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ASIANS STUDYING OTHER ASIANS what difference does it make?

by *John S.idel*



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FROM THE EDITOR'S DESK

Maria Serena I. Diokno

It is evident from the papers presented in the SEASREP Council's workshop last May (titled *Representations of Southeast Asia in Southeast Asian Pre-University Textbooks*) that there are commonly held perceptions (and misperceptions) and approaches to the teaching of Southeast Asia to Southeast Asian children. Although the region is generally introduced to secondary level (high school) students, the focus tends to be geography and little else. Thai textbooks, says Warunee Osatharom of the Thai Khadi Research Institute, contain geographical information similar to that found in travel books or handbooks on the region and the maps are hardly attractive. Nguyen van Chinh of the Vietnam National University agrees. Illustrations in Vietnamese textbooks, he says, not only lack appeal but are also vague and sometimes based on outdated references. Concludes Kyaw Yin Hlaing, a Burmese PhD student at Cornell, the graphic representation of Southeast Asia in maps and pictures reinforces the notion that Southeast Asia is simply a geographic entity.

Southeast Asia is, of course, more than geography. As political scientist Chaiwat Satha-anand of Thammasat University puts it, more than anything else Southeast Asia is the product of political imagination, thereby giving a different meaning to the concept of boundary.

Another interesting question is how, if at all, the home country fits into the notion of Southeast Asia. According to Kyaw Yin Hlaing, Burmese students see themselves as Southeast Asians simply because their country is located in the southeastern part of Asia. The implication is that beyond that, there is little in common. Vietnamese textbooks tend to regard Vietnam as separate from the region although there is implicit acceptance of some commonality in the region with respect to economy, culture and history. Perhaps understandably, Indonesian textbooks place Indonesia at the center of the region as do Thai textbooks. In fact, only this year the Thai Education Ministry decided to replace Southeast Asian subjects in high school with Thai history.

Some attempt is made in Philippine textbooks to situate the country in Southeast Asia but the approach has its limitations. "First," wrote (the late) Luisa Mallari of the University of the Philippines Department of English and Comparative Literature, "Southeast Asia is presented as the locus of her [the Philippines] ancestry, and is thus frozen in the prehistoric past, gaining credence only when the Filipino's racial origins are invoked. Second, Southeast Asia is constructed as an indeterminate place, de-centered by the geographic emphasis on the Philippines as an archipelagic land mass that drifted away from the Asian continent but whose present location at the edge of Southeast Asia magnetically attracts other peoples and cultures." The result, Mallari concluded, is an incoherent image of the region.

Most of the papers also discussed the role of the State in textbook writing. In general public school textbooks are state-prescribed, with some more heavily tainted by official interpretations than others. Official Thai anti-communism, for example, has seeped into textbook descriptions of Thailand's neighbors. Burmese textbooks play up the colonial menace as the historical justification of the Myanmar authoritarian state. Although the nation-state is a fairly recent phenomenon, Chaiwat observes it has become "so sacred in the minds of so many" that dealing with this "sacred construct" is extremely difficult.

Chaiwat's closing remarks raised more questions. Because "objective Southeast Asian history/Southeast Asian stories" do not seem possible, he concludes: "I think you will end up [with]...some kind of prejudiced notion of what Southeast Asia is. Then the question becomes what kind of prejudice we would want to choose. The prejudice...[of] Thai society that [looks at] the Burmese as enemies for 400 years or the other prejudice that we...are common neighbors?" By prescribing the "ideal" textbook, we are really asking ourselves "what kind of direction, what kind of Southeast Asia we want to create."

The Council hopes to publish the papers presented in the one-day seminar at Thammasat University last May.

Asians Studying Other Asians in Asia: What Difference Does it Make?

Dr. Ariel Heryanto, Melbourne Institute of Asian Languages and Societies

Below is the keynote speech of Dr. Ariel Heryanto, Melbourne Institute of Asian Languages and Societies, at the Orientation Program for the year 2000 Fellows of the Asian Studies in Asia, 30 June 2000, Bangkok, Thailand.

With great delight I accepted the invitation to speak before you now. Let me first of all express my personal and warm congratulations to all the new Asian Studies in Asia Fellows, who represent the very best among many candidates for the award this year. I am especially pleased to be here for the opportunity to meet you in person, and to exchange ideas with you. Without this opportunity, for a member of the Advisory Board like me, the ASIA Fellowship Program remains largely a set of papers.

Dr. Chai Podhisita, on behalf of the Orientation Committee, invited me to share a few thoughts on a theme that is key to the Program that has brought us here, namely "Developing Asian Studies in Asia." I took the liberty to alter the title, but hopefully not the theme and spirit, into "Asians studying other Asians in Asia; what difference does it make?" I hope you would bear with me for the next few minutes to consider a few things that must not be new to some of you who have been involved with area studies. If you have not, these issues may not appear to be of immediate relevance to you personally. I would like to undertake the task of persuading you to take some interest in some of these issues, and to invite you to offer your candid responses to assist us in our work around the notion of area studies. By no means do the ideas that I present here reflect the views of the Advisory Board. These are my preliminary thoughts, and I would be too embarrassed to circulate them to any wider circles at this stage.

I am not an expert on Asia. I was born and grew up on the island of Java, Indonesia. I studied and then taught about Southeast Asia a little bit, and I have studied Asia much less. I remain ignorant about the greatest part of Southeast Asia, or even of Indonesia and Java. I mention this mainly to alert you to my biases. It would be foolish of me to attempt or pretend that I can make my presentation relevant to many of the countries in Asia that you come from, or that you have studied. Despite all these disclaimers, I am convinced that there are a few general and intellectual issues that we have all encountered. They are questions with no ready answers.

Old Problems In A New Time

One can be forgiven for being suspicious of the theme of our discussion today as something essentially outdated, but forced to revive with some rather conservative agenda in mind. Partly this is because the title resonates with the old area studies that appears in some places to have run its course, and to have lost much of its previous appeal and vitality since the end of the Cold War. Partly this is because the title is plain and straightforward, rather than sexy and enigmatic as found in many new books and seminar titles. In today's globalized world of great mobility, and with the bombardment of slogans such as hybridity, transnationalization, and multiculturalism, concepts such as Asian and Asian Studies may sound rather naïve, nativistic, anachronistic or nostalgic.

In what follows I wish to explore some of the renewed meanings and relevance of Asia and Asian Studies precisely in the contexts of, and because of, rather than in spite of, these new globalized developments. Before that, however, an acknowledgement of a legacy of the old area studies is necessary.

"What is Asian Studies anyway?" Is it an intellectual exercise that finds its definition primarily in its devotion to the specific object of study, rather than its inclinations towards particular set of approaches, methodologies, or strategies of learning that distinguish it from other and more conventional academic disciplines?

Any activities that come under the rubric of Asian Studies in Asia these days cannot deny a genealogy from and indebtedness to its unspoken and pre-existing Other, namely Asian Studies outside Asia. Asian Studies in Asia is obviously a response to that Other. What the nature of such response is, or should and should not be, why now, what the potential and actual significance of such response can be, and what specifically about Asian Studies outside Asia that this response targets, are all open to debate. They constitute the central questions I wish to raise for our discussion with no ambition of finding the answers at the end of the session.

Admittedly also, many of these questions are not that new at all. Throughout history of Asian Studies in the past, people have asked very fundamental questions which are similar to those mentioned just now. For instance, they have asked: "What is Asian Studies anyway?" Is it an intellectual exercise that finds its definition primarily in its devotion to the specific object of study, rather than its inclinations towards particular set of approaches, methodologies, or strategies of learning that distinguish it from other and more conventional academic disciplines? If we do not hear voices asking the same questions these days, perhaps that is because they are tired of asking and are convinced there will be no satisfactory answers in the end.

If the object of study (i.e. Asia) becomes the most important, if not the sole, defining factor, then what do

we mean by "Asia" or the adjective "Asian" anyway? Many scholars have addressed the issue, but a few basic problems keep coming back unresolved. For an illustration, let me cite here a re-examination of the issue from a contemporary perspective that has both connections and breaks with Asian Studies in previous decades:

Asia is not only a political concept, but also a cultural concept, it is not only a geographical location, but also a measure of value judgment....

[The question of Asia] is hardly a question of substantialization, namely by way of ascribing to it unequivocal geographical attributes. Quite contrarily, it is often invoked in the discussion of questions that bear no direct relation, or are even in stark opposition, to any geographical considerations. For a long historical period, Asia has not been treated as a self-contained geographical concept, but has only been put forward ideologically in opposition to Europe. The discussion of Asia involved not only the question of Eurocentrism, but also the question of hegemony within the East....

The fact that, in the history of the academic world, "Asia" as a singular term has emerged to name collectively a plurality of countries and regions deserves our attention.¹



No matter how problematic and contentious the key terms such as "Asia" and "Asian" can be, they are not totally imaginary and free-floating constructs of the analysts, Asian or otherwise. This is why the relevance of Asian Studies stubbornly persists, but this is also why its importance is not static, identical, or straightforwardly continuous with its part during colonial and Cold War eras.

If the questions of identity of the persons who conduct Asian Studies are to be raised (in other words Asians as a noun), we will most likely be embroiled in no less complicated debates. Who are Asians, or better who qualify as Asians, on what basis, for how long, and where? This is not only a problem of "representation" in the light of the diversity of peoples and cultures in Asia. Should the problem be restricted to this aspect, we could have proposed a wide range of possible representations of Asians, their mix and combinations, but all presumably have stable and clearly marked elements of Asian-ness that create the complex diversity.

However, I refer to something else here. As briefly mentioned earlier, in today's globalized world of great mobility and hybridity, Asians' Asian-ness has become a notoriously fuzzy matter. One of the most obvious diffusing factors is the multiple and oscillating residence, employment, and institutional affiliation, not to speak of cultural orientations, of a rapidly increasing number of Asian people worldwide. How frequent an absence from Asia would disqualify an Asian from participating in a program like ours: Asian Studies by Asians in Asia? How long a period of absence would disqualify her/him? Can s/he re-claim her/his eligibility by repatriation, and for how long does her/his return have last before such re-qualification can take effect?

These problems direct us to the key question of Asian Studies in the present, namely, does it matter who or what partakes in such studies, where and when? Does it make sense to bring in the questions of identity of the persons studying Asia, as well as their geographical, residential, or professional positioning, and the location where such study is carried out? If it does not make sense, do we want to simply continue the old familiar traditions of practicing Asian Studies with the implicit claims of universality and objectivity, deliberately disregarding the questions of subjecthood, positions, history, and social space?

Are there defensible rationales for supporting the idea of Asians conducting a study about other Asians — "other" in all sorts of senses: nationalities, ethnicities, religions, generations, regions, genders, classes, and so on — and especially when

conducting such study grounded on Asian soils? Are we not reviving the old and now much despised desire for a mystified Asian autonomy, or authenticity, in scholarship about "their own" peoples, neighbors, and sub-regions? In other words, are we not reviving the notorious colonial orientalism and making it our own, which some might describe as self-orientalism?

Renewed Endeavors

During the last two or three decades the social sciences and especially the humanities have made it nearly impossible for us to retain the old naivety and desire for Asian authenticity, originality, or autonomy. The reputation of such Western romantic and colonial notions has also been seriously tarnished more recently, and ironically, by the rhetoric of Asian Values, Asian Miracles, or Asian Ways among Asian dictators in bashing the "West", as they imagine, admire, and fear it.

Fortunately, the demise of such problematic notions of autonomy or authenticity has not been followed by a total withering away of Asian Studies. There are several good reasons for this survival. First, it remains impossible to deny the continued cultural supremacy and intellectual hegemony of the West in today's global capitalism, including Asia, despite the economic and political challenges from Asia to the West. Hence, the questions of who, what, and where in Asian Studies remain politically and ethically contentious. Equally impossible is to ignore the widening gap of power relations among different groups in Asia, as they are more deeply incorporated into the world market and information networks. No matter how problematic and contentious the key terms such as "Asia" and "Asian" can be, they are not totally imaginary and free-floating constructs of the analysts, Asian or otherwise. This is why the relevance of Asian Studies stubbornly persists, but this is also why its importance is not static, identical, or straightforwardly continuous with its part during colonial and Cold War eras.

