



The Asian Public Intellectuals

The Nippon Foundation Fellowships for Asian Public Intellectuals

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Are We Up to the Challenge? Current Crises and the Asian Intellectual Community The 5th API Workshop

The 5th API Workshop was held in Phuket, Thailand last 26-30 November 2006. With the theme *Are We Up to the Challenge? Current Crises and the Asian Intellectual Community*, the 2005-2006 API Fellows shared their projects through songs, arts, films, and other presentations; and engaged in active discussions.

Workshop Director Dr Uthai Dulyakasem, Dean of the Liberal Arts Institute of Walailak University in Thailand, members of the API International Selection Committee and the Regional Working Committee (representatives of API Fellows) led incisive comments as reactors that stimulated further discussions amongst the Fellows.

Session 1 and 2 on Human Rights and the Underprivileged and Ecological Destruction and Modern Resource Management highlighted the protection of migrant workers' rights, concept of decent work, human rights education, decentralization of forest management, environment litigation, and public perceptions of tapirs. Session 3 on Young and Old in the Modern World clustered public services and gender issues for senior citizens, children and adolescent with disabilities, and juvenile systems.

Session 4 on Human Learning in the Contemporary World presented pollution campaign, environment education, song as development education, and open and distance learning institutions.

Session 5 on Bridging Tradition and Modernity and Session 6 on Art in a Borderless World covered traditional theater, contemporary art and dance, ceramics and cinema.

Session 7 and 8 on Identity and Self-Determination and Self-Perception in a Changing Southeast Asia included topics on peace building, ethnic relations, Islamic education, identity in a virtual world, being street vendor, and representation of migrant workers. Lastly, Session 9 on Culture and National Pride shared building Asian leaders, sustainable development, and island rituals.

While the topics were broad and far-reaching, the Fellows enthusiastically engaged in exploring the various concepts, experiences, and insights shared.

Some concerns were highlighted in the discussions. How to deal with the challenges of modernity without dichotomizing modernity and tradition, and West versus East? How to better understand globalism and regionalism in the changing conception of nation-states and nationalism? How to link the seemingly abstract social paradigms to daily life?

The Fellows raised the need for post-fellowship interactions to bring forward the accumulated knowledge and experiences; and the need to disseminate the Fellowship outputs to a broader public. The artists also called for different ways of participation to share their expertise outside of the dominant academic mode of analyzing issues.

The members of the Regional Working Committee, who met for the second time (the first was in July 2006) days before the workshop, took the opportunity to share the ideas and processes of the API Community. A draft Charter was presented for comments and suggestions; the same was presented in the Country Workshops that followed early this year. Hopefully, the process of sharing and exchange will contribute to firming up the ideals of the API Community as the platform for the Fellows to interact and take actions on common concerns. ➤ A. Magno

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Welcome Speech by Mr Yohei Sasakawa

Chairman, The Nippon Foundation

Today, Asia faces a variety of political, economic, social and cultural challenges. Because of the nature of the world we live in, many of these problems are multi-layered and complex. National borders count for less; technology - IT included - is advancing; people, goods and information flow more freely; and there is growing interdependence among peoples and nations.

With these developments, the issues have moved on from those we faced twenty or thirty years ago. Problems such as environmental destruction, human trafficking and terrorism have many different aspects. These touch on law, economics, human rights, religion, ethnicity and culture. Expertise in one area alone is insufficient to tackle them. Multidimensional approaches are needed to find solutions.

Under these circumstances, pooling the individual knowledge and experience possessed by experts in diversified fields, and using them collectively, will be crucial. The diversity of the API Community has tremendous potential. If it can organically integrate the individual knowledge of each

Fellow and create collective knowledge, it will have the ability to solve all kinds of issues.

The API Community is an action-oriented intellectual group of people who share a long-term commitment to the API's goal: to serve the public and to make society better. New ideas and solutions that emerge from the API Community must benefit society. As a community equipped with collective knowledge, and acting as a collective force, it is capable of tackling regional issues that test us as human beings. Over time, I envisage the API Community playing an important role in the evolution of society.

Therefore, consider how best to put your collective knowledge to work. Think deeply about what the API Community can do to make a positive contribution to society; how the API Community can best be utilized; and what direction it should go in. None of us know what the API Community can achieve. But without question it has enormous untapped potential and I look forward to seeing how you API Fellows develop it.



Keynote Speech by Dr Surin Pitsuwan

Former Foreign Minister of Thailand

This year's workshop theme is - *Are We Up to the Challenge?* The question for me is - A challenge to do what? As Asian Public Intellectuals you are the barometers and weather wands of all the challenges facing us in the 21st Century. How can we Asians do better than others and what can we Asians contribute to the Asian Century? What difference can we make the 21st Century, with all its problems and challenges, from the 20th Century when it was said to belong to other peoples of other continents?

We began the 21st Century with the Clash of Civilizations, with 9/11, with the violence of genocide, human insecurity everywhere, with the specter of HIV/AIDS and other pandemic diseases, with increasingly disastrous natural catastrophies, here in Phuket and the Indian Ocean only two years ago, the volatile weather patterns, and the looming threats of global warming as a consequence of our environmental degradation.

Planet Earth is running out of steam, depleted of its natural resources, poisoned by its own most intelligent inhabitants, damaged by human greed and insatiable desires. The challenge before us all is how to rescue the Planet Earth from its untimely demise and thereby saving the human specie from self-destruction?

Ours is a continent of Great Religions and Enlightened Prophets. We were taught, and are being taught, to conform with the force of nature. To live within the natural world. To respect the natural rhythm of change and impermanence. To contain our greed and control our desires. To be compassionate and to extend mercy to all beings.

If an Asian Century is to be different from the last one, it will be in the spiritual dimension of our global community. Asians will have to remind the world of basic truths. We need to lead the world in the resurrection of common consciousness or global awareness. A consciousness that we belong to the same specie. An awareness that we live and share this finite Planet Earth with the rest of humanity. That if we are not careful, we can drive ourselves and our entire specie to total extinction.

The Choice is yours. The Choice is Ours.

Jalaluddin Al-Rumi, a Muslim Sufi sage living at the crossroads of divergent cultures and turbulent times - Anatolia of the 17th Century - four centuries ago, surveying the scenes of changes and conflicts, caught between the burden of the past and the lure of the future, he mused: "The Vendors of old goods are gone. We are the new Vendors, this is our Bazaar."

So, to you all, Asian Public Intellectuals, You are the New Vendors of New Merchandises. The 21st Century is your Bazaar. Make it a good one - better than when it was the Bazaar of those who came before you. I know you all are up to the challenge.

Note: The two speeches above are abridged versions. For the full text, please see <www.api-fellowships.org>.



Waiting for Radical Learning in Indonesian Disaster Management: Lesson Learned from Japan and Thailand

Heru Susetyo is a lecturer and researcher at the Department of Law Society and Development, Faculty of Law, University of Indonesia - Depok.



"Not all the injustice accompanying the Tsunami can be blamed on Mother Nature" (Bangkok Post Editorial, 23 December 2006)

Indonesia is a disaster-prone country. Andre Vitcek (2007) wrote that it has replaced Bangladesh and India as the most disaster-prone nation on earth. The scope of disasters is on a scale so vast that they cannot be discounted simply as bad luck or wrath of Gods or nature. Some of the disasters are man-made; many are preventable. Vitcek (2007) underlined that earthquakes alone do not kill people. Poor constructions are the culprits; together with the lack of preventive measures and education.

Since December 2004, Indonesia lost some two hundred thousand people in disasters; excluding automobile accidents, ethnic-religious and vertical conflicts. Many Indonesians are living as dangerously as those in other war-torn parts of the world.

The existing disaster management policy framework is fragmented and scattered, outdated and lack coherence. Devastation from a string of major calamities in combination with the dawning of new democracy, local autonomy, and regional/ international framework compel a paradigmatic shift in the disaster management policy framework. According to Puji Pujiono, former director of UN OCHA in Kobe, a more effective management of disasters and a coherent policy framework with more effective downstream implementation would significantly improve human security in Indonesia.

