

The 40th Southeast Asia Seminar

The Promise and Challenge of Democracy in 21st Century Southeast Asia

Organizers:

Center for Southeast Asian Studies (CSEAS), Kyoto University
University of Yangon

Sponsors:

MEXT Research Program “Promoting the Study of Sustainable Humanosphere in Southeast Asia” and JSPS Core-to-Core Project “Collaborative Research on Transitional Justice and Inclusive Economic Development in Developing ASEAN Countries”

Date: 19-22 November 2016

Venue: Business Alliance Hotel

Yangon, Myanmar

At present, Southeast Asia faces uncertainty in its political development, and what is central is the broadest possible paths open to democratic governance. Since the 1980s, a wide range of experiences with democratic transition have highlighted the difficulties that characterize the region to this day. The increased public participation in democratic processes has been accompanied by opposing trends towards more authoritarian rule. In every country in the region, government accountability is becoming an increasingly important facet of rule. Interestingly, however, the number of full-fledged democratic states in Southeast Asia is still limited. The majority of states can be categorized as different types of hybrid regimes, in which democratic and non-democratic elements exist side-by-side in the same political system. There is great hope for a future of more democratically oriented politics in the near future, yet at the same time there is little ground for optimism about democracy and democratization in 21st century Southeast Asia.

This academic seminar looks at the challenges of democracy in politics, society and natural resource management, and explores the possibility, potentiality and probability of democracy in the region. Democracy usually means a series of political institutions, such as free and fair elections, national parliaments with sufficient authority, and competition among political parties. However these institutions do not function without other broader conditions; state governability, the rule of law and accountability; a shared sense of equal citizenship, a knowledge of civil rights, and freedom of speech; economic stability, economic inclusiveness, and physical safety. In this seminar speakers will address significant issues and concerns relating to the politics of/in democracy, social movements in the making and unmaking of democracy, and the interaction between nature and democratic/undemocratic governance. The seminar includes a one-day field trip within Yangon.

Program

Friday, 18 November 2016

Arrival of participants in Yangon, Myanmar

20:00-21:00 Welcome Cocktail Hour

Saturday, 19 November 2016

8:00-9:00 Registration

9:00-9:30 WELCOME REMARKS by

Dr. Onmar Kyaw (Pro-Rector, University of Yangon)

Dr. Yasuyuki Kono (Director, Center for Southeast Asian Studies, Kyoto University)

9:30-10:30 KEYNOTE SPEECH

Thura U Shwe Mann

(Chairman of Commission for the Assessment of Legal Affairs and Special Issues at Pyidaungsu Hluttaw, The Republic of the Union of Myanmar, Former Speaker of Pyithu Hluttaw)

10:30-12:00 Orientation chaired by Yoshihiro Nakanishi

12:00-14:00 Lunch at the hotel

14:00-16:00

SESSION 1: POLITICS IN/OF DEMOCRACY

Chair: Dr. Hiromu Shimizu, CSEAS, Kyoto University

What shapes different political systems in Southeast Asia, and how do the ideas and institutions of democracy affect people's orientation and political behavior? This session discusses the interactions between formal institutions such election, parliament and political party, on the one hand, and the pressure for more democratic institutional reforms from inside

and outside of the ruling elites, on the other hand, focusing on challenges to democracy or democratic demand in different conditions and trajectories of political development. Speakers of this session critique too optimistic views on democracy, and offer case studies that highlight the complexity of democratization, durability of existing order, and critical factors to promote or undermine the possibility of democratic transition or consolidation.

Speaker 1

Democratization and the lack thereof in Southeast Asia

Dr. Ehito Kimura

(Associate Professor, Hawaii University)

Speaker 2

Making Sense of “Changes” in Myanmar

Dr. Min Zin

(Director, Executive Director of Institute for Strategy and Policy: Myanmar)

Speaker 3

Thailand’s Democratization : structure, key player and dynamism

Prof. Ukrist Pathmanand

(Deputy-Director, Institute of Asian Studies, Chulalongkorn University)

16:00-16:15 Coffee break

16:15-18:00 Q&A and Discussion

Chair: Hiromu Shimizu

19:00-20:30 Dinner at Shwe Ba (a Burmese restaurant near the hotel)

Sunday, 20 November 2016

8:30-10:30

SESSION 2: NATURAL RESOURCE MANAGEMENT

Chair: Daisuke Naito

Southeast Asia countries are often characterized as resource rich societies and management of these natural resource has always caught the attention of policy makers, government officials, scholars NGOs, and local communities. The state continues to make natural resources legible in order to make them controllable. Their utilization and exploitation has led to various forms of resistance from local communities to maintain their sovereignty. Rapid deforestation and agrarian expansion has also impacted upon management arrangements. But natural resources management is embedded within larger systems of governance: at local, national and regional levels. In this session, we will investigate how the development or deterioration of democratic governance has affected natural resources governance regimes, and the implications of these for resource extraction economies of the region. The democratic transition under way in Myanmar provides a timely yet complex view on the interactions between national and local governance in the management of its resources. A regional comparison between countries in the region with a longer history of NRM governance research may offer useful frameworks of analysis, opening up productive and constructive paths of investigation.