Developing Asian Studies in Asia by and for Asians does not need to mean trying to create any new epistemology of

the uniquely Asian. Perhaps it is not even an attempt to develop a separate and superior scholarship on Asia vis-à-vis those already developed in Europe and Northern America. Rather, it is an acknowledgement and expression of concerns about the serious unequalizing tendencies in Asia-related studies that have resulted in Asians being little more than objects of analysis rather than analyzing counterparts. The new project of developing Asian Studies in Asia is also a critical and sensitive recognition of the profound inseparability of constituencies and relationships between the dominant and dominated groups, among circulated knowledges, and among competing procedures of knowledge production in this less than perfect world.

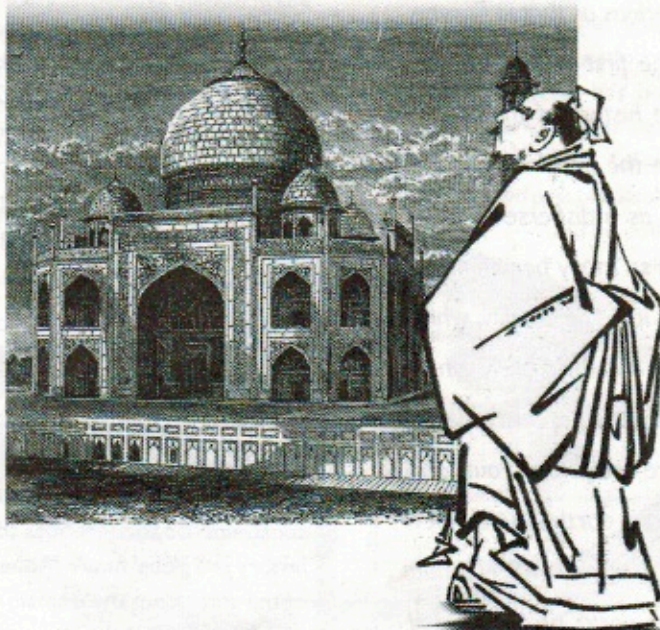
It is now becoming obvious among those doing Asian Studies that building some sort of defensive walls to isolate and create a self-contained Asian Studies in Asia would be the last thing one would want to do. It would be both impossible and undesirable. While the world at large, and Asian Studies more specifically, remain unjust and unequal, creating an isolationist scholarship in response to the industrialized expansionist and intimidating Western-based and Western-centric production of knowledge on Asia can be counter-productive. It can easily slip into a ghettoization of what is to be pursued and valorized at home.

In the end such endeavors will have to confront the old and familiar dilemma between the principles of equality of participation and quality of intellectual output, whatever they

may be. The two do not always impose a condition of mutually exclusive "either/or" options. Enhancing the politically correct programs of empowering the disadvantaged Asians in scholarship about Asia often requires some compromise of standards of scholarship, but this does not have to be done permanently, or to take place without due respect for proportion. While some sort of affirmative action has been common among recent programs in Asia and Southeast Asia, a few have taken one step further by pro-actively and selectively inviting a few non-Asians to take part in the endeavors.

This is not entirely novel. Studies of Asia, or parts thereof, by colonized Asian elites has always involved some collaboration with and indebtedness to the colonizing West. However, the playing field in today's engagements is different.

This is because the status of and relationship among Asian intellectuals and their counterparts are now different. I believe this is what distinguishes Asian Studies today from its predecessors in colonial and Cold War periods. Some may like to describe this recent collaboration as having a "post-colonial" character or orientation, as opposed to the old colonial and anti-colonial counterparts. In some of the most active and innovative circles of Asian intelligentsia there is both the old discomfort with the continued global inequality and subordination, as well as the new ease in sharing such discomfort, and developing a collaborative response to it, with institutions and agencies outside Asia that used to be suspected as forces of the imperial West.



The Future/s of Globalization A View from Southeast Asia

Diana Wong, visiting fellow

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It was the Second World War that first accorded full weight to the contribution from everywhere, to the globe as a whole. The war in the Far East was just as serious as that in Europe. It was in point of fact the first real world war. World history as a single history of the totality had begun. From now on the interim period of previous history appears as a dispersed field of unconnected ventures, as so many beginnings of human possibilities. Now it is the totality, which have become the problem and the task. It ushers in a complete transformation of history. The decisive thing is that there is no more "outside". The world closes. It is the earth's unity. New threats and opportunities appear. All essential problems have become world problems, the situation is the situation of humanity.

Karl Jaspers,

Vom Ziel und Ursprung der Geschichte

Current debates on globalization tend to focus on the challenges of economic globalization deriving from the spectacular growth of trans-national trade, investment and finance capital flows in the last two decades. An influential

body of writings on globalization has also drawn attention however, to the significance of increasing global interdependence for *cultural* understandings of the world. For Roland Robertson, the Pittsburgh sociologist to whom the popularization of the term globalization can be attributed, the process of globalization entails not only the growth of concrete global interdependence, but also the *consciousness* of this new globality [see Robertson 1992]. Similarly, Anthony Giddens whose recent work has embraced globalization, conceptualizes the process not merely in terms of the emergence of large scale world systems, but highlights the erasure of the boundary between the out-there and the in-here that is constitutive of globality [Giddens 1996].

Central to the notion of contemporary globalization has thus been its reflexive and relativizing character; the realization of the inter-connectivity between local, day-to-day activities and events happening on the other side of the globe, and hence a heightening, as Robertson notes, of civilizational, societal, ethnic, regional and, indeed individual, self-consciousness (with constraints on social entities to locate themselves within world history and global future [Robertson 1992:27]). With the retreat of the state from the domain of political economy as a result of economic globalization, it will be in the realm of culture and as a source of cultural identity that the nation-state, it has been suggested, will, in future, position itself [Fukukawa 1998].

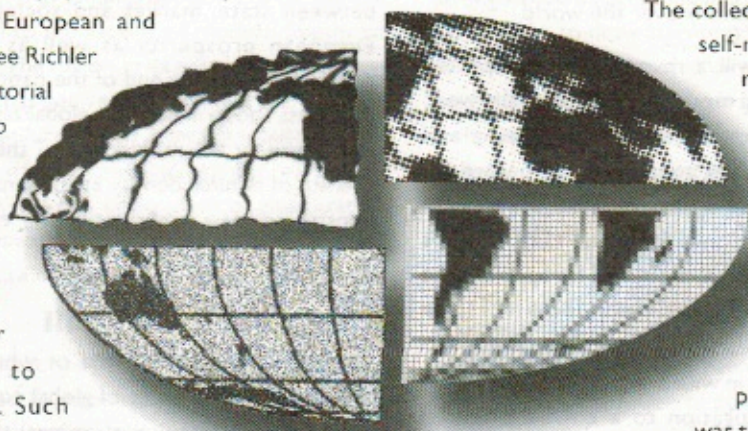
In this paper, I shall argue that the forms of social hybridity spawned by the erasure of in-here/out-there boundaries, and the relativizing forms of consciousness identified as constitutive of a new globalization are, and have been, constitutive of the condition of being in post-colonial societies since their very inception. From that perspective, "global" consciousness is the belated recognition in erstwhile hegemonic nations of the loss of monopoly control over the making of the world. In societies in which the fluidity of cultural and social boundaries have been the norm rather than the exception, and certainly not the novelty of recent global provenance, contemporary cultural politics operate on a differently formed terrain and with

Four aspects of globalization have been identified by the globalization theorist, Martin Albrow, as determining the distinctive character of contemporary global socioscapas: values that draw from the world, access to and influence by events elsewhere, direct interaction with other parts of the world via telematics, and maintenance of lifestyles and life routines in new places by migrants [Albrow 1997].

different terms of reference. In the second part of the paper, I shall attempt to delineate part of this terrain of discourse as found in Southeast Asia.

II

In his major work on world history, Jaspers, as quoted in the epigraph above, attributes the epistemological transition to the globe as a whole to the profound impact of the Second World War, after which there is no more outside. And yet, in an excellent and profoundly moving anthology of *Writers on World War II* published in 1991, the world at war continued to be constituted almost entirely, apart from a few pieces on Hiroshima, by the European and American imagination [see Richler 1991]. Even in this editorial project committed to seeing the war in its totality, the distinctively local Western European and American perspective could be taken — without further self-reflection — to represent the world. Such naiveté derives, I suggest, from a cultural climate informed by an intellectual tradition in which, as charted by Hegel's *Phenomenology of the Mind*, world history culminated in, and was constituted by, Western history. This conflation of western history with world history also meant that western historical consciousness remained essentially self-referential. There was no need to locate oneself within world history and global future as there was no world history and global future outside of one's own. It was from this understanding of the world that all other societies bent on modernity were said to see their future selves mirrored in the Western present.



Needless to say, post-colonial societies did not enjoy the luxury of this unquestioned self-production and the epistemological self-certainty it engendered. As the Japanese social thinker Takeuchi has noted, modernity is the self-recognition of Europe, the recognition of Europe's modern self as distinct from her feudal self (quoted in Sakai 1988). For all post-colonial nations, the emergence of free capital and the nation-state has been experienced as forces not entirely of their own making. For such societies, the project of modernity has been defined not merely in terms of their own past but also in terms of the present of others.

The collective self could not be entirely self-referential; the imperative to relativize, to locate in respect to the world, was given in the very terminology of development and modernization, which came with the birth of these societies. The awareness of the global conditions for its own production and reproduction was thus a fundamental constituent of the self-consciousness of post-colonial societies.

From its very inception as well, plurality and hybridity defined the social self. Four aspects of globalization have been identified by the globalization theorist, Martin Albrow, as determining the distinctive character of contemporary global socioscapas: values that draw from the world, access to and influence by events elsewhere, direct interaction with other parts of the world via telematics, and maintenance of lifestyles and life routines in new places by migrants [Albrow 1997]. Contemporary global cities are said to exhibit these new conditions of daily life [see Eade 1997]. Stripped of the technological innovations, such as telematics, these socioscapas have been paradigmatic features of the great port cities of the

colonial and post-colonial world since the late nineteenth century. It is only in the context of the relatively homogenous nation-states of Europe that the daily experience of alterity in the everyday life-world represents a dramatic and profound break with the conditions of local existence in the past.

The discovery of the global as a condition for the reproduction of local life forms reflects, I would thus argue, a specific shift in western subjectivity in the late twentieth century. In the recognition of the Other as constitutive of its own being (the erasure of the out-there/in-here boundary), it marks the end of the identity of Self and World which western thought has been able to take for granted in the history of modernity. In that respect, it is indicative of the end of the remarkable 400-year era of western hegemony over the world.

It also marks, if one so will, a reversal of the expected approximation of postcolonial modernity to that of the west. The emergence of postcolonial conditions of being and consciousness in the west itself represents as it were, an unpredicted and unexpected approximation of western modernity to that of postcolonial societies. Ulrich Beck's concept of the risk society as characteristic of Europe's Second Modernity under conditions of globalization [Beck 1992], or Richard Sennet's concept of contemporary American post-fordist short-term capitalism in which a coherent narrative of the self based on the subjugation to a coherent fordist production is no longer possible [Sennet, this volume], are further exemplification of this process of reverse approximation. Post-colonial societies have always been quintessentially risk societies in which the individual and the collective self have never been able to construct and control stable conditions of regular and predictable reproduction.

Paradoxically, I would thus argue, the discourse on globalization in the west represents the increasing realization of its own parochiality, in its recognition of the co-existence of multiple worlds within a new global order. The seminal status, as well as the widespread reception, accorded to Samuel Huntington's *Clash of Civilizations* thesis attest to this new recognition of the existence of Significant Others. And

paradoxically, the parochiality reaffirms itself in the postulation of this newly emergent subjectivity as a profoundly novel condition of the global.

These discourses on globalization thus refer to the highly unsettling, complex and contradictory transformative forces, and the varying stances taken in respect to them, in the cultural politics of contemporary western societies. Its most avid and eloquent exponents and advocates have been an unlikely conjunction of transnational capitalists seeking to penetrate markets outside of the metropolitan centres, and diasporic intellectuals seeking to articulate their position in the interstices of the boundaries they have crossed. The new capital and labour mobility however, threatens the welfare consensus between state, market and society underlying post-war European prosperity as well as political identity. The proclamation of the end of the nation-state in the wake of a relentless and an ineluctable globalization has been increasingly countered by the reassertion of the future of the nation as the site of *cultural* identity, at the same time as *Europe* is being constructed as a larger regulatory entity.