Japan: 1959 Ise-Wan Typhoon and 1995 Kobe Earthquake

Japan is subject to frequent disasters such as typhoons, torrential rains and heavy snow because of geographical, topographical and meteorological conditions. There is much damage to lives and property due to natural disasters every year. Until the 1950s, numerous typhoons or earthquakes claimed more than 1000 lives. The number of deaths and missing due to natural disasters shows a declining tendency due to the progress of countermeasures i.e promotion of national land conservation projects, improvement in weather forecasting technologies, completion of disaster information communication systems and preparation of disaster management systems.

According to Director Koji Suzuki of the Asian Disaster Reduction Center (ADRC) in Kobe, the 1959 Ise-Wan typhoon around Nagoya area was a turning point in Japanese disaster management that indicated a shift from response-oriented to preventive approach and from individual to comprehensive multi-sectoral approach; and government along with private agencies started to invest for disaster reduction.

Japan enacted the Disaster Countermeasures Basic Act in 1961 which established: (i) Disaster Management Councils, a multi-sectoral coordination body at all levels; (ii) Disaster Management Plan; (iii) Ad-hoc headquarters for emergency response as a multi-sectoral body in case of emergency; and (iv) that the government must issue an annual government official report (white paper) on disaster countermeasures to be submitted to the Diet. The government arranged public awareness activities.

Osaka University Prof Tomohide Atsumi noticed that the recent turning point for Japan disaster management is the 1995 Kobe earthquake which killed 6433 people, left 123000 houses and building collapsed, and 316000 people displaced. It triggered tremendous response and ignited volunteerism. About 1.2 millions people volunteered to assist the victims and helped in the recovery of the city. Kyoto University Prof Toshio Sugiman supported this observation by stating that volunteering activities became more popular in Japan since 1995; and the government positively responded to this trend by enacting the Volunteering and Disaster Act which established volunteering centers in the affected areas.

Thailand: Learning from the 2004 Tsunami Countermeasures

The massive earthquake which triggered the 2004 Tsunami was among the most severe disasters in Thailand for centuries. It devastated 407 villages in six provinces, took 8000 lives, and caused a total financial loss of two billion US dollars.



Community dialogue with Tsunami victims in Rawai Beach Phuket. Photo by Heru Susetyo.

Thailand led an immediate and effective relief response from the day of the Tsunami; and was successful within a few months. The key factors in the effectiveness of relief response are: (i) the synergy of Thai people to provide all kinds of assistance to their affected countryfolks; (ii) the close and integrated collaboration and cooperation among the civil, military, police, NGOs, charitable foundations, civil defence volunteers etc; and (iii) the influx of support and humanitarian assistance from international communities, organizations, NGOs near and far (WCDR Report, 2006.)

The Royal Thai Government, private sectors, and NGOs launched rehabilitation activities to enhance livelihoods and to rebuild the environments of the affected people following the initial phase of rescue and humanitarian relief. Compensation scheme for the affected communities, Disaster Victims Identification (DVI), and temporary housing for the displaced persons were provided.

Preparedness activities reduce the vulnerability and increase the resilience in the Tsunami-hit communities. Supported by the international communities, NGOs and United Nations mechanisms, among the activities were introducing community-based disaster risk management, establishing the National Disaster Warning Center, and raising public awareness through disaster prevention education by the Disaster Prevention and Mitigation Academy (DPMA.)

Thailand's disaster management system is based on the Civil Defence Act of 1979 and the Civil Defence Plan of 2002. The National Civil Defense Committee (NCDC) coordinates all activities relevant to civil defence and disaster management and performs all functions relevant to management of disaster at the national level; while the National Safety Council of Thailand (NSCT) manages man-made disasters and providing safety education. The Bureaucrat Reform Act 2002 created the Department of Disaster Prevention and Mitigation (DDPM) under the Ministry of Interior that is responsible for the disaster management of the country (WCDR Report, 2006.)

Waiting for Radical Learning in Indonesia

If Japan and Thailand have radically learned from their natural disasters by introducing adequate disaster countermeasures including disaster responses and disaster preparedness, the radical learning in Indonesia in the aftermath of massive disasters i.e. the earthquake and December 2004 Tsunami is still being questioned.

In the absence of a Disaster Management Act as well as the integrative package of disaster management and disaster preparedness, the Indonesian people are really in danger. While the government reacted to the disaster by providing reliefs and emergency responses, these measures were bureaucratic survival and not a real product of radical and systematic learning. The coping capacity of the people remained low.

What should the Indonesian disaster management policy be? Puji Pujiono (2007) mentioned that at least four components of the paradigm shift should exist - from emergency response to disaster risk reduction; from centralistic to local autonomy, from relief to basic rights, and from government centric to participatory processes.

Flooding, Climate Change and Sustainability

Nadaraja Manickam is Deputy Coordinator of the Asian Communication Network based in Malaysia.



Where is Human Civilization Heading?

- Malaysia's worst floods in 37 years displaced nearly one hundred thousand people amid food shortages, looting. (December 2006)
- Heavy rain in Indonesia, exacerbated by deforestation, killed at least six people and drove tens of thousands from their homes. (December 2006)
- Jakarta is suffering from its worst flooding in five years and the rains have continued, giving little relief to the quarter of a million people displaced by the high water. (February 2007)
- The increasing intensity of tropical weather and the rise in ocean levels and temperatures are threatening to sink the island nation of Tuvalu in the South Pacific. Its citizens face the possibility of being among the first climate refugees.

We face steadily and steeply rising temperature on Mother Earth's surface. Global warming, increasingly seen as central to anthropogenic climate change, is brought about by careless human activity. The dire consequences i.e. heat waves and unusually warm weather, ocean warming, sea level rising, coastal flooding, intensification of cyclones, melting of glaciers and ice caps in the North and South Pole, drowning of small islands in the Pacific, loss of livable land masses, spread of diseases, coral reef bleaching, heavy downpours and snowfalls, droughts and fires, changing seasons with the arrival of early spring, are some of the critical signs of our times. All these will intensify, making the environment increasingly unsustainable and precarious for our children and for all life.

I do not think we can be happy about the prospect of a future for human societies. If South Pacific islands begin to disappear, we will witness nations getting submerged because of our unsustainable policies, patterns and practice. That also means the disappearance of cultural life, of civilizations. Are we on some form of a collective death wish?

Visioning, Seeking and Living a Way Out

While some continue to contribute to global warming, there are others who are hardly aware of the precarious nature of our existence. They have taken Mother Earth for granted and continue to live highly consumerist, materialistic and hedonistic lifestyles. The third group feverishly struggle to save the world by addressing the global warming problem in many ways. The latest is the highly popular and powerful framing of the problem by Al Gore's documentary, *An Inconvenient Truth*.

Changes in our individual consumption patterns, national development plans and global policies is the way out. The Kyoto Protocol, an agreement under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), commits countries to reduce their emissions of carbon dioxide (as well as five other gases), or engage in emissions of these gases, which directly contributes to global warming. It is the first and only binding international agreement that aims to lessen the greenhouse gas emissions that cause climate change. But will all this be enough and long-term?

We need to reconsider our framework of national and global development and progress. The developing world is passionately following the development and consumption patterns of the developed West, with an estimate suggesting we need five more earths! Our present framework of progress is so unsustainable that it spells disaster. We cannot be another West! We need a global reflective pause and look back into history and cultural pasts to move forward. It is in the supposedly primitive societies that we may find some answers.

We don't need technology; we need wisdom. We need to free ourselves from the seduction of progress and development to seek individual, national and global enlightenment; like Buddha did from temptation and desire. We need to question our careless and imperialistic urbanism and address the hegemonic anthropocentrism, a philosophical ecology that separates humans from the natural world in the most extreme ways." We need to ask "What is there in the wisdom of the indigenous societies of Asia and our cultural pasts that will help us make the world a better place and a sustainable one for future generations?" We need to seek for some of those inconvenient truths.

