DEPARTMENTAL SEMINARS (2006)

SE6770 GRADUATE SEMINAR

Wednesday, 15 November 2006, 2.00 – 5.30 p.m.
AS3, Level 6, SEASP Seminar Room (#06-20)

These presentations by incoming graduate students are intended to facilitate the development of their thesis topics and proposals. They share their preliminary thoughts and findings with the wider scholarly community in the hope of securing helpful comments and feedback.

SPEAKERS AND TOPICS
1. Tiffany Kay Hacker
   Of Muscular Gods and Tattooed Men: Contesting Contemporary Mural Paintings in Northern Thailand

2. Chia Chee Kain, Arthur
   Managing Religion: A Critical Reading of Professor Trevor Ling's 'Buddhism, Confucianism & the Secular State in Singapore' (1987)

3. Foo Shu Tieng
   Hoabinhian Rocks: Applying Experimental Archaeology to the Southeast Asian Context

4. David Liauw
   Architecture and Nation-Building in Malaysia: Reflections on Two Contrasting Mosques

5. Tan Li Ching
   'Does this look like how it should saung?': Problems of Transcription in Burmese Music

SCREENING DISCUSSION: “DICULKE NDHASE, DIGONDHELI BUNTUTE” [“LET THE HEAD GO, HOLD ON TO THE TAIL”]

Dr Priyambudi Sulistiyanto
Assistant Professor, Southeast Asian Studies Programme

Wednesday, 1 November 2006, 3.30 – 5.00 pm

ABSTRACT
In this presentation, I would like to show a documentary film entitled "Diculke ndhase, Digondheli buntute" ["Let the head go, Hold on to the tail"] (Syarikat, 2006), which I used as a source of materials for my on-going research on the politics of reconciliation in post-Suharto Indonesia. I will then provide a short commentary on it with the aim to encourage the audience to participate in the discussion.
DOING FIELDWORK IN A CONFLICT ZONE: MY YEAR IN PATTANI

Professor Duncan McCargo
Visiting Senior Research Fellow, Asia Research Institute, NUS

Wednesday, 25 October 2006, 3.30 – 5.00 pm

ABSTRACT
The Presentation will discuss the challenges of carrying out interview-based research in a low intensity conflict zone. Around 1700 people have been killed in Thailand's Muslim-majority Southern border provinces since January 2004. In an attempt to understand this complex and troubling conflict, Duncan McCargo based himself at Prince of Songkla University, Pattani for most of the period from September 2005 to September 2006. He travelled widely around the three provinces of Pattani, Yala and Narathiwat in a beat-up 1989 Mercedes, talking to range of informants, and lived to tell the tale.

THE SPEAKER
Duncan McCargo is professor of Southeast Asian politics in the University of Leeds, and currently holds a visiting position at ARI, NUS. He has published various books on Thailand, the latest of which is Rethinking Thailand's Southern Violence (SUP, forthcoming, edited). He is currently writing up his research on the Southern Thai conflict for another book to be published by Cornell University Press.

THE CENTHINI STORY: THE JAVANESE JOURNEY OF LIFE

Dr Soewito Santoso

Thursday, 14 September 2006, 3.30 – 5.00 pm

ABSTRACT
According to Javanese philosophy, life is a long journey from birth to death, full of excitement and dissolution, contributing valuable experience in the development of body and soul. It is up to the individual to decide how to manage physical and spiritual development.

The Serat Centhini contains one of the fullest, most subtle exposition of this philosophy. It conveys its message through stories of exemplary figures. One such story focuses on Rancangkapti, the youngest daughter of Sunan Giri, perhaps still less than ten years old, and Jayengsari, a boy of a few years older. In the first chapter of the book, which depicts their pre-adulthood journeys as renegades from Giri, they experience many misfortunes that strengthened them for further adventures. On the spiritual plane, they met many priests and older people who gave good advice and guidance for their journey. In the second chapter on adulthood journeys, Rancangkapti is married, and Jayengsari has become a celibate priest. The text contains many other stories of travellers on the journey of life.