III

In East and Southeast Asia, or what was known as the Far East before the onset of global consciousness (as still used in the above translation of Jaspers), the cultural debate around the issue of globalization has had a different history. Up to two years ago, the future was being envisioned in terms such as "The Pacific Century", "The Asian Renaissance", "The Rise of East Asia". These were *projective*, not *descriptive* terms. They projected a future pregnant with the promise of a final rupture with the history of intercultural relations of the past four hundred years — the history of western hegemony. Notwithstanding its projective, and hence, fictional, nature, this discourse bore witness to a new relationship of proprietorship to modernity in Asian self-consciousness — if not as that of producer of modernity, than at least as its consumer. As such it signaled the end of a self-consciousness in which the Self was defined by an absence, mirrored in the Western gaze as a

The strongest champion of globalization in Southeast Asia had been the state. Engulfed by a financial and economic collapse widely understood in Asia as constituting the first crisis of a newly emergent global financial system, both globalization and the state — hitherto virtually unquestioned agents of development and modernity — are being subject to severe criticism.

site of backwardness and failure and as its hapless and unwilling victim, the eternal object of a commanding western subjectivity. This Asianist discourse testified, paradoxically, to the emergence of a new economy of the Self in which the Other was no longer construed in terms of the West/East dichotomy, but in which the omnipresence of the Other has been replaced by the presence of serialized and multiple others.

It was in Southeast Asia too that the term "globalization" was perhaps unmatched in its popularity and acceptance, for Southeast Asia saw itself as a beneficiary of globalization, and globalization as the context in which the Pacific Century, the Asian Renaissance, would be staged. As has already been noted above, "globalization" has been no stranger to the region, and indeed, it may be argued that unhindered flows of capital and labor have been central to the making of modern Southeast Asian states and society. The region, in its pre-colonial, colonial and post-colonial pasts, has been exceptionally open to world trade and cultures, with plurality and diversity woven into its social fabric as part of the "natural" order of things. "Globalization, that's us" — this celebration of globalization by the New York Times in one of its recent columns could just as well, although with a different referent, have been voiced in Southeast Asia.

Today of course, these terms have lost their currency. And globalization has changed its meaning: from the promise of a fundamental re-structuring of the old order, to the threat of an even more massive and powerful continuation of the old centric order, shorn now of the protective cover of nation-state structures and institutions. A sense of crisis pervades all countries in the region. Beyond the stark reality of the economic crisis and its social and political consequences however, the crisis can also be seen as one of the imagination — of the ability to imagine alternative futures [Tejapira 1999].

The gravity of the crisis however, has also provided space for the re-emergence of utopian critique in recent intellectual and public debate. The strongest champion of globalization in Southeast Asia had been the state. Engulfed by a financial and economic collapse widely understood in Asia as constituting

the first crisis of a newly emergent global financial system, both globalization and the state — hitherto virtually unquestioned agents of development and modernity — are being subject to severe criticism. Under the aegis of the developmentalist state and a favorable globalization, the social imagination had been leashed to the dictates of instrumental reason. With the crisis, development and modernity, at least in the purely statist and economic garb with which state and market had endowed them, no longer exhaust the imaginings of the future.

With globalization imagined as a neo-imperialist threat, the nation certainly, has assumed a new salience as a site of cultural identity. Similarly, religion as a collective project has strengthened its presence in public discourse. Here however, I would like to draw attention to three other imagined trans-national social spaces which are engaging intellectual discourse on cultural futures, in which globalizing forces are not seen ipso facto as a threat but as emergent forces subject to collective direction and transformation.

For the critique of the excesses of the authoritarian developmentalist state which had engineered the export-oriented growth policies of the post-colonial states in Southeast Asia, the shared values and practices of a trans-national civil society have been critical. In particular, impulses for the democratization of political institutions, for an end to relentless environmental degradation, for the concerns of those at the national periphery, have come from global coalitions located in this trans-national space. Local groups in Southeast Asia have been actively engaged in the construction of these other forms of globality and as these concerns enter mainstream national discourse, so will the engagement in this trans-national space and its project of alternative globalities.

Another trans-national space in the making is that of diaspora. I would like to make a distinction here between the concept of diaspora and that of minority. Diasporas designate trans-national social spaces in which "dwelling in difference" (Clifford 1994) is practiced, minorities on the other hand, occupy social spaces assigned by the practices of the nation-state. Diaspora cultures were constitutive of a pre-modern,

Crisis in Transition, Transitions in Crisis: Roles of Thai Public Intellectuals in Economic Hardship

Suwanna Satha-anand, Department of Philosophy, Faculty of Arts, Chulalongkorn University.

Introductory Note

All societies are in constant transition all the time. But some transitions are more significant than others. Major transitions in many parts of the world are being defined by the complex relationships between the local and the global. The term "global" here indicates key international powers, which could mean colonial powers, multi-national corporations or the global economy. The term "local" here involves geographical lesser-powers with complicated relationships with the global. Take for example, for many people in remote rural areas in Thailand, Bangkok represents the "global" because Bangkok represents the "world" for them. However, at the same time, many forms of international powers also dictate Bangkok. In the latter sense Bangkok is "local" in relation to other world communities.

Apart from being defined by the relationships between the local and the global, the nature of transition itself can take many forms. First, a transition can be a spontaneous transformation with no radical discontinuity with its own past; or second, a transition can also mean radical changes which give rise to qualitatively new mode of existence. In both ways, a transition implies a moment of "being-in-between"

two stages of existence. It can be a moment of anxiety as well as a moment of hope.

Periods of Transitions

In recent Thai history, we can delineate at least four major transitions:

- ▶ Thailand's modernization during the reign of King Rama V in late 19TH to early 20TH century.
- ▶ The 1932 change from Absolute Monarchy to Democracy.
- ▶ The early 1960's government's decision to "develop" Thailand with loans from the World Bank and other international agencies.
- ▶ The recent economic crisis, in which the symptoms of economic prosperity are becoming a myth of the past.

All these major transitions need also to be seen within the context of Thai political development.

Since 1932, non-elected Prime Ministers (mostly military generals) have headed approximately two-thirds of all Thai governments. Since the 1960's, authoritarian leaderships have justified their rules by delivering economic growth. After 40 years of privileging economic growth over and above other aspects of the national life, the income share of the poorest 20% actually "dropped" from 6% in 1975 to 4% in 1991.

On the intellectual scene, great debates for a serious alternative form of society ended in the late 1970's. Nothing comparable to that "Age of Ideology" has emerged in Thai society since then. After the 1992 May event, the military has kept a low profile on political issues. Last year, just a few months after the onslaught of the economic crisis, there were cries

In Thailand, public intellectuals have been the mediators between government bureaucrats and local villagers; between NGOs and urban public; between civil society and traditional religious institutions; and between civil society and the state. It seems that their roles are increasingly needed in times of crisis and transition.

for the military to stage a coup d'etat, but they restrained themselves. In 1997, for the first time in Thai history a civilian holds the position of the Minister of Defense. Whether this administrative and symbolic positioning will lead to a "democratic civilizing" of the Thai military remains to be seen.

Transitions in Crisis

In the five years before the current economic crisis, we saw a gradual strengthening of the emerging civil society championed by the urban middle class. Last year the "People's Constitution" was passed by Parliament. Again, for the first time in Thai history, there was popular participation in the drafting process of the Constitution itself, with many public intellectuals instrumental to it. The Constitution is aimed primarily at creating and strengthening institutional mechanisms for "cleaning up" Thai politics, and guaranteeing more transparency, accountability and protection of the rights of the Thai citizen.

In many ways, the years before the economic crisis have shown signs of healthy transitions for Thai society, the most important of which are first, the fading out of military-led state authoritarianism, and second, the rise of democratic consciousness among the general population. I believe that this "breathing space" is instrumental to the absence of total social disintegration in the face of the current crisis. Another reason seems to be that there is a general feeling that "we" are all in this together. This might not be a fair statement because the poor farmers and villagers had nothing to do with this crisis as actors. And yet, there seems to be no strong sense of alienation against each other. Actually, one of the reasons why General Chavalit had to step down was because he delivered a very divisive speech, trying to blame the "Chinese" for creating this crisis, calling them "it." He had to resign soon after that.

From one perspective we can say that the economic crisis was forced onto the "democratic" transition. This results in

putting the first transition in transition. A favorable solution to the economic crisis might or might not lead to a maturing of the "democratic" transition. That remains to be seen.

Another aspect of the current transition is the changing nature of the relationship between the "local" and the "global." In the past, symbolic subordination/ domination in the forms of taxation and forced or coerced labor recruitment in times of war or big royal projects could characterize the relationship. In recent decades, especially at the height of the globalizing process in Thailand, the locals were urged and coerced into selling their land that was their only means of livelihood and long-term security. This means that, in a matter of months, a buffalo boy roaming in the rice field who might inherit the land from his family was turned into a caddy boy in an "international" golf course, with members coming from Japan and Taiwan. Today, the same boy might be forced back to being a buffalo boy, except that now neither the buffalo nor the land belongs to his family. He is now only mere "labor." In this way, it can be said that globalization has totally subsumed the "locals" within its powerful processes. On the other hand, we cannot deny that globalization itself has also produced a condition wherein many "locals" could be better equipped to cope with the totalizing effects of globalization itself.

Roles of Public Intellectuals

In many cases, Thai public intellectuals are rural or urban locals who become "globalized" through Western education and training. Many public intellectuals in Asia are educated in Western universities. Some return home to their locality, some stay on while others go back and forth. In many ways, public intellectuals are "mediators" between the locals and the global. They are critical of the limitations of the technocrats and the bureaucrats who essentially perform the role of importer and blind supporter of the globalizing processes. In Thailand, public intellectuals have been the mediators between government bureaucrats and local villagers; between NGOs and urban

public; between civil society and traditional religious institutions; and between civil society and the state. It seems that their roles are increasingly needed in times of crisis and transition.

In practical terms, with the government projection of two million unemployed by the end of 1998, the Thai government has set up several types of emergency funds made available to different groups of people, ranging from farmers' cooperatives, various community organizations, home industry promotion groups and others. Many NGOs with public intellectuals as their advisors or leaders try to make sure that first, the information from the government gets across to the people, and second, that they get across to the right groups of people. A case in point, The Foundation for Children Development, headed by a well-known public intellectual, prepared and presented a report on the "Situation and Choices of the Underprivileged in Economic Crisis," for comments and inputs by the public in August 1998. The report was then submitted to members of parliament, the media and relevant government agencies, and to the interested public.

At another level, many public intellectuals in Thailand are re-reading Buddhist scriptures to bring out many neglected elements in Buddhism that could be a basis for more social equality as well as for more gender equality. The traditional exploitation of the concept of "karma" as justifying social and gender inequality also needs to be reformed. Many new researches are bringing out more progressive elements in Buddhism. MA theses at the Philosophy Department, Chulalongkorn University deal with topics such as "Human

Rights and Buddhist Ethics," "Karma and Social Justice in Buddhism," to cite a few examples.

Inconclusive Concluding Note

In conclusion, I would simply say that a crisis is better than "unearned comfort" in bringing out the best potentials in people. I see the economic crisis in Thailand as an opportunity to re-examine oneself in one's future participation in the global economy. I see signs of hope from and for the public intellectuals in their mediating roles between the local and the global, and thus strengthening the process of localizing strategies.

I would like to end with the philosophy of Watsuji Tetsuro, who proposed in *The Study of Ethics as the Study of Man (Rinrigaku)*, that to properly understand the human situation, one needs to understand the "betweenness" between man. This "betweenness" also needs to be radically re-conceptualized. In other words, the question now is how do we deal with the multiple "betweenness" between man created by the globalizing processes? Or how could we make sense of ethics in such complex and multiple sets of simultaneous relationships? The "betweenness" of the public intellectuals is certainly helpful and important, but will it be enough? ▀

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Ethnic Nationalism and the Nation-State: Acheh's Journey to Self-Determination

Dr. Lukman Thaib, Department of Political Science, Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia



A SEASREP visiting
professor at the

University of the Philippines, Dr. Lukman Thaib of the
Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia, spoke on Indonesian
politics. Below is an excerpt from his opening lecture.