Speaker 1

Landscape of Political Ecology in Myanmar: Why it matters for democratic reform?

Mr. Win Myo Thu

(Co-founder and Managing Director of Ecodev)

Speaker 2

Protecting Animals, Managing People: Resource Thinking in Malaysia

Dr. Lye Tuck-Po

(Senior Lecturer, School of Social Sciences, Universiti Sains Malaysia)

10:30-10:45 Coffee break

10:45-12:00 Q&A and Discussion

Chair: Nathan Badenoch

12:00-14:00 Lunch

14:00-16:00

SESSION 3: SOCIAL MOVEMENT AND CIVIL SOCIETY

Chair: Satoru Kobayashi

Social movements are a crucial part of democratization and civil society is an imperative actor for supporting it. Since modernization in the region, all countries have experienced various types of social movements along the lines of labor, ecology, environment, ethnic groups, gender, sexuality, and peace among others. Although their forms and goals are various, each of them commonly illustrate confrontations and tension between people, society and state, in search of certain values in a specific time and space. The desire for democracy and human rights is one of the common values shared by Southeast Asian people today, but historical processes of adoption and struggles as well as their performances can vary considerably. This session, questioning democracy and state in Southeast Asia, will present a comparative examination of the state of the social movements and civil society in some Southeast Asian countries in order to deepen discussions on democratization.

Speaker 1

Problems and Promise of Youth Social Movements in Cambodia: A Case of Human Rights Activity and Natural Resources Protection

Mr. Sar Mory

(Cambodia Youth Network)

Speaker 2

Synergy for Anti-Corruption Campaign in Indonesia: Civil Society and Anti-Corruption Agency

Mr. Ade Irawan

(Indonesia Corruption Watch)

16:00-16:15 Coffee Break

16:15-17:30 Q&A and Discussion

Chair: Masaaki Okamoto

18:30-21:30

Dinner & Film Show

Chair: Mario Lopez

Film 1. *Vein*

This documentary deals with a relatively unspoken part of life in Myanmar, mining sites and highlights the dangers and perils that face laborers searching for jade.

Film 2. *Mother & Son*

The mother of two men who took part in the 1988 pro-democracy uprising remembers their struggle and their sacrifice for the sake of a more open society in Myanmar. Her experiences reflect the anguish of many families and the human cost of political activism.

Monday, 21 November

7:30-17:30

Session 4: Field trip to Yangon

This mobile workshop is designed to deepen our understanding of contemporary politics in Myanmar, in which unexpected changes are drastically happening. Participants will have a discussion on democracy and democratization with the Chief Minister of Yangon Region, followed by an observation of regional parliament. They will then visit the Headquarter of National League for Democracy (NLD), which won the 2015 general election and became the ruling party after two decades of democratic movement under suppression. Participants will be divided into four groups, and each group will conduct interviews with NLD political activists in order to build a picture of politics in Myanmar's daily life, both in the past and present. The last place to visit will be the office of *Irrawaddy*, which is one of the most active internet-based media groups in Myanmar. Throughout the trip, participants are required to record individual observations, exchange opinions and discuss research issues within each group.

8:00 Meeting at the hotel lobby

9:00 - 11:00

**Discussion with U Phyo Min Thein (Chief Minister, Yangon Regional Government) and
Observation of Yangon Regional Parliament**

11:30 - 12:30 Lunch

12:30 - 15:00

**Group interview with ex-political prisoners at the HQ of National League for
Democracy**

16:00 - 17:30

**Visit to the office of Irrawaddy, and Discussion on the Media's Role in Myanmar's
Democracy**

Tuesday, 22 November

8:30-12:00 Group-work

12:00-14:00 Lunch

14:00-17:00 Group presentations

Chair: Dr. Nathan Badenoch and Dr. Mario Lopez

17:00-17:30 Closing remarks

Dr. Shimizu Hiromu (CSEAS, Kyoto University)

Prof. Daw Yin Myo Thu (University of Yangon)

Wednesday, 23 November

Leave Yangon