HUMBOLDT-UNIVERSITÄT ZU BERLIN

Philosophische Fakultät III

Institut für Asien- und Afrikawissenschaften

Seminar für Südostasien-Studien

Südostasien

Working Papers

Thomas Engelbert and Jana Raendchen (eds.)

Colloquium and Round-Table Discussion on Ethnic Minorities and Politics in Southeast Asia

No. 23

Berlin 2003

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Sponsored and organised by the Heinrich Böll Foundation Berlin,
in co-operation with the Department of Southeast Asian Studies
of the Humboldt University Berlin

SÜDOSTASIEN Working Papers
ISSN: 1432-2811
published by the Department of Southeast Asian Studies
Humboldt-University
Unter den Linden 6
10999 Berlin, Germany

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Introduction: Ethnic Minorities and Politics in Southeast Asia

All countries of the Southeast Asian Region, which currently form the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), are multi-ethnic states. Except for this basic similarity, the countries are politically, economically and culturally very diverse. The wealthy, ethnically Chinese-dominated city state of Singapore, for example, is contrasted by the Union of Myanmar (Burma), Laos, and Cambodia, which still belong to the poorest countries of the world. The by far largest country of the region, Indonesia, is also the largest Islamic country of the world, whereas Burma, Thailand, Laos and Cambodia are predominantly Theravada Buddhist. Singapore and Vietnam are deeply influenced by Confucianism. The majority of the inhabitants of the Philippines and a substantial minority of the Vietnamese are Catholic. Furthermore, there are striking differences – but also quite a few similarities – between mainland Southeast Asia and its island regions, or between parts of both mainland and insular Southeast Asia as far as the ethnic make-up, the history of dynastic states, colonialism and the development of nationalism are concerned.

Some culturally-inspired observers have therefore considered the differences rather than the similarities as being important, and some even very superficially presumed to claim the existence of an eternal, "textually" motivated cultural borderline between the Indian and Chinese civilisations at the Annamite Cordilleras (the Truong Son or Pou Luang Mountains) which divide Vietnam from Laos and north-eastern Cambodia. Others based their more ethnically motivated approach on the presumption that ethnicity and nation states are nothing but constructed identities, and some even went as far to claim that this assumption could be proven with any ethnic group or nation state of the region. Historians, on the other hand, often referred to the interplay of both basic similarities between ethnic and national developments in Southeast Asia on the one hand and the many variations on the other. Last but not least, a few area specialists had the tendency to claim that the ethnic and historical developments of "their" country or ethnic group were unique and could not be compared with any other example.

Nationalitätenpolitik (ethnic politics or policies of the state), in the narrow sense of the word, is the whole apparatus of a state geared at solving its ethnic and national problems. As a constituent of interior policy, *Nationalitätenpolitik* is bound to state institutions which produce and implement it, even if they do not expressively use this particular term. In a wider sense, it might be understood as appropriate management strategies of the state or as an interactive process between the state or between states and their "nationalities" or "ethnic minorities". Observers have discovered the general informal character of ethnic politics as a particularity of Southeast Asia in which extreme measures like open discrimination, forced assimilation or "ethnic homogenisation" are avoided by favouring accommodation, management and manipulation of ethnic relations. In looking at why this is so, the question remains whether the reason should be reduced to the more or less "oft" authoritarian political systems of most of the current Southeast Asian states, or whether, like the so-called ASEAN Way of international relations, it is a policy deeply rooted in the region's own political culture.

Therefore, the investigation of traditional strategies of ethnic management in a historical and cultural context is important in order to understand if – and if so, to what extent – colonial and postcolonial administrations used, reinterpreted or changed these traditional strategies and methods. Ethnic conflicts root back in history, and there are often geographical or historical parallels indicating how to provoke, prevent or solve them. The history of several states since independence also shows that the indulgence of the elites of Southeast Asian majority populations clearly has its limits when it comes to the question of secession, that is, if a people or an ethnic group decides to use its right of self-determination to the extent of living in their own state.

The aim of the contributions to the colloquium and the two subsequent round-table discussions is to investigate first of all this interplay between the general and the specific, between history and contemporary times. Not every state and every ethnic minority is the same – there are fundamental differences between tribal groups, highly developed nationalities and the so-called foreign Asians; differences between states, historical, cultural or ideological backgrounds, and political systems, in which *Nationalitätenpolitik* is formulated and implemented. Yet a scrutiny of the successful containment and prevention of ethnic conflicts in several states of the region will surely point to a number of basic economical, ecological, political and cultural problems as well as open questions, and at the same time, point to ways they can be peacefully solved.

Colloquium and Round-Table Discussions

In four panels, eight authors presented their findings based on extensive archival and field research on specific cases of six Southeast Asian countries – Indonesia, Singapore, Cambodia, Thailand, Laos, and Vietnam. The contributions dealt, on the basis of selected examples, with the question of general state policies, their implementation, as well as the reactions of tribal groups, nationalities, and the so-called Foreign Asians. Each individual paper was both presented to and discussed with the audience.

Additionally, two round-table discussions provided a forum for general questions encompassing the range of one country or one particular ethnic group which were discussed by all participants of the colloquium. The first looked at the general questions: Is Southeast Asia, as far as the ethnic make-up and related state policies are concerned, a historical, cultural and geo-political unity? What does this "Southeast Asian-ness" mean in a rapidly changing national, regional and global context?

The second round was about the two general approaches of *Nationalitätenpolitik*: toleration and promotion. On the basis of the individual papers and the discussion following them, as well as the first roundtable session, it was considered whether there are general ways of solving ethnic conflicts, and to which extent the Southeast Asian state administrations, the ethnic groups themselves and other actors (for example NGOs) can contribute to a peaceful and long-lasting settlement of ethnic conflicts.

Thomas Engelbert:

Opening Speech

Ladies and gentlemen, dear colleagues and friends,

Today it is an honour and a pleasure to me to welcome you here, in this magnificent environment of the Heinrich Böll Foundation, situated right in the heart of the *Neue Mitte* (new centre) of Berlin, for our colloquium and round-table conference on 'Ethnic Minorities and Politics in Southeast Asia'. I hope that those coming from afar have had a pleasant journey.

I do not want to make too long preliminaries, in order to save our time for the panels and the round-table discussion afterwards.

However, I would like to say a few words about how this project started, why it took so long to see the light, and what the aim and the main idea behind the whole thing are.

As everybody knows, all countries of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) are multi-ethnic countries. Besides this basic similarity, they are in terms of languages, ethnic affiliation, culture or religion very diverse. In former times, there were even authors who denied that the countries of Southeast Asia shared a common history. They regarded the region as a mere creation, a geo-political or military 'caprice of history'. But this particular question seems to be solved now and those who still maintain these views have become rather rare.

However, if Southeast Asia is a regional entity and has an interior unity, what does this unity mean? How can the region, can regional cooperation be maintained, if there are so many differences? How could the states of the region survive, and even develop quite successfully in recent decades, if there is so much diversity? Beside some areas and fields of tension and conflict which can be clearly defined and traced over different historical periods, as for example in Indonesia or in the Philippines, why they are generally not going for each others throats altogether? How can those different peoples like the Islamic Malays and the non-Islamic Chinese live peacefully side by side? How was it possible, most recently, to settle most of the ethnic conflicts in Burma (or Myanmar) peacefully, which in the four decades since independence have lead almost to a political and economic stalemate of the country?

Do all these developments described above have something to say, if I would not dare to say to teach, to other regions of the world as well? Or is this situation of relative peace, development and stability which seems to be established at the moment in Southeast Asia, uncertain, fragile, or even a mere self-deception, and we have to be prepared to witness more dramatic events like the kind of the recent Bali incident, and possibly not only in Indonesia?

Of course, nobody is able to answer all at once these questions raised above. Some of them we will surely take up in the two round-table discussions today and tomorrow.

Since 1994, Hans Dieter Kubitscheck, at that time Professor for History and Society of Southeast Asia at the Humboldt University Berlin, directed a research project on *Nationalitätenpolitik* in Southeast Asia.

(*Nationalitätenpolitik*: Rebecca Smith has so nicely put this term into the words: ‘policies and politics with regard to ethnic minorities’. This is a technical term. It has a history of its own and should by no means be seen as an only communist *terminus technicus*. But we will surely talk about that later.)

If I am not wrong, it was coined in the old Austrian-Hungarian empire, was later adopted by the Soviet Union, went from there to many countries of Southeast Asia, like Burma or Vietnam, and is finally an established term in many of these countries. In Vietnam, we have even an Institute of Research on *Nationalitätenpolitik*.

The original hypothesis of this project suggested, that in spite of all the national and regional particularities and the different historical processes in the countries of Southeast Asia, the economic, political and judicial approaches and their results must be seen as pointing in the direction of convergence in the context of the development of International Law.

This was the original assumption, but the papers and sub-projects soon pointed more to specific factors rather than to similarities. The theoretical introduction by Hans Dieter Kubitscheck today and the paper of Annemarie Esche about the Kayin in Myanmar (she can unfortunately not be with us today, as she is currently in Yangon) as well as the paper of Jana Raendchen about the situation in Northeastern Thailand originated from this research project which started eight years ago. Later, the papers were, of course, changed and updated ever and ever again. Up to recently, we extended this matter and asked friends and other colleagues to join with a paper as well.

Now, we have contributions about seven Southeast Asian countries (Myanmar, Thailand, Laos, Cambodia, Vietnam on the mainland, and Singapore and Indonesia on the islands). They are on all of the three important sections of ethnic minorities (the tribal populations, the nationalities, and the so-called foreign Asians).

General questions will be discussed by Jean-Louis Margolin in his paper on Singapore.

Thailand and Vietnam are especially strongly represented. For the general questions, I would particularly like to stress the papers of Professor Hoang Thi Chau from Hanoi about the elaboration of scripts for ethnic minorities in Vietnam; and of Professor Bui Khanh The from the University of Ho Chi Minh City. He is currently and finally proofreading his contribution about Vietnamese policies with regard to the languages of ethnic minorities. We are very happy that we will be able to include the contributions of these two distinguished Vietnamese linguists, even if they, unfortunately, cannot attend our meeting today. Especially the question of *Sprachenpolitik* (language policies) in Southeast Asia seems to be a subject worth of further research, as we have so many different languages in the countries of the region. May be it will be possible to take up this particular topic in a research project at a later date.

The question how foreign or not foreign these formerly called Foreign Asians are, will be discussed by Mary Somers Heidhues in her paper about the Chinese in Indonesia. I myself will discuss some aspects of the tribal populations in Southern Indochina. Volker Grabowsky discusses the question of the

nationalities, namely the Thai in Cambodia and the Khmer in Thailand. Michael Steinmetz will speak about the Malay Muslim Community in Thailand.

Even if the official sponsoring for this particular project mentioned above was stopped a long time ago, the project as such will probably never be officially closed, as the problems and questions related to it are so encompassing, so manifold, so various and so interesting, that there is stuff enough for coming generations of researchers. The colloquium we present today and the book which will finally see the light *après toutes ces batailles*, is partially the fruit of this enterprise which began eight years ago. It should probably seen as an interim rather than a final report, which leaves room for further discussion.

From 1999 until 2002, Hans Dieter Kubitscheck directed, in his capacity as Professor Emeritus of the Humboldt University Berlin, a second research project, named officially: Ethnic developments and *Nationalitätenpolitik* in Southern Laos. The participants of this project were Hans Dieter Kubitscheck, first Andreas Schneider, then Michael Steinmetz, and I myself. Here, it was possible to compare general features of *Nationalitätenpolitik* by way of one particular example, the area of and around the Bolaven high plateau in Southern Laos. Originally, this area was chosen by our Laotian partners, as they themselves wanted to pursue ethnological research on the ethnic minorities living there, who were partially their own ethnic group, belonging to the Mon Khmer language family. First results of this second research project have been published in five working papers, which are currently extended and completed and will then appear as SÜDOSTASIEN Working papers of the Humboldt University Berlin.

For me as an original Vietnam specialist, these were, despite all of the more or less important problems and hardships, unforgettable days in this peaceful and charming neighbouring country of Vietnam and with its wonderful population. Partnerships and even friendships were formed with our Lao colleagues, which hopefully will last. Even if, unfortunately, the official sponsoring for this project has stopped already, the project as such has not, as the results will now be published.

Finally I would like to express my sincere gratitude to the Heinrich Böll Foundation, which has extended more than generous support both for the previous book ‘Ethnic Minorities and Nationalism. A Festschrift dedicated to Hans Dieter Kubitscheck’, for this second book on the topic, ‘Ethnic minorities and politics in Southeast Asia’. and for the event we will have today and tomorrow. My special thank goes to Heike Löschmann, the director of the Southeast Asia Office of the Heinrich Böll Foundation based in Chiangmai, who can, unfortunately, not be with us today; to Gregor Enste, the director of the Asia department of the Heinrich Böll Foundation, and last but not least to Christiane Molt of the Asia Department.

Many thanks also to Jana Raendchen for the preparation of the event and, in advance, for the summary of the two round-table discussions which will appear as a SÜDOSTASIEN Working Paper of the Institute for Southeast Asian Studies of Humboldt University Berlin. This paper will be later sent to

Chiang Mai and serve as a material for the work of the Southeast Asia office of the Heinrich Böll Foundation.

Thanks also to Rebecca Smith and Nosakhare Igunma who do the English proofreading for this forthcoming publication.

Many thanks to the contributors, and especially to the two chairmen of today's and tomorrow's colloquium and the round-table discussions: Vincent Houben, professor for History and Society of Southeast Asia at the Humboldt University Berlin, and Mekonnen Mesghena, the director of the department of migration policy of the Heinrich Böll Foundation.

It gives me a particular pleasure, if I may add that, to see today researchers on Southeast Asia from four different German universities (Berlin, Münster, Göttingen and Hamburg) in a conference together with colleagues from Paris. I hope that this co-operation within Germany and in Europe in our so-called "small subjects" will continue and even gain in strength. In the times of shrinking budgets all over the world, both specialisation and inter-university co-operation at the one hand and the presentation of our findings to a wider audience at the other, are no longer just desirable, but perhaps an inevitable necessity.

I thank you, Ladies and Gentlemen, colleagues and friends, for coming and I sincerely hope that we will have a good discussion during the panels and afterwards as well, when we will have snacks and drinks together. Thank you all! And I shall hand over to Vincent Houben.

First Panel

Hans Dieter Kubitscheck:

Nationalitätenpolitik in Historical Perspective as a Field of Research (With Special Reference to Southeast Asia)

Nationalitätenpolitik stands for a comparatively new object of research, which concludes the whole apparatus of the state in order to regulate problems resulting from the existing internal multi-ethnic structure. It is expressed in its corresponding programmatic features as well as in the actually realized measures. More or less serious differences between these two aspects of *Nationalitätenpolitik* are the rule everywhere. The theoretical principles are often nothing more than an ideal construct of which the *nationalitätenpolitical* pratice fails to meet or is even contradicted to.

The *Nationalitätenpolitik* as programmed and put into practice by the state (or the government) is the official policy towards ethnic communities (nationalities) within a political polity. It does not exclude the existence of other and differing concepts, projects and intentions in the *nationalitaetenpolitical* field as pursued for instance by non-governmental organizations, oppositional groups and also by representatives of ethnic communities on their own. Studying these concepts compared to the official *Nationalitätenpolitik* of the state is very interesting and instructive. The fundamental difference results from the fact that only state authority is in a position to realize *Nationalitätenpolitik* actually, in other words to bring theory and practice in connection and, so far as possible, in accordance.

For the understanding of ethnic processes and ethnic-national developments is of most importance, firstly, the relationship between the theory of *Nationalitätenpolitik* (as reflected in its programmatic aspect) and the practice as well as, secondly, the relation between that practice on the one hand and the ethnic processes on the other. It has something to say about the results: going smoothly in the case of "right" *Nationalitätenpolitik* and good governance, but conflicts and disturbances on the contrary, simply speaking. The critical point is not the existence of any problems in the course of implementing *Nationalitätenpolitik* but the chances and abilities to get over a crisis without using force.

Nationalitätenpolitik includes the general theory as well as its application in special case studies. It results from there that law and political sciences are fundamental elements of the complex and interdisciplinary study field *Nationalitätenpolitik*. Because of dealing with ethnic minorities it is out of question that ethnology is the third important component besides law and political sciences. In the case of general and special areas of responsibility more and other subjects must be added to, for instance history, linguistics and sociology. Important are quite often economics and, in view of the underdeveloped ethnic communities, developing policy, agronomy and agricultural policy.

From our point of view modern *Nationalitätenpolitik* began at that moment when ethnic communities gained the quality of ethnic (national) minorities or of a so-called minority status. This development in the direction of a well established international law gave rise to a system of *Nationalitätenpolitik* with

its conceptual and terminological instruments still in use by now. They derived from both the policies and the legal traditions of the West.

World War I and aftermath

During the First World War and the following two decades global and far-reaching changes took place with implications for the *Nationalitätenpolitik*. The growing nationalism lead to an increase of ethnic awareness and self-confidence, political activities and ethnic conflicts. The multi-ethnic empires, especially Austro-Hungary and Russia, broke down and were replaced by new emerging nation states in new political borders and composed by many ethnic (national) minorities. Minorities became an integral part in the interstate relations and the international law. The procedure of establishing an international minorities treaties regime of protection was in accordance with the efforts of the League of Nations.

In view of these developments and already looking ahead at the future one was searching for solutions in order to defuse the ethnic-national tensions or to use this situation and the minorities support in the fight against the ruling regime. It is no accident that some theoretical and preparatory work was done just from both the so-called Austro-Marxists and the Russian communists concerning, among other things, the right of self-determination and various forms of autonomy. Autonomy was understood as an effective means to protect both minority interests and legal rights. In the international relations, however, the right of self-determination was at this time nothing more than a kind of formula applied in practice from case to case only in view of political interests and aspirations.

The system of Marxist-Leninist nationalities policy was enthusiastically accepted as a shining example by many nationalist liberation movements in Asia, Africa and Latin America irrespective of its already forseeable shortcomings and some malfunctioning in the reality. Nonetheless, in Southeast Asia was this policy towards minorities not only favoured by communist and nationalist leaders in Indochina but also strongly by the Burmese nationalist liberation movement under the leadership of Aung San.

Colonial Nationalitätenpolitik and anti-colonial nationalist movements

The ideas of human rights and freedoms, equality and self-determination fell in the colonies on fertile grounds. Leading representatives of the nationalist movements were quite familiar with these imaginations applied to a world where many peoples had become victims of the colonial expansion. The nationalist movements insisted on these rights as universal and indivisible ones in spoken and written statements as well as in many political activities. These ideas became the ideological motor of the nationalist movements.

Compared with these views of human rights and the objective of liberation from colonial oppression the ethnic diversity was pushed into the background because a sense of unity among the nationalities within a colony was more and more forthcoming to such a degree as a nationally conscious community. Ethnicity was taken as a result of colonialism. Therefore one placed particular emphasis on na-

tional unity and solidarity but took no notion of such things like ethnic diversity and the potential for conflicts resulting from it.