No government of a multi-ethnic state has found the solution to the problem posed by the demands for modernization and the tendencies of growing ethnic nationalism. Government policies that attempt to prevent secession and achieve nationalism through coercive methods, while simultaneously promoting assimilation, have proved unsuccessful. The resurgence of ethnic nationalism highlights the problems of political integration of decolonized states. Thus, movements for autonomy and independence are being experienced in former colonized territories such as Acheh, Sulawesi, Irian Jaya, Ambon, and East Kalimantan in Indonesia.

Indonesian national identity was shaped in the struggle against Dutch colonialism. However, ethnic nationalism surfaced as this shared memory of struggle slowly faded. In the formation of Indonesian nationalism, Javanese has been seen as an essential element, while Achehnese, Ambonese, Papuans and Irianese are considered anomalies. Yet Indonesia is nothing but a geographic anomaly, a product of Dutch colonization bringing together more than 13,000 islands with divergent histories and cultures.

Acheh-the strategic and resource-rich "Special Territory" on the North Sumatran island-is one of the oldest

independent nations in Southeast Asia. Its history is narrated in terms of economic relations with trading states in Southeast Asia. At present, Acheh/Sumatra is the world's largest producer of natural gas aside from producing petroleum, natural rubber, coffee, tobacco, timber, gold, tin, platinum, steel, paper, cement, bauxite, rice and sugar.

The Achehnese totally reject the notion of an "Indonesian Nation" on historical, cultural, sociological, anthropological, economic and political grounds. It was the Round Table Conference Agreement between Holland and Indonesia on 27 December 1949, which allowed the transfer of sovereignty of the territories of Dutch East Indies such as the Kingdom of Acheh Darussalam to Indonesia. No plebiscite, referendum or election was held to determine whether the Achehnese wanted to be part of Indonesia or not. And at that time, Holland had no *de jure* or *de facto* power over Acheh since the Dutch were evicted from Acheh in March 1942.

In short, the Dutch had no power to hand over to Indonesia a territory which in the first place was not theirs. It was also the period when colonialism was prohibited and the United Nation's Decolonization Commission was established to uphold the peoples' right of self-determination. Thus, the Round Table Agreement is seen as a violation of the UN principle of decolonization and other General Assembly resolutions against colonialism. UN General Assembly Resolution 1514, on the granting of independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples, states that a colonized territory must go through one of the following to attain independence: 1) become a sovereign independent state, 2) associate of its own free will with an existing independent state, or 3) integrate freely with an existing independent state. However, neither "free integration" nor "free association" existed between Acheh and Indonesia. By international law and convention, therefore, the struggle of the Achehnese is in keeping with the right of self-determination.

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The decision on whether Aceh will remain part of the Republic of Indonesia in the form of a loose Indonesian confederation, or become an independent state either in the form of a Commonwealth Independent State of Indonesia or a Confederation of Aceh Sumatra, should be placed in the hands of the Acehnese.

On 4 December 1976, the Aceh/Sumatra National Liberation Front (ASNLF) led by Dr. Tgk Hasan M. di Tiro was founded to assert Aceh's bid for independence. The Indonesian government declared Aceh a Military Operation Area in 1990, resulting in the massacre of 5,000 Acehnese. The continuing military operations carried out by the Indonesian Army and the Indonesian Police Force increased human rights abuses and the number of refugees fleeing to other areas. The demand for the separation of Aceh from the Republic of Indonesia by means of referendum has steadily increased. In response to Aceh's clamor for independence, the Indonesian government, represented by Dr. Hassan Wirayuda, signed a three-month ceasefire with the ASNLF, represented by Dr. Zaini Abdullah on 12 May 2000 in Switzerland. The ceasefire included the creation of two committees: the Committee for Security Modalities and the Committee on Humanitarian Affairs. The Acehnese view the ceasefire agreement as a product of the diplomatic efforts of Dr. Tgk Hasan M. di Tiro. It could also be regarded as a response of the Indonesian government to the demands of human rights NGOs and student organizations for both sides to put an end to the violence. International policy makers consider the ceasefire the first step towards negotiations for a peaceful solution to the "Aceh problem". Yet the Indonesian military continues to execute operations in Aceh and according to Wirayuda, troop withdrawal is out of the question.

The immediate withdrawal of troops and an end to impunity is the only rightful recourse of the government. The Acehnese have suffered systematic human rights violations for more than 10 years at the hands of Indonesian armed forces, resulting in the death of thousands. Impunity will end only when those responsible for this and other crimes are

brought before a credible independent tribunal capable of trying violations of human rights under international humanitarian law. The Indonesian government should use the army for peace-making and confidence-building instead of suppressing the referendum campaign in Aceh with force. It is necessary for the Indonesian government to accommodate a new road to freedom for the Acehnese. This new road is none other than the path to legitimate self-determination through democratic mechanisms such as referendum or direct ballot. The decision on whether Aceh will remain part of the Republic of Indonesia in the form of a loose Indonesian confederation, or become an independent state either in the form of a Commonwealth Independent State of Indonesia or a Confederation of Aceh Sumatra, should be placed in the hands of the Acehnese.

The restoration of territorial sovereignty over Aceh to the Acehnese, over Sumatra to the Sumatrans, and over Javanese territory to the Javanese, is an act of justice too long denied. This is the only way to secure peace, security and harmony to this vast region hitherto drawn into endless anarchy, lawlessness, oppression and injustice, caused by incessant rebellions against Indonesia on one hand, and by Indonesia's cruel suppression of these nationalities on the other.

Through this act of justice, the most important source of conflict, that of people of one country trying to lord it over others, shall be removed. Once peace and security are restored, the road to development and progress, which has been blocked for many decades, will open. The problems of administration will then be reduced to a manageable size and economic planning will become possible and practicable. ■

Of Violence: The History-Memory Complex in 20th Century Asia

Xin Liu, Assistant Professor, Department of Anthropology, University of California Berkeley

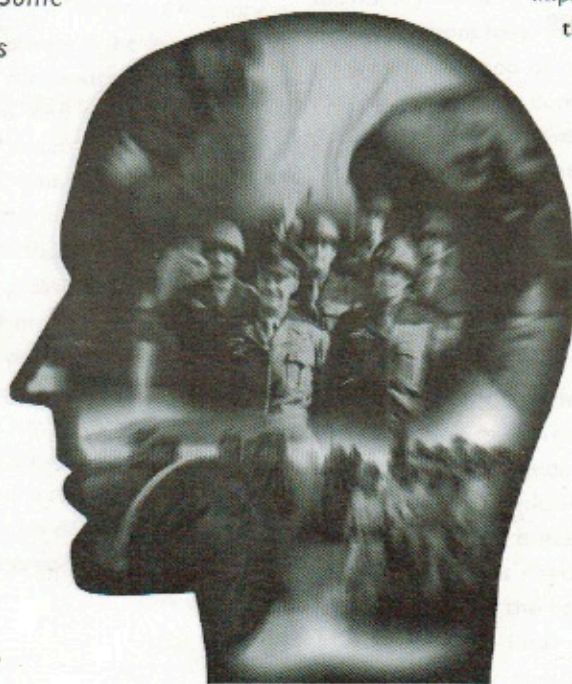
This piece was inspired by the panel on war and violence at the Millennium Regional Conference: We Asians — Between Past and Future, held in Singapore, February 2000, sponsored by the Japan Foundation and the Singapore Heritage Society. Some extremely interesting questions were raised but due to the time and format of the conference, they could not be fully discussed. This is an attempt to continue this conversation among Asian scholars as a way of envisioning the past as part of the future.

Questions to Be Asked

The history of 20TH century Asia, perhaps not unlike other histories, is a history of war and violence.

The memory of fighting against Japanese soldiers during the Second World War, which played an important part in the rise of nationalism in Asia, has remained central to the formation of collective identities in the region. Violence as everyday experience, in one form or another, either under the name of emancipation or the name of modernization, either authored by the authority of "an imagined community" or carried out by one ethnic group against another on various occasions,

continues to shape the structure of feelings in everyday life till today — to mention only the recent and on-going ethnic turmoil in Indonesia. What is, if one may ask, the difference between the violence of the past that has become part of our memory and the violence that is being experienced at the very present time? Such a question invites, or implies, a number of further questions that make up the content of this proposed project.

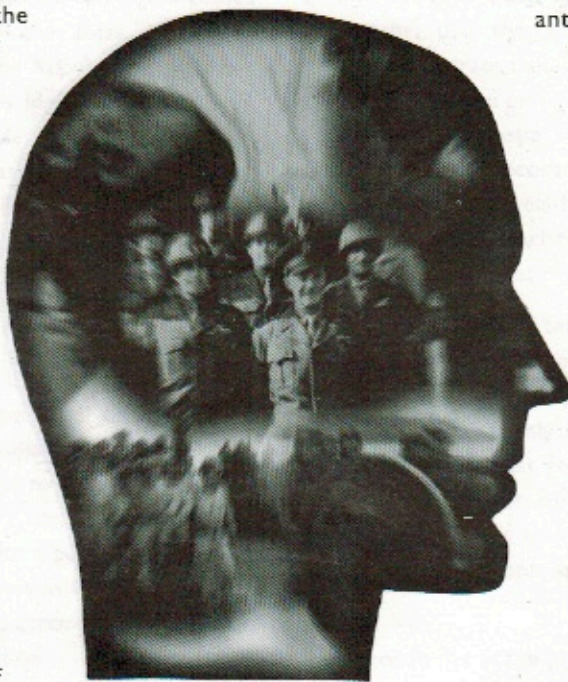


I. Although it is almost truistic to say that some ethnic conflicts in Asia are deeply rooted in a particular history of colonization and war, it is by no means clear whether people from different cultural or political traditions in this region share the same idea of history due to their very different ways of becoming "modern" in the later half of the 20TH century. The word "becoming modern" is loosely used to indicate, adequately or not, a number of very different processes of development in Asia. What is the relationship between ourselves, either defined in national

or ethnic or other collective terms, and the history of war and violence? Can we still talk about the past in the same language, which we used to be familiar with, after these very divergent trajectories of the modernizing process? Do we still stand on the same plain of cultural or political presuppositions today?

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Let us take the Nanjing massacre as an example, which recently invoked very strong reactions on both Chinese and Japanese sides, having caused street demonstrations, museum exhibitions, new publications, television debates, so on and so forth. There is no doubt that some horrible human crimes were conducted during the war, and there is no doubt that the victims of these crimes should be compensated. However, the intellectual question we pose here is of another kind: we want to ask whether it is necessary to raise the question of war and violence in terms of *how* our visions of history are shaped by the different trajectories of development after the Second World War. Or how our visions of history are undermined by our relationship to the global penetration of capitalism. Should the difference between the Chinese and the Japanese view of the Nanjing massacre be simply explained in terms of who is the good or bad guy in history? Or is this difference an indication of two different modes of understanding the past? No one should deny the importance of finding out the truth of the past, but what is equally important is to make clear of the sense of history within which we are implicated. Without being aware of our own sense of history, people from different cultural or political traditions may simply have, as Fernand Braudel once put it, "a dialogue of the deaf" when the violence of the past is discussed.



2. From a theoretical perspective, what lies at the core of this inquiry is neither searching for certain historical facts as positivist historians have always done nor taking an extreme position by equating history with fiction, that is, to take it as an entirely subjective creation. Instead we propose to focus on what may be called the "history-memory complex," that can be briefly defined as a historically situated mode of *being* in the past at the present. As we have seen, the question of memory has become a central site for the debates on history and historiography. Why? As Maurice Bloch, an anthropologist, has argued, it is by

different modes of memory — in his example, internal or external memory — that different groups of people form their own ways of being *in* history. That is, it is through the functioning of memory that people are able to relate themselves to what actually happened; and this functioning of memory is historically situated and culturally specific. This is our theoretical proposition: memory is the vehicle by which we travel in history.