Some Inconvenient Truths

Asia's spiritual traditions present spirituality as the other side of sustainability. Spirituality is not simply religion; it locates the individual in the larger purpose of the collective and the natural cosmos and in the relational and emotional ecologies defined by values as respect, empathy, service, compassion, love, joy, wisdom, and peacefulness. There are non-materialistic, non-development oriented cosmologies of sustainability in Asia that nurtures all life within a non-utopian dynamic of living, growing harmony, social learning loops and spirituality. This orientation has wider implications.

(a) Take consumption. Modern urban-directed and supported consumption is perceived as a linear activity with the present (and youth) privileged. The past and the future are absent in the way we consume. We neither care about where the resources come from nor do we pay attention to what happens when we consume indiscriminately. We do not see the connectedness. However, consumption in the past and among many indigenous peoples in Asia is a circular process. Reflecting a different time sense, the circular process is one framed as one comprising pre-consumption, consumption and post-consumption stages. The consumption stage is conscious of the stages before and after largely tied to what is being consumed is part of the sacred or is a gift of the spiritual beings. Since the sacred is involved, it defines the idea of limit of use and consumption, both of which contribute to sustainability. The consumption circularity also provides for deeper connectivity between different realities and different times.

(b) Consider the connected notion of deep personhood: inter-being. Individual entities are dependent and interwoven into a non-beginning, no-end web. There is no atomized individual, but there is a networked individual who is part of continuity, a web of beings. So when we do something here and now, we must realize that an impact is created all over and across time. We need to be conscious, caring and responsible, keeping in mind that

we are part of a larger nurturing reality. Inter-being offers a pathway to planetary consciousness and global citizenship, both is a must for any lasting solution to the problems of the world today.

Conclusion

The truths and wisdom of the cultural pasts of Asia offers many pathways out of today's chaos of development and towards a sustainable future. The simple truths mentioned above offer



An elderly being evacuated during the flooding in Malaysia. Photo by Nadaraja Manickam.

ways to re-situate the human, overcome the mess we have created and reverse the direction we are heading in time. They have the potential to slow down, reduce, or eliminate climatic changes that have the potential to destroy our civilizations, cultures and societies. As much as we must concentrate on the material exterior and social structures, we need to greater attention to our cultural interior and pasts, the wisdom associated with them and to our deep personhood.

We need to look back and deep within to move forward, sustainably.

1 http://img.photobucket.com/albums/v475/nurse_betty/2007/1%20January/n_04lijab.jpg

2 Koto Tinggi, Malaysia, Dec 23, 006 (Reuters): <http://www.alertnet.org/thenews/newsdesk/SP142366.htm>

3 <http://www.worldtravelwatch.com/07/02/indonesia-jakarta-floods-continue-dengue-fever-outbreak.html>

4 <http://www.grist.org/news/maindish/2005/02/16/braasch-tuvalu/>

See <http://www.climatecrisis.net/>

5 Deborah Ros, "An Indigenous Philosophical Ecology: Situating the Human", *Australian Journal of Anthropology*, Dec 2005.

6 While these ideas emerge from the contributions of the Vietnamese Zen master, Thich Nhat Hanh, they echo in Buddhist-Hindu emotional and intellectual life in Southeast Asia. And they are reflected in the cosmic native religious and cultural values. For instance, in the Philippines, they have the notion of kapwa. Though there is a difference between the Buddhist notion of inter-being and Filipino notion of kapwa, they share in the meaning that is intended to be established: "Kapwa is a Tagalog term widely used when addressing another with the intention of establishing a connection. It reflects a viewpoint that beholds the essential humanity recognisable in everyone, therefore linking (including) people rather than separating (excluding) them from each other." Kapwa simply means 'shared self' and that defines the Filipino personhood (not personality). Connectivity again.

Territorialization of Forest Resources

Yuli Nugroho is Executive Director of Yayasan Damar in Indonesia.



For hundred of years, local communities have been managing natural resources (forests) in a sustainable way through their own modes such as CBFM (community-based forest management) in the Philippine, *pachumchon* in Thailand and *Hutan Kemasyarakatan* in Indonesia. Forests as resources are managed by customary laws which is respected and implemented by communities i.e. forests can only be harvested for domestic use, forests can only be harvested using manual tools, respect to traditional belief, etc. This traditional knowledge is strictly implemented to avoid destroying the forests. Forests are important not only as a source of economic livelihood but also as a place where they can practice their ancestral beliefs.

The communities-forests harmonious relationship is changed after government and private companies see forests as a potential source of income. To accelerate economic development, the government divided the forests areas and gave concessions to companies without consulting the communities. The companies claimed that they have total authority, access and right to manage (and exploit) its concession areas. Since then, conflict emerged between communities, government or companies in many places.

This is called territorialization where state or companies control and limit local communities and peoples' activities (Peluso, 2005.) In certain cases, the state and companies control on the communities caused conflict, even violence, particularly when the state and companies involve the military in controlling the communities.

Bundles of Rights

The bundles of right is a notion in common property management wherein more than one right is attached to one resource; or owned and claimed by more than one person. For example, with a tree - one person may have a right on its fruits, another on its wood, another on its leaves, and another on the land where the tree grows, etc. The persons who claim rights are dependent on the number of functions of the tree.

Like a tree, forests also have many meanings and functions. For communities, the forests fulfill their economic needs on food, fodder, fuel wood, and timber as well as their needs for water irrigation, animal, etc. To some, forests also have social and cultural functions; and fulfill the need for traditional medicine.

State and companies see forests merely as a source of timber which can be exploited anytime.

Bundles of right can also be used to trace back the kinship and origin of communities. In West Kalimantan in Indonesia, for instance, a hundred-year old durian tree generates as much emotional association and recognition with its many layered meanings and means of making claims (Peluso, 2005.) A durian tree and its fruit first belong to the planter and her husband, then to all their children, and the subsequent generations of grandchildren and great-grandchildren. The number of siblings and cousins with rights in them increase through the many human generations that such a tree can endure.

Hence, it can be said that bundles of rights not only show the relationship between people and resources but also social relationships between people who has interests on the resources. There is a need for collaboration on how to distribute and allocate resources with more rights and claims. Even though the customary laws were not written, the laws are maintained and implemented by the communities in their daily life.

The neglect of the traditional laws caused the conflict among communities and state or companies. The presence of outsiders changed the relationships between people and resources and social relationships between people and people.

Respect Customary Laws

Conflicts between communities and state or companies highlight the importance of respecting and recognizing customary laws. New forestry regulations i.e. Community Forestry Bill in Thailand must accommodate and articulate local values. Forestry development also needs to adjust to the local values. National park establishment, for instance, which has become a national agenda in Southeast Asia exclude the people who live in the area many years before. The establishment of forestry projects i.e. national park, concession, conversion to estate, etc. do not mean territorialization that lose access of communities to these areas. Without respecting the customary laws, the presence of state or companies and the initiative of forestry developments will trigger conflict between communities and state or companies.

Reference:

Peluso, Nancy Lee. *From common property resources to territorializations: Resource management in the twenty-first century. In Commonplaces and Comparisons – Remaking Ecopolitical Saepces in Southeas Asia.* Edited by Peter Cua-say and Chayan Vaddhanaphuti. Chiang Mai: RCSD Faculty of Social Sciences Chiang Mai University. 2005.

Life After Tsunami

Kokaew Wongphan is a freelance journalist. Thanks to Pipob Udomittipong for the translation from the original Thai text.



The 2004 Tsunami wiped away many lives and properties and worsen the livelihoods of communities living in Takuapa District, Pang-nga Province and Phuket Province.

The nightmare came in the aftermath of the Tsunami.

At least 81 communities in six provinces in the affected areas including Phuket, Phang-nga, Krabi, Ranong, Trang and Satoon faced land insecurity. They confronted land disputes with private or governmental sectors who claimed to be landowners. Many villagers were barred from reconstructing houses in the same land their families have lived for generations because they were unable to produce documents to prove their ownership.