The means and methods of colonial government and control indicated features to be qualified as colonial *Nationalitätenpolitik*. Part of it was the policy of "divide and rule" which exploited first and foremost ethnic diversity and ethnic differences for political purposes. This mechanism of power was practised to the point of perfection. The situation gave rise to many prejudices and stereotypes in the interethnic relationships. This grouping along ethnic lines ended up in a raising of the people's awareness to such a degree as never before. Everywhere the colonial powers gave preferential treatment to certain nationalities by grants, privileges and what is known as special safeguards in the hope of getting support in return.

In view of these promising perspectives to stabilize the colonial system on the one hand and, at the same time, to undermine the unity of the nationalist movements on the other, the colonial powers paid more and more attention to the ethnic factor. So it is noteworthy that British, French and Netherlanders in Southeast Asia step by step and at about the same time aimed at a certain decentralization of their colonial possessions with special reference to the ethnic aspect. Understandable enough therefore, the nationalist movements were very distrustful regarding these wheelings and dealings as the undisguised attempt to undermine independence and to maintain the colonial system further more. These experiences had consequences for both the formulation and the implementation of *Nationalitätenpolitik* within the independent states.

The period of decolonization

After World War II began a historical period characterized by the worldwide collapse of the colonial system and the birth of new states on the basis of the right of self-determination. Often one came to the simple conclusion that after the breakdown of colonialism also ethnically homogeneous national communities would be born almost automatically as the response to the ethnic divisions caused by colonialism alone. However, the limits of such a philosophy became obvious very soon under the pressure of hard realities in the multi-ethnically structured states asking for answers to burning questions.

This was the starting point to develop concepts, drafts and a package of measures dealing with ethnic problems, that is *Nationalitätenpolitik* in theory and practice. It was slowly learnt that self-determination, autonomy, protection of minorities and so on were not any remains of the past but, on the contrary, most relevant to the present. The discussion focussed on the right of self-determination of peoples and individuals coming from ethnic communities by descent, often declared as internal self-determination in contrast to this right as a political instrument used in the fight for independence. It was the state which was exclusively seen as the only competent and appropriate authority with the right to grant self-determination. The existence of an inalienable right of the peoples and nations was

out of any discussion. Demands from this position were often imputed bad intentions like the destabilization of law and order or the policy of separatism with the aim of political independence.

On the other hand there were many examples of taking ethnic aspects into consideration by means of *Nationalitätenpolitik*. The cultural diversity in multi-ethnic structured societies was understood as a national heritage. Native languages and minority scripts, both of course subordinated to the corresponding national standards, were gradually accepted in the public life and in the media. The same happened with regard to customs and traditions of minority peoples as well as to some practices contrary to the national legislation. Sometimes exceptions to the rule were tolerated in such cases, now and then in the form of temporary arrangements. Ethnic organizations, mostly of an apolitical nature, were accepted too. Ethnic minorities were recognized and used as a popular exotic framework in the tourist business. The fundamental attitude towards the minorities was, however, the same every time: At most minority peoples were looked upon as backward ancestors of the leading nationality approaching step by step the national standard. This was seen as a national challenge and the main object of the officially practiced *Nationalitätenpolitik*.

Nationalitätenpolitik at present time

In the period after World War II the main components of modern *Nationalitätenpolitik* developed from their beginnings in the first half of the 20th century into a program of liberal character in the widest sense of the word. There were, of course, many shortcomings and divergencies from the ideal case depending on the conditions in the new developing countries. We are living in a time characterized by many disputes about the principle of legally binding on demands of ethnic minorities. The decisive new approach is the rising determination of ethnic minority people as holder of rights and as legal persons themselves in order to lay claim on their rights instead of dependence on the good will of the government or the state power alone.

There are two matters dominating the worldwide discussions nowadays, namely the general recognition and actual realization of self-determination as well as the official legal binding of autonomy. The right of self-determination did not end with the process of de-colonization, even if the new states tried to limit the effects of this right only to external self-determination. It was, however, on the contrary bit by bit extended beyond the colonial context with a new and enlarged understanding. The considered application of self-determination to the rights of ethnic minorities is still a matter of controversy amongst states because nature and extent of the right remain unclear in a lot of points. And it conflicts with some difficulties, above all with the principles of national sovereignty and non-intervention.

Nevertheless it is already today constituent in the modern international law that not only peoples but also sections of a state population, likewise called peoples too (that is to say also ethnic minorities), are not alone the holders of cultural rights but also legally entitled to the right of self-determination. Self-determination includes undoubtedly the chance of or the right to independent statehood if the peoples concerned choose it. The point is that only peoples are entitled to self-determination. But its

coming into effect is not identical with the demand for secession of minorities from state authority because it is thought enough for its realization if the rights of ethnic minorities are respected within the community of which they form an integral part.

The realization of autonomy for minority people has made no major progress in the legislation process. We are eye-witnesses of a development in the course of which autonomy will be recognized as a new principle by international law, too. The various forms of autonomy result partly from the different conditions in the settlement areas of minority people, often with a mixed population, or their position in the state community. We are now at the beginning of a process leading to the establishment of more extensive guarantees of minority rights and to a considerable degree of autonomy and its gradually formulation as a legally binding category. The main objective must be to find political solutions in order to enable ethnic minorities to live together safely within existing states.

Mary Somers Heidhues:

The Chinese Minority In Indonesia after *Reformasi* – Cultural Renaissance, Legal Obstacles, Interest Formation

Economic crisis and signs of political change came to a peak in Indonesia at the end of 1997. For the Chinese minority, tensions increased and violent incidents threatened small businessmen and political figures alike. Indonesian President Suharto's New Order ended in May 1998 in an orgy of anti-Chinese riots that left much of northern Jakarta's business district in ruins and hit a number of other cities as well. As a result, many ethnic Chinese fled the country, at least temporarily, or sent their families abroad to escape the violence, rape, and threats of repeated aggression.

Although most observers accept that elements of the army close to Suharto engineered the outbreaks in the hopes of encouraging either a call for retention of the president or for a military take-over; instead they contributed to the downfall of the ageing despot. His hand-picked successor, Vice President B. J. Habibie, assumed the presidency on May 21, 1998 but was unable to defend his position in the general elections of 1999. Instead, a moderate Muslim leader, Abdurrahman Wahid, built a coalition of parliamentary forces that elected him (indirectly) to the presidency. However limited democracy was in this process (the party of his vice-president, Megawati Sukarnoputri, had received the highest popular vote of any party), the era of Reformasi was at hand. What might this mean for the relatively small (three percent or less) but influential – especially in economic life – Chinese minority, a minority so often the victim of discrimination and violence, particularly at times of political transition?

Abdurrahman Wahid's Presidency

For the Chinese minority, the presidency of Gus Dur (October 1999-July 2001), as Wahid is popularly known, brought a respite. The New Order, as Suharto's regime had been called, had given generous advantages to a handful of prominent ethnic Chinese businessmen, the so-called "conglomerates." Above all, it had conspired to maintain the Chinese as a separate and visible minority while at the same time promoting their "assimilation" into the majority. This contradictory policy both labelled the Chinese as separate and blamed them for being so. The favours the conglomerates were openly and obviously granted drew great attention and dominated much of the discussion of the minority. Not surprisingly, Suharto's policies had served to increase resentment against the Chinese minority, not dampen it.

In the 1950s and 1960s, successive government initiatives had closed down the Chinese-language schools and press, the backbones of Chinese communities outside of China. Only a few experimental schools remained open after 1967, and these soon had to cease operation, while in the media one lone, government-controlled, newspaper appeared in Chinese characters. Officials discouraged public use of the Chinese language.

As a subject, Mandarin Chinese was offered only at university level – and that only with restrictions. The authorities repeatedly suppressed expressions of Chinese culture, including public celebrations of

religious feasts, the explanation being either that it would inhibit assimilation or it would favour communism. The import of Chinese-language materials was generally forbidden; public display of Chinese characters, for example in shop signs, was also disallowed, and shops with Chinese names adopted Indonesian-sounding alternatives. Even many Chinese temples took on Sanskrit names.

Ethnic Chinese were pressed to change their personal names to Indonesian-sounding ones as well, in the supposed interest of their own "assimilation." On the other hand, their identity cards usually carried a letter or code identifying them as members of the minority, effectively eliminating any possible gains from assimilative behaviour. Even if the persons involved had Indonesian names, they were easily recognised through the code.

While the codes have since been eliminated – at least in theory – there is now much more room for the expression of Chinese culture and for minority activities in general. The responses have come promptly but have also varied greatly.

Religious and Cultural Renaissance

Although Chinese schools have not reopened, and it is questionable whether they ever will, clandestine instruction in Mandarin, which many parents had arranged for their children in New Order days, is a thing of the past. Instead, evening classes, some taught by former teachers at the Chinese schools, have sprung up "like mushrooms" in community buildings. Prohibitions on importing Chinese-language materials (which had been in the same category of forbidden imports as drugs and firearms) have been eliminated. Most young people of Chinese descent speak Indonesian as their first language, however, and a significant Chinese reading public may never again exist in Indonesia. As long as there are no schools providing instruction in Mandarin on a daily basis, there will probably be too few persons fluent enough in the language to support a sizeable press or literature. Some Chinese-Indonesians have, of course, studied Mandarin abroad and some continue to do so. In addition to material printed in Chinese coming into the country, a few publications in Chinese, often part-Chinese, part-Indonesian, have appeared in Jakarta since 1999.

Other aspects of Chinese culture have recovered even more rapidly. The previous government had also interfered with the practice of that indefinable mix of Buddhism, Taoism and Confucianism that may be called popular Chinese religion. The New Order, eager to assign everyone to a religion, which it thought would assure that they would not be under communist influence, took refuge in definitions. Although regulations of 1965 and 1969 provided for six religions: Islam, Catholicism, Protestantism, Hinduism, Buddhism and Confucianism, later decisions reduced the number to five, eliminating Confucianism. As a result, most ethnic Chinese, when asked officially, gave their religion as Buddhism. Buddhist halls have opened to provide, for example, wedding venues (a religious wedding was a requirement prior to the ceremony at the civil registry). However, thanks to inconsistent implementation of the regulations, some official statistics on religious affiliation list only Buddhism, while others include Confucianism as well. A substantial proportion of ethnic Chinese chose to be Protestant Chris-

tians or Catholics, although Christians are not, as is sometimes claimed, a majority. It is often asserted that most ethnic Chinese in Indonesia are Christians, but this is not so.

The downgrading of Confucianism to a system of beliefs (*aliran kepercayaan*) was an excuse to disallow traditional Chinese religious practices deemed foreign to Buddhism, not least the public celebration of the Chinese New Year and of Cap Go Meh, the fifteenth day and first new moon of the year. Dragon or lion dances and parades, once annual events in major cities, were prohibited; any commemoration of these feasts was supposed to be strictly private. The recognition of Confucianism as a religion, or rather the withdrawal of the state from this question, will presumably eliminate this problem.

Chinese-Malay Language and Literature

Whereas Mandarin education and Confucianism, along with the school and reform movements that promoted them in the twentieth century, were intended to make the ethnic Chinese living in the Netherlands Indies – many of whom no longer spoke Chinese and who had adapted in other ways to the local culture – more "Chinese", other cultural trends demonstrated that they were becoming more "Indonesian". This is especially true of language.

Many families of Chinese-Indonesians, the so-called *peranakans*, had not only resided in the archipelago for generations, but spoke Malay as their mother tongue. This group made a significant contribution to Indonesian culture through the so-called Sino-Malay or Malay-Chinese literature. Beginning in the late nineteenth century, writers of Chinese origin began using the Malay language, which at the time was also the language of the colonial regime, of the cities, and of inter-ethnic communication (thus it was called "*pasar*" or "*bazaar*" Malay) to create a substantial body of popular literature and journalism. At first Nio Joe Lan, then the well-known writer Pramoedya Ananta Toer drew attention to this corpus, with its translations of Chinese novels and stories, Western literature, and original writings on a wide variety of themes. As Pramoedya indicated, and as scholars have since accepted, these works were a major contribution to the development of early Indonesian literature and, for that matter, of a reading public. These works had, however, disappeared from circulation by the 1960s, and only the popular *cerita silat*, cloak-and-dagger or "Kung Fu" stories, remained as an echo of the Chinese-Malay contribution.

Since the year 2000, the publishing house and bookseller Gramedia has reprinted many of the old works, in modern Indonesian spelling, for today's public. To date, four thick volumes called *Kesastraan Melayu Tionghoa dan Kebangsaan Indonesia*, Chinese-Malay literature and Indonesian nationhood, have appeared, and have found, as far as can be judged, an interested public. More volumes are in planning. This is an important acknowledgement of the contribution of the minority to modern Indonesian literature and the press.

Legal Issues

Ethnic Chinese know, however, that sore points remain as barriers to full acceptance into all spheres of Indonesian life. An important aspect is the question of legal hurdles to equal status for the minority. The New Order government did take an important step in 1980 by finally clarifying the national status of many persons of Chinese descent, even many born in Indonesia, who were not Indonesian citizens and had great difficulty becoming naturalised. Now well over ninety percent of the ethnic Chinese in Indonesia are Indonesian citizens and their status as citizens of Indonesia is also accepted by the People's Republic of China.

Scholars today usually accept that the peculiar separateness of ethnic Chinese, even those of mixed descent or those who are culturally and politically "Indonesianised," is a product of the colonial era, and in particular of its legal system. In at least two ways, the minority is still separated from the rest of the citizens by law.

First, the constitution of 1945, which is still in force, insists that the president of Indonesia (Article 6, 1) be an indigenous Indonesian (*orang Indonesia asli*). The president is also to be a Muslim. In practice, the limitation means little to most ethnic Chinese, but it is clearly discriminatory.

More important, however, the constitution distinguishes between different kinds of citizens. Indonesian citizens are

- all indigenous (*asli*) Indonesians
- and such others as are made citizens by law. (Article 27)

Thus persons of Chinese descent, even if born in Indonesia to families who have lived there for generations, are (as non-indigenous) only second-class citizens, and that only if they fulfil certain legal qualifications. As long as this constitution remains in force, Indonesia belongs, as it were, to the "blood" tradition, restricting citizenship primarily to a group defined by descent, not the tradition of "*citoyen*", opening citizenship to those who wish to be part of the nation. The appellation of the ethnic Chinese common in past decades, "WNI," means literally, "citizen of Indonesia (*warganegara Indonesia*)," and almost always implies "of foreign descent (*keturunan asing*)." Although the usage has changed, something of the distinction remains, now often in the form of "*pri[bumi]*," that is, indigenous, and therefore completely Indonesian, and "*non-pri[bumi]*," non-indigenous and therefore of doubtful citizenship and loyalty, for the Chinese. Perhaps a more generous definition of the legal status of citizens would be a real breakthrough.

A second question refers to a number of laws continued from Dutch times that treat Chinese (in colonial terms, "Foreign Orientals") as different from indigenous Indonesians. These include that of the civil registry (*catatan sipil*, known in colonial times as *burgerlijke stand*). Until the middle of the nineteenth century, the legal status of ethnic Chinese in colonial law was largely similar to that of the indigenous people. The agrarian law of 1870 prevented them from acquiring title to native agricultural land, inhibiting the formation of a class of large landlords of Chinese descent (as existed in southern

Vietnam and in the Philippines), although some big Chinese landowners did arise along the north coast of Java and in the cities and their environs. Indonesian land laws still retain this principle.

Social and Political Activism

Many older Chinese Indonesians see the experience of Baperki, which defended the interests of the Chinese Indonesians between 1955 and 1965 and acquired a measure of political influence through its closeness to President Sukarno, frequently in partnership with left-wing and communist organisations, as an example for today. But because Baperki became a target of attack when the political atmosphere changed after 1965, many other Chinese remain skeptical or even fearful of any political activity. The restrictive nature of elections under the New Order may have suited them well. Most of them, as did most other Indonesian voters, followed the banner of the semi-official Golkar candidates, who regularly brought in two-thirds or more of the total vote. As for pressure groups, any organisation dedicated to "Chinese" interests, or even social organisations that seemed too "Chinese" or used the word in their title, would have been forbidden.

Although many Chinese Indonesians certainly feel the need for a strong representative organisation, especially after the experience of May 1998, it is too early to know whether INTI [organizations like INTI (Perhimpunan Indonesia Keturunan Tionghoa, Association of Indonesians of Chinese Descent), and others that aim to struggle for minority interests,] will fill the role. Many other Chinese Indonesians believe they can best contribute to Indonesia by participating as individuals in public life wherever their talents are best suited. Furthermore, many others believe that Chinese Indonesians can best contribute to Indonesia by participating as individuals in public life wherever their talents are best suited. Examples include people like Kwik Kian Gie, long-time member of the Democratic Party, financial advisor to the current President Megawati Sukarnoputri, and a member of the cabinet. And for many in the younger generation, their individual goals already identify them more with indigenous Indonesians and they have little wish to join ethnic Chinese organisations. In short, the answers to the challenges of Reformasi are as diverse as the minority itself, which is divided by generation, class, background, cultural orientation, and individual experience.

The minority alone, of course, is not responsible for its future; that will depend on developments in Indonesian society and politics as a whole. Megawati, who succeeded Wahid as president, comes from a more narrow and nationalistic background (although she did elevate Chinese New Year from a permitted public occasion to an official national holiday). Leaders of the increasingly influential Islamic groups have shown considerable tolerance toward the Chinese – this is true not only of Wahid, but also of men like Amien Rais and Nurcholish Majid. Their more fundamentalist followers may be another matter, however. The other politically influential faction, the military, has both worked with and attacked Chinese interests. In any case, an extended period of economic trouble or political unrest and competition for power would certainly be detrimental to minority interests once again, as it has been in

the past. With the uncertainties of Indonesian politics being as they are, this minority, like all other Indonesians, must face a certain amount of insecurity as a "given" in life.

Discussion

Hans-Dieter Kubitscheck:

At first, I think it is a question of minority status, and I think there is a difference between minority status and ethnic communities. I took the definition of minority status used since the 1970s as stated in international laws. Some of the criteria used were 1) numerical inferiority (which is true for the Chinese in Southeast Asia), 2) socio-political non-dominance, 3) nationality or citizenship status (but this is a point which is under discussion between experts in international law because some of them see that national minorities have the citizenship of the state where they live, and ethnic minorities do not), 4) distinguishing ethnic, religious, or linguistic characteristics. Therefore there are minorities based on these definitions. I'd like to ask Mary Somers-Heidhues about the situation of the Chinese.

Mary Somers Heidhues:

As I said, about 90% are citizens. So we would have to say "yes", minority. And, of course, Indonesia is a very multi-ethnic nation, without any real majority ethnic group. If you say minority then you mean the Chinese. The usual word for ethnic group in Indonesia is "*suku*" - you could be *suku Jawa* or *suku Batak*, for instance. Sukarno once said that the Chinese were *suku* and now it is being used, more and more, for the Chinese, which would be an advantage because you say that you have a culture. Of course, if that culture is oriented to Mandarin language, which is an external language, you're getting into trouble. But, in fact, people use Indonesian – even the minority. And, as I said, it has a long tradition.

Ingrid Wessel:

You spoke quite optimistically on the changes concerning the Chinese minority, but you didn't mention the tensions and contradictions between Muslim entrepreneurs and Chinese entrepreneurs. Could you elaborate a bit on this question?