By taking this theoretical position, we reject two theses: first, history has nothing to do with memory because what happened is factually verifiable; and second, history itself is memory because all historical facts are socially constructed. Few scholars would today support the first thesis without some hesitation. As for the second thesis, one must ask: WHAT is exactly constructed, as Ian Hacking recently asked? We hope to use this opportunity to discuss and clarify these questions. At the moment, we are tempted to argue that what is constructed is not

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what happened but the way in which we are able to relate ourselves to these happenings. The mode of relating oneself to the externally determined social facts is what may be called "history-memory complex," which is the central question we must address at this proposed workshop. It is only after such a question is answered that the specific experiences of war and violence may be understood.

3. Another set of questions we shall address concerns narrative as a means for people to turn their experiences, collective or individual, into memory. The kind of memory we propose to deal with is not private in the sense that it is hidden in the background of consciousness; but rather, what we are interested in is the kind of memory that is circulated among people as a means of justification or legitimation for action. What is remembered and what is forgotten is revealed in the stories people tell about themselves and others. Therefore, the question of narrative must be raised. An underlying assumption is that to understand a certain mode of memory means to look into the way in which different people tell stories about society and history. Narrative is not simply a container of experience. Following David Carr, we try to look into the relationship of experience to narrative in order to understand how a sense of self or a mode of personhood or a form of identity is produced in different cultural and social situations. We hope this proposed workshop will allow us the opportunity to exchange our views on such questions.

The Significance of This Project

These three sets of questions we hope to address come from our reading of the contemporary condition of life in Asia, which has been increasingly penetrated by transnational capital and capitalism. Why does violence persist? How can we, as Asians broadly defined, continue to battle against the social or political evils of inequality and exploitation in the

age of globalization? How are we able to talk about justice in this transformed public sphere by capitalist global penetration? What is our moral obligation and how are we able to carry it out? All these questions are intellectual questions of our time and must be answered if we wish to engage in any kind of collective action. The significance of this proposed project, hopefully as an inauguration of further dialogue and conversation among Asian intellectuals on such questions, is two-fold. First, it is simply difficult to define who we are or what we want to be without an adequate understanding of the history-memory complex within which we are implicated. These questions have not been properly interpolated. Second, a serious discussion of such questions will not only open up further channels for communication between Asian scholars with scholars of other regions in the world but also bring to the intellectual questions of our time a possibility of new imagination.

Practicalities

The objective of this proposed workshop is to engage intellectuals in Asia with each other in an on-going conversation, both within and outside the academic circle. Whether this recent round of capitalist global expansion has introduced another historical break is arguable. What is clear is that there is an urgent need for some deep reflection on the very condition of the contemporary transformation of the world. Although local or regional experiences may have been different, the question of where we are going is forced upon almost every intellectual of this region. This proposed workshop hopes to bring Asian intellectuals together to discuss, in a thorough and deep way, the question of the contemporary. ▀

[A workshop to tackle some of these questions will be held in Cebu, Philippines, in March 2001. The project is jointly organized by the University of the Philippines and the Japan Foundation Asia Center.]

The Southeast Asia Traveling Classroom 2000

Roderick Guerrero Galam is an M.A. student of the Department of English and Comparative Literature, University of the Philippines. He also teaches at the UP Integrated School.

The SEASREP Council held its second "traveling classroom" on 25 April – 6 May this year, with 24 students and 4 faculty companions from Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines and Thailand. The article below is written by a Filipino student participant.

There is a scene in *Footsteps**, third novel in the Buru Quartet of famed Indonesian writer Pramoedya Ananta Toer, that aptly describes the Traveling Classroom 2000 of the Southeast Asian Studies Regional Exchange Program (SEASREP). The scene involves Siti Soendari, a radical teacher fighting the Dutch colonial government in Indonesia, explaining to her students her way of teaching. The Dutch colonial government and even the native society, realizing its subversive potential, found it dangerous and therefore unacceptable.

Once a week she took the students from the most senior class to the rice fields and farms.... She didn't use the official textbooks, but used the natural surroundings all around her. (213)



I often took you out into the open for classes. For no other reason than that you should get to know your environment around you, in which you will live and grow. You must love the environment around you because it all belongs to you. I will be so happy if just one of you truly learns to love the world around you and understand that it all belongs to all of you, and no one else. (214)

Like Siti Soendari who brought her students out into the open, SEASREP's Traveling Classroom (TC) 2000 literally (and figuratively) brought us out of the confines of our classrooms and national borders into the "environment around us" that we may discover, know and "learn to truly love" Southeast Asia.

The Traveling Classroom

The Traveling Classroom is part of the SEASREP's program to generate among students from the region interest in Southeast Asia. It aims to encourage undergraduate and graduate students to pursue Southeast Asian studies. Thus, the traveling class may be seen as part of the larger project to "Southeast Asianize" Southeast Asia. It must be noted that many, if not most, of the specialists in Southeast Asian studies (the so called Southeast Asianists) are not from the region but from the USA (Cornell, Yale, Wisconsin, Michigan, Berkeley, etc.) and Australia (ANU, Monash, etc.). The first travel class was conducted in 1999 in Thailand. This year, the travel class brought Filipino, Thai, Malaysian and Indonesian students (six from each country) to Thailand and Malaysia. The travel class 2001 and 2002 will be held in the Philippines and Indonesia, respectively.

The "lessons" in this year's class were structured in a manner that allowed students to learn from experts on particular topics or issues and at the same time gave them the chance to interact and engage in healthy debates and arguments. The lessons were complemented by visits to cultural and historical sites and interaction with the local people, thus further deepening the participants' appreciation of the people's condition. The students then were led to discover that despite the specificity of their own societal/national conditions, they frequently find themselves and their countries facing similar problems and are therefore linked together by some common struggles.

*Translated by Max Lane and published 1990 by Penguin Books Australia Ltd.



Whether in mixed groups for their reports (above) or in country groups for a rendition of native language song (below, left), the interaction was fun and meaningful. (Below, right) Bringing down luggages at the Thai-Malaysia border for a change of bus.

Confirming Commonalities

Dr. Charnvit Kasetsiri, former rector of Thammasat University and a hugely popular historian, gave the first lecture, putting into historical context the similarities and contrasts of Southeast Asian societies. Adapting a comparative (meaning regional) perspective, Dr. Charnvit drew in bold strokes the commonalities of many Southeast Asian countries. He emphasized the influence of Hinduism, Buddhism and Islam on the region, and the cultural borrowing and adaptation that occurred in and among Southeast Asian societies. He underscored that although many societies were heavily influenced by these three great religions, the societies appropriated them to suit their particular cultural, social and linguistic needs. One other aspect Dr. Charnvit discussed is the colonial experience of the region. Pointing out that while Thailand never experienced being under the rule of a western power, it nonetheless suffered from the consequences of

western and Japanese imperialism as it lost some of its territories in the process. Thailand may have been spared but only through heavy concessions. Finally, Dr. Charnvit reminded the participants of the multi-ethnic and multi-racial composition of many Southeast Asian nations.

Politics in Plural Societies: Ethnic and Identity Issues in Southeast Asia

Because of the multi-ethnic and multi-racial origins of Southeast Asians, many of the problems faced by Southeast Asian societies today are directly and indirectly caused by such a situation. The travel class 2000 had several lectures devoted to these issues.

The first, given by Ms. Pornsuk Koetsawang of Forum Asia, dealt with the case of Burma/Myanmar. Drawing from her experience working with citizens displaced and dislocated by

the Burmese military junta, Ms. Pornsuk outlined some of the contradictions obtaining from the efforts of the repressive, authoritarian regime to build or orchestrate a Burmese/Myanmar nation. Despite (or better yet, because of) the enormous power of the state which resides on ethnic Burmese (the dominant ethnic group) only, such a condition has led the other ethnic groups to consciously cultivate and develop a stronger identification with and loyalty to their ethnicity. Ms. Pornsuk explained that many groups, specially the Karens, do not consider themselves Burmese but Karens, Kachins, and so on.

During the open forum, one of the participants drew attention to the role of education in the nation-building process and asked how the Burmese government is using education as an ideological apparatus to propagate the collectivity it desires. The speaker replied that the state is aware of the potency of education as evidenced by the textbooks used in Burmese schools. Despite this many ethnic groups have succeeded in subverting the state's project.

The lecture became the forum for a discussion of the experiences of other Southeast Asian countries like the Philippines (Mindanao) and Indonesia (Aceh). The same participant who asked the question on how education is being used to develop national consciousness in Burma pointed out that because of the resistance of the people to identify themselves with the "official" Burmese nation and their refusal to imagine themselves into this national collectivity, Burma might be considered a **state without a nation**. In contrast, he said, the Muslims in Mindanao might be seen as a **nation without a state**. They identify with the "Bangsa Moro" and have a category which they use to refer to the Philippine nation — "Bangsa Filipino." He noted that the existence of these categories point to the conscious attempt of Muslim Filipinos (the MNLF/MILF) to imagine themselves distinct from Christian Filipinos. This process has been engendered by years of neglect by the Manila-based government and has led to the separatist movement waged by the MNLF and now, the MILF.

Light and serious moments (above) in Kuala Lumpur. (Below, right) Lecture on Tourism in Southeast Asia by Dean Kadir at the Universiti Utara Malaysia in Kedah.



SEASREP's Traveling Classroom (TC) 2000 literally (and figuratively) brought us out of the confines of our classrooms and national borders into the "environment around us" that we may discover, know and "learn to truly love" Southeast Asia.

Another lecture dealt with similar happenings in Southern Thailand where a large Muslim population lives. The lecturer pointed out, however, that while there exists an organization calling itself the Patani United Liberation Organization (PULO), this group is not advocating separation from Thailand. All it wants is for the government to do something about the prevailing social injustice in Thai society, where Thai Muslims are the victims and Buddhist Thais the beneficiaries.

Dr. Hasan Madmarn of the Prince of Songkhla University (Pattani) talked about the role of Buddhism and Islam in the structure of societies in Southern Thailand. In his lecture, Dr. Hasan argued that religion, contrary to what many think, is not the cause of many of the conflicts arising in a growing number of societies. He said that while Islam and Buddhism in Southern Thailand have structured society in such a way that specific areas are occupied by believers of these two faiths, and that communal participation has largely been dictated by these religions, they have also been instrumental in keeping Southern Thailand peaceful. Buddhism and Islam, Dr. Hasan claimed, have taught the people to live in harmony.

The lecture on the case of Penang also drew attention to the conflicts that have been caused by ethnic and racial tensions. The speaker, Dr. Ariffin Omar of the Universiti Sains Malaysia said, however, that Penang society and culture have been tremendously enriched and been made more colorful and dynamic by the interactions that have occurred between and among the ethnic Malays, Chinese and Hindus.

Ultimately, what the lectures and the focused group discussions accomplished was to locate identity politics in Southeast Asia (whether it be ethnic, racial, national or religious) in concrete and material structures of power. Evidently, identity issues or conflicts cannot be viewed apart from these relations of power.

On several occasions during the travel class, it was noted that many of the conflicts between or among ethnic or race groups were caused by what is perceived as the preferential treatment governments give to the dominant (frequently the majority) group. Simply put, economic, political, educational, cultural and other social benefits accrued to the majority. This is basically the issue the PULO,

for instance, is raising against the Thai government. The same may be said of the Muslims in the Philippines. In the case of Burma, it is the homogenizing project of the state (a homogenization that privileges and makes dominant the Burmese ethnic group and which concentrates power on them). Here, the participants noted the crucial role of the nation-state in creating national space/s that admit/s heterogeneity and hybridity and where social justice and equality thrive.

But the discourse and project of nation building, the participants agreed, must not forget that conflicts among citizens occur not only along lines of ethnicity or race. The nation-state frequently becomes instrumental in perpetuating class oppression where the gap between the rich and the poor, regardless of ethnicity or race, becomes wider. They underscored the need to look at social and political conflicts as also obtaining from class struggles, from the failure of the governments to provide everyone equal access to social, economic, and political rights and services.

Poverty in Southeast Asia

The cityscape of Kuala Lumpur is dominated by two structures that signify/ symbolize Malaysia's economic transformation: the Kuala Lumpur Tower and the Petronas Twin Towers. In fact, the KL Tower was built to announce to the world that "Malaysia has arrived." But at night, when the race for life and the pace of life and movement seem to slow down, the streets are transformed into sleeping mats or beds. Like a counterdiscourse, the people who remain jobless and homeless and who have found shelter and solace in the streets are making an equally bold statement: that when Malaysia arrived, some people were left behind and did not arrive with it.

