will be followed by a two-day international seminar on *The Tai People Before the Coming of Civilization*.

For inquiries, contact:  
Thai Khadi Research Institute  
Thammasat University  
2 Phra-Chan Road  
Bangkok 10200, Thailand

## NEW PUBLICATIONS AND AUDIO-VISUALS

- **Ji Giles Ungpakorn, Thailand: Class Struggle in an Era of Economic Crisis. 1999. 120 pp.**  
Pub. Asia Monitor Resources Centre, Hong Kong. Cost (including postage): US \$7/A \$11/ £4. Situation of Thai workers in the 1990s; profiles of eight rank and file trade union activists; workers and parliamentary democratic pattern of class struggle in past 25 years.

Send order to:  
Asia Monitor Resource Centre  
444 Nathan Road, 8-B Kowloon  
Hong Kong  
Tel. 852-2332-1346  
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- **University of the Philippines Manila Library, Subject Guide (358 pp.) and Microfilm (25 reels, 35 mm.) on Philippine Radical Papers. 1998.**  
Documents of student, political, and religious organizations advocating political, economic, and social change during the Marcos regime: speeches and letters of known critics; documents of the Communist Party the Philippines, New People's Army, and National Democratic Front; the periodicals of underground movements. Cost of subject guide, US\$30; microfilm US\$1,375/set.



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► **Thammasat University Archives,  
Video Tape (55 min.) of 1973 Thai  
Student Uprising.**

Narrated in Thai with English subtitles.

Cost: US\$14 excl. postage; with postage, US\$30 for the U.S. and Europe, and \$28 for Asia and the Pacific. 1973 democratic revolution which toppled the military regime; footages of rallies at Thammasat University, march on Rajadamnoen Avenue, shooting scenes, King's appearance on television, collapse of junta.

## Send order to:

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