Mary Somers Heidhues:

I don't know much about it. But people assume it is there. People assume there was great resentment among the Muslim entrepreneurs, whose position was very much weakened under Suharto, whereas that of the Chinese entrepreneurs, or some of them, was greatly strengthened – maybe at the expense of the others. But I don't know how that works out in practice. It would be interesting to observe, but so far I cannot see any move to remove the legal impediments under which the Chinese live and I do not think that's going to have much priority in the next decades – even though the Chinese would like to see it go and they have many good reasons for that. I think it is widely held that the Chinese are economically strong and that it is the natives that are economically weak. But it is interesting to note

that people like Nurcholish Majid and Abdulrahman Wahid and even the NU (Nahdlatul Ulama, organization of Muslim scholars) in East Java have their link to the Chinese. A young man who has written a book on Confucianism is a teacher at the Muslim university. Apparently the Chinese Confucians have their relations to people in Jakarta – in the Islamic circles, which I think is very illuminating or even promising.

Jean-Louis Margolin:

What you said made me think of certain aspects of French anti-Semitism. Some Jews were accused, at that time, by anti-Semites of not being sufficiently assimilated or appear to assimilate so as to infiltrate some circles of the French nation.

What is the popular feelings in Indonesia, regarding the Chinese – are they still held to be distant from the Indonesian nation or that they are now welded into it?

Mary Somers Heidhues:

Chinese are seen as not loyal to the Indonesian nation. They are just there to make money and when they get their money, they go somewhere else to spend it. They invest in China. If there is any trouble, they pack up their things and leave. So they are outsiders. Assimilation has a long history. It was basically a movement against left-wing influences among the Chinese. Rather than assimilation, I think the issue is "how much are you part of Indonesia or how much are you different from it". The movement to convert to Islam was not particularly successful – though there were a handful of prominent conversions here and there. And of course, when trouble came, they did pack up and left. But 3% of 200 million is just 6 million and there is no way all of them could leave as not all of them can afford to leave – so they have to stay. Some of them would be visibly and unknowingly different, some of them would be more conformists while the other would probably isolate.

Vincent J. H. Houben:

You are very positive that a lot of development is going on in the public lives of the Chinese. They have more freedom to express themselves in public – a way of showing those that are still prejudiced that "we exist, we are behaving normally, we are doing the same things as you without any problems". Judging from this background of prejudice, to what extent is this a new way of "defending forward"?

Mary Somers Heidhues:

I don't think you are going to fight prejudice by going underground, because the stereotypes just propagate themselves then on their own. So, what I am speaking of in terms of my positive views was not even positive to extent that people diminish themselves. Whether it was a good idea in terms of the majority, I don't know and I think it is illustrated by the movement against legal barriers – to get rid of civil registry as it applies to Chinese and change some of these. For example, it was against the law for Chinese to acquire agrarian land. That is a colonial law, but it was renewed under independent Indone-

sia. So should these laws be abolished? But most Chinese probably don't want to become landowners. On the other hand, the thought that they could just buy up on the land is pretty frightening. Indonesians' problems are poverty, violence, poor educational system, a political system that is completely unripe, immature, ethnic clashes, pollution, and so on. Is it really so important whether the Chinese can buy up agricultural land or not? Or should these people engage their efforts (as some do) on women's rights or anti-poverty measures and so on? But, like most people, they tend to think of themselves first. I am therefore asking them to be more altruistic. But we have to be realistic about these things.

Alexander Horstmann:

I'll like to comment on both papers. As acknowledged by Professor Kubitscheck, I think what is missing in the picture are the voices of the ethnic minorities themselves. We have to focus on the narratives of the ethnic minorities and these narratives, of course, include confrontation of these ethnic states. So ethnicity is not something that should be taken for granted. Through these narratives we could also understand how ethnic identity is negotiated.

Second Panel

Jean Louis Margolin:

National Construction, Identity Quest and Communitarian Temptations in Independent Singapore

State-building preceding nation-building: Singapore presents a case quite common in the post-colonial world, albeit more in Africa than in Asia. Being an exception for that part of the world, the city-state had never been an independent polity in the centuries preceding colonization, and, furthermore, became a separate colony in the British empire as late as 1945. The startling conditions of the August 1965 independence show how awkward then appeared the very idea of a Singaporean nation: the 1963 departure of the British had coincided with the merger of the island with the new Federation of Malaysia, beforehand endorsed by the vast majority of Singapore voters through the 1962 Referendum; later on, the mounting ethnic violence had led to the unexpected expulsion of Singapore from the Federation, a decision considered most unfortunate by the island leaders, who until then had always associated *Malayan* (or Malaysian) to the word "nation". The army -built from scratch-, the education system, and for some years the closely-controlled trade unions became the main instruments of the painstaking process of nation-building, up to now never pronounced completed by the political leaders.

Less common is the complexity of the ethnic configuration: four "races" (the Chinese -75% of the citizens-, the Malays -15%-, the Indians -7%-, the Eurasians -2%-) officially recognized, with their own languages (Mandarin, Malay, Tamil, English) and streams of education. Furthermore, four religions are recognized (through national holidays): Buddhism, Christianism, Islam, Hinduism - and none is dominant.

Yet, despite these ominous beginnings, ethnic violence, rampant in the 60s (dozens of Chinese and Malays were killed in 1964, and a few more in 1969, as a ripple of the Kuala Lumpur racial mayhem), has since receded. And there are many hints that a nation is stabilizing: the massivity of electoral participation (even if voting is compulsory); the recurrent failure of all ethnic-based parties; the universality of army conscription (a feature shared only by Vietnam in Southeast Asia); a general bilinguism (English as the language of communication, plus the vernacular language); and limited emigration, despite the educational and linguistic abilities of many Singaporeans.

Hence two questions arise:

1) Ethnicity has been successively, and sometimes simultaneously considered as an obstacle to overcome, as well as the most secure basis for the "organic state" projected by Prime Minister Lee Kuan Yew (1959-1990), and by some of his political heirs in the ruling People's Action Party (PAP). How did evolve the dialectical process between nation-building and ethnic management?

2) In the meanwhile, what became of Singapore identity?

1. Target: ethnicity

Singapore political elite has always considered that the main threat for societal cohesion could be a combination of selfish "money-theism" (as then Foreign minister Sinnathamby Rajaratnam nicknamed it) and ethnic chauvinism – both leading to the negation of national interest. This second danger seemed most pressing after independence, as it had been preceded by extreme ethnic polarization. The initial modern politicization, during the Interwar years, had moreover developed on ethnic lines: the Chinese followed Sun Yat Sen's Guomindang or local Communists closely connected to China's Communist Party; the Indians placed their hopes into Nehru's Congress, or, during the Japanese occupation years, into the Indian National Army, who fought in Burma along the imperial troops. The island Malays were attracted by the vibrant and precocious Indonesian nationalism, or manipulated by Peninsular traditionalists: the indigenous UMNO (United Malay National Organization) was openly aligned on the Kuala Lumpur government.

These pervasive ethnic divisions were largely the result of a colonial policy that progressively institutionalized the differences and negated the split, dual identities and sub-identities of that complex population. Although the first censuses, during most of the 19th century, put Bugis or Javanese on a par with "pure" Malays, later on they were all merged under the Malay denomination. The same fate happened to Chinese dialectal groups and Indian nationalities. The new ethnic artefacts became the objects of specific administrations (such as the Protectorate of Chinese) or laws (the customary -*adat*- or Muslim law regulating Malay family and inheritance; protective measures for Indian immigrants). Finally, different streams of education ensured the reproduction of the system: private schools for the young Chinese after China's 1911 revolution, government-supported Malay, Tamil and English schools.

Independent Singapore, in many ways, endorsed that classification. Thus, since 1979, the campaign "Speak more Mandarin and less dialects" has downplayed the differences between Chinese. A similar attempt at unification of all Indians around Tamil language has failed, the linguistic hiatus between North and South Indians being too considerable. The 1982 introduction of a new Religious Knowledge course in schools had been first motivated by the desire to unify the Chinese around common, Confucian principles. However, most of the targeted students having preferred the Christian or Buddhist options to the Confucian one, the course itself was abandoned in 1989.

At the same time, any expression of sino-centrism was deemed "Chinese chauvinism", and severely suppressed. The fears expressed in the Malay world of a "3rd China" in its middle had to be allayed, and the powerful local Communist organization, identifying itself with Maoism, had to be crushed. Since 1964, the Communists were attacked through their Chinese high schools and tertiary institutions strongholds, and many were detained for years without trial, or banned when they were not citizens. But the Chinese Chamber of Commerce itself was harshly rebuked in 1965, after Independence, when

it called for a “special status” in favour of Chinese language. Furthermore, incentives were increased for the English educational stream: in 1968, 60% of the students registered into it, 80% in 1978; in 1984, the marginalization of the other streams had become such that English was declared sole medium of education. In the meanwhile, in 1980, Chinese-language Nanyang University had forcibly merged into the new English-language National University. Symbolically, Prime Minister Lee, meeting Deng Xiaoping in 1978, had chosen not to speak to him in Mandarin. And he has stressed that Singapore Chinese should not be called Overseas Chinese more than the Australians or Canadians are called Overseas British.

The Malays could not take any advantage of the situation. The 1965 Constitution had solemnly recognized their “special position”, as “the indigenous people of Singapore”. But the only tangible advantage was the exemption of high school fees. Malay is still the only National Language, but, outside the Republic's anthem and motto, it is actually less and less used by the non Malays, English having replaced it as communication language. The Head of State, denominated *Yang di-pertuan Negara* in 1959, has reversed to the less exotic “President of the Republic”. In 1971, English became the sole language for the orders in the new army. The protracted suspicion regarding the Malays' fidelity to Singapore in time of conflict has led to a strict curtailment of their presence in the police and in the army, depriving them of one of their traditional professional specializations. And, in the late 60s, all Malay religious and civil organizations were willy-nilly regrouped into two clusters, both under close government and PAP supervision.

2. The return of communitarianism (since the 80s)

Around 1980, ethnicity could be seen as more and more restricted to a private life itself closely watched by an intrusive government. But, since, the re-emergence of communitarian themes may be regarded as one of the most obvious evolutions in a rigid political system, still under the total control of one party and one co-optated team of leaders.

The first hint of a new atmosphere, in retrospect, could be the already mentioned “Speak Mandarin” 1979 campaign. Contrary to many expectations, it did not slow the affirmation of English as the main language; its main goals were actually the unification of the Chinese under government control, the preparation of the imminent “Confucian values” campaign, and the seizure of the new trade opportunities with a reopening China. Nonetheless, the campaign triggered a process of increasing ethnic pressures, based on the principle of reciprocity between the different ethnic groups: the advantages (real or supposed) gained by any had to be extended to the others, sooner or later.

More than the Mandarin campaign, the 1980 *Special Assistance Plan* that led to the opening of nine elite schools “with Chinese ambience” determined those new claims. For the Malays, the problem was not the cultivation of an elite, but the fight against an exceptionally high rate of educational failure: Malays constituted only 3% of university students, five times less than their proportion of the general population. So, in 1981, a Council for the Education of Muslim Students (or *Mendaki*) was launched.

Its scope of intervention was enlarged in 1989 to include some of the structural evils of the community: high drug taking, high divorce rate. The Indians followed suit: a Singapore Indian Development Association (*SINDA*) appeared in 1991; then, in 1992, the Chinese, with a Chinese Development Action Council (*CDAC*). Thus, progressively, a good deal of the social welfare had been redirected from the state towards the ethnic communities.

A further step was, in 1990, the inauguration of an Association of Muslim Professionals (*AMP*), expression of the nascent Malay middle class. It signalled the timid liberalization of the regime, initiated by the new Prime Minister, Goh Chok Tong: AMP was more independent from the PAP than any wide-ranging public organization, although any expression of open opposition remained and remains unthinkable. Thus an ethnic overture paved the way for the constitution of several "reasonable" autonomous organizations, such as the Nature Society of Singapore, or the Association of Women for Action and Research (*AWARE*), whose leaders later on became *Nominated Members of Parliament* - a specific institution designed to remedy the quasi-absence of elected opposition MPs.

But the most striking expression of the communitarian revival could be its partial institutionalization in politics. During the parliamentary elections of 1988, one of the ruling party's main proposals (later adopted) was the introduction of a wide-ranging electoral reform: *Group Representation Constituencies* should be partly substituted to the British-style single-seat constituencies. It was probably a political trick: the new larger constituencies (they were progressively increased from 3 to 6 members), with teams of candidates to be elected *in toto*, have greatly reduced the chances of localized successes for the weak opposition parties. But the official rationale for the GRCs scheme was ethnic: the parliamentary representation of the minorities would be ensured, as at least one non-Chinese candidate had to be included in each team. Until then, no such quota-like measure had ever been adopted in the political field. Its necessity was not obvious: many Indians or even Malays have been elected by a majority of Chinese voters, both for the PAP and for the opposition. In most Parliaments, non-Chinese have been more numerous than the 20% ensured by the scheme. GRCs, however, limit the eventual effects of a possible ethnic polarization: *all* constituencies having Chinese majorities, Malays and Indians MPs could be otherwise entirely wiped out. But making the Trojan horse of ethnicity enter Singapore politics has its own dangers...

3. The tortuous ways of Singapore identity

The first condition for the birth of a truly Singaporean nation has been the stabilisation of the island population. Immigration has slowed considerably after the early 1930s. The change has been tremendous for a society made up before World War II of a vast majority of transient migrants. The above-mentioned decline of the "foreign" and ethnic political parties has signalled the progressive coalescence of the various communities. Today, the political, social and cultural configuration has become something very specific, not only compared with Malaysia, but also with "Greater China"

(including Taiwan and Hong Kong). The population there is much more homogenous, and not as used to interacting with the non-Chinese.

The cultural scene is revealing. A lively Singaporean cinema has appeared in the 90s which, even if it has not produced masterpieces, plays powerfully on the huge diversity of the island languages (Chinese dialects, “Singlish”, etc.) and on Singaporean distinctive features, - from present-day housing estates to the indigenous rock music of the 60s. And contrary to many expectations (or fears...), over two decades of closer relations with China have not engendered much sympathy for the “old country”, whose main interest, for Singaporeans, seems firmly set in the sphere of business.

To go further, Ernest Renan's definition of the national bond does not work well on an island where the ancestors are not buried, where the most dramatic common experience has been a Japanese occupation during which most of the (few) local heroes later on turned out to be outlawed Communists, and where, until recently, feelings and emotions could hardly be communicated to others, due to the absence of a common language. And yet a distinct Singaporean identity does exist, even if in an unassuming way. It is for a good deal the result of a unique syncretism. The past is actually offering Singaporeans three widely distinct (but not necessarily incompatible) sets of traditions into which they can sink their roots.

The most obvious tradition is that coming from the ancestral country. A matrix of primordial identity, that tradition is however constantly reinvented, and is probably declining, if slowly. Among the Chinese, trance rituals -may be on Indian influence- have assumed an importance seldom known in China. Hindus have started lifting caste bars (especially in temples) before it happened in India. And, among all ethnic groups, an “association craze” has long been rampant; later on it gave way to the present tight net of government organizations.

Migration -that liberating trauma- determined a whole new set of specificities and values, transmitted from generation to generation, and reflected in official discourse. Singapore history, as taught in primary school, centres on portraits of immigrants that came without money, succeeded through hard work and cleverness, and used their new fortune to help less fortunate ones. In other societies of migrants, even far away from Asia, and with a completely different ethnic distribution -USA, Australia, Argentina, Mauritius, etc- one could probably find the same cult of energetic pioneers, the same secularism (at least in politics and in economic life), the same spontaneous egalitarianism.

The last tradition in which nearly all Singaporeans are rooted is the western one. What remains of the long British colonial period (1819-1963) is still conspicuous in the urban landscape. The West has deeply penetrated many aspects of the institutional as well as daily life. English is taught and spoken much more today than during the colonial period. The most widely read newspapers, the most popular TV or radio channels are in English. The lively literary and theatrical scenes are more English than all local Asian languages taken together. The thousands of students leaving year after year for Britain, the USA or Australia constantly re-establish the multifaceted ties between Singapore and the English-

speaking world, whose heritage has been transplanted -even if only partially- into the city-state more than anywhere else in Asia.

Singapore society has proved to be much more complex and fluid than most accounts like to contend. Crude, dychotomic classifications such as Western/Asian, traditional/modern, Chinese/indigenous Southeast Asians have proved unable to account for its most significant features. Thus the Malays, far from leading a kampong life, dwell like the others in concrete apartment blocks, and the proportion of wage earners among them is even higher than among the Chinese. Malay women usually work, and the number of their children, although the highest of all ethnic groups in Singapore, is much lower than among Malaysian Malays. And if ethnic intermarriage has never been very common, the proportion of Eurasians (nearly 2%) is probably the highest in Asia. Even in the distant past, the propensity to syncretism was shown to be impressive. Thus Baba Chinese (whose ancestors came first to Malacca in the 15th century, and whose way of life, and even language, were deeply "Malay-ised") are seen by someones as constituting a model for today's cultural interaction. They had devised, with the Europeans, the ubiquitous "shophouse", that thin and deep two-floor building of the old Asian commercial districts. The wooden, stilted Malay houses have been used as models for the elegant ancient veranda houses built for rich Westerners. Straits English is dotted with words, formulas and even grammatical forms coming from Malay or Chinese languages.

Conclusion

The emphasis given in Singapore to "ethnic specificities" has often led to a formal and sterile multiculturalism, that locks each community into a predetermined set of "traditions". The government has tried hard, since at least two decades, to complement those traditions with a "national ideology". However, despite its total control on the media, it has been an almost total failure. The end result has been an excessive prominence of a "pragmatism" often associated with selfishness, opportunism and a vulgar materialism. Therefore a potentially dangerous void has opened between parochial communitarianism and excessive individualism: it tends to be filled by milleniarist or even nihilist ideologies and groups. Thus numerous charismatic or fundamentalist Christian groups have been developing. And the dozens of arrests operated since September 11 in the Jamaah Islamiyya circles have shown the startling extent of the Islamist threat. Any mishandling could lead to a renewal of ethnic polarization. But the worst is never sure, and Singapore has repeatedly proved in the past its ability to overcome various dangers. In the future, is it too optimistic to think that the city-state could still become a living demonstration of the aptitude of Chinese, Malay and Indian cultures to contribute to the advancement of mankind?

Volker Grabowsky:

The Thai and Lao Ethnic minorities in Cambodia: Their History and their Fate after Decades of Warfare and Genocide

Cambodia with ethnic Khmer making up roughly 90 per cent of the population, currently estimated at twelve million, is considered as one of the ethnically most homogenous states in mainland Southeast Asia. Apart from the various Mon-Khmer and Austronesian speaking "hill tribes" in the northeast (1-1.5%) only the Islamic Cham and Malay (3%) are officially recognised as "indigenous" minorities. Ethnic Chinese and Vietnamese, though many of them Cambodian citizens, are registered under the label "immigrants populations". Official statistics of Cambodia give the numerical strength, albeit underrated, of the "indigenous" groups. However, with regards to the so-called "immigrant" nationalities the government remains rather silent. Only residents who hold a foreign passport are considered as "foreign" (Vietnamese, Chinese, etc.) nationals.