Thailand presents a similar case, as do the Philippines and Indonesia. The other Southeast Asian countries, perhaps even Singapore, have the same story to tell. The benefits of economic progress achieved by Southeast Asian nations in varying degrees have not reached a great number of people. The "miracle" seems to have worked only for a few perhaps

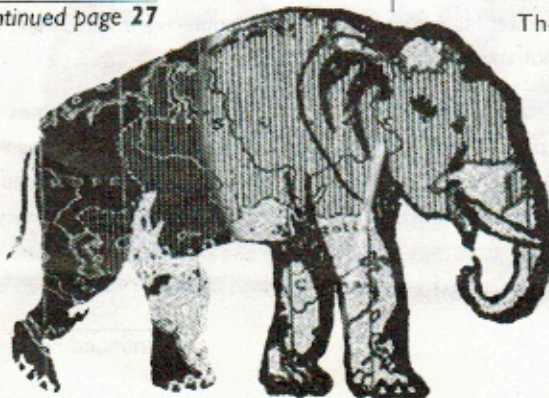
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because the governments work in cahoots with the privileged sector.

The story of the fisherfolk of Songkhla, Thailand demonstrates how governments are willing to sacrifice the "lesser" sectors of society in the name of economic progress. Our "dialogue" with the fisherfolk made us more aware of how a government can be the oppressor of its own people. By supporting large-scale fishing enterprises and sea-food processing for export (for bigger national revenue) at the cost of sustainable coastal and marine resources management, the Thai government has systematically disenfranchised and displaced its own local and small-time fisherfolk.

By allowing big boats to engage in fishing activities that employ destructive means such as nocturnal fishing (particularly of anchovies), fine-meshed nets and spotlights to attract the fish, the Thai government has greatly impoverished the fisherfolk of Songkhla who use fishing methods that in no way endanger the marine ecosystem. Unable to compete with the sophisticated equipment of the bigger fishing vessels, they now have to fish day and night (they used to fish only at day), go much farther into the sea and stay there much longer, and still come back home with very little catch. Their daily income has been severely reduced and the social costs have been heavy. There is social disintegration; children can no longer attend school as families have become so poor; the teachings of Islam are being

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More than a Visit to Thailand

Chong Chai Hun is a student at the Department of Political Science, Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia.

THIS IS THE FIRST TIME I had a great trip — all of 12 days from 25 April to 6 May 2000. All of us, 24 participants and 4 coordinators, coming from different countries, traveled from Bangkok to Kuala Lumpur. It was an excellent opportunity for us to meet, discuss and learn about the culture, history and contemporary reality in Southeast Asia.

The main theme of our Traveling Classroom was "tourism". Our seminar topics covered a broad range of subjects: "Similarities and Contrasts in SEA", "Politics in Plural Societies", "HIV: Though the Looking Glass", "Labor Migration in SEA Countries", "Life in a Plural Society: Buddhism and Islam in Southern Thailand", "Development Issues and the Role of Civil Society in Thailand", "Tourism in Malaysia", "Society and Politics in a Multi-Racial Society", and "Impact of Globalization on the Public and Social Life of Malaysia".

Seminars are normally boring to students. But those of the Traveling Classroom were especially attractive. The best seminar was that held in the fishermen's village about the life of fishermen in Southern Thailand.

The seminar about labor migration in the region by Ms. Chanya Yimpasert was also very interesting; it took place in a cottage next to the Golden Sands beach.

The seminars focused directly on the issues and problems spawned by tourism. But because the topics covered several countries in the region, we were able to know more about the region as a whole. Every effort was made to relate the topic to present reality. For example, before the first discussion about HIV in Thailand, we were brought to Koesang Street to interview tourists. It was evident to us that prostitution is a major reason for Thailand's attraction as a world tourist spot.

For the final evaluation, we gathered in a room to prepare for our presentation. Every group did its presentation differently but all of them well. We also compared some of ways to solve them.

To express our feelings about the class, we used the analogy of a garden with dropped leaves, flying birds and flowers. Dropped leaves represented what we were not satisfied with, what we lost or have not done yet. Flowers and flying birds symbolized what we were contented with, our aspirations and our future. It was the best idea I have seen to express our opinions.

Twenty-four participants and four coordinators are an ideal number for this program. We created very good relationships despite the difficulty some of us had in speaking up, especially during the seminars. But the workshop

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Of Borders, Hopes and *Khao Phad*¹

Verna Dinah Q. Viajar, M.A. student,
Department of Political Science,
University of the Philippines and
SEASREP M.A. Incentive Program Grantee

IN KEEPING WITH ITS IMAGE as the “land of smiles”, Thailand is the land of beautiful pagodas, decorated elephants and a much-revered monarchy. No matter how long or short your stay in Thailand, you’ll learn how to greet the Thai way — by saying “Sawatdee Kha/ Krap” and making the traditional *wai* (put your two palms together in front of your chest and bow slightly). This simple greeting conveys respect, care and genuine welcome, the Thai equivalent of a hug without touching.

My 10-month stay in Thailand was too long for first impressions and too short to deeply understand Thai society and its sub-cultures. But the experience of living in a different environment and with people from varied cultures has not only enriched me as a person but also as a Filipino. For four months I attended one semester of graduate studies at the Chulalongkorn University Thai Studies Section and then spent five months as a visiting research fellow at the Institute of Asian Studies in the same university. The month in between I learned how to speak rudimentary Thai in one of the language schools in Bangkok.

My stay gave me the opportunity to see Thailand beyond riding the *tuk-tuk*² and sightseeing Buddhist temples. Unlike the quintessential tourists whose curiosity leads them to *Patpong*³, I experienced the Thai people’s polite manners and penchant for negotiation to avoid conflict, a practice that extends from commerce and trade to politics.



Old man walking inside the refugee camp. Some Karen refugees are living inside the camp for 16 years.

In bazaars and markets, haggling is a game both buyer and seller enjoy. In politics, Thailand’s flexible brand of diplomacy has perplexed and amazed the world.

I viewed and appreciated Thailand in two ways: as a foreign visitor and as a student of politics. As a visitor I admired Thailand’s distinct culture and religion, beautiful countryside and hospitable people. Despite their openness to foreign visitors, considering the enormous tourist industry in the country, Thai people retain a fierce sense of pride in their historical heritage and national identity. Among the fascinating aspects of Thailand, you easily notice the people’s devotion to Buddhism, the monarchy, and food. Since I cannot speak extensively of the first two subjects, Thai

food became my initial window to Thai society and culture.

Thai food is famous worldwide and understandably so. Its richness in taste, diversity and generous spices (especially the chili) are rarely matched. Thai food also reflects its Asian character and the culinary influences of neighbors. Curry is a major ingredient found in Burmese and Indian cuisine; noodles (a hundred and one types in Thailand), are the second staple in Chinese, Vietnamese and Cambodian fare; and the liberal use of coconut milk can also be found in Indonesian and Filipino food.

While “*sinigang*” is the Filipino traditional soup, Thailand boasts of its “*tom yam kung*”⁴, prawn soup flavored with lemon grass, lime leaves, garlic, chili paste and lemon. Then there’s the

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Asians Studying... (continued from page 7)

Just because Asian Studies, and for that matter the entire apparatus of modern educational institutions in most of Asia, have their antecedents in Western colonization of Asia, as well as in the American hegemony during the Cold War, it does not follow that the future of Asian Studies has been completely pre-determined, and its potentials exhausted. We only need to look very briefly at the history of Asian nations and nationalism to understand the indeterminacy of history, and the dialectics of forces in social constructs and social agencies. The dramatic transformation of ASEAN (Association of Southeast Asian Nations) during its brief history is illuminating: from being an extension of the anti-Communist measures of the Western Bloc during the Cold War, to being hardly more than a paper tiger, to a surprisingly assertive regional agency that challenged the victor of the Cold War during the economic bubble, and now to a shaken and subdued body following the late 1990s economic and political crises.

Asian Studies in Today's Asia

There are other reasons for a renewed interest in pursuing Asian Studies in Asia today. Commenting on Southeast Asia and its studies, Professor Ruth McVey once made a very apt observation: "Southeast Asia itself has changed far more massively and profoundly than have Southeast Asian studies, whether carried on by indigenous or foreign academics"². I do not know how far the validity of her statement can be extended to the situation elsewhere in Asia, but I would not be surprised by any striking parallelism. To a great extent the profound and massive changes in Asia during the last two or three decades are results of intra-Asia interactions, perhaps with an unprecedented scale and speed. Academic study of these changes is just too slow. At the same time, Asia witnesses an ever increasing production of knowledge about its dynamics outside the academy and state security apparatuses: for instance business communities, non-governmental organizations, tourist industries, and the mass media, to name a few.

While one should welcome the fact that academic scholars and state intelligence agencies no longer monopolize or dominate the study of Asia, I would argue that Asian intellectuals (academic, artistic, or social activist) should continue to make their interventions in the public discourses of the region and in the region. The dynamics of Asia today are just too complex and too important to be left in the hands of a few groups of

professionals or bureaucrats. While intellectuals are not regularly the most important agents of change of history, it is fair to expect that they could and would occasionally help elevate the quality of public debates and deliberations of important issues. In today's industrializing Asia, it has been too easy and too common for public fora to be dominated by political propaganda and discussions that "appeal to popular prejudices", rather than critically questioning preconceptions, or illuminating suppressed perspectives and exploring new horizons.³

That leads me to a concluding point in this preliminary note for reflection and discussion, namely the specificity of post-colonial intellectuals in Asia in this particular historical juncture of rapid and dramatic industrial expansion. This historical context distinguishes them significantly from the majority of professionals studying Asia in most major centers and former centers of Asian Studies in Europe, Northern America, or Australia.

With a few exceptions in places like Japan, Singapore, Taiwan, or Hong Kong, scholars working on Asia in Asia operate with moderate or depressingly minimal resources. Although in many places in Asia there are, or used to be, centers of rigorous vernacular scholarship, most are not adapted to the major social transformations brought about by colonialization and industrialization. They remain subordinated, marginalized, and discredited by the global hegemony of modern and post-modern epistemology that evolved in dialectic with Western-led global industrialization.

However, in the midst of industrial changes in their societies, Asian intelligentsia often find themselves in privileged positions unseen in today's industrialized West. Although this may not always come with good justification, scholars and public intellectuals in Asia often enjoy enormous authority in public by virtue of being a critical minority. For better or worse, scholars and scholarship in many of these newly industrializing societies do not have enough autonomy for intellectual exercise. They often carry more political and moral weight in comparison to their counterparts affiliated with world centers of Asian Studies in the West. Again, with a few exceptions, there is barely any separation between academic and non-academic worlds, compelling academic and public intellectuals to be partisan either in support of or opposition to the regime.

This offers an answer to the question in my sub-title: Asians studying other Asians in Asia do make a significant difference compared to predecessors centered in the West. More than

their counterparts in the West in the past or present, many of these Asians will have to be more generalist with respect to academic disciplinary divisions, more politically significant and passionately committed than purely analytical in their scholarship. Asians who are engaged in contemporary Asian Studies in Asia can neither escape its historical connections with the West, nor can they simply continue and mimic the practice and achievements of their Western predecessors. ▀

Notes

- 1 Sun Ge (2000), "How Does Asia Mean?" *Inter-Asia Cultural Studies*, 1 (1): 13.
- 2 McVey, Ruth (1995), "Change and Continuity in Southeast Asian Studies", *Journal of Southeast Asian Studies* 26 (1), March: 6.
- 3 Goldfarb, Jeffrey C. (1998) *Civility and Subversion; the Intellectual in Democratic Society*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, p. 3

[The ASIA Program develops regional expertise in Asia, and establishes a multilateral network of specialists within the region to strengthen Asian scholarship. For more information, visit www.iie.org/cies/ASIAfellows.]

The Southeast Asia Traveling... (continued from page 24)

disregarded; fathers and male children/siblings have left their village to find (illegal) work abroad.

The fisherfolk of Songkhla have, of course, fought back. But their experience alerts us to the ways by which the economic programs of governments, far from uplifting the common people, mire them instead to even greater poverty (sacrificing at the same time the environment).