Some people in Ban Namkhem, Ban Laempom, Ban Taptawan belonging to the Morken (sea gypsy) in Takuapa District, Ban Nairai in Taimuang District, Pang-nga Province and a Morken's village in Rawai District, Phuket Province organized to resist the eviction. Villagers got together to form a land network to voice out their problems to the government and an ad-hoc committee was set-up to solve land disputes. Yet, the efforts were not seriously pursued; many villagers were forced to leave their land. The rich claimants asked the court for eviction orders; hundreds of such cases are still pending in the courts. The villagers received some assistance from the Law Society of Thailand (LST) in this litigation cases.

Villagers were evicted even though they have information to prove that the rich claimants' land titles were obtained through corrupt channels. They used their influence to hold the villagers at bay. At Ban Nairai, Taimuang District, Pang-nga Province, the villagers were charged with trespassing, subject



Tsunami victims discussing the land issue in Ban Nai Rai. Photo by Kokaew Wongphan.

to eviction; though the courts have not made any ruling yet. Though the villagers were assisted by LST's lawyers, their livelihoods were greatly affected while waiting for the ruling. As well, they continue to incur legal expenses.

The rich claimants capitalized on the grave situation and the pressure faced by the villagers. They offered money to the villagers to purchase equipment for fish cage culture provided that they agree to relocate. Funds for basic utilities and facilities in the new settlement were also promised. Left with no choices, some villagers took the offer. The lands on which they used to live cost several times more than the land they were relocated. If the fish cage culture cannot sustain their livelihoods in the future, they will have nothing else to do.

The Tsunami took away their houses and some family members; but life after the Tsunami inflicted more brute. Now, land laws and dark influences are waged by the rich to unfairly and inhumanely steal their lands. The government is inactive on the issue. The villagers still live in pains and agonies.

Earthquake Response in Yogyakarta

Sri Nuryanti is a researcher at the Center for Political and Regional Studies of The Indonesian Institute of Sciences.



The 27 May 2006 earthquake hit Bantul region and its surrounding areas in Yogyakarta - Indonesia's cultural city. The massive damage awakened solidarity among those who survived the earthquake. It was heart-breaking to see my village totally damaged. My first concern was to save the lives of my wounded and dying neighbors.

We evacuated people to hospitals and clinics - many survived but some died. My family was aware that we have limitation in providing aid. We mobilized funds and other means that can help the people survive.

The API FUG earthquake recovery program grant and some contributions from API Fellows provided medicines, first aid and temporary shelters; supported economic activities such as food production i.e. traditional rice/flour crackers, soybean cake, traditional snacks and others and farming activities i.e. rice seeds, fertilizers, and hand sprayer; and supported trauma relief activities i.e. facilitating children's games, disseminating

knowledge on earthquake, giving away toys and other useful materials for children trauma relief.

We realized that the problem will be the continuation of life after the termination of any kind of aid/donation from the donors. Thus, aside from financial support, we also coordinated with POSKO (Center for Coordination of Disaster Recovery Effort) and the Setrajana (Student Association for Mountaineering of Gajah Mada University.)

The initial target group was for households in Gatak, Sumber Agung, Jetis, Bantul; but later also included Yogyakarta and surrounding areas including Gunung Kidul and Klaten.

The Javanese family system involves all family members (husband, wife, kids, and relatives staying with them) in farming. On top of this, the wife usually do home industry such as food production for additional income. Thus, the farming and food production assistance contributed in recovering the economic activities of the families for their basic sustenance in the longer term.

Barbing Pinay's Healing Journey from UP to Bicol

Flaudette May V. Datuin is Associate Professor at the Department of Art Studies, University of the Philippines - Diliman.



Barbing Pinay (Filipina Barbie) and her journey from a University of the Philippines classroom to Bicol Province devastated by super typhoon Reming (international codename: Durian) was born by two mother projects: a class activity of Art Around Us (Art Studies 2) administered by the UP Department of Art Studies (UP DAS) and the healing art workshops in connection with Filipina artist Alma Quinto's collaborative project - the House of Comfort - which aims to build a giant house quilt with contributions from survivors of various traumas.

In the class project, the students were instructed to "create a doll, give her/him a name and a life history, describe his/her characteristics and provide him/her with her accessories, come up with an ad campaign and sell her/him to the class, and the class decides if the doll has a market or audience." This exercise facilitated the discussion on gender issues and passive consumerism, drawing from popular culture and the students' everyday life. Before they created their dolls, the students researched on three icons of popular culture - the Japanese *shojo*, a *manga* and *anime* character usually a young girl whose powers are based on sexual innocence; the fairytale heroines of storybooks and Disney animations; and the impossibly proportioned Barbie doll. The doll project intended to challenge the negative traits and highlight the positive traits of the *shojo*, fairytales and Barbie.

Most of the dolls created were anti-Barbie, and borrowed heavily from the *shojo*, especially its hybrid characteristics - *mecha* and *cyborg* superpowers, its ability to transform itself and create more humane and other worlds.

Creating the dolls, forming imagined companies, and presenting their doll prototypes and marketing campaign to the imagined exacting board executives were fun ways of debating issues related to identity, challenging traditional corporate practices, and developing critical social consciousness. However, while the dolls became a rich source of instructional materials for succeeding Art Around Us students, they remained stored in our memories and our computer's hard disks.

In February 2007, a group presented an unfinished, interactive rag doll which children and their mothers can accessorize and clothe that led the exercise to a more outward-looking and art-for-healing direction. The group defended their doll: "Aside from being very cheap and very easy to make, children can bond with their mothers by actively creating instead of simply buying an expensive Barbie with its impossible and pre-given physical traits." They added that it is huggable, washable, flexible and transformable. Made of scrap cloths, this doll is environment-friendly and can be marketed in and through communities and NGOs; not in the malls.

A few days after this was presented in class, Quinto and I went to Naga City to conduct House of Comfort Workshops with the elderly at the Tomasa Community Center led by United Nations peacekeeper Jean Llorin and with differently-abled children of Help Learning Center led by Dr Fe delos Reyes, also an API Fellow. In between workshop activities, I learned about the Tomasa Center's activities for the youth from German and British volunteers and broached the idea of an anti-Barbie doll workshop for young people at the

center. After several phone calls and emails, the other members of the Tomasa Community Center suggested that we instead call the project *Barbing Pinay* which is more positive, flexible and catchy.

Nineteen students, one eight-year-old child and two adults headed to Tomasa Community Center in Naga City on March 31. Together with young people, we created 20 dolls with their own life histories, clothes and accessories at almost zero-cost. API Fellow Rudyard Pesimo, an animation expert and faculty at the Ateneo de Naga, was involved in the project. The group proceeded to the Maipon Evacuation Center in Guinobatan, Albay on 1 April to offer



Children held their dolls during the workshop. Photo from <www.barbingpinay.multiply.com>.

the dolls to the children through stories that inspire and give hope. One story from the Acta/Agta ethnic group, a much abused and discriminated minority, was about the future President of the Philippines. Another doll named Otap has wings and can fly, has birds for parents, and with a mission to save animals.

Some students expressed frustration that there were not enough dolls to give away to the many children

who lost their families, their homes, their toys and most of what they owned. They were consoled that it will be followed by another workshop with the children making their own *Barbing Pinays*. The sequel was dubbed *Barbing Pilay* (paraplegic Barbie) with participants from the differently-abled children of Help Learning Center and a smaller group from the UP pioneers. After the Help workshop, differently-abled facilitators can be trained to conduct the workshops with the children of the Maipon Evacuation Center and hopefully spawn more local facilitators conducting future workshops - fellow Bicolanos helping fellow Bicolanos - a model which can be replicated all over the Philippines.

As Dr Fe delos Reyes said, drawing her metaphor from the human body, "Perhaps the fact that there are not enough dolls to go around at the Maipon Evacuation Center is symbolic. When the organism is wounded, that organism draws from its own strength and resources to heal itself. When the organism gets used to external dole-outs, it loses that self-healing capacity and becomes dependent and even twisted." By providing the venue and environment for children to make their own toys out of scraps and their innate talents, we help them remember, reconnect and mine their capacity to create, imagine, and endure.

For related stories, please visit <http://archive.inquirer.net/view.php?db=1&story_id=54073> and <www.barbingpinay.multiply.com>. Also see: <www.trauma-interrupted.org> and <www.trauma-interrupted.org/datuin>.