Among the non-indigenous populations of Cambodia there are two groups who have been living in the country at least as long as the Cham. I speak about the Lao and Thai. Until recently they have made up the relative majority of the population in two of Cambodia's twenty provinces (in Stung Treng and in Koh Kong). The very existence of these minorities should by no means be a surprise as large parts of western and northern Cambodia — making up nearly of one third of the present-day national territory — had been either an integral part of Siam or of Laos for one century or even longer.

As to the rough size of ethnic Thai and Lao living in Cambodia, we lack any reliable data. The first Cambodian census that matched acceptable international standards was conducted in 1962 but failed to provide useful data on mother tongue and ethnic origin of the Cambodian population. The second census, carried out in 1998, included "mother tongue" but the results were never published. However, there is strong evidence, as I will show later, that in the first half of the last century ethnic Thai and Lao comprised at least one per cent of the total population in the French protectorate of Cambodia. Forced assimilation and physical persecution during the successive Cambodian regimes of Sihanouk (1953-1970), Lon Nol (1970-1975) and Pol Pot (1975-1979) reduced the relative size of the Lao and Thai national minorities. Following the overthrow of the Khmer Rouge in January 1979, their plight seemed to have been alleviated although we do not exactly know to what extent. During the regime of the Vietnamese installed "People's Republic of Kampuchea" (1979-1989) a relatively high percentage of senior party and government officials belonged to Cambodia's Thai minority. For example, among the nineteen members of the "Kampuchean People's Revolutionary Party" (KPRP) elected at the fourth party congress in May 1981 there were two ethnic Thai from Koh Kong province: Say Phouthong and Rong Chream Kaysan.

The Thai (or Siamese) and Lao ethnic minorities can be divided into four main groups:

a) the Thai in the southwestern coastal province of Koh Kong;
b) the Lao and Shan (Tai Yai) in Battambang;
c) the Lao in Stung Treng and Rattanakiri;

d) isolated Lao settlements in central and eastern Cambodia.

All four regions have in common that they were part of the Siamese Empire (almost) throughout the nineteenth century.

Ethnic politics and policies of Cambodian governments towards the Thai and Lao minorities

There are few academic works, if any, on the ethnic politics and policies of Cambodian governments towards the Thai and Lao minorities. The most detailed monograph, written in Thai, is Caran Yobanyong's (1985) *Ratthaban thamin* ["Savage Governments"]. Though not written for an academic audience in a narrow sense, it contains a lot of hitherto unknown facts about the struggle of the "heroic Thai population of Koh Kong" against allegedly brutal repression inflicted by successive Cambodian governments, letting the French-Cambodian colonial administration appear comparatively compassionate.

Caran was a leftist Thai journalist, an admirer of Pridi Phanomyong, who defies clear-cut ideological categorisation. Although hardly denying his long-term contacts with the Hanoi leadership, dating from his first visit to Hanoi in 1958, where he met the North Vietnamese Prime Minister Pham Van Dong, Caran Yobanyong expresses strong Thai nationalist sentiments. In discussing the Thai-Cambodian territorial dispute over the temple of Preah Vihear (1958-62) or the internal policy of the Khmer Rouge, Caran hardly argues in Marxist terminology but sticks to what he perceives as Thai nationalist interest. Caran visited Vietnamese occupied Cambodia in August and September 1979. There he met with Heng Samrin and Hun Sen at a time when Thailand had become ASEAN's front-line state that strongly opposed to the so-called "Vietnamese puppet regime" whose top leaders were the two Cambodian politicians mentioned above. Thus one might wonder whether Caran's nationalist viewpoint was genuine or more a means to protect himself against accusations of being just a fellow-traveller of Hanoi and Moscow. Most of Caran's data were collected from interviews given in Cambodia and with Cambodian refugees of Thai origin in Trat and Chantaburi provinces.

During the French colonial rule of Koh Kong (1904-1953) the administration on the district (*srok*) and commune (*khum*) levels was dominated by ethnic Khmer. Most soldiers stationed in the province were also ethnic Khmer. The French, however, respected the ethnic Thai language and did not forbid its public use either at court or in monasteries. There were no signs of any significant repression of the Thai villages with regard to their ethnic background. During the first Indochina War (1945-53) Khmer Issara and Vietminh units operated in Koh Kong. They were openly supported by the local Thai militia. A conflict between Khmer Issara and Vietminh arose in 1950 when the Khmer accused their Vietnamese comrades of excessively exploiting local resources. Finally, the Vietminh guerrillas gained the upper hand.

The government of Prince Sihanouk called Koh Kong's Thai minority "Siamese of Koh Kong" (*Siam kò kong*). In 1959 the province was given the new official name *Khamen Rat Phumin*, the "[province belonging to] the King of the Khmer State". Not all anti-French local Thai made use of a royal am-

nesty. Some preferred to stay in exile in Khlòng Yai district, Trat province. During the 1960s the economy of Koh Kong prospered. Many Cambodians took advantage of a government decree that all bosses of fishing boats operating from Cambodian soil had to employ a certain percentage of Khmer nationals. For that reason, the Thai owners of fishing boats in Koh Kong had to employ ethnic Khmer from other parts of Cambodia rather than fellow Thai from neighboring Trat, Chanthaburi and Rayong. Sihanouk's policy of assimilating the Thai minority proved to be most dangerous in the religious sphere. Sihanouk appointed Brahæ Bhiksæu Anukanæa to Patriarch of the provincial Sangha. The policy of assimilation began to work as more and more ethnic Khmer were encouraged to enter monkshood and to observe Khmer monastic rites. During Buddhist ceremonies under the participation of the predominantly Thai laymen the Khmer language was used.

In the early 1960s the political repression of Koh Kong's Thai minority became more and more unbearable. The use of Thai as the medium of instruction in schools and in other public institutions was strictly prohibited. The deterioration of the bilateral relations between Thailand and Cambodia in the aftermath of the Preah Vihear conflict certainly contributed to a worsening of the situation for many ethnic Thai. As a consequence, "many Thai of Cambodian nationality flew hiding in forests or escaped the sombre dangers by seeking refuge (under the shelter of the king) in Thailand." The prosecution of Wai Kawòn, a farmer and fisherman from Ban Rong Cek who in 1965 was falsely accused of separatist activities, is described by Caran as a striking example of the brutality and ruthlessness with which Sihanouk's secret police cracked down on the Thai minority's desire of preserving their language and culture.

The policy of Khmerisation was implemented in other sparsely populated minority regions as well. Until the late 1950s the Khmer population in the northeast, notably in Stung Treng but also in large parts of Kratie, remained very low. Thus Prince Sihanouk's Sangkhum Party ("*Communauté socialiste populaire*") launched a programme to resettle ethnic Khmer families in the northeast. To facilitate the implementation of this policy two new provinces were created: Rattanakiri (eastern part of Stung Treng) in 1962 and Mondulkiri (eastern part of Kratie) in 1965. These two provinces, the population density of which was less than four inhabitants per square kilometre, were declared "pioneer frontiers" and subject to population transfers under military supervision.

At Stung Treng and Rattanakiri alone more then 600 Khmer families from central Cambodian provinces were transferred to colonise the river banks. The continuous state-sponsored migration of ethnic Khmer had two long-term consequences:

a) More and more "upland people" became Khmerised, and now officially called Khmer Lœu "Upland Khmer".
b) The cultural hegemony of the Lao — notably vis-à-vis the highland population — was disrupted.

It does not come as a surprise that this government policies did not receive much enthusiasm among the Lao of Stung Treng and Rattanakiri and met the stiff resistance of the so-called Khmer Lœu who

rebelled in 1963 and by 1969 formed the backbone of the fledgeling army of the Communist Party of Kampuchea led by Saloth Sar alias Pol Pot.

During the "fascist dictatorial regime" of Marshall Lon Nol the provincial state apparatus in Koh Kong remained intact. The plight of the Thai people did not improve. Knowing that Lon Nol's coup d'état would not affect the anti-Thai attitude of the Khmer administrators, the patriotic local Thai took arms and "tried vigorously to chase all ethnic Khmer (*Khon chat khamen*) out of the territory of Koh Kong". Supported by ethnic Thai veterans like Nai (Mr.) Udòn, Nai Prasat and Nai Sai [Phuthòng] who returned in 1971 from North Vietnamese exile, the Thai population of Koh Kong gained step by step the liberated territory. By 1973, the Lon Lol regime had lost its hegemony over Koh Kong. The Thai armed units liberated their villages in "internationalist cooperation" (*naeo ruam sakon*) with the Vietnamese and Cambodian revolutionaries. "The Thai troops of Koh Kong took over the task of liberating [the territory] and driving away the troops of the reactionary government from Koh Kong territory which is the native country of the ethnic Thai who form a national minority in Cambodia. Therefore, the operations of the Thai troops of Koh Kong were conducted separately from the armed forces of the Cambodian Communist Party. The crucial role of the local Thai forces in the conquest of a major encampment of government troops, Tanai military camp, on 30 October 1973 provoked the envy of the Khmer communists".

The liquidation of the Thai Communist leadership in Koh Kong by their Khmer comrades is described in considerable length. However, the sequence of events as exposed by Caran differs in some important details from Kiernan's account. The differences may be attributed to the fact that Kiernan uses Tea Banh as his main source of information while Caran seems to have relied on Sai Phuthòng. Moreover, Caran overstates obviously the ethnic division between Thai and Khmer communists, since Prasit, "the commander of the troops of the Thai national minority in Koh Kong", was a high-ranking member of the Khmer Rouge leadership. According to Kiernan, Prasit, "a light-skinned ethnic Thai whose father was partly Vietnamese" and who "had led the 1946-54 Issarak anti-French resistance in Koh Kong", ranked seventh in the Central Committee hierarchy. Kiernan says that Prasit was summoned in January 1974 to a Central Committee meeting from where he never returned. But Caran states that Prasit received the order to attend the meeting, three months later, on 3 April 1974. Five days later, six other Thai leaders were ordered to attend a meeting at the Southwest Zone headquarters [with Ta Mok]. The Khmer communists killed them all.

During the Sihanouk regime many Khmer Krom refugees and Khmer from neighbouring provinces such as Kompong Speu and Kampot were encouraged to migrate to Koh Kong and settle there. These ethnic Khmer received relatively benign treatment by the Khmer communists who were called by the local Thai people not "Red Khmer/ Khmer Rouge" but "Black Khmer" (*Khamen dam*) or "Black Crows" (*ka dam*) because of the colour of their uniforms. Caran cites numerous killings, in particular of Thai children, after the Khmer Rouge had taken full control of Koh Kong in mid-1974. These children were "kids of the contemptible Siamese who sell out the nation" (*luk ai siam phuak khai chat*).

The fate of the Lao in Stung Treng and Rattanakiri during the Khmer Rouge period was hardly better. It is estimated that at least one million out of eight million Cambodians perished as a direct result of the genocidal policies of the Pol Pot regime (over the period from April 1975 to January 1979). The former urban populations suffered most. In his recent book on the Pol Pot regime, sub-titled "Race, power, and genocide in Cambodia under the Khmer Rouge, 1875-79" (1996), Ben Kiernan puts forward the argument that Pol Pot's extremist socialist policies had a distinct racist component. Thus ethnic minorities suffered in general more than ethnic Khmer. Although this argument holds true with regards to ethnic Vietnamese and Cham, it cannot be generalised. Ethnic Chinese, for example, were persecuted not because of any racial prejudices (most Khmer Rouge leaders, including Pol Pot, were of Sino-Khmer origin) but on reasons of perceived class antagonisms. Unlike the Chinese and Sino-Khmer, the ethnic Lao were almost totally rural and had been living as so-called "base people" under Khmer Rouge control since 1970. This explains their relatively benign treatment by the Khmer Rouge when compared with the incredible sufferings of people — both Khmer and non-Khmer — in most of the country. However, the egalitarian policies of the Khmer Rouge suppressed certain important characteristics of Lao identity. The public use of Lao language was forbidden, and the Lao women had to wear the same black dress as Khmer women. Moreover, the Khmer Rouge no longer allowed the planting of glutinous rice (*khao niao*), which is regarded as an essential element of Lao-ness.

After the fall of the Pol Pot regime in early January 1979 the Thai minority regained their historic rights — for the first time since 1904, if we follow Caran's point of view. The government of Heng Samrin appointed an ethnic Thai called Rung, as governor of Koh Kong province. Rung should be the same person as Rong Chream Kayson mentioned above as member of the KPRP Central Committee in 1981.

During the period of Vietnamese occupation of Cambodia (1979-89) Koh Kong became a contested space between the Phnom Penh government and the anti-Vietnamese resistance. Several thousand Thai fled from Koh Kong to neigboring Trat province where those who could prove their Thai descent were granted Thai citizenship. Thus the number of ethnic Thai along the coasts of southwestern Cambodia further declined.

Perspectives

Koh Kong is one of the fastest growing provinces in Cambodia — both economically and demographically. According to the results of the 1998 census, 58% of Koh Kong's 132,000 inhabitants were migrants. That is the highest percentage for any Cambodian province, except Phnom Penh and Pailin municipalities. Three quarters of the migrants had their previous residence in another Cambodian province, and 5.3% came from outside Cambodia.[1] Although the published census results do not further specify the countries of origin, one may assume that most of the latter group are of Thai origin.

[1] National Institute of Statistics 1999: 133-134.

However, it seems that Koh Kong has lost its once predominantly and distinct Thai identity. Can Thai investments in Koh Kong and the promotion of tourism from Thailand into this border area help create a revival of ethnic consciousness among the remnants of the ethnic Thai in Koh Kong? This is a question still too early to answer but there is no reason to be overly optimistic in this respect.

In Stung Treng the Lao survived much better and even experience a modest cultural revival. The religious freedom the present Cambodian Royal Government gives to its Buddhist (90-95%) as well as its Islamic (3-4%) citizens helps also the Lao to reinforce their ethnic identity. Lao monasteries flourish in the towns of Stung Treng and Vœunsai. Wat Sra Kae Monivan or Wat Leu in Stung Treng, for example, is a pole of attraction and formation of the Lao community. In the mid 1990s more than 30 novices, aged between 8 and 20 years, were ordained (*buat*) in this leading monastery. Although a new generation of monks is educated through textbooks published in Khmer by the Buddhist Institute in Phnom Penh, a revival of interest in studying Lao Buddhist palm-leaf manuscripts (*bai lan*), written in Lao language and the religious Lao Dhamma script (*tua aksòn tham lao*), may contribute to a further strengthening of Lao identity that is to a great extent also identified by religious rites.

The Lao minority has so far benefited from friendly political relations between Cambodia and Laos during the last two decades, which is in contrast to the less smooth relations between the both countries and Thailand. However, long-term development schemes of the Cambodian government to “develop” the northeast might jeopardize the fragile ethnic balance in the region. The intention of the Phnom Penh authorities to transfer as many as 20,000 Khmer families to Rattanakiri and Stung Treng in the near future could lead to social unrest not only among the “upland Khmer” but also among the “Lao Long”, “the lost Lao” along the Cambodian-Lao border.

Discussion

Mary Somers Heidhues:

It was said that the Khmer Rouge recruited many of their supporters from minorities. In the meantime, this explanation seems to have vanished. So were they based on minority non-Khmer groups or were they ethnically primarily Khmer?

Volker Grabowsky:

I think the rank and file of the Khmer Rouge were primarily ethnically Khmer, but a relatively high percentage of the so-called ethnic minorities from the northeast were reservist soldiers in the Khmer Rouge army and, especially the bodyguards for the senior Khmer Rouge politicians like Pol Pot himself, were from the minority. The new governor of the autonomous province of Pailin is a "Khmer Lœu" from Rattanakiri province. I think it is also, in certain ways, a reflection of Khmer chauvinism to say the Khmer Rouge phenomenon had nothing to do with Khmer ethnic identity or is alien to Khmer identity.

Ingrid Wessel:

You have called Singapore a successful ethnic management experience that could serve as a model to other peoples in the world and at the same time you called Singapore and Malaysia very distinct countries in their ethnic management experiences. Why do you see more differences than similarities in this case because I think that Singapore and Malaysia are very similar in their ethnic managements?

Jean-Louis Margolin:

I don't seem to know exactly what you mean by similar because I see more differences than similarities especially, for example, if you look at their political systems. Of course I would agree that there were similarities between the 1930s and 1960s. But nowadays the political parties in Singapore are completely non-ethnic. This is exactly the contrary in Malaysia, where the political parties are mainly ethnic based. There were two different attempts in the last 10years to forge some kind of political alliances of opposing political parties but they all failed – mostly divided along ethnic or religious lines. So I think the managements are quite different. Also the Chinese in Malaysia complain about the policy of quotas introduced since after the riot of 1969, which gives incentives to people based on their ethnic origin. This is not the case in Singapore. After independence, the Malays were supposed to receive special privileges, although these have been reduced to almost nothing. The only significant advantage the Malays enjoy now is the free secondary education policy, which is exclusively for the Malays, but then again secondary education is not very expensive. The fact is that Singaporeans and Malays are two different populations now. Only the older populations still dream that the two countries could be unified again sometime in the distant future.

Alexander Horstmann:

I think Professor Grabowsky's paper on Cambodia also showed the importance of memory in relation to the historical consciousness, may be, of ethnic minorities. Oman Faruk talked about the re-writing of the Islamic history in Cambodia. Do you know anything about this development?

Volker Grabowsky:

Actually, the book written by this old Thai pro-Soviet communist or pro-Vietnamese communist, who combine loyalty to the Vietnamese and the Soviet Union in the late 1970s and early 1980s with Thai nationalism, which he used against America, the west and the Chinese wasn't handed to reconstruct what was left of the Thai minorities in Koh Kong. It would be interesting to know whether there is some revival of Thai ethnic consciousness in the province of Koh Kong. If successful, such a development could lead to increase in trade relation, especially between the Trap province and Koh Kong province. From some Thai newspaper reports we learnt that a casino has been opened on the Cambodian side of the border which might attract some Thai businessmen as well as tourists to the province. This combination might help to encourage the collective consciousness of what is left of the Thai minority.

First Round Table Discussion:

Unity or Diversity? Nationalitätenpolitik (state ethnic politics and policies) in Mainland and Insular Southeast Asia

Vincent J. H. Houben:

The concept of Southeast Asia as a region has been under discussion since the middle of the 1990s. You may have seen it in some American journals, and some very prominent people like Ruth McVey have written on this issue because there is a feeling among Southeast Asianists that there is a need to re-conceptualize Southeast Asia as a region.

The background of this discussion was that in the course of globalization, the regional specialists have come under severe attack from representative of the major disciplines, because, according to them, if the world was growing more and more together, what is the need for regional specialists? Since our worldview has been completely changed as a result of the event of September 11th, 2001, the situation has changed as well. As far as I know it, regional specialists are now been asked about the position, and possible threat, of Islam in Southeast Asia. But, in general, I think the perception of cultural differences and the need for region-specific knowledge has become more recognized since then. So, I hope the trend will continue, as this will guarantee a better future for the academic discipline in this school.