The poverty that drove the people of Songkhla to seek employment abroad is the same poverty that has forced millions of other Southeast Asians (particularly Filipinos) to work outside their countries. The participants of the travel class confronted the problem of labor migration in Southeast Asia in a lecture/discussion led by Ms. Chansa Yimpasert, a researcher and NGO worker.

Poverty remains one of the biggest problems of the region. Despite the economic gains of some countries, the reality of

people living under the poverty line, of the mass exodus of people, continues to confront and haunt many governments of Southeast Asia. As poverty is closely tied up with many political and social problems (as the lectures and focused group discussions of the travel class have shown), including the spread of HIV-AIDS as Senator Jon Ungpakorn said in his lecture, the governments of Southeast Asia are hard pressed to address poverty, even as they try to respond effectively to new and emerging domestic/national and regional concerns and to the onslaught of globalization.

Into the Future

Did the Travelling Classroom 2000 of SEASREP succeed in getting Southeast Asian students (that's us) interested in Southeast Asia? If our answers to the evaluation questions are an indication, the answer to the question would be yes. Prajak Kongkirati (Thammasat) expressed his desire to become a lecturer in Southeast Asian Studies. Umar Idris (Universitas Indonesia) also wants to become a professor of (Southeast Asian?) history. Judith Salamat (UP) wants to learn a Southeast Asian language or two so she can translate Southeast Asian literary works into our languages. Chonlapat Suwanmanee (Thammasat) intends to study at the University of the Philippines, Diliman, while Vicky Vadiveloo who is majoring in Tagalog at the University of Malaya intends to spend a year at UP Diliman. Others expressed their interest in knowing more about Southeast Asia.

One of the biggest benefits we the participants got from the Travelling Classroom is the "network" we built among us (from UP, Ateneo de Manila, Thammasat, Chulalongkorn, Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia, University of Malaya, Gadjah Mada and Universitas Indonesia). If all of us become, in the future, Southeast Asianists, just imagine the possibilities, the collaborative work we can do.

In bringing Southeast Asian students together for the purpose of studying Southeast Asia, the SEASREP Council's Travelling Classroom is helping to ensure that in the not-so-distant future, the Southeast Asianists will be the Southeast Asians themselves. ▀

Of Borders... (continued from page 25)

affordable *khao phad*. Basically, a plate of fried rice cooked the Thai way, *khao phad* is a complete meal in itself when mixed with either *koung* (prawn), *pou* (crab), *kai* (chicken) or *moo* (pork). My personal best was “*kwaitiao sen-lek say nam*”, a common noodle dish sold in abundance on food stalls lining the streets of Bangkok usually at night. This became my standard dinner fare since it is very cheap and quick to prepare. I could not help but think of the food security situation in the Philippines, where food is more expensive. Whenever the intemperate weather rears its ugly head, and compounded by a mismanaged agricultural sector, the Philippine food situation quickly worsens.

As a student of politics, I went to Thailand in search of refugees — persons who cross the border in time of war, famine, and natural calamities, people fleeing toward safe refuge. In my quest for the causes and consequences of population flows, I needed to come to terms with the concept of borders. Since I come from a country surrounded by water, the concept of land borders does not seep easily into my consciousness. Water is the natural border that separates the Philippines from its immediate neighbors as well as the rest of the world. Being in Thailand, right in the heart of mainland Southeast Asia, I had to contend daily with the thought that you can reach Cambodia, Laos and Burma by train or bus in three hours.

Distinguished by human-made fences and bridges, and occasional natural borders such as rivers and mountains, Thailand is flanked by Burma in the west and Laos, Cambodia and Vietnam in the northeast. Thailand's geographical location places the country in a strategic position as the hub of trade and commerce among these countries. Thailand is also considered the ‘frontline state’ among countries in the

Karen refugees learning the basics of life inside a refugee camp.



Southeast Asian region due to its geo-political importance and open economic system. While Thai domestic politics is interesting enough, Thailand's relationship with its neighbors is just as interesting. Border relations with Burma, Cambodia and Laos are addressed daily. For decades, Thailand has been the catch basin of Indochinese and Burmese peoples seeking refuge while their countries became embroiled in conflict and war. While the last batch of Cambodian and Laotian refugees was repatriated in the last couple of years, the influx of refugees, student and political activists from Burma into Thai soil continues to this day.

My research took on a colorful turn when I witnessed a twin hostage attempt staged by Burmese and Karen⁶ rebels in October 1999 and January 2000. The first incident happened at the Myanmar Embassy in Bangkok and the second in a hospital in Ratchaburi, a border province between Burma and Thailand. Since my research focuses on the Karen refugees in Thailand and the Thai government's policy towards them, these two incidents unfolded more than just a hostage event before my very eyes. They reflected the continuing political discontent and ethnic strife in the modern nation-state that calls itself Myanmar. A deluge of information poured in from all sides. Immediately I sensed the ambivalence of Thai public opinion. Also evident was the Thai government's predicament in negotiating with the rebels and the government of Myanmar. Most telling were the desperation and idealism expressed by the young hostage-takers. I felt the collective sigh of relief after the Embassy crisis was peacefully resolved. But this relief was matched by the silent outrage of people concerned for the plight of the Karens in Thailand when the 10 rebels at Ratchaburi were killed by the Thai special forces.

A month later, I visited the largest refugee camp in Thailand located at the border town of Mae Sot, where majority of the residents are Karens. There, for two weeks, I met the protagonists and antagonists in my research. For four days I lived in the Mae La refugee camp and interviewed camp residents and leaders. I also experienced first hand how the Karen refugees live their daily lives. Wearing the Karen traditional skirt⁷ throughout my stay, I was able to roam around the camp and visit schools like any Karen refugee.

As one of the earliest camps built when the first wave of refugees arrived in Thailand, Mae La has the amenities of any other local village (i.e. market place, water pumps, schools, churches, clinics, etc.). However, camp life at Mae La still reflects the ambivalent situation of the refugees — people who are

given temporary shelter on Thai soil. Though refugee life is not harsh, it is far from comfortable. Assured of a roof over their head and a monthly supply of coal, oil, corn, fish paste and vegetables from humanitarian NGOs, refugees are not allowed to work in or outside the camp to augment their daily fare. Beside each bamboo house is a waist-deep bunker for refugees to hide in in times of cross-border attacks from other armed groups. Electricity is provided only at the center of each camp zone where the schools and churches are located, but not in their homes. Strict rules govern camp life; refugees must have a permit, for instance, to leave the camp lest they be barred from coming back in.

In dealing with the more than 100,000 Burmese and Karen displaced people in Thailand, the Thai government's policy is likewise ambivalent. Since Thailand is not a signatory to the 1951 UN Convention on the Status of Refugees, the government can only offer temporary shelter to the Karens and other displaced peoples. Repatriation is the most likely option for them once the situation in Burma "improves". Evaluating the situation is the work of the United Nations High Commission on Refugees⁸ and the Thai government.

Before I left Thailand in March 2000, the political scene was pregnant with tension over the plight of Karen refugees and the increasing number of Burmese migrants in Thailand. Thai security policies towards the displaced people in Thailand were reviewed and tightened. Illegal Burmese workers in the border towns were repatriated and massive security checks conducted on Thai-based NGOs working for Burma's democratization. The Chuan government itself was questioned. The government's policy towards the displaced ethnic peoples of Burma was among the issues raised during the confidence vote debate last November in the Thai parliament. The political backlash of the two hostage events extended beyond Thai domestic politics to its precarious relations with Myanmar. Borders were intermittently closed because of the Myanmar government's displeasure with the outcome of the Embassy hostage incident. By setting them free, Thailand was viewed as being soft on the Burmese dissidents who had held the Myanmar Embassy hostage.

In the continuing narrative of refugees along the border, the various actors in the story hope an amicable resolution of the problem will soon take place. Caught in an ambivalent present and an uncertain future, hope is what keeps the refugees afloat. ▀

As a result of her research stint, Ms. Viajar presented a paper entitled "When Borders Become Walls" at the Institute of Asian Studies, Chulalongkorn University, which will be published in the Institute's Asian Review Journal.

Notes

1. Thai fried rice; *khao* literally means rice and *phad* means fried.
2. A three-wheel vehicle that functions as a micro-taxi, a common sight in Bangkok streets.
3. Thailand's famous or infamous red light district located in downtown Bangkok.
4. Pronounced as "gung".
5. Steamed noodles without soup mixed with chicken, fish and soy sauce, ground peanuts, garlic, mongo sprouts, and ground chili.
6. One of the major ethnic groups in Burma fighting for autonomy and self-determination from a majority Burman-led government in Yangon.
7. I had to blend in with the Karens because security in the camp tightened after the two hostage incidents. Entry of visitors, media people and exit of refugees were regulated by the Thai border police.
8. UNHCR was finally allowed to operate in the camps in 1998.

More than a Visit... (continued from page 24)

discussions gave us the chance to share our opinions freely and interact with one another.

The Traveling Classroom actually made me understand more than just Thailand, the country I visited, and Malaysia, my home country. Southeast Asia has the potential to become a strong zone in the world but it faces many social, economic and political problems. The Traveling Classroom must continue to give more opportunities to the young generation, who will become leaders in their own time, to develop a shared concern about their countries and neighbors and to think of ways to overcome their problems. ▀

The Futures of Globalization...

(continued from page 12)

pluralistic, cosmopolitan order, in the Islamic civilizations of Muslim Spain, Mughal India and maritime Southeast Asia. They were accorded a more subterranean existence in the colonial empires that replaced these older cosmopolitanisms. With the advent of the nation-state, state-sponsored nationalism imposed an official narrative of cultural homogeneity designed to erase all traces of diasporic cultures. The recovery of the diasporic in recent Southeast Asian discourse can also be read as the desire to affirm the pluralistic fabric of local lifeworlds and to forge new forms of cosmopolitanisms more reminiscent of the familiar plurality of its own historical experience.

The question of plurality is also central to the third discursive project I wish to draw attention to, the project of region-building. Notwithstanding the vacuity of the state-sponsored "Asian Values" rhetoric, the utopic vision of an Asia as a distinctive regional formation continues to exercise the imagination. In contrast to the project of Europe, and in contradistinction to the rhetoric of "Asian Values", the project of Asia cannot be constructed on a foundation of shared values and culture. Asia, as has been often observed, is nothing more than a geographical expression, a derivative concept, an empty category. There is no equivalent to the commonwealth of shared values and institutions derived from the legacy of Christianity. Takeuchi, the Japanese thinker already quoted above, had concluded from this the necessity for a non-essentializing conceptualization of Asia - the principle of its unity, as he put it, has to be found outside of itself (quoted in Sakai 1988).

The project of Asia has to be conceived in pluralistic terms, and the terms of its plurality will have to differ from that developed in Europe. Anchored in a fundament of shared values, plurality in the tradition of Western thought and political practice has referred to the possibility, and toleration, of divergent and contesting opinions derived from the same set of core values (Walzer 1997). In Asia, in the absence of a historical monopoly of one set of truth-claims, plurality has to be grounded on the contiguity of incommensurably heterogeneous traditions. Tolerance has to mean the recognition and acceptance of irreducible alterity.

IV

The globalizing forces emanating from changing scales of production and consumption in the world today cannot be denied or simply wished away. Neither should they be conceived as purely abstract forces unfolding their ineluctable consequences all over the globe. As I have tried to show, discourses on globalization have their own histories, just as there are different histories of globalization. The future, even the future of globalization, remains contested terrain. ■

The article appeared as: "Die Zukunfte der Globalisierung — Ueberlegungen aus der Perspektive Suedostasiens", in Joern Ruesen, Hanna Leitgeb, Norbert Jegelka (eds.), *Zukunftsentwerfe. Ideen fuer eine Kultur der Veraenderung*, Campus Verlag, Frankfurt/New York, 1999.

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ANNOUNCEMENTS

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CONFERENCES



- **Seminar on Malay Language and Translation**, 24 January 2001, Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia.

