

**Report of
JOINT SEMINAR
“Tenets of Human Development in Southeast Asia”**

**Organized by Center for Southeast Asian Studies (CSEAS, Kyoto University),
Universiti Brunei Darussalam - Institute of Asian Studies (UBD-IAS) and Southern
Institute of Social Sciences (SISS, Vietnam)**

Co-sponsored by “Southeast Asia Studies for Sustainable Humanosphere” (CSEAS, Kyoto University)

Date: March 4-5, 2015

Host: Southern Institute of Social Sciences (SISS), Vietnam

Venue: Southern Institute of Social Sciences
270 Nguyen Trong Tuyen Street Ward 8 District Phu Nhuan
Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam

In the spirit of fostering collaborative research in the region, the Joint Seminar was co-organized by three research institutions: Center for Southeast Asian Studies (CSEAS, Kyoto University), Universiti Brunei Darussalam - Institute of Asian Studies (UBD-IAS) and Southern Institute of Social Sciences (SISS, Vietnam). It was held on March 4, 2015 in the SISS office, Ho Chi Minh City.

The Joint Seminar was clustered to discuss four important issues in the Southeast Asia region: migration and civil society, sustainable humanosphere, history and religions, and literature and culture. It brought together region-based scholars to share their research findings and ideas for academic dialogues on the Southeast Asia’s rich history, resources and cultural diversity for its future dynamic integration.

The seminar was also attended by a number of important scholars from other research institutions in Vietnam, such as Ho Chi Minh City University of Social Sciences and Humanities (HCMUSSH), Institute of Social Sciences in the Central Region (ISSCR) in Da Nang City, Ton Duc Thang University, Open University in Ho Chi Minh City, Binh Duong University, and École Française d'Extrême-Orient (EFEO) in Ho Chi Minh City. The CSEAS team was composed of Assoc. Prof. Dr. Mario Lopez, research fellows Dr. Tsukasa Iga, Dr. Tran Van Do, Dr. Lisandro Claudio, and Dr. Jafar Suryomenggolo.

The Joint Seminar was attended by 41 researchers.

PROGRAM

Day 1

08.30-08.45 Welcoming remarks by Assoc. Prof. Dr. Le Thanh Sang (Deputy Director of Southern Institute of Social Sciences)

08.45-09.40 Keynote speech by Prof. Dr. Hendrik M.J. Maier (UBD-IAS): “Sailing for the islands in the South China Sea.”

Speech by Prof. Dr. Bui The Cuong (SISS): “Bringing Vietnam back into the Southeast Asia: story of Vietnamese social sciences.”

09.40-10.00 Break

10.00-12.00 Parallel Panel 1 and Panel 2

Panel 1: Migration and civil society in Southeast Asia

Moderator: Assoc. Prof. Dr. Mario Lopez (CSEAS)

Speakers:

1. Assoc. Prof. Dr. Le Thanh Sang (SISS): “Impacts of rural-urban labor migration on rural development in the Mekong river delta.”
2. Nguyen Thi Minh Chau (SISS): “Climate change and migration: exploring the impacts of climate change on people's livelihoods and migration in the Great Mekong Sub-region: a case study of Mekong Delta of Vietnam.”
3. Assoc. Prof. Dr. Tran Huu Quang (SISS): “Civil society in contemporary Vietnam: theoretical versus practical issues.”
4. Dr. Tsukasa Iga (CSEAS): “Political scandal and social accountability in contemporary Malaysia: the role of new media and opposition parties in a democratic society.”

Panel 2: Sustainable humanosphere in Southeast Asia

Moderator: Dr. Frank Dhont (UBD-IAS)

Speakers:

1. Dr. Nguyen Thi Hong Xoan (HCMUSSH): “Living environment in slum areas in Ho Chi Minh City.”
2. Dr. Tran Van Do (CSEAS): “Forest development and improving income for local people through quantifying environment value of forests in Vietnam.”
3. Dr. Ngo Thi Phuong Lan (HCMUSSH): “From rice to shrimp: ecological changes and human adaptation in the Mekong Delta of Vietnam.”