THE SPEAKER
Born in a hamlet called Gamolan, Karanganom, Klaten, Central Java, Indonesia, the author is the son of a village chief, the sixth of seven children. Upon graduating from the Faculty of Arts, University of Indonesia, Jakarta, he was appointed headmaster of the Senior High School of Singaraja, Bali. While there he began to search for a manuscript to serve as the basis for his Ph.D thesis. Three years later he was appointed lecturer at the Institute of Teacher Training at Malang, East Java, where he stayed till 1964. He then moved to Canberra, Australia, to lecture at the Faculty of Oriental Studies (later known also as The Faculty of Asian Studies), while writing his doctoral thesis. He obtained his Ph.D degree in 1969, and stayed at the ANU as Senior lecturer till 1987.
COME AND MEET FILIPINO PAINTER EDGAR TALUSAN FERNANDEZ

Wednesday, 6 September 2006, 3.30 – 5.00 pm

THE SPEAKER: EDGAR TALUSAN FERNANDEZ (B. 1955, PHILIPPINES)

Edgar Talusan Fernandez (who sometimes signs his works as Talusan) was born in Caloocan City. He obtained his art education from the PWU College of Fine Arts where he majored in commercial art and interior design.

He was soon to realize that his real talent lay in printing. From his first works in 1975, he has emerged within a period of ten years to be one of the most productive social realists with a wide thematic range and a wealth of creative resources in the Philippines.

In his art, Edgar Fernandez assumes the authentic role of an artist of our time: to be witness to contemporary events and to take up the cause of the people in art as he develops a personal idiom that realizes his vision.

SOCIAL SCIENCE, PEOPLE, STATE AND EARTHQUAKE

Dr Aris Arif Mundayat
Visiting Fellow, Southeast Asian Studies Programme, NUS

Wednesday, 30 August 2006, 3.30 – 5.00 pm

ABSTRACT

A tectonic earthquake of 5.9 on the Richter scale rocked Jogjakarta at 5.54am on 27 May 2006. This natural disaster flattened housing and public facilities in the Southern part of Jogjakarta and surrounding districts. Even more tragically, the death toll was extremely high, reaching 4,554 people on Jogjakarta province and 1,680 people in Central Java province. This disaster caused huge disruptions among major civil society organizations in the area, such as Dasawisma (neighbourhood of ten houses), a self help group set up by local women. While the local government was paralysed, the central government through the provincial authority intervened without any understanding of the local issues. In the meantime, various relief groups, each of which led by different interests, also got involved by creating Pokso Peduli Gempa (“Task Force for Earthquake Victims”) with the aim of helping local people. While the promise of some forms of compensation by the central government is yet to materialise, the local people remain confused about their future and are still struggling to come to terms with the disaster. Dr. Aris Arif Mundayat will share his personal reflections on these issues in this talk. His presentation is also an attempt to question the role of social sciences and social scientists in understanding and in dealing with earthquakes and natural disasters in Indonesia.

THE SPEAKER

Aris Arif Mundayat is the Director of CSASS-GMU (Centre for Southeast Asia Social Studies-Gadjah Mada University), Jogjakarta, Indonesia. He is an anthropologist with a Ph.D degree from Swinburne University of Technology, Melbourne, Australia. He is currently a Visiting Fellow at the Southeast Asian Studies Programme, National University of Singapore.
ABSTRACT
State formation among the Central Highlanders of Vietnam under the First Republic, as existing analyses inform us, was an assimilation process. The government of the First Republic envisioned a process of modernization, to be realized primarily through agrarian change, for the highlanders. Present analyses tell us that this was done through a formula of assimilation via agricultural resettlement. I suggest that the situation was probably not as bleak as painted by the current literature. Recently available archival documents indicate that agrarian change introduced by the government for the Central Highlanders was mediated through an array of programs that went well beyond the simple formula of assimilation via resettlement. For all the assimilation tendencies one may identify in the First Republic’s highlander policies (chinh sach thuong), we may find recurring middle ground practices that soften this rather conflictual story of state formation on the frontier we know so far. The state form that was continually being reproduced for the 1955-61 period was not that image painted in existing literature.