Today we are dealing with the problem of ethnicity and the policies that have been adopted by the various governments in Southeast Asia to deal with the problem. This is an extremely complex issue. So far we have seen a wide range of issues, starting with the introduction on some of the key issues. Remarks have been made on pre-colonial states and the policy of forced migration of Asian states in mainland Southeast Asia after wars.

Professor Kubitscheck made some comments on colonial policies regarding ethnicity and, of course, the current situation and we have the feeling that the Southeast Asian states are still in the process of developing their own identity (geo body) and somehow this ethnicity has to be accommodated within their national identity. I also appreciate the presentation by Professor Grabowsky who tried to show us the difficulties involved in writing such history as a result of the knowledge available in that area. On the other hand it is also important to look at the issue from the perspective of those involved in the history themselves, that is, the ethnic groups themselves on the one hand and the politicians on the other. In this regard it is necessary to be very careful in assessing the claims made by both the ethnic groups on one hand and the state on the other. Not only should we concentrate on discussing the formal process, I think the informal process is also worth discussing. In this respect, I think, Singapore stands out as a perfect example – where the government has been very successful in dealing with the issue of ethnic minorities even up to the point of social engineering. On the ground, however, one sees a different picture in Singapore, where it appears there is an attempt to make Chinese dominance acceptable and working. So in reality you have Chinese dominance, while officially you have a policy of

ethnic non-discrimination and four official languages. In Indonesia, likewise, on the formal front people seem to be much tolerant towards the Chinese, whereas on the other hand, negative projections on the Chinese continue to exist. Another issue raised by Professor Kubitscheck, which has not yet been discussed is the dimension of international policy. This involves the question of human rights and the extent to which national sovereignty is an absolute. Is it conceivable that in the future international organizations like the United Nations Organization might intervene in ethnic as well as cross-border issues? I think these are issues that need to be discussed extensively.

Thomas Engelbert:

To begin, we have Singapore or Indonesia on one hand and mainland southeast Asia on the other. At least three ways of assimilation are easily noticeable. These are forced assimilation – which of course is not admitted by the minorities; then voluntary assimilation – if the Chinese, e.g., accept to be Indonesians, mainly over the language question; and finally natural assimilation. With the Chinese, population assimilation is very wide spread. In Thailand a sizeable percentage of the Thai have Chinese ancestors. This is also very visible in Cambodia – not only in the market but also in the countryside, where peasants marry native women. This is also the case in southern Vietnam where there has not been any case of racist violence against the Chinese as individuals even in the times of the Vietnam-China conflict. But this is something that occurs quite often in Indonesia. There are even instances in Indonesia where the government has used dissatisfaction with the government to promote violence against the Chinese minority. So what is the main hindrance to assimilation by the Chinese in Indonesia? Is it Islam?

Mary Somers Heidhues:

We usually point to two factors and these are: Colonial policy and Islam. We can discuss for a long time about the extent to which Islam is an exclusionist religion, whereas Buddhism tends to be a more encompassing religion. Or we can simply argue that the Chinese were Buddhists anyway. But they were not Muslims and they would have to convert to Islam. Those Chinese who did convert to Islam, historically, in the Malay-Indonesian world tended to be assimilated and we don't know where they are anymore – because they became assimilated. Secondly, colonial policy was divisive and it was deliberately so for a lot of reasons. Particularly, the Dutch insisted, at the end of the 18th century, that the Chinese should not dress like the natives. It was an offence because the Chinese paid more taxes than the natives. In fact Dutch colonial policy was very attentive to the Chinese. It ruled them through a system of Chinese officers [what I said was *kapitan*] that was always kept under very close Dutch control and from the end of the 18th century they tended to emphasize separating the Chinese from the indigenous Indonesians. The British, perhaps not so deliberately, also tended to feel that the Chinese and the indigenous people must be separated. This wasn't the case in places like Thailand or Vietnam – you had a Thai elite or a Vietnamese elite. French policy came in rather late and didn't have much effect on this interaction.

Another factor was the opening of Dutch education in the 20th century. Chinese schools opened at the turn of the century – 1900. They were teaching in Mandarin. They were modern and there was a boom in Chinese education. The Dutch simply had to do something, so they opened European schools in Dutch to the Chinese in 1913. This meant that you had a local born, locally oriented, but Dutch educated elite. A similar thing happened in Singapore and Malaysia, where some people learned first how to speak English before they learned how to speak Mandarin, Malay or other languages. This meant you had a multi-ethnic elite who spoke the colonial language and were not so interested in those who didn't. I think those were important divisive factors.

In the Philippines, however, the Spanish colonial policy was assimilationist. If you were a Catholic, you might not be at the top of the pinnacle, like the Spanish Catholic, but still, you were locally accepted, and that kept the barriers down. The Spanish differentiated the non-Catholic Chinese – the immigrants – but once they were "catholicised", they were allowed to mix with the indigenous population.

Jean-Louis Margolin:

I would like to add a little to your remarks on Singapore and also the question raised by Thomas Engelbert. I am sorry if I sound like a Singapore paid agent, but there is no way I could avoid what I've written – most especially my main book on Singapore. I am not really so much in favor of everything that the Kwang Yu (Lee Kuan Yew) government did and I'm very conscious of the fact that, especially, the Malays are a very dejected minority in Singapore. I alluded to the fact that most of the Malay students could not enter the university, so their level of education is still much lower than that of the Chinese, and economically, they were quite marginalized – especially during the colonial period. They were mainly found at the lower levels of the civil service – especially the police and army. And for political reasons, they were more or less excluded, after 1965, from these avenues of limited success and stability in life. Recent news have shown the presence of a surprising high number of members of the radical Islamic group (Jama Islamiya) in Singapore. This is an obvious danger to the government of Singapore. Actually, even if it is not so obvious now, I think the Malay problem in Singapore has come to stay and may even become more violent in the future. But I must also recognize the fact that the level of ethnic tensions is very much reduced. On the positive side, however, there is growing level of intermixing (not so much intermarriages) at the workplace, at schools and friendship, generally, among the different ethnic groups. Nowadays you find Chinese going to Indian temples during festivals. A number of Chinese go to Malay night markets during the month of Ramadan without any problem. Things have changed now, though, considering the events of the recent past where you have cases of ethnic violence in the area. So, one couldn't say it is without problems and that it could serve as a model. But it is not fair to say that this is a way of trying to hide Chinese domination. Firstly, the Chinese in Singapore are not a single united group; in fact there is a great rift in the Chinese community. There are the Chinese-educated and English-educated Chinese, there are the Christian and non-Christian Chinese and even among the elite (middle class), there is a high represen-

tation of the Indians – especially in the political, trade union or even academic sphere. Also, even if it is only symbolic, you have a few Malays who make it into the parliament, and even the university but, in reality, this is an artifact. There is also a small group, which is very successful. This is a group of Arabs (so-called sayyad) and is holding very high positions – both in the Malay community and in Singapore in general.

Mary Somers Heidhues:

Another question is the extent to which minorities groups control resources, which the government is eager to have, for example forest resources, or gems. In most Southeast Asian countries, I think the state has the right to control resources. In Indonesia, it does. But what about the minorities in an area where oil is discovered, or forests, gems, etc., can be exploited?

Volker Grabowsky:

In considering the question as to whether the discovery of natural resources e.g. oil would change the ethnic composition of an area, I would like to consider the case of Pailin. There was mass migration of people from far the away Shan state of Burma and as a result a completely new and, until then, unknown ethnic group was created in the region. As to the question raised by Thomas Engelbert, regarding the influence of Islam and whether the incorporation of different religiously incompatible groups are almost inevitable, at first sight, this would appear to be the case. The integration of ethnic Chinese into the Thai society looks like a success story. There is probably 15% to 20% Chinese blood in the Thai population, i.e. up to 20% of Thai blood is actually of Chinese origin. Thus in the central region of Thailand, most notably in Bangkok and surrounding countryside, almost all Thai people have at least one Chinese ancestor. Going back to a hundred years ago, when Chinese migration to Thailand had not reached its peak, people in Thailand and also some foreign western observers feared that Thailand might change into a Chinese province if the migration did not stop. The Thai adopted a two-way approach to prevent this from happening: firstly they suppressed Chinese education and stopped migration from China in order to be able to integrate the already high population of Chinese in Thailand and after 20 or 30 years of such integration policy, if some result had been achieved (up to the period of the Second World War), they could then shift to a more gentle and flexible policy for the Chinese – until the second or third generation Thai-Chinese have developed some level of loyalty to the Thai state. Actually the Chinese brand of Buddhism is not completely the same as Thai, but they are compatible in certain ways. The Thai do not expect that the Thai of Chinese origin would behave in exactly the same way as the ethnic Thai, but, at least, there is some mutual respect concerning cultural and religious traditions – the Thai celebrate the Chinese New Year the same way as the Chinese celebrate the Thai New Year and, of course, a third New Year – which is the international New Year. But for the Muslims, it is more complicated because they are less compatible with the Thai society. Another example of voluntary migration, as mentioned earlier, is the Cham people in Cambodia and the Mon in Thailand. They were migrants who voluntarily came to Cambodia and Thailand respectively

and were invited by the government and were given some privileges. Nowadays we have a high percentage of Cham in the Cambodian army, and of Mon in the Thai administration. But in Thailand, nowadays, the Mon ethnicity has disappeared. I don't know whether it is due to the fact that the Thai and Mon Theravada Buddhist traditions are almost the same – even Thai kings adopted the Mon tradition in central Thailand – so they could merge. The Cham in Cambodia have survived the existing groups, in spite of the policy of integration. Though they are integrated to a certain extent, but they have survived – still recognizable by their religion, custom, etc. Could this be due to the fact that the French used the Cham or could it be attributed to Islam?

Hans-Dieter Kubitscheck:

As for natural resources, the issue is regulated by declarations on the rights of indigenous people and other declarations on the rights of persons belonging to tribal groups passed by the United Nations assembly and also the International Labor Organization. But these declarations are not binding international laws. The national legislations usually take precedence, as there is the right to sovereignty and non-interference in internal matters of states. But there are other areas of co-operation; the convention on the rights of persons passed by the U.N. became binding on the countries that are signatories to it. But, by and large, the issue of natural resources is subject to the national legislation.

Uta Gärtner:

I would like to refer to the case of the Mon; they are still existing as a minority, not only as ethnic minority, but even as a state, in spite of the fact that Theravada Buddhism was said to have been brought to the Burmese by the Mon. They are still a distinct ethnic community there. Could it be that the situation of the Mon, as against other ethnic groups, in Thailand is the result of the Thai policy of uniting the people as Thai (sort of assimilating them), considering that the Thai official policy for centuries has been to make one Thai people, irrespective of their ethnic differences? This could have been possible, because they had no colonial power, which could have accelerated the development of ethnicism.

Another issue is that of resources. In Myanmar, for example, most of the mineral resources are with the ethnic communities. The mineral deposits are in the high mountains and the people could not make use of them because most of it is taken over by the central government. And this is a major cause of conflict in Myanmar.

Volker Grabowsky:

Dr. Gärtner has made a very important point. I think, to a certain extent, the Thai and Cambodian ethnic policies are different from Burma. In Burma, the various ethnic groups are recognized as such – even having their own states – whereas in Thailand no ethnic group, whether the Malay, the Khmer or any ethnic group for that matter, has even an autonomous district or province. The same applies to Cambodia as well. But I will not compare the Mon in Thailand and those in Burma, because these are

different kinds of ethnic groups. In Burma, the Mon are the predominant population of lower Burma, so they still have their ancestral homeland, whereas the Mon in Thailand, according to what some people believe, are not the descendants of Theravada Buddhist Mon that ruled Thailand between the sixth and ninth centuries. Those Mon are completely assimilated. But the Mon that live in Thailand nowadays – both in central Thailand and even a few Mon settlements in northern Thailand, have migrated from Burma in several waves in the 17th, 18th, and 19th centuries and, according to the ethnic policies of the Siamese kings, were given new places to live in – scattered all over the central region of Thailand, and not allowing them to settle in contiguous territories, which would otherwise give them the right to claim autonomous districts. This was also the case with the Cham in Cambodia – they are also scattered all over the country, in Phnom Penh, throughout the central region, but they have survived in small pockets mainly due to their different religions and customs.

Alexander Horstmann:

I think assimilation is very much a dominant transcript. It has been observed that we should pay more attention to the ethnic minorities themselves, those who are involved partly in the making of their ethnic identity. In the case of the Mon, for example, there is a certain revivalism in ethnic identity (as shown by a PhD thesis written in Tokyo about the Mon in Thailand). There are also kinship relations and trading networks, which have a long history. This points to the fact that there is revivalism in ethnic identity of the Mon in Thailand and Burma. Also the Cham are based on the Malay sacred lineage, i.e. Islamic lineage. There are even Cham communities that link to each other and to the middle east. So, in a way, there is a new stimulus to ethnic identity of the Mon.

Christiane Molt:

I have a question for Professor Grabowsky on the issue of ethnic groups in Thailand. As you said, they are more or less assimilated into the Tai population. What about the Karen – an ethnic minority, as they are seen in northern Thailand, is there a kind of assimilation on the way for them as well?

Volker Grabowsky:

What I mean by assimilation refers to state policies regarding low-land population that have been integrated into the Tai society –the Mon, Khmer, including two or three million or more Thai citizens of Khmer origin still speaking the Khmer language, but integrated or assimilated to certain extent into the mainstream Tai polity. To that extent, that also refers to the Patani, Malay etc. The hill tribes are regarded differently because of the traditional lowland/ upland dichotomy. Until recently, they have been regarded as outsiders in the Thai society and are not holders of a Thai passport. In the last 15 years, or so, there have been arguments among the public as to whether or not they should be given Thai citizenship educational programs. So one has to distinguish between these recent migrants from Burma or southern China, who have been regarded as outsiders, and those ethnic groups who are part of the Thai society. For this second group, the Thai authorities still enforce assimilation as a state pol-

icy. As for the so-called hill tribes (the Karen probably an exception) e.g. the Mon, Aka, Lahu, etc, these are regarded as difficult to incorporate into the Thai mainstream. But this is changing with the influx of workers from the mountains to Thai cities, like Chiang Mai, where the hill tribe labor force is in high demand, considering the shortage of labor in Thailand.

Hans-Dieter Kubitscheck:

I think the question of assimilation depends on the historical period. Nowadays, there is rising ethnic awareness and consciousness that is fundamental for the ethnic consolidation of small minorities all over Southeast Asia.

Ingrid Wessel:

Why is it not possible for Chinese to buy land in Indonesia? Though international laws have been cited but I believe it is closely related to basic human rights. And to refer to the remarks by Professor Houben, we have three levels: the national, state/ethnic entrepreneur, and international organizations. But all these levels (including the ethnic entrepreneur) are from above. I think all these discussions must also include the pressures from below, e.g. the role of the NGOs, which has not been mentioned in all these questions, in relation to the realization of human rights.

Rebecca Smith:

To what extent is assimilation a successful minority policy? The situation in some countries, e.g. Surinam, is much like in this region; you have the Hindustanis, Javanese, Africans, native Indians and Europeans all living together with their different religions, not assimilated. Though, not as economically prosperous like Singapore, for instance, but harmonious.

Mary Somers Heidhues:

In a way, assimilation is an unsuccessful minority policy, because it abolishes the minority. On the other hand there are many other countries that exist with the kind of divisions we find in Southeast Asia. I don't think any of the Southeast Asian countries has arrived yet at a successful answer to the question of how to live with culturally diverse minorities. They are trying, but they are not successful yet. I think the Malaysian example is a poor one as it allows one group to dominate the others, because supposedly it is weaker than the others. Singapore has a problem because it says "we are all alike" but in fact the Malays are disadvantaged compared to the Chinese. But assimilation could be voluntary. Someone could become assimilated because they perceive a distinct advantage in doing so.

Jean-Louis Margolin:

I don't think assimilation could be qualified as good or bad so easily. It depends on whether it is enforced or not; if it leads to new avenues of personal success of the assimilated people or if it brings them suffering. If you compare the Southeast Asian case to other parts of the world, at least the people

are not always at war with each other, although some minorities are more dejected and isolated than others. By and large, in these countries, there are still opportunities for most minorities (not all) to achieve personal success in political, cultural and economic fields, which is not the case in other parts of the world – say in south America, North Africa or even larger parts of Europe.

Volker Grabowsky:

As to question of whether assimilation should be appreciated or whether it is more desirable to keep the diverse ethnic groups intact, I think it depends on the special case. There is a difference between societies like Surinam, as mentioned (where probably all groups are new comers, and so have the same rights from the start, building up a new society), and Singapore, where migrants (from other ethnic groups) come to long-established, culturally distinct, country or state, where they have to preserve their ethnic identity in relation to a dominant, self-assertive culture. On the long run, what has been called natural assimilation, if not accompanied by coercion, may be something that could not be prevented. For instance, some 25 years ago, almost 25% of Berliners were French-speaking people. But they decided to become part of the Berlin society and are not noticeable any longer – may be regrettably or not.

Third Panel

Michael Steinmetz:

Malay Muslim Minority. Reflections on Aspects of Domestic and Foreign Policy of Relevant Historic Sequences.

Introduction

Statistics increasingly portray a harmonious Thai-culture: More than 80% of the citizens of contemporary Thailand are direct descendants of the T'ai tribes. Almost 90% speak one of the T'ai dialects and about 95% are Buddhists. To the ethnically heterogeneous Thai-Muslim community (official governmental term "Thai Islam") belonging Thai, Chinese, East Indians, Indonesians, Cham and various minorities, most notably the Malay in southern Thailand.

Malay Muslim means that all five characteristics of group identification, clear divergence from the Thai majority in ethnicity, language, religion, customs and the consciousness of a separate historic identity. All attempts and efforts of the various Thai administrations to accommodate them, to assimilate them, or to integrate them into the imaginary 'unity of the nation' failed.

Further aspects are: the ethnic affinity of the Malay Muslim minority to the 200 million Malay beyond the borders of Thailand, as well as the shared religion which ties them to the Islamic world. The Malay Muslim – especially those in the provinces of the former sultanate Patani – are a group of ethnic minorities in Thailand with whom serious conflicts actually arise. Another important trait makes the Malay Muslim different from almost any other minority in the country: "They did not come to Thailand, but Thailand came to them."

1235-1909: From a feudal satellite state to a national province

Cause of conflict mainly was the expansion of the first Thai kingdom, Sukhothai, onto the Malay peninsula. At that time, the Malay were still Buddhists or Hindus. Conflict-regulation was rather simple at that time: the weaker principalities were required to pay feudal homage to the Siamese king. Europeans arriving in the beginning of the 16th century in SEA. Siam appeared to be the hegemonic power on the Malay peninsula. In 1569 and in 1767 (Ayutthaya was taken by the Burmese) the Malay provinces disengaged themselves. The Siamese perception was that rebellion had to be corrected as quickly as possible.

In response to the pressure of the European conquests in SEA, for the first time the kingdom's borders needed to be clearly defined in the 19th century. The Chakri Reformation aimed on a modernisation of Siam according to the European model.

New concept 1894: Siam declared the Malay sultanates an integral part of the kingdom. Each local ruler was assigned a 'deputy governor'. The counties of Patani and Kedah were restructured and divi-

ded into new provinces. The whole new system was reminiscent of the methods of the British in the colonised Malay states.