12.00-13.30 Lunch break

13.30-15.15 Panel 3: History and religions

Moderator: Dr. Jafar Suryomenggolo (CSEAS)

Speakers:

1. Dr. Lisandro Claudio (CSEAS): “Non-narration and the history of small people: Philippine historiography outside the nation state.”
2. Dr. Frank Dhont (UBD-IAS): “Toward an inclusive historiography of the nation: the case study of Indonesia.”
3. Assoc. Dr. Jeremy Jammes (UBD-IAS): “Transnational religious innovation in modern Vietnam: Cao Dai religion.”
4. Pascal Bourdeaux (EFEO): “Mekong delta under history, religion and development perspectives.”

15.15-15.30 Coffee break

15.30-16.45 Panel 4: Literature, art and culture

Moderator: Assoc. Prof. Dr. Mario Lopez (CSEAS)

Speakers:

1. Dr. Kathrina Mohd Daud (UBD-IAS): “Nation-building and identity in Bruneian literature.”
2. Nguyen Thi Truc Bach (SISS): “Cai Luong from perspective of cultural entity and sentimental characteristics.”
3. Dk. Dr. Noor Hasharina Pg. Hassan (UBD-IAS): “Home culture and consumption in Brunei Darussalam.”

16.45-17.00 Concluding remarks: Assoc. Prof. Dr. Mario Lopez (CSEAS)

Day 2

09.00- 15.30 Fieldtrip: Historical sites of Ho Chi Minh City.

ABSTRACTS

KEYNOTE SPEECH

Prof. Dr. Hendrik M.J. Maier: “Sailing for the islands in the South China Sea”

Malays sailed all over Southeast Asia, in particular the South China Sea, making Borneo an island and connecting it with mainland Southeast Asia. This speech discussed their journeys will on the basis of an analysis of a number of oral Malay Manuscripts.

Prof. Dr. Bui The Cuong: “Bringing Vietnam back into the Southeast Asia: Story of Vietnamese social sciences”

For many decades after 1945 until the late 1970s, Vietnam became an important actor on the worldwide political scene. In thoughts and feelings, many Vietnamese leaned in different geographical directions, but not towards Southeast Asia. The same held true for the Vietnamese social sciences community. However, since the late 1980s and especially early 1990s, Vietnam has gradually been re-orientating itself toward the region. This keynote discusses how the Vietnamese social sciences have also changed since then.

PANEL 1: MIGRATION AND CIVIL SOCIETY IN SOUTHEAST ASIA

Assoc. Prof. Le Thanh Sang: “Impacts of rural-urban labor migration on rural development in the Mekong river delta”

This research assesses the impacts of rural-urban labor migration on rural development and to a certain extent the impacts of rural development on trend of migration flows in Long An province of the Mekong Delta. The results found that rural-urban labor migration is accelerating the aging process of the rural population and agricultural labor, and reducing the proportion of workers in the agricultural sector. The migration has also increased the income of rural households and consequently stimulated investment in rural areas in various ways. On the other hand, infrastructure improvement and industrialization in rural areas are gradually changing the destination of migrant workers, increasing the magnitude and expanding the age range of migrant workers, but also starting to attract local small-scale business and may curb out-migration trends in the future. Some returned migrant workers started these ventures and absorbed local female workers, including returned migrant workers. However, low quality and low-paid migrants as well as limitation of migration age may cause problems for sustainable rural development in long-term and raise policy implications.