Between Manado and Davao: How the Indonesian Island of Miangas is Making Use of its Philippine Ties

Djorina Velasco is a freelance researcher. This article was first published on *Newsbreak* <www.newsbreak.com.ph>, 12 February 2007.



The tiny Indonesian island of Miangas usually does not make the news. With just 982 people on the island, life on Miangas is simple. There is no cell site, no regular electricity, and no marketplace. Fishing and copra production are the only economic activities of significance.

In the afternoons, people sit chatting with their neighbors, while village kids play on the pristine white beach after school. Most members of the close-knit community are devout Protestants. Criminality on the island is practically nil.

What makes Indonesia's northernmost island interesting is its location. About 324 miles separate it from North Sulawesi's provincial capital of Manado, while Davao City is just 78 miles away. Sovereignty over the island has been a contested matter.

Ownership over Miangas was settled before the Court of International Justice at The Hague in 1928, where the Dutch presented a stronger case than the American contenders. Yet the Indonesian and the Philippine successor states have not pursued the matter of bilaterally defining the exact coordinates of the fluid sea border connecting the two countries. And so, although Miangas is nominally part of Indonesia, the waters surrounding it are silently claimed by the Philippines in a border dispute that is, for all intents and purposes, inactive.

Not many people know that there is a special border crossing arrangement between Indonesia and the Philippines dating back to 1975. Residents of the border area have the privilege of crossing the border without using passports to visit family, celebrate religious occasions or engage in petty trading.

For this reason, the Indonesian-Philippine border crossing stations dot the islands on both sides of the border, including Miangas. Many of the adults, frequent border crossers, speak Visaya and/or Tagalog and tune in to the Philippine radio every day. Inter-marriage is common and many families have relatives in Southern Mindanao.

“...the once sleepy island is awash with government projects: the pier has been upgraded and a warehouse constructed, and there is even talk of developing an airstrip to bring Miangas closer to the world.”

Locals interchangeably refer to their home as *Isla de las Palmas* - its Spanish name dating back to colonial times. Its Indonesian name means “exposed to piracy” in reference to frequent attacks by Sulu slave traders in the past.

From Miangas, Cape San Agustin in Davao Oriental can be reached in three hours by pumpboat. By contrast, it takes three days to reach the main island of Sulawesi aboard a passenger ferry that plies the route every fortnight.



Local people are engaged in fishing. Photos by Djorina Velasco.

Like many other outer islands in the sprawling Indonesian archipelago, Miangas is beyond the radar screen of national concerns. An unprecedented expression of dissent in May 2005, however, put Miangas on the map. The trigger was the death of Miangas Village Secretary Jhonlyi Awala, who succumbed to injuries he received in a beating at the hands of the non-organic Chief of Police of Miangas who reportedly lost his temper when he encountered the drunk Awala on a Monday afternoon.

With no adequate medical treatment available on the island, Awala died in the arms of his relatives and neighbors the same night. Agitated villagers kept vigil outside the residence of the sub-district head, threatening to set a fire if



The Indonesian and the Philippine flags displayed in Miangas Island.

their calls for justice would not be heard. The next day, the Regent Elly Lasut arrived to prevent the situation from escalating. About two hundred people, dressed in black, mobilized to express their outrage at the senseless death and their acute neglect by the Indonesian state. They lowered the Indonesian flag at the Miangas pier and greeted the local government delegation by waving a Philippine flag.

In shock, Indonesian authorities wasted no time in wooing back the island population. Sacks of rice, assorted medicines and sports equipment were doled out almost immediately. Officially, the incident was downplayed as a “spontaneous emotional response to the death of a villager.” But it is obvious that the dramatic protest action has left a deep impression on worried provincial officials. Two years after the incident, the once sleepy island is awash with government projects: the pier has been upgraded and a warehouse constructed, and there is even talk of developing an airstrip to bring Miangas closer to the world. Piped water and street lights arrived in 2006. A residence for a village doctor has been built, although the doctor has yet to arrive.

How has the local population responded to the sudden attention? In the case of Miangas, the remote location has produced pragmatists rather than rebels. The Philippine flag has long been returned to its rightful place at the Philippine Border Crossing Station on the island and locals are proud to point out the progress when receiving newcomers.

Yoppy Luppa, the harbor master of Miangas, explains that “The people of Miangas feel close to the Philippines. But we are also scared of the war in Mindanao. We do not want to go there.”

The Philippine head of mission in Manado, Consul General Olivia Palala, also makes it clear that “The incident should be viewed as a domestic concern of Indonesia. However, the implication on the Philippines is that if the dissatisfaction of the Miangas population continues, this could mean a mass migration to the Philippines, which will further burden our security and economic problems.”

Is the grass always greener on the other side? Governmental neglect is not a new story, neither in Indonesia nor the Philippines. The people of Miangas, however, have made waves by teaching officials that the border area should not be treated as a backwater. How deeply the lesson has sunk in, of course, remains to be seen.

Development of Human Rights Studies in the Region

Mariko Akuzawa is an Associate Professor at the Faculty of Human Science and Environment, University of Hyogo, Japan.



Since the end of Cold War, many governments in Asia-Pacific Region started institutionalizing human rights. Ratification of international conventions, revision (or adoption) of new constitutions containing detailed provisions for human rights, establishment of independent human rights commissions are parts of such efforts. However, reforms of laws and systems are only the surface of the change. While many researches in early 1990's merely and simply welcome such changes as progress of human rights, it is high time for us to review their real implementation and evaluate how the changes brought differences in the lives of the people.

The establishment of human rights studies programs in universities in the region has significant meanings as they provide research opportunities. The Office of Human Rights Studies and Social Development of Mahidol University in Thailand offers an International Masters of Arts in Human Rights and

“... it is high time for us to review their real implementation and evaluate how the changes brought differences in the lives of the people.”

a PhD in Human Rights and Peace Studies are the only graduate degrees in human rights in Southeast Asia. I had an opportunity to teach for a few days at Mahidol early this year. It was one of the most inspiring experiences as it gave me many ideas how human rights studies (both research and education) should be constructed.

First, the program at Mahidol is interdisciplinary, as well as a combination of practical and theoretical studies. Human rights should not be the theoretical concern of jurists, as sometimes misunderstood. In order to review and evaluate the real implementation, social science methodologies are crucial including those of sociology, anthropology, psychology, education, political science, and other related fields. Every MA students in the program is required to conduct individual research for their thesis. The list of completed theses clearly shows the need for interdisciplinary approach to respond to the concerns that range from local to national case studies; international policy analysis on child, women, minority rights, HIV/AIDS, human rights education, culture and tradition i.e. dishonor killing and women's rights; official development assistance; election, social order policies, treatment of detainees and death penalty, etc.

Second, the interdisciplinary nature of the program attracts students with different professions that approach human rights at different levels and places of the society. The occupational backgrounds of the current 12 MA students varies from NGOs, international organizations, law firms, national human rights institutions, government offices, and so on. Such a colorful background greatly contributes to the discussion as inputs from different standpoints enhance the universality of human rights. Needless to say, the network of different professions and institutions will contribute to future implementation of human rights in the region.

Third, as it is an international program, students with different national backgrounds are admitted. Majority of the batch were from Southeast or South Asia; including Cambodia, Thailand, Myanmar, Nepal, India, Indonesia and Philippines. As such, even a short discussion during the class can map out the rough regional picture on a certain issue. For example, one asked a question, “Does your country have any legislation which supports human rights education?” Everyone gave inputs about their countries. Indeed, differences are the strength for the program.

Fourth, the international program for human rights studies and API Program appear to have many commonalities. Both programs promote mutual learning and discussions to challenge common problems in the region. At the same time, both programs prioritize researches for finding facts, leaps and gaps. Research is fundamental for evaluating the implementation of human rights, however, researchers quite often meet interventions because there are still strong myths against human rights among the people such as human rights are radical ideology that provokes anti-government attitudes. Support from universities with academic freedom is then very important in conducting research.