THE SPEAKER
Stan is a Senior Tutor at the Southeast Asian Studies Programme of the National University of Singapore. He recently submitted his PhD thesis, entitled ‘Dust Beneath the Mist: State and Frontier Formation in the Central Highlands of Vietnam, the 1955-61 Period’, at the Department of Political and Social Change, Research School of Pacific and Asian Studies, The Australian National University. Stan began studying about Vietnamese rural society in 1997 when he first conducted fieldwork in the Mekong Delta. He shifted his research focus to the Central Highlands of Vietnam since late 1998.
6. Ms Trina Tinio (PhD student) - Four Curricula and a Funeral: Education in the Philippines and Malaya

7. Mr Idham Setiadi (PhD student) - The Floating Mandala: Questions of Place in Borobudur.

MANOEUVRES IN MANADO: MEDIA AND POLITICS IN REGIONAL INDONESIA

Professor David T. Hill
Visiting Senior Research Fellow, Asia Research Institute, NUS

Wednesday, 29 March 2006, 3.30 – 5.00 pm

ABSTRACT
One of the most evident changes to Indonesian public culture since the fall of President Suharto's 'New Order' in May 1998 has been the florescence of the nation's media. This article examines these changes at the local level, in a perimeter region of Indonesia, away from the political epicentre of Jakarta. It seeks to test assumptions about the impact of a raft of central government policies collectively dubbed 'de-centralisation' or 'regional autonomy' in North Sulawesi. By exploring the unfolding relationship between local media and local politics, it questions assumptions that the unshackling of media following the collapse of an authoritarian regime axiomatically produces a pluralist democratic media. In 2005 provincial and local elections took place throughout Indonesia. The mayoral elections in the provincial capital of Manado provide a measure of how the local media are responding to the new political environment. If, as a consequence of 'regional autonomy' provisions, the national centre of Indonesia's new democracy is weakening, is media ownership and production also becoming regionalised? What kind of media is emerging in these regions and what role do they play in local politics?

THE SPEAKER
David T. Hill is Professor of Southeast Asian Studies and Fellow of the Asia Research Centre at Murdoch University, Western Australia. He is currently a Visiting Senior Research Fellow at the Asia Research Institute, National University of Singapore. His research interests cover Indonesian media, politics, literature, and culture. His books include The Internet in Indonesia's New Democracy (2005) and Media, Culture and Politics in Indonesia (2000) (both co-authored with Krishna Sen), Beyond the Horizon: Short stories from contemporary Indonesia (edited, 1998), and The Press in New Order Indonesia (1994, 1995).

MARITIME PIRACY IN SOUTHEAST ASIA: STATUS, RESPONSES AND DILEMMAS

Mr. Xu Ke
PhD Candidate, Southeast Asian Studies Programme, NUS

Wednesday, 15 March 2006, 3.30 – 5.00 pm

ABSTRACT
Maritime piracy in Southeast Asia has a long history. Piracy was rampant in colonial Southeast Asia, until it was firmly suppressed by the European colonial authorities. Since the end of the Cold War, piracy has made a spectacular comeback in Southeast Asian waters, especially in the Straits of Malacca.

This seminar aims to answer the following questions: What is the current status of piracy in Southeast Asia? How do the related countries respond to piracy, and what are the dilemmas in anti-piracy cooperation? The seminar starts with a brief historical review on piracy in Southeast Asia, then answers the above questions by examining two sets of interlinked nexus, namely
pirates and state, and inter-state anti-piracy cooperation, and concludes with an analysis of the historical continuity and transformation of piracy in Southeast Asia.

THE SPEAKER
Henry Xu Ke is a PhD candidate in the Southeast Asian Studies Programme of the National University of Singapore. His research investigates the shipping industry, maritime piracy and state responses to piracy in Southeast Asia.