Assoc. Prof. Tran Huu Quang: “Civil society in contemporary Vietnam: theoretical versus practical issues”

The discussion about the concept of civil society in Vietnam in some recent years has lead to some misunderstandings relating to this concept, especially the relationship between the State, the market and the civil society. First of all is the inaccurate idea of the nature of the market and civil society, which holds that the market and the civil society are entirely independent spheres, lying outside of the political sphere and complying only with their own rules. Secondly, the reductionist distinction between the public sphere and the private one, as well as in the mechanistic distinction between the political sphere and the economic one. And thirdly, the view of civil society as a form of organization, a definite mode of

social organization, or a definite societal model. Basically inspired by Gramsci's thoughts on civil society, we think that an accurate definition of the concept of civil society could play an important role in the analysis of the relationship between the State and the society in terms of its empirical manifestation in contemporary Vietnam, as well as in the practical sphere of social administration and social policy.

Dr. Tsukasa Iga: “Political scandal and social accountability in contemporary Malaysia: the role of new media and opposition parties in a democratizing society”

This paper focuses on the occurrence and development of political scandals. It clarifies the mechanism of social accountability in contemporary Malaysia. Based on Markovits and Silverstein's classical study, most scholars have assumed that political scandals can occur in liberal democracies only. Recent studies, however, demonstrate that political scandals occur in democratizing countries, including semi-authoritarian countries like Russia.

On one hand, Malaysia in the post-Mahathir era is on the road to democratization. The ruling coalition, Barisan Nasional (BN), forms the federal government while civil liberties are still restricted with few minor changes have been introduced. On the other hand, opposition parties and civil society groups, which make effective use of new media such as blogs, Twitter, and Facebook, have become active under Abdullah's 'weak' leadership. They are the key driving forces for democratization and have exposed political scandals to the public gaze.

There are two main questions for this paper: (1) How and under what condition do political scandals occur and develop in contemporary Malaysia? (2) Can political scandals in contemporary Malaysia function to enhance democratization? In exploring the above questions, I focus on the role of new media and opposition parties by examining two case studies of corruption scandal: Lingam video scandal and NFC scandal.

PANEL 2: SUSTAINABLE HUMANOSPHERE IN SOUTHEAST ASIA

Dr. Nguyen Thi Hong Xoan: “Living environment in slum areas in Ho Chi Minh City”

It can be seen that, after revolution in 1975, Ho Chi Minh City had the largest population due to the flow of migration moving from other areas in the whole country. As a result, the needs of housing had become more and more urgently. Among the social groups who required housing, the poor people, especially migrants, were the most significant. Although the authorities had great efforts to solve this issue, housing shortage seems to be the big challenges until now. In order to explore the living conditions and housing demands of urban poor areas in Ho Chi Minh City, in the period of 2012-2014, the research “Building capacity of community people and local authorities for participation in improving living environment in slum areas in Ho Chi Minh City” was conducted by the University of Social Sciences and Humanities, funded by Rosa Luxemburg Stiftung, Germany with 500 households in poor areas in three districts in Ho Chi Minh City. Using data from the study, this paper focuses on three aspects: housing problems in Ho Chi Minh City, the living conditions in residential areas and solutions of the inhabitants, and the relationship among poverty, housing and urban environmental problems.

Dr. Tran Van Do: “Forest development and improving income for local people through quantifying environment value of forests in Vietnam”

In 2010, total forest land of Vietnam was 13.8 million ha, accounting for 44% total land area. There was a dramatic change of forest cover; it was 43% in 1943, reducing to 27.8% in 1990 due to logging and shifting cultivation. Since then forest cover has been increasing as efforts of government, reaching to 39% in 2010. The forestry sector contributed approximately 1.8% to total GDP and there was about 3.9% total population concerning in forestry activities. Accompany with increase of forest cover is reducing income of local people from banning logging and as currently it is paid 10 US\$/ha/year for protection/preservation. Such low payment results from no clear knowledge of environment function of forest in the aspect of how much carbon will be stored in protected/preserved forest. Therefore, quantifying carbon sequestration is supporting basic for higher payment to local people, whose life is mainly depending on forest resources. Research has been conducted in northwestern, northeastern, and Central Highland since 2012. Results indicated that one ha of tropical forest can sequester 4 – 6 tons carbon/year. Then, CO₂ emitters must concern in carbon market, pay for their CO₂ emission. Such payment will sustainable livelihood of local people and development of forest resources in Vietnam.