Finally, API can provide further possibilities to young researchers to expand their experiences. Through the discussion with students at Mahidol, I found out that most students conduct research in their own countries with their own language, although the thesis has to be in English. Familiarities of the places, peoples, and languages enable them to conduct in-depth studies. However, one of the practical reasons that limit research sites is the lack of funds to go abroad. Fellowship programs such as API could help them greatly to take further steps to gain comparative and regional research experiences. Development of such regional programs will surely contribute to the future establishment of regional human rights protection mechanism.

Crafts Can Cement Southeast Asia Ties

Ceramic artist Itsue Ito lives in Miyazaki, Japan while her works are exhibited in various art galleries in Japan, the United States and Europe. This is an abridged version of the article first published on *The Daily Yomiuri* <www.yomiuri.co.jp/dy/>, 20 January 2007.



Born in Japan, I could not help but be surrounded by ceramics. It is part of our Japanese culture and heritage.

This influenced me so much that it has defined my career as a ceramic artist. After graduating from Osaka University of Art, I traveled to the United States to further my education in a more expressive way than I could by staying in Japan. It afforded me the opportunity to not only learn but to teach as well. After returning to Japan, I periodically applied for grants to work overseas and have traveled to the Netherlands, France, Hungary, the United States, South Korea, and most recently to Thailand on an Asian Public Intellectuals Fellowship.

I applied to API so I could see how rapid change in Asia has affected the handicrafts encountered by Thais on a daily basis. Unlike the West and Japan, the industrial revolution and information technology came late and advanced quickly throughout Southeast Asia. This changed daily life and thus the way handicrafts were used in daily life.

Sadly, the result has been catastrophic. The lack of support from the lower and middle classes have all but erased a once prosperous, functional, and self sustaining industry that all Thais could enjoy. Local handicraft masters and the techniques they handed down have been replaced with mass produced plastic products. Thais are increasingly turning to these goods because they are cheaper and many feel they are superior in quality.

Unfortunately, plastic has no connection with the people in general and has a very impersonal feeling about it. Hands can create so many wonderful things, both utilitarian and aesthetic. Young people should try working with their hands so they can gain a true appreciation of the objects and to keep their cultural heritage alive. Ceramic materials by their very nature relate well to the hands and therefore handicrafts. Like ceramics, hand crafts are not only an object, but part of our culture. Japan is helping with the economic buildup of Southeast Asia, but should also show countries how to preserve their cultures. It is my belief that artists can also cooperate in this area.

“Local handicraft masters and the techniques they handed down have been replaced with mass produced plastic products.”

Before going to Thailand on the API Fellowship, I thought about this, and after returning have a stronger image of people sharing my thoughts and work. In the past, people would often view my work as something only to look at, untouchable as it were. But I felt that my ceramics should be more personal and to have greater meaning for the person looking at them. Again, being educated in Japan and the United States and working in Europe, I was able to see the influence the arts have on the culture. But I found this lacking

Linking Asian Youth: Notes from the Beijing Retreat

Herry Yogaswara is a researcher at the Research Center for Population of The Indonesian Institute of Sciences (PPT-LIPI).



Building a Better Asia (BABA) was established to link young Asian leaders from various programs administered/supported by The Nippon Foundation and its affiliate organizations such as the Sasakawa Peace Foundation and the Tokyo Foundation. BABA participants included Fellows from programs such as the Asian Public Intellectuals Fellowship (API Program), the Sasakawa Young Leaders Fellowship Fund (SYLFF), and the Graduate School Scholarship Program at the Peking University School of International Studies. There are more than thirty thousand public intellectuals, graduate students, journalists, NGO's, activists and the like who have benefited from TNF and its affiliate organizations. However, there was a lack of platform to link peoples from these different programs.

“... a commitment to working together in particular fields of action.”

In the spirit of providing an arena for Fellows to interact with each other and to create a platform to work for a better Asia in the future, a retreat program was held last 3-10 September 2006 in Peking University attended by 16 participants from Southeast, South, and East Asia. The program was titled *Building a Better Asia: Future Leaders Dialogue*, and the retreat's theme was *Reconciliation Reconsidered*.

Three API Fellow were invited to the program - Rosalie Arcala-Hall (Philippines, 2004/05), Herry Yogaswara (Indonesia, 2001/02) and Henry Chan (Malaysia, 2001/02 and SYLFF Fellow). There were two main activities in the retreat - lectures of prominent public intellectuals and group discussions that facilitated interaction among participants and strengthened the group.

Former Foreign Minister of Thailand Dr Surin Pitsuwan gave his insights on the role of young peoples in the region. Prof Jia Qingguo from the Graduate School of International Relation of Peking University emphasized the importance of non-political efforts among Asians to make a better Asia, such as culture and economic ties. Dr Rizal Sukma from Indonesia shared about political transition in Indonesia as one lesson learned from other countries in the region. Thai journalist Kavi Chongkittavorn talked about the role of media in Asia. Sri Lankan Dr Harsha Kumar, with his long experience engaging with NGO activities, challenged participants to reflect on the position of civil society in the Asia context. And Dr Yonosuke Hara from Japan talked about the importance of good governance in the development of Asian countries.

After every lecture, the participants divided into small group discussions. There were questions and debates but the spirit of understanding among the participants made the differences in thinking less conflicting. They always looked for a common ground.



The participants during the field trip in Beijing. Photo from Herry Yogaswara.

On the last day, each small group made a presentation on the most important topic to be addressed. A communiqué was made not only as an identity of the BABA group but also as a commitment to working together in particular fields of action. From the communiqué, the participants committed to follow-up activities such as creating a website <<http://www.buildingbetterasia.com>> and other activities related with academics and actions.

The participants and organizers also visited the famous Tiananmen field and the Forbidden City - both are symbolic of young leaders and great tradition of Asian values.

As a follow-up activity, Henry Chan and Herry Yogaswara initiated the formation of a Fellowship for Conflict Resolution that will be a forum for conflict resolution practitioners to bridge contending parties in the implementation of sustainable forest management. Their first field activity is a mediation project addressing a long-standing conflict between the Samling Corporation and the Penan's folks of Long Benalih, upper Baram of Miri, Sarawak. Rosalie Arcala-Hall and her group is working on a project of historical textbook in different Asian countries such as the Philippines, Myanmar and Peoples Republic of China. Both activities reflected the collaboration of different countries as well as the different backgrounds of the Fellows.

in Thailand. If Thailand is not careful, its cultural heritage will disappear at a much faster rate than in the Japan, the United States or Europe

I broke my fellowship up into two stays. The first was for one month to gather background information in and around Bangkok and, to a lesser degree, in the north. My second stay, for two months from the beginning of July to the beginning of September 2006, focused on the Chiang Mai/Lampang area, which is considered to be one of the leading ceramic production areas in Southeast Asia. While there, I observed and documented five basic areas of interest in regard to ceramics: observations on the streets and museums, interviewing artists and people in the crafts, talking with art educators, interviews with governmental organizations about ceramics, and visiting industrial ceramic centers.

Through my observations on the streets, in shopping malls, markets and resorts, museums, as well as at many industrial ceramic factories, I have seen what the average Thai thinks about ceramics and how it is used in daily life.

I learned two things: how much plastic is used by the average Thai instead of ceramics and how the ceramics, and how the ceramic industry caters to wealthy Thais and foreigners. I also learned that a combination of handcrafted and machine made products for the masses is important, but needs to be more carefully thought through than just producing objects. Artists and craftsmen showed me the beauty of their crafts and told me how their crafts are slowly fading away. And the government agencies showed me how they are helping the people in areas where craftsmen are centered, but in most cases struggle

to help because of limited funding and lack of coordinated effort to follow through on programs.

“...greater understanding of the complicated connections of social responsibility.”

What I personally learned from the API Fellowship was a greater understanding of the complicated connections of social responsibility. For my own work, I gained a better insight into how our hands connect to the uses that ceramics are put to. I also learned that artists also have a responsibility to make society better and can actually be a catalyst for this. We can offer our thoughts and ideas about education, business, government policy, tourism and ecology freely.