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- **1st Conference on the Southeast Asian Religious Mosaic in the 3rd Millennium**, 1-4 February 2001, Mahidol University International College, Salaya Campus, Nakhon Pathom, Thailand. *Background:* Southeast Asia accommodates a number of world religions including Buddhism, Christianity, Confucianism, Daoism, Hinduism and Islam. Southeast Asian forms of religiosity have often been regarded as syncretistic, hybrid and acculturated to the local magic-animistic tradition. Religions have played a vital role in community-building, state- and nation-building, independence movements, peace movements,

creating and preserving ethnic identities. Migration, colonization, modernization, Westernization and globalization have all had an impact on Southeast Asian religions and religiosity. The result is a colorful mosaic of religious traditions and cultures. Southeast Asian scholars from various disciplines and fields of interest are invited to attend the conference. *Issues:* The role of religions in development strategies, community development and/or conflict resolution; religious revivalism, new religious movements, and/or new forms of religiosity; interaction between religious authorities and lay religiosity; religious discourses and activities in environmental protection, education and/or anti-consumerism; religion and democratization; globalization and the role of religion; and, public religion and personal religiosity.

For further information, contact the organizing committee:

Dr. Eugene Jones
E-mail: drjones@cscoms.com
or
Dr. Marja-Leena Heikkila-Horn
E-mail: marlehei@loxinfo.co.th

- **Workshop on Imagining the Past, Remembering the Future: War, Violence and Memory in Asia**, 8-10 March 2001, Cebu, Philippines. Organized by the University of the Philippines and the Japan Foundation Asia Center, the conference has the following themes: War memories and history, memory of violence and identity, truth and reconciliation, memorialization and symbolisms of memory.

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- **5th ASEAN Inter-University Seminar on Social Development on Post-Crisis Southeast Asia**, 23-25 May 2001, National University of Singapore. *Themes:* Rural and urban poverty and inequality; social restructuring; Southeast Asian families; gender, culture and power; security and strategic challenges; information technology and the new economy; political economy of crisis and response; environment and politics; globalization and identities; governance and the state; conflict and cohesion in Southeast Asia.

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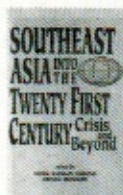
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- **Abd. Karim Abd. Rahman. *Tieng Viet: Vietnamese Language*.** 2000. 252 pp. Pub. Penerbit Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia. Cost: RM20. The book is designed for those who want to master Vietnamese language. Divided into three parts: 1. Pronunciation; 2. Essential vocabulary; and 3. Everyday conversation.

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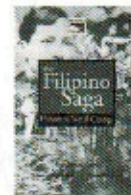
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- **Sida Sonsri (ed.), *Economic and Political Development in Southeast Asia*.** 2000. 10 vols. Pub. Kopfai. Cost: Baht 1,500 (for 10 vols.). The book analyzes economic and political developments in Indonesia, the Philippines, Malaysia, Singapore, Cambodia, Laos, Myanmar, Thailand, and Vietnam.

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- **Rosario M. Cortes, Ricardo T. Jose and Celestina P. Boncan (eds.). *The Filipino Saga: History as Social Change*.** 2000. 545 pp. Pub. New Day Publishers. Cost: PHP 625 excluding postage. Textbook on Philippine history.

Send order to:

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PROGRAMS AND PROJECTS

- The *Institute of East Asian Studies, Universiti Malaysia Sarawak*, coordinates and promotes a range of interdisciplinary programs and activities to advance a better understanding of the East Asian region. The Institute also encourages a deeper understanding of current and projected change in the regional and global socio-economic environment. *Research focus:* Sarawak and Borneo studies; East Asian studies in the fields of ethnography, economics, culture, politics, policy studies, regional studies, East Asian growth area, and international relations.

For more information, contact:

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E-mail: michael@ieas.unimas.my
Webpage:
<http://www.unimas.my/html/ieas.html>



► **Program for Southeast Asian Area Studies (PROSEA), Academia Sinica.**

Aims: To facilitate multidisciplinary research on Southeast Asia among researchers in the Academy. **Research areas:** Austronesian history and prehistory; languages, religions and indigenous cultures in Southeast Asia; post-colonial developments in Southeast Asia; and interaction of the ethnic Chinese and Southeast Asian peoples. PROSEA also supports researches by post-doctoral fellows, M.A./Ph.D. students on Southeast Asian studies. **Publications:** Newsletter of Southeast Asian Area Studies (thrice a year), research bibliography series, and occasional paper series.

For more information, contact:

Program for Southeast Asian Area Studies (PROSEA)
Academia Sinica
Nankang, Taipei 115
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Tel. +886-2-2782-2191; 2782-2195;
2651-6862
Fax +886-2-2782-2199; 2651-6863
E-mail: prosea@gate.sinica.edu.tw
Webpage: <http://www.sinica.edu.tw/~proseaw3>
or <http://www.sinica.edu.tw/~isear>



► **TANAP (Towards a New Age of Partnership) Programme, School of Asian, African, and Amerindian Studies, Universiteit Leiden.** Two major projects: 1) The TANAP Archive Conservation Project is directed at the study, preservation, and disclosure of 5,000 meters of archives of the Dutch East India Company in Asia, South Africa, and the Netherlands, and 2) The TANAP Partnership Research Project intended for M.A. graduates in History. The TANAP Research Project comprises: a) The Advanced Master's Programme (AMP): a training program for Asian, African and other non-European Community students in (17th-century) Dutch and archival research methodology. b) The Ph.D. Research Programme in the field of Early Modern Asian and South-African History. Young historians, who want to embark on an academic career in Asian or South-African Early-Modern history, are invited to enlist in the AMP. AMP courses start 1 January 2001 (maximum of 10 students) and 1 January 2002 (maximum of 10 students).

For application forms and more information, contact:

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H.E.Niemeijer@let.leidenuniv.nl
Webpage: <http://www.let.leidenuniv.nl/history/igeer.tanap.html>

FELLOWSHIPS



► **The Nippon Foundation Fellowships for Asian Public Intellectuals (Senior and Junior)** calls on public intellectuals (academics, mass media professionals, artists, NGO activists, and others with moral authority who are working to shape public opinion and influence policy in their societies) to apply for the fellowships for the year 2001-2002. **Eligibility:** Native to or currently living or working in Indonesia, Japan, Malaysia, the Philippines, and Thailand (regardless of nationality) and must be able to leave their country of residence during the term 1 June 2001 to 31 May 2002. **Themes:** Changing identities and their social, historical, and cultural contexts; reflection on the human condition and the search for social justice; and the current structure of globalization and possible alternatives. Fellows will be *required* to: Propose and carry out a project of research and/or professional activities in a participating country or countries other than their native country or country of residence; conduct research and/or professional activities in compliance with the schedule accepted by the Selection Committee; attend the API workshop to exchange results of their research and/or professional activities with other Fellows; disseminate findings and results to a wider audience; and pursue a deeper knowledge of each other, and the region. Deadline for submission of applications is 31 October 2000.

For further information, please contact the following partner institutions:

Indonesia

Center for Social & Cultural Studies
The Indonesian Institute of Science (PMB-LIPI)

Widya Graha, 9TH Floor
Jl. Gatot, Subroto No. 10
Jakarta 12190, Indonesia
Contact person: Dr. John Haba
Tel. +62-21-522-4667/525-1542 ext.
680
Fax +62-21-522-4667
E-mail: pmbliipi@indo.net.id

Japan

Center for Southeast Asian Studies
Kyoto University
46, Yoshida Shimoadachi-cho
Sakyo-ku, Kyoto 606-8501
Japan
Contact person: Dr. Donna Amoroso/
Dr. Yoko Hayami/Ms. Naoko Maeno
Tel. +81-75-753-7348
Fax +81-75-753-7350
Webpage: <http://www.cseas.kyoto-u.ac.jp>

Malaysia

Institute of Malaysian and International
Studies (IKMAS)
Paras 5, Bangunan Fakulti Ekonomi
Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia
43600 UKM Bangi
Selangor Darul Ehsan, Malaysia
Contact person: Ms. Au Yong Geok
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E-mail: aygl@hotmail.com/
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Webpage: <http://www.ikmas.ukm.my/>
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History Department
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Contact person: Dr. Felice Noelle
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7th Floor, Prajadhiok-Rambhai Barni
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Phyathai Road, Bangkok 10330
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Wun'Gaeo
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Fax +66-2-255-1124
E-mail: ias@thaimail.com
Webpage: <http://www.ias.chula.ac.th>

LANGUAGE COURSES



- ▶ Learn Business Bahasa Indonesia, Bahasa Melayu, Filipino, Myanmar Language and Vietnamese for businessmen at **SEAMEO Regional Language Centre (SEAMEO RELC)**. The language courses are tailored for businessmen who have minimal or no knowledge of these languages. The courses focus on spoken aspects of the languages and also give insights into the social and cultural background of the countries. Course duration is 51 hours with a special in-country immersion program. Fee is S\$700 (inclusive of 3% GST).

For inquiries, contact:

Mrs. Sathya S. Retnam
SEAMEO RELC
30 Orange Grove Road
Singapore 258352
Tel. +65-737-9044 ext. 615
Fax +65-734-2753

or

Ms. Chia Whee Yee
Export Institute of Singapore
Tel. +65-433-4485

TRAVELING CLASSROOM

- ▶ **The 3rd Southeast Asia traveling classroom** will take place in the Philippines from 25 April to 6 May 2001. Twenty-four travel grants are available to Southeast Asian graduate and undergraduate students from Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines and Thailand.

For inquiries and application form, contact:

For the Philippines
Prof. Miriam Coronel-Ferrer
Director
The Third World Studies Center
Palma Hall Basement
University of the Philippines Diliman
Tel/fax +63-2-920-5428
E-mail: mferrer@kssp.upd.edu.ph

For Malaysia
Dr. Rozainee Khairudin
Psychology Department
FSKK
Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia
43600 Bangi, Selangor D.E.
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Tel. +60-3-8929-2286/2210
Fax +60-3-8929-3541
E-mail: onee@hotmail.com or
rozpan@pkrisc.cc.ukm.my

For Indonesia

Dr. Bambang Purwanto
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E-mail: b.purwanto@mailcity.com

For Thailand

Dr. Charnvit Kasetsiri
History Department
Thammasat University
2 Phra-Chan Road
Bangkok 10200, Thailand
Tel. +66-2-224-8099
Fax +66-2-882-1320

E-mail: charnvit@alpha.tu.ac.th

Application forms are also available at:
The SEASREP Council (Manila
Secretariat)

Deadline of applications:
11 December 2000

SEASREP REPORTS

The *1999-2000 Annual Report of SEASREP* is now out and copies of the 1995-1998 consolidated report and the 1999 annual report are still available upon request. Contact the SEASREP Council Manila Secretariat.

SEASREP GRANTS

► Language training

For the study of a Southeast Asian national or local language other than one's own, or a source language (a former colonial language except English), through a formal course or with a private tutor. Study of the selected language should be necessary to enable the applicant to carry out library or field research. A list of language courses is available at the Manila Secretariat.

► Visiting professors

To enable departments or institutes to sponsor one to two weeks of intensive lectures by a visiting Southeast Asian expert from the region.

► The Luisa Mallari Fellowship for M.A. and Ph.D. research in Southeast Asian studies

For graduate students doing library or field research on a Southeast Asian country other than their own or on a comparative topic involving two or more Southeast Asian countries.

For grant guidelines and application forms, contact: The SEASREP Council Manila Secretariat

► Regional collaboration

For regional collaborative research, for comparative research, and for other activities that contribute to strengthening Southeast Asian studies in Southeast Asia. These can include collaborative research that examines the region as a whole; individual or joint research focused on countries in the region other than the researcher's own; and seminars, workshops, and publications aimed at sharing the results of research in Southeast Asian studies.

For grant guidelines and application forms, contact:

The Tokyo Joint Secretariat for
SEASREP
c/o The Toyota Foundation
Shinjuku Mitsui Building 37F
2-1-1 Nishi-Shinjuku
Shinjuku-ku, Tokyo 163-04
Japan
Tel. +81-3-3344-1701
Fax +81-3-3342-6911
E-mail: seasrep@toyotafound.or.jp

Application forms are also available at:
Japan Foundation offices in Bangkok,
Jakarta, Kuala Lumpur and Manila
Toyota Foundation home page, by
following the links to "Program
Related to Southeast Asia":
<http://www.toyotafound.or.jp>

Deadline for all applications:
7 December 2000