Great Britain used Patani in the interests of its colonial politics. In 1902 the British acquired the right to intervene in Kelantan, Kedah, Trengganu and Perlis. In 1909 these four Malay territories had to be surrendered to the British colonial power. The ruler of Patani was the only one who has vehemently demanded admission into the British Straits Settlements. But ironically, Patani was the only Malay state to remain in Siam. The Anglo-Siamese contract of 1909 was not meant to be not the end of the historical Malay-Siamese conflict, but just the beginning of a new form of the now-domestic Malay fight for cultural and religious survival against a Siamese-Buddhist administration.

1910-1936: National Awakening

As a result of Chakri Reformation, the traditional kingdom was replaced by the 'forming of a Thai National State'. During the consolidation phase of the nation building process, Vachiravudh (1910-1925) introduced a nationalist ideology. He blended Buddhist-Hindi myths with the political ideology of European nationalism „nation, religion and king" as an answer to the chauvinism and racism of the Europeans. The motivation for his verbal discrimination (especially the Chinese) was not primarily racist but rather of a well-calculated political nature. Vachiravudh, aware of the specific problem presented by the Malay Muslims, granted them as compensation more attention and more favours than any other minority in the country.

The lessened repression generated a lessened opposition. Some Malay leaders cherished hopes that the concessions granted by the government would enable them to preserve a Malay Muslim identity and still participate in the Thai system. The relatives in the northern provinces of Malaya were under the strict control of the British administration.

1938-1944: 'Hypernationalism'

In 1938, Phibun Songkram's take-over of the government marked the beginning of a period of intense state influence over all aspects of economic, social, and cultural life throughout the country. This was the end of the relatively peaceful situation in the Malay provinces. 'Thailand for the Thai' became the most important propaganda slogan. This campaign reached into all aspects of daily life and resulted in the discrimination and ethnic exclusion of all minorities.

The politics of assimilation targeted the Malay Muslims with full force. The Islamic special courts were forbidden; it was no longer allowed to celebrate Friday as the holy day; the law of monogamy was now applied to the Malay as well; Muslims who worked as civil servants were subject to proselytization by Buddhists, and pressured to change their names to a Thai version. Phibun's alliance with Japan renewed the annexation of the Malay provinces of Kelantan, Trengganu, Perlis and Kedah. The first organised resistance movement was the GAMPAR (*Gabungan Melayu Patani Raya* = union of the Malay of Great Patani).

1944-1957: Historical Misfortune

Pridi Phanomyong's efforts were a short chapter of change in the Thai political policy towards the Malay states. In 1945, Thailand was re-named Siam. Malay territories were given again to the British Empire. The Patani region as well as Satun, which Pridi offered far-reaching autonomy, were drawn into the international post-war politics in Southeast Asia. The British had re-established their colonial system in Malaya, but were unable to reach an agreement on the subject of the Malay states in Thailand. The 'Islamic Council' was founded under the leadership of Haji Sulong. In summer of 1947 the aim was clear: an autonomous Malay state with a locally-born and elected Malay Muslim as fully-empowered, independent head of state.

In November 1947, a Coup d'état was organised by the Thai armed forces, and masterminded by Phibun Songkram – who now was supported by the USA. As a result of the renewed Phibun dictatorship bitter revolts out of which a rebel movement developed that was to last for decades but never became homogeneously organised. After international pressure, Bangkok emphasised the absolute freedom of religion as a traditional principle of Thai politics. Malay language was partially allowed in primary schools; respected Malay Muslims should be appointed as counsellors to the government on religious questions.

British war against the communist national liberation movement of Malaya brought about a change in foreign policy towards Thailand. The agreement at the Songkhla conference in January 1949 between British and Thai military forces. The second time the colonial interests of the British Empire in Malaya and the Thai nationalist irredentism had decided the 'historical misfortune of Patani': that it remains a province within the Thai nationalist state.

1957-1973: *Military despotism and forced assimilation*

In the context of the overwhelming Malay nationalism which followed the separatist Malay Muslim movement attempt to make the international public aware of the Patani problem. But it was quickly and mercilessly drowned. On 16 September 1957, Sarit Thanarat ended the unexpected 'enthusiasm for democracy' that had befallen Phibun during the last years of his reign with yet another coup d'état. Sarit installed a crude form of nationalism with renewed emphasis on 'nation, religion and king' and with himself as state patriarch. His methods were borrowed from the horror arsenal of a common despot: abolishment of the constitution, martial law, suppression, censorship, arrest, torture, public executions.

The Malay interpreted Sarit's 'Self-Help Land Settlement Project' -Miniature Transmigrasi- as nothing but an invasion. Obligatory Thai lessons as well as Buddhist morals teaching in schools should form a new generation of *Malay* Muslims, to be brought up consciously of being *Thai* Islam. A long-term strategy was to produce loyal Thai Muslim citizens by denying the ethnic element of the Malay Muslims while at the same time emphasising the Islamic religion as the main characteristic of the Malay's divergence from the mainly Buddhist Thai. As a result of the immense significance of the *pon-*

doks for the daily life of the Malay, the attempt to secularise these religious centres generated a chain reaction. There was an increased "desire for the fundamental values of Islam" among the village population. Islamic organisations like the 'Da Wah Movement' praised in the name of religion the justification of violence; the Islam became synonymous for the "battle cry of the holy war". The most important phenomenon in the early seventies was the decision to place the Malay Muslim issues into the hands of the commander of the 'Fourth Army Region' (FAR). This policy undoubtedly paved the way for the following 'years of violence'.

Malay Muslim Resistance

In the early seventies there were about twenty different separatist organisations fighting for Patani's independence; each group claimed for itself the leadership of the uprising activities. Five of them are most notable:

PNLF (Patani National Liberation Front: identical with the BNPP (*Barisan Nasional Pembebasan Patani*)). Founded in 1947. Its aim: to establish an independent Malay Muslim kingdom of Patani.

PNLF's most serious competitor in international attention and support: the PULO (Patani United Liberation Organisation), founded around 1968. They received financial support from Syria, Libya, and the approximately 8,000 exiled Malay Muslims in Mecca. The PULO also operates secret military and ideological training camps in the Middle East. Ultimate goal: to establish an independent Islamic state of Patani.

The NRF (National Revolution Front) met with less success and little support among the Arabic countries. In the early sixties it became the successor to the GAMPAR; its principle was called NASOCI (Nationalism, Socialism and Islam). This was closely tied to the ideas of Sukarno and the Indonesian National Party. NRF's military plan to unite all armed Muslim groups into an army failed early on.

Most notable among the rural guerrilla groups: the *SABIL ILLAH* (The Path of God). They preferred organising terrorist actions – such as planting bombs on market squares or in train stations – in the city. They operated exclusively underground and as a result of their unclear aims and fanatic character they were treated with mistrust by the other organisations.

Only the CPM (Communist Party of Malaya) made contact with the broad opposition of the Thai Buddhists. Their Thai Muslim People's Liberation Armed Forces failed just because its name implied an Islamic fight for liberation within the borders of Thailand, a view that was not shared by the fighting Malay Muslims.

Even though the organisations differed in ideology, strategy and member structure, they agreed in their perception of the Thai state as a colonial power as well as in their acceptance of an armed fight for independence. One of the reasons why the Malay Muslim resistance movement had such little success during its long history was that the support from the population in the armed fighting against the Thai administration remained very weak. The disagreement among the groups, the internal fights and poor organisation as well as the fact that they were fighting against the omnipotence of a strong government

with experience in fighting against resistance are to be counted among further reasons. International support was much weaker than expected. Even the Islamic brother countries were rather hesitant in their support: Malaysia's refusal to participate officially in the Patani movement was a further reason for the failure of the separatists. Malaysia, which had been allied with Thailand in the ASEAN since 1967, had signed a contract (also signed by Indonesia) in which the ASEAN allies were put under an obligation to show solidarity and to defend Thailand in the Islamic world.

Up from the eighties: Peace-Making Offensive

Prem administration (1980-88) changed the politics directed towards the various nationalities residing in Thailand. From the politics of 'assimilation at all costs' to a 'de-accelerated' model of accommodation. Although the Thai policy of integration still based upon the desire to turn the Malay Muslims into 'modern, Thai speaking, non-orthodox, secularised citizens', this aim was now to be reached through the reconciliation and peaceful coexistence of the different cultures. A broad domestic and international propaganda offensive for the support of Islam was started. The translation of the Koran into Thai became one of the most important enterprises of the Prem government. With the realisation of this task it was obligate to teach the Koran in Thai in the Islamic schools.

Other measures the Thai government has used to promote Islam in and since the 1980's were the arrangement of an international Koran-reading competition; the organisation of annual seminars to discuss Muslim affairs; public support of the birthday celebrations for the Prophet Mohammed; the provision of financial assistance for pilgrimages to Mecca; financial sponsorship for building mosques; and the organisation of lectures in the southern provinces by the *Chularajamontri* and the Islamic central committee on correct Islamic habits and practices. Co-operation with the Malay was also carried out on an administrative level: the concept was to decentralise the administration. The 'New Administrative Center' was created in the province Yala. The years of violence seemed to be over and the majority of the population had settled down to life under Thai rule.

But despite all governmental efforts to make Thai the official language, it has become a custom to watch the Malay TV programs. This trans-national influence of the media makes the fragile socio-cultural acceptance of the Malay Muslims in the political world of Thailand nearly meaningless. The traditional cross-border marriages between Malays, and the abroad religious education of Malay that is supported by the Thai state have all resulted in further setbacks of the integration process and strengthened the independence of the Malay Muslim identity in a pan-Islamic world. The separatist movement suffered a substantial loss of members in the eighties. Now they have taken to recruiting new members among the great number of young people who are unemployed and who, in spite of various social programs, come into conflict with government authorities and think life as a gang member exciting.

Jana Raendchen:

Thai Concepts of Minority Policy: National Integration and Education in Northeast Thailand

Minority policy does not exist as an official political concept in Thailand. Original Thai sources on this topic are rare, except for handbooks for administrators and military officials. Yet ethnic minority policy has to be practised in a state where as many different ethnic groups, with their respective languages and socio-cultural backgrounds, live as in Thailand. The Thai government has to deal not only with the so called “hill tribes” of the north, but also with the Islamic Malay population in the south, with Chinese, Indian and Vietnamese immigrants in the cities, and with the large Lao-speaking population of the north-eastern region known as Isan.

The Lao population in northeast Thailand amounts to at least 16.5 million people, forming 26.9% of the total population of Thailand. Other Lao live in northern, southern and central Thailand, especially Bangkok, due to state forced population resettlements during the 19th century. These numbers together make the Lao the largest ethnic group in Thailand. To understand the process of national integration of the Lao-speaking population of northeast Thailand – a process that was not entirely unproblematic – one must take the historical relations between Thai and Lao indigenous small-states and kingdoms into consideration.

Let's begin when the kingdom of Lan Sang disintegrated and officially ceased to exist as one unified kingdom in the 18th century. The Lao territories were formally incorporated into the Siamese kingdom in 1782 after nearly a hundred years of intra-Lao disunity, foreign invasion and war. The regions west of the Mekong fell under direct control of Bangkok, but in many cases the members of traditional Lao ruling families were confirmed as governors of their respective *müang*, which they were relatively free to administer. However, Lao officials were required to pay annual visits to Bangkok, and Siamese demands for *corvée* such as construction works and canal construction in and around Bangkok. Boundaries were changed and precisely defined, population resettlements from east of the Mekong to west of the Mekong took place and new *müang* were created. Even in 1826, the number of *müang* in today’s northeast Thailand had increased from thirteen to thirty-five. The population of the territories east of the Mekong was continuously reduced in favour of the regions west of the Mekong.

Siamese rule and the enforced population resettlements led to resentment among the Lao on both sides of the Mekong. The first Lao resistance movement was lead by Chau Anuwong, a Lao prince who had been installed as king of *müang* Vientiane by Rama I in 1804. He initiated a plan to throw off the Siamese hegemony over Lao *müang*, to repatriate the ethnic Lao people from Bangkok and from west of the Mekong and to re-establish Lao autonomy. Towards the end of 1826, the Lao under Chau Anuwong made their move, but as early as mid-1827 Siamese reinforcements stopped the movement. Vientiane was completely destroyed that time, and its entire population deported. Altogether at least 100,000 persons from the eastern bank of the Mekong were forced to resettle west of the river.

80 years later, other Lao resistance movements such as the "holy men rebellions" blazed up again and again. The best known are the rebellion led by Ong Man in 1901-02, as well as the movements led by Ai Lek Ai Bunchan in 1902. As early as 1902 the rebellions had already developed into a mass movement, especially in the regions bordering the Mekong. The government in Bangkok soon became aware of the separatist character of the movements, and sent hundreds of soldiers to the northeast, quickly crushing the movements by military force.

In 1924, in the region of Loei the *Noong Maakaeo* movement was led by three monks, a number of novices and several followers. This *phuu mii bun* movement declared as its aim the liberation from Siamese rule and re-unification with Vientiane. The last known movement was led by Nai Sila Vong-sin in 1933.

During World War II, the essentially anti-Japanese/anti-fascist Free Thai (*seri thai*) movement built several bases in the northeast and had established links to the Free Lao (*lao itsala*) movement of French Laos. These ties strengthened after World War II, when more and more Lao people became aware of their disadvantaged position within Thai society and began to articulate their own political identity, which to a certain extent was related to the Communist Party of Thailand (CPT). During the 1960s-70s, a number of Lao people joined or supported or simply sympathised with the CPT, which during the 1970s had its strongest bases in northeast Thailand and concentrated its armed struggle against the Bangkok government there.

How did the Thai government answer? National security and "protection from communism"

In the opinion of the Thai military elite, states with a weak government and political system need strong armed forces. This was, in their eyes, the case with Thailand: a disorderly political party system along with frequent changes in constitution and government points to a weak political system. The additional threat of communism, defined as both an external and an internal threat, was used to legitimise a powerful professional army which played a dominant role in the country under the auspices of national security.

For at least two decades (early 1960s to 1980s), communism had been identified as the major cause undermining national security and the integrity of the Thai state.

Therefore, in 1969, a list of provinces affected by communism was promulgated along with the 2nd issue of The Prevention of Communist Activities Act (first issued in 1952). This list included 36 provinces, 15 of which were northeastern provinces forming a so-called "zone 2 of provinces affected by communism." In the provinces listed, travelling and moving was restricted, as well as the possession and transportation of food, medicine, tools or weapons.

Officially, economic and social disparities between central and northeast Thailand, as well as external communist influence from Vietnam via Laos and from China (directly through Chinese residents) were used to explain the growth of the communist insurgency particularly in the northeast. The inter-

nal “danger” that was expected to arise from communism was defined, both in ideological and military terms, from the background of that external threat.

In 1976, just after the ultra-right government under Thanin Kraivichian had come to power, the special law on the defence from communism, which had been first enacted in 1952, was revised. The revision broadened the definition of “communist organisations and activities”, and widened the powers and rights of Thai authorities who controlled the northeast. As Thanin himself stated, the primary aim of the law was the protection of the “four highest institutions of the state that are the nation, Buddhism, the monarch, and democracy, from the communist enemies.” Therefore, he added, the government officials were to be controlled by the police and the military. Thanin went on to put forth proposed definitions of criteria to identify communists, “who act disguised and lead an ideological war against the Thai state.”

In fact, with this law the persecution of any opponents against the military regime who automatically were accused to be communists, was legitimised. After the law was issued thousands of students and Bangkok intellectuals fled to the northeastern jungle. This gave a real boost to the CPT that reached a climax after 1976. Also in 1976, additional Military Decrees were promulgated in order to “protect society from dangerous persons”.

Any resistance activities of the Lao of northeast Thailand during the 1960-70s were directly put into a communist context in negative terms by Thai officials. On the grounds of alleged communist activities and the plotting of the secession of northeastern Thailand, ethnic Lao members of the parliament were arrested and executed, and thousands of Lao were arrested on charges of communism. Even the Lao “forest monks” were accused of possibly being communists or at least supporting the communists in the northeast. A rightist anti-Communist ideology was created and promoted with support of the media as a strategy to accomplish several goals: to legitimate the assassination of Lao political leaders of the northeast, to increase an already existing antipathy of Thailand’s Siamese-Thai populace against the Lao, and to enforce cultural assimilation of the Lao in the northeast. This assimilation was “encouraged” by stronger administrative control and the replacement of ethnic Lao officials by ethnic Siamese-Thai, through military intervention, nationalist educational and language policy, and state intervention in religious affairs of the northeastern provinces. From the 1960s on, the northeast was automatically associated with communism, because of the great popular support of the CPT there, and because the armed struggle of the CPT had been launched in the northeast. As a result of this, the policy in the northeast focused on a process of "Thai-isation”, which was understood as the basis for social and economic development in rural areas, and it was practiced in the form of nationalist education, language policy and population resettlements in favor of state development projects.

During the 1960s, the “struggle against illiteracy” was officially the top educational priority in the northeast. Bangkok Thai had been declared to be the lingua franca of the whole state, and since Thailand had been made the official name of the state, Bangkok Thai fulfilled the function of a national

language, even though originally this dialect was spoken as a mother tongue only by a Siamese minority, but not by the population of southern, northern or northeastern Thailand.

Alphabetisation campaigns that were carried out in the whole country aimed at introducing Central (or Standard) Thai as the national language and *lingua franca*. Mastering Central Thai was and is one of the main tasks of formal education, and therefore it is the official prescribed medium of instruction at all levels of public education. Central Thai is the sole language of law and administration, and it is favoured in the majority of printed and electronic media. But more importantly, the standardised written form of Central Thai has become the commonly and exclusively used script in Thailand, and therefore is an oft-mentioned component of the Thai "national identity". On a practical level this means that the ability to speak Central Thai has become a pre-condition to finding one's way into secondary and higher education, or even to getting an ordinary job outside of the northeast. Though Lao – commonly referred to as "Thai Isan" – is still the everyday language, especially among the older generation, the Lao script is no longer used.

The teaching of social sciences at schools aims at serving the purposes of state and nation-building. The idea that the instilling of certain Buddhist and nationalistic values would promote the stability of the state became a central point in the official curriculum implemented in 1978.

The analysis of Thai schoolbooks (social sciences / language and literature), which are edited centrally by the *krachuang süksaa* (Ministry of Education) for the whole country, reveals an important pattern in Thai cultural nationalism. The origins of the Thai nation are explained as unfolding from a Sukhothai-Ayudhya-Bangkok continuum, the components of which are described as centres of Buddhism which have always been seen as being on a higher level of civilisation than the neighbouring kingdoms and societies. Typical central Thai patterns of behaviour, which are believed to originate from the Sukhothai-Ayudhya-Bangkok continuum.

Besides formal education, the mass media and propaganda, in which the National Identity Office and the military play a special role, are important means of education. Television and radio are required by law to provide programs which aim to strengthen national identity and unity. In this spirit, all radio stations have to broadcast the national anthem twice a day – when the anthem is played, everyone is required to stand still respectfully. At the end of the broadcast the national flag is raised or lowered in all public institutions. In the cinema, the national anthem is to be played before each feature. Three times a day official news, produced by the Army Security Unit (Psychological Operations Centre) and the Army Programme Production Centre, must be broadcast.