Being a somewhat young organization, API is still trying to find its direction. What is obvious, however, is that with a steadily growing number of Fellows, more people throughout Asia will begin to see the necessity of reevaluating their cultural heritage and identities. This in turn will strengthen ties throughout Japan and Southeast Asia and will enable a better understanding and respect for the region's past, and an awareness of how it can improve current realities, and foster a greater self awareness of a localized direction for its future.

Updates from Fellows



Yoshiko Shimada's exhibition *Bones in the Tansu* in Manila last August to September 2006 was reviewed by Helen Yu Rivera entitled *Demystifying the Japanese Household: Bones in the Tansu* published on *Ctrl+P* Issue No.4, essays 16-21, December 2006.



Sharaad Kuttan spoke on *The Real Image of Southeast Asia as Mirrored in Solidarity: Reading Intellectual Self-representation in a Time of Ferment*, **Ketut Gunawan** on *The Terrorists' Actions in Southeast Asia: Origins, Driving Forces, and Networks: The Cases of Indonesia and the Philippines*, and National Artist and Solidarity editor Frankie Sionil Jose, at the Ateneo Center for Asian Studies (ACAS) and the Asian Center for Journalism (ACFJ) roundtable discussion last 27 February 2007 in Quezon City, Philippines.



Henry Chan, Wataru Fujita, and Dave Lumenta will undertake an API Follow-Up Grant activity entitled *The Borneo SFM Dialogue in Miri, Sarawak, Malaysia; Samarinda, Kalimantan Timur, and*

Pontianak, Kalimantan Barat, Indonesia. The objective of the dialogue is to develop an alternative voice reflecting the personal opinions of individuals implementing sustainable forest management, local communities affected by or benefiting from the system, and NGO critics.



Ramon Santos was the Festival Director while **Cecilia de la Paz** was Exhibition Curator for the *Cuerdas sa Panaghiusa 2nd International Rondalla Festival* held in Dumaguete City, Oriental Negros, Philippines last 19-25 February 2007. The project

was sponsored by the National Commission for Culture and Arts (NCCA) Arts Month and the Province of Oriental Negros. There were some 36 concert performances throughout the province, conference on the history and global diffusion of plucked strings, workshops, and exhibit. Foreign groups from Australia, Burma, Japan, Israel, Mexico, Russia, Singapore, Thailand, and Iran joined the 10 outstanding local groups from the Philippines.

Ramon Santos was also part of the Symposium on the *Theories of Performance in the Musics of Asia* at the University of the Philippines' College of Music last 27-28 February 2007. Sponsored by the Center for Ethnomusicology, UP College of Music, UP Musarfound, Inc. and OICA, it brought together resource speakers and presenters from Myanmar, Okinawa, Singapore, Iran, Thailand, and Philippines.

Cecilia De La Paz was one of the speakers at the Religious Festivals in Contemporary Southeast Asia held at the University of California in Riverside, California, USA last 16-18 February 2007.



Supervising Legislative Committee Researcher **Allan Villarante** researched and drafted the bill *An Act to Strengthen the System of Management and Administration of Archival Records, Establishing for the Purpose of the National Archives of the Philippines, and other Purposes or The National Archives Charter Act*. It will insulate the established National Archives of the Philippines from any external machination of political, economic, or of whatever purpose. The landmark legislation was recently approved by the Senate of the Philippines.



Kokaew Wongphan writes her field research experiences in Indonesia and Philippines in <www.prachatai.com>. She is also an independent local reporter in Nakhorn Sri Thammarat where she is currently taking a graduate degree course.



Naveerat Leelawat is midway into her Master of Science in Media Technology and Games in IT University of Copenhagen. Partially funded by Danish Government, her research project is Computer Games and its Visualization and Serious Games.



Prangtip Daorueng wrote a series of three articles on Aceh from 8 to 10 February 2007 on <www.malaysiakini.com> titled *Tsunami's survivor begins task as Aceh's leader, Dead man ruling, and Aceh's democracy a bold experiment*.

Notices

Follow-Up Grant (FUG) Applications

The API FUG will continue to accept applications; except for the category on Response to Immediate Issues. The deadline for applications is on 30 August 2007. For more information, please visit the website <www.api-fellowships.org>.

TNF Dinner in Jakarta



The Nippon Foundation Chair, Mr Yohei Sasakawa, hosted a dinner-gathering at the Le Meridien Hotel in Jakarta last 14 February 2007. Photo above shows on front row from left: Indonesia Program Coordinator Dr John Haba, Mrs Abdullah, Mr Yohei Sasakawa, Indonesia Program Director Dr Taufik Abdullah, TNF Executive Director Mr Tatsuya Tanami, and TNF International Program Department Manager Ms Michiko Taki. Standing: Indonesian Fellows and Fellows currently conducting their projects in Indonesia. Photo by Natsuko Tominaga.

ACAS Call for Papers

The Ateneo Center for Asian Studies (ACAS) invites scholars, academics, practitioners and doctorate students from various disciplines to submit papers for its 5th ACAS conference with the theme *Religions in Asia: How They Interact with Regionalism and Globalization* to be held on 1 February 2008 at the Ateneo de Manila University. Send the title of the paper, 300-word abstract, and the proponent's one-page curriculum vitae to the ACAS Executive Director at <acas@admu.edu.ph> or <japanese@admu.edu.ph> or <lyjose@ateneo.edu> on or before 2 July 2007. The deadline for the complete paper is on 7 January 2008.

Obituary



Suwit (seated, center) with API Fellows. Photo from Kokaew Wongphan.

Suwit Watnoo, 54, died of heart attack last 12 March 2007. Representatives of TNF, CI and API Fellows attended the funeral held at Samakkhi Banpot Temple in Chon Buri's Sattahip District. The cremation is on 9 June 2007. He began his career as a teacher at a vocational

college in Bangkok after graduating from the Education Faculty at Srinakarinwirot University's Bang Saen Campus. He was actively involved in the October 1973, October 1976, and May 1992 political uprisings; and joined the underground movement of the now-defunct Communist Party in the wake of a government crackdown in 1976. After the government granted amnesty to members of the communist movement in 1985, he joined the Duang Prateep Foundation (Slum Foundation.) He was a member of the Human Settlement Foundation from 1989 and was the secretary-general at the time of his death. Suwit was adviser to the Assembly of the Poor and the Provincial Slum Network; served as secretary-general of the October's People Network and the Campaign for Popular Democracy; and was one of the leaders of the People's Alliance for Democracy.



THE EDITOR

Indonesia, Japan and the Philippines share similar geographical and physical conditions. All are archipelagic and exposed to the Pacific Rim. All three are located in the typhoon belt and the ring of fire making it perennially vulnerable to devastation and loss of lives. Fortunately, the bigger parts of Thailand and Malaysia enjoy safer locations and are protected from the temper of nature. Some occasional natural disasters do come by; though far in between.

The 2004 Tsunami and climate change, however, dramatically increased the insecurity of the first three and changed the sense of security of the last two countries.

Aside from natural calamities, man-made disasters also threaten lives and properties. Droughts, floods, land and mudslides, oil spills, industrial accidents etc. are results of irresponsible use and manipulation of nature's resources.

The unregulated rush for modernization includes massive dam constructions and control of water resources, logging and blasting of forest reserves, extraction of minerals and gas, and deep sea explorations. Access and control over resources is overtaken by states and corporations. Nature is territorialized and corporatized.

The flux of nature's wrath, the abuse of power of states and corporations, the demand of an increasingly consumerist world population put a heavy pressure on nature's capacity to recover. Sooner, than later, nature will find its own level. And it might be too late to take action.

Disaster prevention and management measures are urgent needs in the region. Japan has the political will, economic capacity, and citizen's volunteerism to confront emergency situations and to conduct recovery programs.

There are lessons to be learned and more to be done for the rest of the region. Some may have the expertise, some the civic awareness, some the political will; but one without the others is futile. The challenge is to approach the problem in a more wholistic and sustainable manner. Bad practices should be halted and social consciousness should be enhanced.