Dr. Ngo Thi Phuong Lan: “From rice to shrimp: ecological changes and human adaptation in the Mekong Delta of Vietnam”

In the last few decades, structural transformation in agriculture has been considered in Vietnam a key to rural economic development in the country. In the Mekong delta, the most important rice basket of Vietnam, farmers have diversified their economic activities, and engaged in production which involves high risks, partly due to global market price fluctuation. This change in livelihood pattern results in a significant change in the delta’s ecology.

This paper analyzes socio-economic changes as human adaptation to a new living environment in two shrimp-farming communities in the Mekong delta, one in the lower part (Ca Mau province) and the other in the upper part of the delta (Long An province). It examines the changes in livelihood and local ecology when farmers shift from conventional rice cultivation to high-valued shrimp farming and thus, from fresh water to saline water ecology. This paper concludes that human environment is a social process in which people constantly shape their landscape and they have to adapt to the “created” environment by changing their socioeconomic lives. In the shift from rice to shrimp, when people cannot adapt to ecological changes locally, labor migration is the best solution for their livelihood. This phenomenon can be seen as an indicator of agricultural unsustainability. My comparative study seeks to contribute to the understanding of socio-economic changes from an environmental perspective.

PANEL 3: HISTORY AND RELIGION

Dr. Lisandro E. Claudio: “Non-narration and the history of small people: Philippine historiography outside the nation state”

This paper examines the relationship between narrative history and “history from below.” Narrative history is associated with biographies of important people, and, as such, has a reputation for “excluding” certain social classes. On the other hand, social history—or telling the story of groups and classes—is usually conceived as a better way to narrate the stories of groups from “below.” But reducing lives to abstract categories can seem morally barren and transactional. And, when used with ideological intent, categories such as “the

people,” “the proletariat,” and “the nation” can become avatars for exclusionary political projects. This paper examines these problems through an investigation of the conflation between “the people” and “the nation” in Philippines historiography.

Dr. Frank Dhont: “Toward an inclusive historiography on the nation: the case study of Indonesia”

Indonesia is the largest country in Southeast Asia. The rich Southeast Asian diversity of peoples and cultures of Southeast Asia is expressed very articulately in the Indonesia nation. This diversity is recognized by the Indonesian motto: “Bhinneka Tunggal Ika”: Unity in Diversity. Interestingly written in Sanskrit, this motto typifies the Indonesian nation-state. The formation of the Indonesian nation begins in the early 20th Century. It is then that political movements and parties are formed that articulate and absorb this concept of ‘Indonesia’ in a Southeast Asia ruled by Dutch and other colonial empires. The rest is history... The intellectuals became more outspoken and used the Japanese occupation to gain independence in 1945 based on a national popular struggle against colonialism. What follows is a struggle against the Dutch who tried to reconquer the colony of the Netherlands as well as a struggle to forge very diverse regions and people into one nation. Now 70 years later Indonesia is a democratic nation with a significant rate of development. The paper will highlight how this process of national struggle and nation-building is as such portrayed in Indonesian history textbooks. The main argument in this paper is that this historiography of nation-building does not sufficiently fulfill its intended role as national historiography by being far too Java centric and ignoring the participation of other areas of Java.

Dr. Jeremy James: “Transnational religious innovation in modern Vietnam: Cao Dai religion”

Caodaism has been the subject of multiple social and historical studies, focusing on its crucial role of this new faith in Indochina as a social player and cultural mediator in the process of the decolonization. Academic accounts of Cao Dai religion have largely ignored the links between this new Vietnamese religious movement and both Western Occultism (including spiritism, theosophy, psychic practices, etc.) and Chinese redemptive societies. In this paper, I thus propose to consider Caodaism as a unique product of the confluence of Chinese and French religious responses to modernity, a hybrid expression of spiritual universalism as well as a vehicle for a distinctly Vietnamese religious construction of ethnic and national identity.