The Thai media and press are used to create and to preserve the existing nationalistic images and ideas about the components of the Thai nation. Typical stereotypes are that the northeasterners of Isan are "impoverished, un-beautiful, un-intelligent and un-educated, but good workers"; that "northern Thai women are the most beautiful in Thailand"; and that "the south is full of bandits and rebels"; whereas "the hill-tribes are colourful and basically harmless but should assimilate as soon as possible to preserve the forests".

Another example is the so-called “high-culture” concept. The idea that “pure Thai race” is associated with Sukhothai, which is supposed to have been the first Thai state, and that this race should be privileged over other cultures within Thailand, is supported not only by the Bangkok elite and politicians, but also by several leading Thai historians and archaeologists. Only in the late 1990s did a more critical view on Thai-ness emerge, and the culture of northeastern Thailand, for example, is no longer limited to archaeological sites, but its influence on central Thai culture could actually come up for discussion as well.

During the 1990s many research programmes on traditional culture, literature and arts of northeast Thailand were initiated and financed by the state and the Thai Research Fund. And though the term “Lao” is still taboo when speaking about the northeast, comparative research on Lao (meaning Laos) and northeastern Thailand’s cultures is allowed, and even the revival of Lao language use in literature, the performing arts and popular media is promoted. It has been recognised that, despite poverty, the population of the northeast has a resilient and rich culture and takes considerable pride in its language, literature, fine and performing arts as well as cuisine, festivals, traditional ceremonial life and Buddhism.

After a century of a tense political relationship between the Lao of the northeast and the government in Bangkok, with the latter exercising a certain discrimination against the Lao on while the former continued to resist, the situation at the beginning of the 21st century has more the character of a peaceful co-existence and mutual acceptance between northeasterners and the rest of Thailand, especially the government. The current policy to promote cultural and social pluralism is also an important step towards practical democracy that could become a model for others in Southeast Asia.

Discussion

Vincent J. H. Houben:

It was mentioned that Islam was more closed and inflexible than Buddhism. But if we look at the case of southern Thailand, it seems that Buddhism is more inflexible than Islam. How do we reconcile these?

Volker Grabowsky:

Regarding the question as to why the Thai (or Siamese) consider Pattani an important factor of national stability, it is important to note that since the Ayuthaya period, the Thai state has established a special relationship with Pattani – closer than with any other Malay sultanates. In the 17th century, Pattani was the center of Malay Islamic culture. Therefore, having incorporated Pattani under their sphere of influence meant a boost of prestige for the Siamese king.

Alexander Horstmann:

In response to the issue of Islam/Buddhism co-existence, firstly, it is important to bear in mind that in the locality itself, there is a long history of Islam/Buddhism co-existence in neighbouring villages and towns, but the nature of co-existence varies from one region to another. For instance, the east coast – consisting of Pattani and other settlements – is the cradle of Islam, where most of the Pondoks are located. But both the Muslims and Buddhists perform most of their rituals (e.g. funerals, marriage, etc) together because they have common ancestors. There are even intermarriages. In Satun, there are interconversions of people from one faith to the other, i.e. Buddhist to Islam and vice versa. So, in looking at this issue, we have to bear two things in mind, viz. the local history of the people, and the incorporation of the localities into the nation-state. The ability of the people to communicate in the different languages also makes the co-existence easy, as the people become very much adapted to the various ethnic groups.

Mary Somers Heidhues:

This brings us to the issue of ethnic switching and multiple loyalties. The borders between these states are so porous that people can easily change identities.

Rebecca Smith:

I have a couple of questions. Firstly, what is the situation of the Pondoks across the borders, and how did the British colonial powers handle it? Secondly, I wonder if there are similarities with the situation of Laos and Malays as minorities under the Siamese power – with language and political differences.

Jana Raendchen:

The Lao in northeast Thailand have to accept the standard Thai language – it is the *lingua franca,* the children learn it in schools, and it is the only language to be spoken in public life. But there have been some changes in the last few years. The people in the northeast of Thailand are now beginning to remember their roots, and there are tendencies to revive the use of Lao or the so called "Isan dialect" even in public life.

Hans-Dieter Kubitscheck:

When I visited Thailand a few years ago, I heard it discussed that there was a favourable disposition by the king and members of his family, as well as the provincial authorities, towards the minorities. But the situation now is that the hill tribes have more privileges than the rural Thai population – which I think is poor. I think the minorities now enjoy too much privilege as a result of these government policies.

Volker Grabowsky:

I can only guess that this is mainly the case for two reasons. Firstly, the pressure from NGOs within Thailand to give the special privileges to the so-called hill tribes – due to their fewer numbers. Secondly, international pressures on the government tend to pay more attention to the hill tribes. The question is: why is the problem in northeast Thailand more serious than in the north? The northern population has a legacy of supporting the government in power – whether military or civilian, whereas the Lao in the northeast have been known to vote for opposition communist candidates. So the government has less problems with the population in central Thailand than with the Lao in the northeast.

Jana Raendchen:

Of course there are differences between northern and northeastern Thailand. One of the main differences was the perceived communist threat. The Lao in northeast Thailand maintained close relations with the Lao in Laos until the late sixties, or even longer. So it was the fear of the Thai government that communism could be imported into Thailand from Laos through the Lao in northeastern Thailand. Another reason is the closer historical relationship between central and northern Thailand – the former kingdom of Lanna – on one side, and central and northeastern Thailand on the other, which are quite different in many respects. One important aspect seems to be that Lanna was incorporated into the Thai state as a whole political unit, whereas the former Lao kingdom of Lan Sang had been separated into several parts, and only the part left of the Mekong became part of Thailand.

Mary Somers Heidhues:

Pondoks are all over the Malay world – throughout Malaysia, Indonesia, the southern Philippines. There is a great difference, however, as to whether they offer modern education plus Koran studies or whether the study of the Koran is the total content. Even in Singapore, they exist in great variety. And

they are an important institutional factor in life in these countries. But, I think, it is not a separatist issue.

Michael Steinmetz:

Just an answer to Prof. Grabowsky, I disagree with you on the power of Chulalongkorn, and the question of Pattani remaining in Siam. All the resources I read talked about the colonial question of British power. That Pattani remains in Siam, and 50 years after the administration of Pridi Panomyong, shows that Siamese administration is clear about the situation. The possible solution is autonomy, and giving it to them depends on how we define democracy and the democratic system in Thailand. For the Chuan Leephai administration, the foreign minister came from Pattani, and he gave a discussion about the religious controversy by stressing that it is entirely useless to use the conflict of the Malay muslims, the Thai administration solely on the basis of ethnic, linguistic and trivial religious nature of the difference. This conflict has deeper cosmological roots in the diverging perceptions of the legitimacy of power because it was the role of the Islamic leaders. In the Theravada Buddhist society of Thailand, the state and the king share the responsibility of keeping religion pure and protecting it. And as long as the Thai state is a manifestation of Buddhist cosmology the Malay muslims don't want to be part of it. We can compare Satun and Pattani regions in Southern Thailand. All the problems in Pattani region cannot be found in Satun. There is an opportunity for field researchers to make comparisons in this situation. It, no doubt, needs a good democracy to solve these problems. It also needs social scientists who know about the history of this conflict to proffer solutions to the problem.

Fourth Panel

Thomas Engelbert:

From Hunters to Revolutionaries. The Mobilisation of Ethnic Minorities during the First Indochina War (1945-1954)

In Vietnam, the first liberated zones in the north-eastern Tongking at the Vietnam-China border were situated in the areas of national minorities, which forced Vietnamese communists right from the beginning of their armed struggle to pursue a diligent policy to win over, to organise and to mobilise these non-Vietnamese peoples, who had for centuries been neglected, disregarded, harassed, or exploited by Chinese, Vietnamese and French rulers, especially the Tày, the Nùng, the Hmong (Mèo), Yao (Dao) and the Chinese (Hoa).

In Laos, the highland and mountain areas of the north, bordering North Vietnam and China, of central, bordering northern central Vietnam, and of southern Laos, here especially Attapeu and Sekong in the Three Border Triangle, served also as the first, most important and all in all very successful bases of Laos' anti-French resistance from 1945 until 1954, and of the anti-American struggle thereafter.

In the period after 1975, the new Vietnamese, Lao and Cambodian administrations had to re-organise, to administer, and to develop these most underdeveloped hinterland areas of their generally destroyed and impoverished countries. The interior and exterior political developments of the post-revolutionary era, especially the looming Third Indochina Conflict with its manifold dimensions and manifestations, and the development strategies of the so-called "socialist industrialisation", promoted the view that, although officially it was proclaimed otherwise, national unity must be created through rigid unification as well as ethnic and social homogenisation. Some of the recent events in the Vietnamese highlands described above have their origin after all in these developments, and not necessarily in the revolutionary era. Therefore, it does not astonish, that since the beginning of Dôi Moi, at least Vietnam and Laos have officially adopted new methods which seem to be a return to the spirit – though not the verbiage – of the *Nationalitätenpolitik* of the pre-1975 period.

In the following, I would like to give a summary of the 1945-54 period in the Three Border Triangle with special emphasis on the Lao side, the so-called Liberated Area Lower Laos, later named Liberated Area Southeast, encompassing today's provinces of Attapeu and Sekong.

The uprising of the Bolaven High Plateau was one of the two large-scale anti-colonial movements in Laos. It had different traits in different periods: I. 1900-1910; II. 1924-1936; III. 1947-1949.

1900 until 1910 it was a milleniarist movement led by Ong Keo, a Nghê (a Mon-Khmer ethnic group related to the Katu; in the French sources: he was named as an Arak). He proclaimed himself Chao Sadet (or Ruler) of the highland peoples; and the movement was primarily directed against poll taxes, and forced labour (corvée).

The background of this movement was the dissatisfaction of a larger part of the traditional Lao elites, who had formerly ruled over this area, and of many of the tribal populations with the administrative innovations of the French colonial rule.

1924 until 1936: This second period of the Bolaven uprising was closely related to the person of Khommadam, a former aide of Ong Keo. He was a Jruq (Loven; also a Mon-Khmer people living on the highest part of the plateau, near Paksong), who had retreated, after the defeat of his boss Ong Keo, into the higher mountains of the Annamite Cordilleras.

Khommadam's demands were more detailed, more subtle and complicated. He has written down these demands in 19 letters sent to the French Resident in Laos. Other demands originated perhaps in a certain traditional ethnic hegemony in the Bolaven Plateau. Regional small hegemons were the war-like tribes like the Arak or the richer tribes, like the Loven (Jruq), who had for centuries themselves, in the name of the Lao ruler, the Chau Sivit of Champasak, exploited the Nhaheun, especially through slave hunting. The Nhaheun, for their part, were a smaller, weaker, and poorer tribe on the plateau, living in the more remote and infertile areas at the fringes. Especially the Nhaheun on the Bolaven Plateau and the Oy in Attapeu gained much from French colonial rule, because slavery and slave trade were finally abolished. The same kind of inter-ethnic relations we have in other parts of the Three Border Triangle as well, e.g. between the more warlike Brâu and the more peaceful Oy in Attapeu; or between the more war-like Sedang and Jarai and the more peaceful Bahnar in Kontum.

War-like tribes, like the Alak, the Brâu, or the Sedang had to stop traditional economic activities like robbery and slave hunting and lost, therefore, a considerable source of income.

Khommadam's movement was quelled in 1936 by Capitaine Nyo and two platoons, one made of highland minorities from Vietnam, one made of Khmer soldiers from Cambodia. Captain, later General Nyo was during the First Indochina War for a certain time also commander of the French Troops in Indochina. Khommadam himself was killed during this operation, and his two sons were arrested in Northern Laos until the Japanese take-over in March 1945.

It was a very clever manoeuvre of the Viet Minh, that they could win over one of the sons, Sithon Khommadam. Since the end of 1947 he was active in the Bolaven Plateau. For the minorities, especially for the war-like ones, he was the 'Phya Khom', their 'Chao Sadet'. They thought that they finally had found their traditional leader. But this alone was not enough.

1947 until 1949: In several raids, mixed Vietnamese-Lao commands tried to gain access to Lower Laos via Northeastern Thailand (where a large Vietnamese Minority lived) or Central Vietnam. Very few Lao and no ethnic minorities from Laos participated in these actions. The goal was first of all to establish a link between Northeastern Thailand and the Liberated Areas in Central Vietnam (Interzone/Liên khu Nr. 5).

A deserted French border post was captured, and served as the beginning of revolutionary activities in this area. One Vietnamese platoon was stationed there with the aim of securing militarily the creation of revolutionary cells among the population. Firstly villages, then districts were declared liberated.

This platoon was dispatched from Vietnam in August 19, 1948. The special conditions of Southern Laos, especially the sparse population, the difficult communication, and especially the long distance between the isolated French posts was seen as an advantage for the revolutionary forces. However, the military expeditions, after a few initial victories, proved unsuccessful, as the Vietnamese units, after they had initially overwhelmed some isolated posts, were beaten by the French regular army and had to retreat on the Vietnamese side. After the return of the bo doi, the revolutionary movement among the local population collapsed immediately. The local population, who had been previously forced to obey, now refrained from taking any action for the revolution. Therefore, the Vietnamese changed their approach.

Officially, the Liberated Area of Lower Laos was founded March 1, 1949, in Dak Chung (today's Sekong; at that time still belonging to Attapeu). However, very probably it was founded in April 1949, on the Vietnamese side of the border, after a Joint Vietnamese-Lao conference to assess the situation in Southern Laos. However, the real power was still in the hand of the Vietnamese advisers, who controlled the nascent Lao administration and army. Altogether, the Vietnamese sent, at this time, a group of 20 military advisors who organised three platoons among the local population: one for offensive operations, one for the security of the Lao leadership, and one for armed propaganda among the population. 50 Vietnamese cadres were sent to Southern Laos for political work.

In the whole area of Liberated Southern Laos there were only 20 Lao and minority members of the ICP in 1950. In 1952, after a rectification campaign the number went down to 18. Until the end of 1953; this number rose to 53, which is also not so much. When they started with their activities in Southern Laos, the Vietnamese met with difficulties: They did not know much about the area, its rouged geography, the different peoples who lived there, their languages and cultures. The work of first and foremost importance was now: to win over, to organise and to mobilise the local population. This implied for the Vietnamese that they had to learn Lao and, if necessary, even the local tribal languages, to respect, as much as possible, the customs and traditions, to win the population over peacefully, through their example.

The Lao and the tribal peoples had to get modernised, to get 'revolutionized'. Those who initially went with the revolution were not the most selfish, the most estimated elements of the local population. They belonged to the traditional ruling clans, or were adventurers, or striving for glory, or conformists, and generally they exploited their own people. Some of them even worked as agents for the French, or changed their affiliation according to the military situation. These elements were, during a rectification campaign carried out in 1952/53, expelled from the party. The following wide-spread mistakes of Lao and minority cadres were, during this campaign, denounced and combated:

a) Passivity and pessimism.
b) Negligence, the spirit of the 'either way it's alright'.
c) The spirit of timidity; the fear to expose themselves, to take any action or decision and especially the spirit to "take part on the two-sides", whoever is in control of the region.

d) Dogmatism. The mechanical copy of what the Vietnamese advisors had taught them.
e) Undecidedness.

The campaign to rectify and to rebuild the party organisation of Southern Laos began in the end of 1952/beginning 1953. Prospective future leaders and administrative cadres or future teachers, mostly young men and women from the vanguard youth groups, were chosen among the local population and then sent to the Liberated Area of Northeastern Laos or to North Vietnam for general education and practical training.

The Lao language had to be implemented as the official language; books, records, propaganda pamphlets and other documents were now be written in Lao exclusively. Local party committees had to be completed with ethnic Lao, and it was seen as necessary to blend in these committees different family members or different minorities, in order to avoid despotism and nepotism. It took 10 years, until 1963, when this rectification campaign was officially declared closed.

But, despite all initial difficulties, one must admit, that the two resistance wars against the French (1945-54) and the US and the Vientiane administration (1959-1975) brought about tremendous changes, so far unseen in history. It seems not to be exaggerated to say that under the leadership of the Communist Party of Indochina and, since 1955, under the leadership of the Lao People's Revolutionary Party, the ethnic minorities made a large step in their history, from a society which was still dominated by the characteristics of a tribal society, towards a modern society of the 20th century. These changes occurred in all areas of life.

Since the beginning of 1954, in the very last months of the First Indochina War, when the Viet Minh was militarily firmly in possession of the area south of the *Route Coloniale* No. 8, a large-scale campaign was started in the Liberated Area Lower Laos (Vung giai phong Ha Lao). The campaign was aimed at abolishing 'retrograde customs and traditions'. From now on, the whole population, especially the youth, was advised no longer to wear the loincloth, no longer to sand down the teeth, no longer to wear the traditional bronze earrings (which had a weight up to half a kilogram), and to improve hygiene within and outside of the house (cooking and fire place, toilet, and water facilities). The nourishment should be improved, for example the population was advised no longer to respect the taboos on certain plants and animals, like manioc, bananas, chives, or wild meat. The lavish festivities which partly had the character to destroy the unnecessary provisions of the community members in order to prevent the emergence of wealth among individuals, were now officially declared abolished, or at least was the population advised to reduce them considerably. Especially the taboo of the village sorcerers that children should not learn how to read and write was attacked. This had the result, for example, that some villages of the Oy in Attapeu abandoned altogether the Ritual of the Phra Chrôk, the guardian spirit of the village entrance, one of the most important and most elaborate rituals in the life of the community.

With the aim of all-out modernisation, immediately after the official complete liberation of the revolutionary province of the East (e.g. Attapeu and Sekong) in May 1971, that was four years before the

liberation of the Mekong Valley, there were already campaigns to relocate the ethnic minorities from the mountains to the river valleys, from remote areas into the near of provincial and district centres, streets, electric energy, and waterways; in the same time to organise classes from the improvement of agricultural production, for trades and businesses, for the clearing of new land or for the introduction of new crops.

This went hand in hand with the ‘collectivisation’ campaign in the country-side with its three periods: implementing groups of mutual help, groups of solidarity and cooperatives. Administratively, the former “Eastern province” (Khveng Taven Ok) was divided again in late 1975. Sekong was made a part of Saravane, Attapeu became again a province of its own.

If we take a look on this whole process from 1971 until today, these are already more than 30 years now. However, it will certainly take much more time, and it will demand first of all financial means which the Lao government alone did not have in the past and is unlike to have so soon in the future. It is not enough to force the people to change their location and to advise them not to practice slash and burn anymore, if you don’t give them the means for making a living elsewhere or if you abandon them after relocation. Secondly, this question demands also subtlety in dealing with the complicated questions of customs and traditions of the different peoples, and political culture in dealing with their legitimate demands and interests, including the question of the preservation of their languages, culture and religious beliefs. As in the times of the revolution, it seems to be a better way not to force the people to follow a particular example, but to help them to take their destiny gradually into their own hands. Health care, education, both general and professional, and communication could be again parts of the answers to this question.