Still, lest we not forget, there are good practices and lessons on the ground. Respect of customary laws, peoples' interconnectedness with nature, citizens' volunteerism, trauma healing initiatives are being done by and amongst interest groups in many villages. While natural and man-made disasters may seem to be too huge to confront, the experiences, initiatives, lessons, and good intentions on the ground may prove to be the way forward.

Compassion, responsibility, ethical practices are not too hard to learn.

► A. Magno



THE FOUNDATION

The 5th API Workshop in Phuket was a wonderful representation of the diversity of the API Community. This diversity was represented by the participants and the presentations made. The topics ranged from human rights, the environment, to contemporary art. The methods of presentation also varied - some used the latest digital technology, while others used more analog methods; but everyone found a way to engage the group. It was evident that each person spent a lot of time thinking about the best way to communicate their message within the constraints of the time and venue they had to work with.

A travel writer I know once told me that the last thing she wanted to do after traveling was to write about it. She wished she could just experience the magic of traveling and not have to translate it into words for the practical benefit of others. I am sure many others in her position feel the same.

Thus, it was nice to see people so eager and willing to share their API journey with others. With such a variety of interests and so many distinct voices, it was a tribute to the Workshop Director Dr Uthai, the moderators and discussants, and all participants that we were able to have such lively and substantive discussions. Most importantly, I think it showed that the Fellows, despite their diverse backgrounds, have many ideas and values in common.

A few months after the 5th API Workshop, orientations were held in each country to welcome the 7th group of Fellows to the API Community. This year's orientation was held to coincide with the country workshops which allowed Fellows to meet those from different batches.

At the same time that we welcome new members to the Community, we unfortunately had to say our goodbyes to a most loved and respected fellow. We were deeply saddened to receive the news that Mr Suwit Watnoo passed away on 11 March of a sudden heart attack. Suwit was one of Thailand's leading social activists and a man who dedicated his life to protecting the rights and improving the livelihoods of the poor. As a Senior API Fellow, Suwit went to Malaysia, Japan and the Philippines to conduct research on urban homelessness in 2004/05.

News of his passing was covered on the front page of newspapers and the country mourned the loss of the great "people's warrior." Hundreds of people, including many members of the API Community, attended his funeral to pay their respects. Our thoughts are with his family and friends at this sad time. We know that Suwit will live on in the thoughts of many people, and we feel honored to have had such a wonderful man as a member of the API Community.

► David Karashima

In Memory of Pi Suwit Watnoo

Kokaew Wongphan is a freelance journalist. Thanks to Pipob Udomittipong for the translation from the original Thai text.

The late Pi (brother) Suwit Watnoo, respected senior activist and veteran NGO worker, was an inspiration for many younger activists. Pi Suwit set an example of a determined activist who showed his unwavering advocacy for the people. Despite hardships in life, Pi Suwit never took his mission for the people for granted. Despite the opportunity to climb up the ladder of fame and power in politics, as Pi Suwit always told us how national politicians offered him tempting rewards, he always categorically rejected the offers. He saw the privileges contradictory and detrimental to his determination to assist the villagers and the marginalized people. He deliberately chose to live in poverty, though he was never morally poor. Whatever works in the service of the people, however far he had to travel, he never missed out on any of them. Just before his death, I overheard a discussion among senior activists and friends about the idea to set up an ideal political party to work for the cause of people, not for vested interests. I feel sorry for Pi Suwit for not staying long enough to fulfill the dream.

Pi Suwit was always one of the leaders of the movements when I covered the uprisings for the rights of villagers such as demonstration by the villagers, people's forums, or during the historical political events as May 1992 uprising.

He was always on the first car that led the demonstrations, spoke to forge common understanding among the masses and garnered unity among them in their struggle for democracy. Lately, he actively worked as a spokesperson for the People Alliance for Democracy (PAD) during the campaign to topple Thaksin.

Pi Suwit and I were awarded the API Fellowship in 2003/04. We spent time together in the Philippines and Indonesia. In the company of Pi Suwit, I had the chance to learn about the homeless and street people in both countries. A serious person, he always worked very hard in the field. We met the poor villagers at night in the streets. As the busy vehicles passed by, we ate and spoke with them with help from an interpreter from the Urban Poor Consortium, an NGO working for slum dwellers, homeless and street people. Within one month of his research, Pi Suwit got to know all the places where the homeless stayed. In Manila, Pi Suwit wandered into wherever the urban poor lived - eating and sleeping with them in their communities. Upon returning to Thailand, he took the initiative to build an international network of the poor to foster exchange among them.

Pi Suwit Watnoo was a veteran NGO worker who devoted his entire life to his cause. Though he might be too straightforward and may sometimes hurt people with his words, no one got angry with him. They knew well that what he said was truthful. My brother, please rest in peace - society has immensely benefited from your services.



API FELLOWSHIP PROGRAM MISSION STATEMENT

Public intellectuals are those - academics, researchers, media professionals, artists, creative writers, NGO activists, social workers, public servants and others with moral authority - who are committed to working for the betterment of society by applying their professional knowledge, wisdom, and experience. The Nippon Foundation Fellowships for Asian Public Intellectuals (API Fellowship Program) is designed to stimulate the creation of a new pool of intellectuals in the region. It aims to promote mutual learning among Asian public intellectuals and to contribute to the growth of public spaces in which effective responses to regional needs can be generated.

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INDONESIA

Research Center for Regional Resources, The Indonesian Institute of Sciences (PSDR-LIPI)
Widya Graha, 9th Floor, Jl. Gatot, Subroto No.10, Jakarta 12190 Indonesia
Contact Persons: John Habu and Yekti Maunati
Tel : +62-21-522-4667 / 525-1542 ext. 680
Fax : +62-21-570-1232 / 522-4667
Email : darahkubiru@yahoo.com / yektim@yahoo.com

JAPAN

Center for Southeast Asian Studies, Kyoto University
46 Shimoadachi-cho, Yoshida, Sakyo-ku, Kyoto 606-8501 Japan
Contact Persons: Naoko Maeno and Satoko Yasuhara
Tel : +81-75-753-7348 / 7391
Fax : +81-75-753-7350
URL : <http://www.cseas.kyoto-u.ac.jp/api/>
Email : api@cseas.kyoto-u.ac.jp

MALAYSIA

Institute of Malaysian and International Studies (IKMAS), Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia (UKM)
43600 Bangi, Selangor Darul Ehsan, Malaysia
Contact Persons: Dorothy Fernandez-Robert and Noraini Dhianddin
Tel : +60-3-8921-3576 / 3205
Fax : +60-3-8926-9253 / 1022
URL : <http://www.ikmas.ukm.my/api/>
Email : drob@pkriscc.cc.ukm.my

PHILIPPINES

School of Social Sciences, Ateneo de Manila University
API Office in Center for Community Services (CCS) Building, Social Development Complex Ateneo de Manila University, Loyola Heights, Quezon City 1108 Philippines
Contact Person: Melissa Jayme-Lao
Tel : +63-2-426-6001 ext. 5205
Fax : +63-2-426-1279
URL : <http://api.ateneo.net/>
Email : api@admu.edu.ph

THAILAND

Institute of Asian Studies, Chulalongkorn University
3rd Floor, Prajadhipok-Rambhai Barni Building, Chulalongkorn University, Phythai Road, Bangkok 10330 Thailand
Contact Persons: Michiko Yoshida and Saowaros Saetang
Tel : +66-2-218-7422
Fax : +66-2-652-5283
URL : <http://www.ias.chula.ac.th>
Email : api_fellowships@chula.ac.th

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The Nippon Foundation International Program Department

1-2-2 Akasaka, Minato-ku,
Tokyo 107-8404 Japan
Tel : +81-3-6229-5181
Fax : +81-3-6229-5180
URL : <http://www.nippon-foundation.or.jp/eng/>
Email : api@ps.nippon-foundation.or.jp

EDITORIAL COMMITTEE

TNF: Tatsuya Tanami, Michiko Taki, David Karashima
API Thailand/CI: Surichai Wun'Gaeo, Michiko Yoshida
Writer-Editor: A. Magno

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Prawase Wasi, M.D.

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