ASIAN CHRISTIANITIES: POLITICS OF MYTH IN CONTEMPORARY VIETNAMESE CATHOLICISM

Dr. Jacob Ramsay
Postdoctoral Fellow, Asia Research Institute

Wednesday, 15 February 2006, 3.30 – 5.00 pm

ABSTRACT
Christianity today is at a major crossroads in its centuries' long history in Asia. It boasts one of the fastest growing religions in the region, its following is regarded more dynamic than in the religion's "traditional" home, Europe, and the Christianisation process itself is increasingly Asian in origin. Yet, to date, Christianity is in many studies still approached in terms of its "foreignness" to the local religious milieu and the "shallowness" of its infiltration in Asian societies. Building on foundations laid over a decade ago by Hefner and Keyes, this project seeks new ways to explore contemporary Asian Christianity in its various forms, local experiences and perceptions of the religion and its impact on regional political and social change. To explore the issues and questions above, in this talk I examine contemporary Vietnamese Catholicism to illuminate broader themes of enquiry in Asian Christianities.

Catholicism, the second largest religious following in Vietnam, occupies an ambiguous position on the local religious landscape. Despite its four - centuries - long heritage in Vietnam, the religion remains hostage to its stigmatisation as a foreign - imposed religion. Catholics, while openly lauded by the state for their contribution to nation - building, are still the subject of suspicion in official discourse. This study examines the underlying tensions in contemporary Church - S tate relations by focusing on the social production of “myths” as publicly shared knowledge about the religion. This study asks how myths – in the form of rumour, hearsay and misinformation – have informed the way Catholicism has been experienced and portrayed. It suggests “myth - making” offers a way to understand the continuities and ruptures in Church - S tate relations over time. In turn, a focus on “myths” offers a means to explain the discourse of “foreignness” and “cultural incompatibility” associated with Catholic identity.

THE SPEAKER
Jacob Ramsay is a Postdoctoral Fellow at the Asia Research Institute. His current research focuses on religion and politics in Southeast Asia, and religious change in contemporary Vietnam. He is finishing a book, Mandarins and Martyrs: Catholicism and the Nguyen in 19th Century Vietnam, which examines the rise of official anti - Catholicism under the Nguyen, and the pre - colonial roots of religious sectarianism in modern Vietnam.
PRESENTATION OF HONOURS STUDENTS' RESEARCH PROPOSAL

Wednesday, 8 February 2006, 3.30pm

This seminar is an occasion for those of our Honours students who are writing a thesis to present their research ideas at a fairly early stage in the process. We would like to invite SEA SP staff members and research students to attend the seminar in the spirit of making constructive comments that will help the students refine their arguments and research design.

1. Deborah Lee - 'Local Music in Singapore
2. Alan Ang Kwan Lin - 'Vietnam - Singapore Industrial Park JV (VSIP) in South Vietnam'
3. Kamolwan Olarikovit - 'Multiculturalism and the accommodation of others' in Singapore. A case study of married Vietnamese women through matchmaking agencies'
4. Tan Shao Han - 'Magic and Modernity in Singapore'

EAST KALIMANTAN AND THE CHALLENGES OF DECENTRALISATION

Mr. Paul Culligan
PhD candidate, Southeast Asian Studies Programme, NUS

Wednesday, 18 January 2006, 4.00 – 5.30 p.m.

ABSTRACT
This presentation offers an examination of the political dynamics of the Indonesian province of East Kalimantan since the fall of the New Order in 1998; specifically exploring the impact of the decentralisation process, enacted in 2001. Indonesia’s experiment with democracy has resulted in a system of decentralised governance which has given extensive powers to the district level of government, largely bypassing the provincial tier. Hailed by some as a panacea, decentralisation is seen as a means of providing good governance, locally sensitive development and above all providing a solid foundation for sustainable democratic institutions. However, others see it as a confused, ill-thought out process that at best decentralises corruption and at worst endangers the unity of the state. East Kalimantan, Indonesia’s richest province and one that has been largely devoid of ethnic-conflict as seen throughout the rest of the archipelago, provides an exemplary case-study both of the positive and negative ramifications of decentralisation. A successful economy and peaceful local elections mask extensive corruption, feelings of marginalisation and a growing Dayak political movement that threatens to spark ethnic-conflict as seen other parts of Borneo. How the challenge of decentralisation is managed in this, one of Indonesia’s most valuable provinces will have widespread consequences for the whole of Indonesia.

THE SPEAKER
Paul Culligan is currently a PhD candidate with the Southeast Asian Studies Programme, National University of Singapore. His thesis topic is “Indonesia: The Challenge of Decentralisation”