PANEL 4: LITERATURE, ART AND CULTURE

Dr. Kathrina Mohd Daud: “Nation-building and identity in Bruneian literature”

Fewer than a hundred local prose and poetry works are published annually in Brunei (Nellie DPH Sunny, 2012), with a majority of these published through the National Language and Literature Bureau. The low output of texts through traditional publishing systems can be attributed to a number of factors, including insufficient financial support and infrastructure, low readership and a sluggish national reading culture. Additionally, very few of these works have been translated into English, in part due to the National Language and Literature Bureau’s well-documented stance on the importance of Bahasa Melayu as the national language and discouragement of hybridized, colloquialized versions of Bahasa Melayu. In the last decade, however, increasing numbers of young Bruneian

writers have sought alternative means of recognition, either through self-publishing or online dissemination of prose (through “zines” and genre websites). Much of this emerging writing is in English or in colloquial Bahasa Melayu. This paper will examine the implications of this split from traditional, state-approved publishing through the representation of nation and identity in two texts, Norsiah Haji Gapar’s *Pengabdian* (1987), which has since been appropriated and circulated as a textbook in the national curriculum and Amir Faliq’s self-published *the Forlorn Adventure* (2013).

Nguyen Thi Truc Bach: “Cai Luong from perspective of cultural entity and sentimental characteristics”

Cai Luong is the opera-drama type formed on the basis of the reformed traditional Vietnamese opera influenced by Hat Boi theatre (theatre classic), of the development of singing opera with acting gestures and of acquiring Western theater background. Cai Luong was first shown in the South of Vietnam, the Southern people is the main subject of the creative process and artistic reception. From practical basis, this research recognizes and analyzes Cai Luong through two major research issues. Firstly, on the subject of culture - cultural environment, system of specific characteristics of the Southern people and its direct impact on Cai Luong. Secondly, expression and sentimental is a typical characteristic of Cai Luong which is shown on the aspects such as script content, methods, tunes, acting. And this is a significant and prerequisite characteristic for Cai Luong, the type that has long been known as “the art of emotion”, “sentimental theatre”.

Dk. Dr. Noor Hasharina Pg. Hassan: “Home culture and consumption in Brunei Darussalam”

The Government of Brunei Darussalam has played a central role in the provision of public housing in the form of landed property for many centuries. Modernity and economic growth has resulted in urban sprawl and land scarcity for development in Brunei-Muara district. In a bid to arrest this unsustainable trend, the Government is supplying smaller living spaces such as semi-detached houses and terraces compared to the first generation of the National Housing Scheme (NHS) as well as promoting high-density, high-rise settlement complexes as an alternative to meet housing demands. Nevertheless, the government has assured that development of NHS houses have always incorporated the Malay Islamic Monarchy concept (MIB) that is sensitive to the local culture and practices. However, significant alterations of NHS houses by recipients are suggestive of the incongruence between NHS housing design and Bruneian housing proxemics. Understanding and appreciation for Bruneians’ lifestyle and consumption culture are undoubtedly important for urban planners and housing developers to consider. Using a more qualitative approach, this research aims to study the degree of incongruence between Bruneian culture and proxemics with that of NHS designs through the use of structured interviews with participants currently living in one of earliest housing areas in Brunei. The study takes an insider-outsider approach which further emphasizes the importance of local knowledge and understanding of local cultures and practices in research. It is hoped that through this study we will have a better understanding of the housing demands of Bruneians and their cultural including consumption practices that have implications on housing development.

Pictures

Image 1. Group photo of seminar participants at the Joint Seminar.



Image 2. Field trip in Ho Chi Minh City. Participants in front of Saigon Central Post Office (designed and constructed by Gustave Eiffel).