Second Round Table Discussion: Promote or Tolerate? Ways and Possibilities towards the Successful Prevention of Ethnic Conflicts

Hans-Dieter Kubitscheck:

You have said a lot about the Nationalitätenpolitik of the Vietnamese and Lao authorities both during the pre-war and post-war periods. What are the essentials now, because the circumstances have changed drastically - due to immigration, resettlement and so on. Establishment of autonomous zones has been abolished. What do you think of how to deal with the problems of the minorities by representatives of the minorities themselves?

Thomas Engelbert:

A lot of things would have to be considered. First are the methods by which the traditional Lao and Siamese rulers governed their people. Second, the coming of the French and, third, the minorities themselves.

Since the changes in the Nationalitätenpolitik due to the reform process, a lot of things have changed for the better. The issue of territorial autonomy is, in my view, no longer important or practicable, at least in Vietnam. The concept of individual autonomy has always been criticized as a bourgeois concept so far, but it might find relevance as the democratization process continues, vis-à-vis the preservation of cultures, religions, parliamentary representations, etc. Currently, in Vietnam, there are already radio and television programs in minority languages. Vietnam has a great experience with bilingual education programs – some successful, some not – albeit these were often seen as a vehicle for learning better Vietnamese.

There is at the moment also great improvement in health care – many villages have a medical center. The main areas of disagreement in Vietnam are the issues of land tenureship and water resources in the highlands – which cannot be changed easily. There is also the issue of demographic pressure – the coastal areas being crowded and Vietnamese people are now moving to the highlands.

Volker Grabowsky:

What are the limits of these demographic pressures? Are these people who relocate willing to adapt to the local situations of their host e.g. do they learn the local languages?

Thomas Engelbert:

Currently there are many television programs in Vietnam in the minority languages. This serves as a medium for educating the minorities on many issues e.g. agriculture, birth control, etc. Bilingual education varies from region to region, and many factors are also to be considered e.g. whether the Vietnamese are in the minority or not, whether there is a tradition of living together, or individual cases such as intermarriages, etc.

Alexander Horstmann:

As seen on Thai TV, some Buddhist monks have become popular media stars in Thailand, using Thai TV. I like to ask Jana, because she talked about Lao forest monks, and Prof. Engelbert who talked about Buddhist networks. Is it a religious network? The Thai Sangha is also influential in the neighboring countries especially Laos, and I would like to ask if it is the same in Cambodia? What kind of hierarchy are these Buddhist networks using, because the forest monk tradition is completely different from the state tradition? Are these networks crossing political boundaries – they do obviously in the case of the Isan. Also do they cross ethnic loyalty?

Jana Raendchen:

Being the most mobile people, the Buddhist monks always played an important role in the exchange of ideas, and they always formed networks. But the forest monks are seen in a different way by the Thai government, because they had a relatively strong political influence in Northeast Thailand and close contacts to monks in Laos itself. They therefore were put in the light as being superstitious and having negative influences on the "real" Buddhist tradition which – in the eyes of the Thai government - was kept in it's pure form only by the state Thammayutika Sangha. But this is left to be seen, in fact nowadays the forest monks are seen to be better Buddhists than the materially oriented monks of the Thai Sangha.

Hans-Dieter Kubitscheck:

I would like to come back to the earlier topic, i.e. the two general branches of Nationalitätenpolitik, summarized as follows:

1. Cultivation of ethnic institutions, customs, traditions, etc., and
2. Forced assimilation, integration, etc.

My question is this: is there the right to preserve or change these customs and traditions? What protections are there of these minorities' rights? For instance, religion is viewed as a superstition that must be changed. There is also discrimination against women, in spite of international laws against such discriminations. How is Vietnam addressing this issue today?

Thomas Engelbert:

I heard that in some villages of the Yao people – close to the Vietnam-China border - traditional shamans organized classes, to learn the traditional writing system (based on the Chinese characters). The police then raided the temple and forced the people to get out because, it was believed, the temple was used as an avenue for spreading superstition. Other examples include festivities like the sacrifice of the buffalo, which has been banned officially in Laos, but which is still practiced, because the minorities see it as a part of their tradition. Laos' tourist agencies even organize tours for foreign guests to witness the sacrifice of the buffalo because it is quite profitable to them. Also, even though hospitals have been built everywhere in Laos' minorities' areas, people often do not attend them because they believe

more in the sorcerers. They only go to the hospital if the sorcerer fails to heal them, and again if the hospital fails, they go back to the sorcerer. So there are many things, which cannot be changed so easily. Though polygamy has been officially abolished, there are still some cases of the practice of polygamy. Since it is perceived that the power of the government is weakening, many traditional practices are beginning to flourish again. People now go to the shamans to predict their future and people now patronize the shaman for treatment of their illnesses. Much as the Vietnamese government, e.g., would like to enforce the two-children-family policy on the minorities, the government cannot sanction them, as they do not depend on the government for sustenance. The result is that the percentage of the minorities is increasing, because they have a higher birth rate.

Jean-Louis Margolin:

My feeling, after listening to the various presentations, is that there are serious violations of the ethnic minorities, both according to the minorities in question and according to the period under consideration.

What do you think is the most significant consideration with regards to these violations – is it the ethnic minorities type or the period under consideration? I think this question is important in appreciating the meaning of this Nationalitätenpolitik.

Thomas Engelbert:

It is not possible to make a general comparison here, because it varies with the countries and with the ethnic minorities in question. However, there are a few things that are comparable, e.g. the treatment of the Chinese in the different countries of the region, according to different periods. Then we could see the similarities. Differences can also be seen from different historical backgrounds, in different periods, with different ideological motivations, etc. Basically, there are similarities as well as dissimilarities. If we look at one country, we see different policies at different stages, not only with regard to ethnic minorities, but also for the people in general. In Vietnam, for instance, after 1975 it was collectivism i.e. implementation of the Soviet model in all aspects of life – including Nationalitätenpolitik. Then there was a big change in 1986 – the renovation process, which meant that previous policies with regards to religion, ethnic minorities, etc had to be revised. But all these were done both with more tolerance and, at the same time, in the spirit of strengthening national unity.

Mary Somers Heidhues:

In Thailand, the obvious example would be the government under Phibun Songkhram, which was very repressive of the Chinese and Malay minorities. There was a narrow nationalist approach to minority policy. In Indonesia, the New Order tended to disregard the rights of the so-called Suku Terasing – the isolated groups. The problem with Indonesia is that it consists of minorities. The Javanese, though not the majority, tend to think of themselves as the majority and so tend to disregard the other groups. But

the Suku Terasing were the most isolated groups – usually non-Islamic and were not particularly well treated by the Suharto regime, and neither were the Chinese.

Volker Grabowsky:

One issue that has not been discussed in detail is the question of national censuses because by registering the population, one would appreciate the fact that they are ethnically diverse. Some governments are afraid of facing the reality. It would be interesting to compare the approach of taking national censuses by the various Southeast Asian governments, for instance the Lao and Vietnam governments acknowledge ethnic diversity in their censuses. In Laos, between 47 and 68 ethnic groups are recognized and people can declare themselves members of one ethnic group or the other, but in Thailand and Cambodia, this is not possible. The idea of mother tongue is not recognized and foreigners, once granted Thai or Cambodian citizenship, cannot claim their ethnic origin. The only exceptions are the Muslims in the south – they were labeled Thai Muslims, but not as members of particular ethnic groups.

Vincent J. H. Houben:

Having listened to speakers in the past two days, it appears we have been trying to generalize on two levels, which, in my view, are not compatible. On the one hand, we have been trying to compare the policies that have been developed by the various states to deal with the realities of ethnic pluralities and then we can try to distinguish between periods; try to see certain differences and similarities that spring from national history. Another kind of generalization, not yet discussed, but implicit in the various presentations on several groups in the region, has to do with immigration patterns, distribution of natural resources, localized religions, etc. I think there is still a long way to go in developing this kind of new generalization – on the development of minorities. But I believe this is the right way to go forward – because most of the details lie in the local history that has been presented here already. I cannot imagine how these two different kinds of generalizations could be intertwined. Maybe we should not attempt to do this.

Mekonnen Mesghena:

I wish to ask a short question from a global perspective. If we compare the problem of ethnic conflict in Southeast Asia with other regions, e.g. Africa, Latin America, etc. except a few like Indonesia, East Timor, etc. we do not see any dramatic outbreak of brutal ethnic conflict. Are there any treaties between the states on how to deal with this issue among the member states?

Vincent J. H. Houben:

I think it is not yet there. These problems are mainly perceived by the various governments as domestic affairs. As a rule, in ASEAN you don't discuss your domestic problems. But I'm sure that these leaders meet regularly. They are talking on these issues. I think, with the enlargement of ASEAN,

there is a shift-taking place. In the medium term, I think there would be a development of a kind of Southeast Asian policy on minorities, but it is not yet there. Maybe it is in the making.

Mary Somers Heidhues:

This is not necessarily good for the minorities, because it is saying that you agree with your neighbor that he will stay out of the matter and you can handle it on your own.

Thomas Engelbert:

This informal way of handling disputes and bilateral conflict has been generally seen as an advantage of ASEAN. This is to ensure that internal disputes will not become a bilateral conflict that might result in armed conflicts. In this case, I would say that Southeast Asia, and especially the history of ASEAN since 1967, is indeed an example of a success story. If we look at other areas of the world, e.g. Kashmir, Palestine, or Chechenya, Southeast Asia has succeeded in ensuring that internal conflicts do not become the cause of armed conflicts within the region.

Hans-Dieter Kubitscheck:

I think the main point is that all matters concerning the minorities are seen as domestic affairs in the region. There is no collective philosophy on how to deal with minorities. It is a sensitive issue for all the countries involved. But there are regulations in specific cases, e.g. Thailand and Malaysia. The Malays are suspected to be communists, and members of the communist party are, of course communists. There is no philosophy with regards to "Asian values". Even in the Bangkok declaration, the issue of the minorities was seen as clearly a domestic affair – most of the governments did not recognize it as a problem. I think there should be a development like in the European Union, where the question of national minorities are of great importance in the declarations in politics.

Volker Grabowsky:

I think it is right to stress that, so far, ethnic conflicts have not spread across national borders and so far there is no state in Southeast Asia that thinks that by supporting separatism, or even by nurturing the disintegration of the neighboring state, it may hope to get any benefit. The general picture, in most cases, is that nation-states could maintain control over minorities within their national borders. But where there is a massive influx of refugees across national borders, the situation might change. Take the difficult relations between Thailand and Burma, for example. Thailand is not interested in the disintegration of Burma at all, but she cannot close her eyes from the looming refugee crisis along her western borders. Hundreds of thousands of refugees have crossed the borders since 1989/1990, most especially Shans – as a result of the massive ethnic cleansing in the eastern Shan state by the Burmese, and also by the hill tribes.

Jean-Louis Margolin:

The situation in that region, unfortunately, has not been that rosy – knowing the treatment of the ethnic minorities – not even the possibility of emerging conflict between countries within the region regarding the minorities. An example is the conflict around Sabah in Northeastern Burma and Southern Philippines, where there have been attempts in the past by the Philippino government to annex Sabah and also attempts by Malaysian government to support Muslim guerillas in Southern Philippines. Also the 1979 conflict between Vietnam and China, which was partly triggered by the mass expulsion of Chinese from Northern Vietnam. As mentioned already, there have not been many ethnic wars in the region in the past 50years. Nevertheless, if there have not been wars in the region, one possible explanation could be the fact that, unlike other parts of the world, the power is not generally concentrated in the hands of one ethnic group. It is common to have one

ethnic group assuming political power, while another group would control the economy. Compared to Latin America, for example, I think this situation readily makes room for compromise – without any ethnic group being completely marginalized.

Alexander Horstmann:

I agree that we have to look at the details of local history. The mechanisms of peaceful co-existence are precisely there. Tai and Malay Buddhists in this cultural area comprise provinces in Southern Thailand and Northern Malaysia. They develop a common culture, e.g. superstitious beliefs, i.e. belief in spirits, ancestors, etc., which form an important part of their lives. These beliefs are actually pre-Buddhist and pre-Islamic. There is even inter-ethnic division of labor, in which they complement each other. These are mechanisms for peaceful co-existence, and, I think, we can learn a lot from their local history.

Secondly, I think, in the future we will see a lot of violence in Southeast Asia – mostly state violence. This was discussed in a previous conference on “Violence in Indonesia”. It was revealed here how the military faction in the state used political hate against the Chinese – by way of systematic harassment of the Chinese population, e.g. raping Chinese women in public. Also in Burma the military carried out atrocities against the Karen. In Cambodia, there has been massacre of the Cham.

Mekonnen Mesghena:

On an optimistic note, I would like to think that the conflicts, which exist in the region would not explode, that there would be ways of handling them in a way that, at the end, all these conflicts in Southeast Asia would be resolved peacefully. In discussing this issue, I think there must be co-operation between specialists – ethnologists, linguists, etc. as linguistic policies, economic policies etc. cannot be discussed by historians alone – even if historians tend to think that they have knowledge about everything. This is also a question for development specialists. So, it is a whole range of people that

should work together on this issue. There is enough for everyone to work on. The issue is by no means finished. It is an open end.

Thomas Engelbert:

Some Implications for Development Policies

Southeast Asia is a region of eleven different states, each having many different languages, peoples, and cultures. Therefore, it may seem hopeless to establish general ideas, principles or rules which encompass the range of one particular example, one country, or the whole region. However, generalization is possible, and without ignoring the local, regional or socio-economic specifics. It goes without saying that the study of and the work with ethnic minorities is a common task of social scientists and representatives of other academic disciplines, of academia and practical work, for example concerning, in this regard, development aid, human rights activism, or foreign political or cultural foundations. Also it should be well established that the work about and for ethnic minorities cannot be done without the utilization of local knowledge and the participation of local representatives.

A generalization must usually go hand in hand with the assessment of the long historical traditions, the causes and consequences of today's events. Many of the current ethnic conflicts, for example in Burma/Myanmar, root back in history and cannot be explained, and of cause not be solved, if this long tradition of hopes and failures is not taken into account properly. The relations of Vietnamese governments, or of the Viet population in general, with ethnic minorities vary according to the region and the historical period, but there are constant themes throughout history like settlement, borders and neighboring states, national unity, geo- and demography, which can be traced down for centuries, and did also occur in the times when Vietnam was governed by the French. The practical solutions governments found or did not find depended on this traditional pattern at least as much as on contemporary ideological or political ideas. This constant interplay and interaction between the general and the specific, between the local and the regional, between region and nation, between history and current times, is one of the characteristics of Southeast Asia. The consideration of this background is important to distinguish between rule and exception, to trace down recurrent themes in history according to changing circumstances, and to see possible ways of smoothing tensions or of solving conflicts.

If we talk about ethnic minorities, not all are the same. At least we can distinguish three different groups of ethnic minorities: the tribal populations, the nationalities, and the so-called Foreign Asians.

First of all we always might be tempted to think minorities as the so-called tribal populations, who lived, well until the 20th century, at the margins of the Southeast Asian nation states: in inaccessible mountain areas, in the interior of islands, often at the borders between states. In general, these peoples were included into the system of modern economy and state very late, some as late as most recently. This does not mean that their areas have been totally shut for outsiders. At least until colonial times, there were traditional economic and political relations based on the exchange of goods or tribute.

The problem of modernization with or without inclusion of these populations into the state system of the majority populations has been discussed since colonial times. The solution depended on several

factors, political constellations or ideological preferences, but in the end, economic necessities and financial needs and possibilities often prevailed, and the interests of these peoples were disregarded.

NGO's, especially those concerned with economic and social development, are already working in these areas, and, mostly without deeper knowledge or special training, they are immediately confronted with the situation of these often very different minorities, who have established complex relations among themselves and with the representatives of the majority population. In this situation, social scientists and development workers must work hand in hand in order to prevent that irreparable damage is being done. Neither should development programs, like resettlement schemes, be a cover or an umbrella for other activities, for example the acquisition of territories for lodging and plantations. On the other hand, economic, social and cultural development is badly needed by these minorities and will be their best weapons in the defense of their legitimate interests, even for their ethnic survival in the 21st century.

Beside these tribal populations, we have the so-called nationalities, which are often far more numerous than the above mentioned peoples. Nationalities are generally developed peoples who live in neighboring states as a majority population, and were, in their areas of original settlement, put into a minority position by later settlers and by border regulations after wars or colonial arbitrary shares of territories. This concerns, for example, the Khmer in Eastern Thailand and Vietnam, the Lao in Northeastern Thailand, or the Malays in Southern Thailand. Cum grano salis, this situation applies also to the Cham in Vietnam and Cambodia, and to the Mon in Burma and Thailand, although there is no Champa or no independent Mon nation state anymore. Because of the historical legacy, including attempts aimed at forced assimilation, these minorities and their interest aimed at preserving distinctness and cultural or religious relations with the majority population of a neighboring state, are often not duly recognized or are regarded as a problem by the national government, which anticipates – rightly or not – the danger of secessionist activities or revisionist claims. In the case of problems or conflicts, national governments will be unlikely to accept the interference of outsiders, such as NGO's or international pressure groups.

The case of the Malays and Lao in Thailand or the Khmer in Vietnam shows, that the relations of the national government with the nationality depend very much on the general situation of bilateral relations with the neighboring country, such as Thai-Malaysian, Thai-Lao, or Vietnam-Cambodia relations. Conflict between neighboring countries, such as between Vietnam and Cambodia in the late 1970s, inevitably complicates the relationship between the nationality and the state it lives in. On the other hand, the smoothing of bilateral state relations relieves much of the anxiety that the nationality might be used as a 'tool' against national unity, and helps the nationalities to achieve cultural, religious and socio-economic rights. Territorial autonomy is rarely a perfect solution, as these nationalities usually live in the lowlands, and often intermingled with other peoples, including the majority population. The concept of individual autonomy in practice, even if it is not named as such, that means cultural and religious rights, special socio-economic measures if necessary, and a fair share in the po-

litical representation, allows to satisfy the basic needs of the majority of the nationalities, and will cut the ground under extremists who use grievances in order to stir up emotion. Because of the mixed settlement structure, in most cases majority and minority are bound to live together for better or worse.

Third we must mention, as a distinct group, the so-called Foreign Asians. In Southeast Asia, this concerns the Chinese in all countries of the region, the Indians in Burma, Singapore and Malaysia, and the Vietnamese in Cambodia, Laos, and Thailand. In most recent times, we have also the emigration of Indonesian, Filipino or Thai workers to neighboring countries. The relations of these migrants to their old and new countries are complex and vary according to the social position, the reason, background and duration of the migration, local or national traditions, and the socio-economic and legal situation of the individual country where they migrated from and to.

Due to their special economic position, the situation of the ethnic Chinese in Southeast Asia, in comparison with the other ethnic groups of this kind, seems to be relatively well researched both as individual or regional case studies and in its overall economic and political dimension. As the discussion of our colloquium has shown, there are similarities between the countries, especially the economic position of the Chinese, and their networks of personal, familial, cultural, economic and other relations within the region and beyond. The process of integration and assimilation into Southeast Asian societies also shows similarities; even if the Islamic states like Malaysia or Indonesia have some peculiarities. In the case of these minorities as well, the interference of outsiders, like NGO's or international pressure groups, is highly undesired by both the Southeast Asian governments and even the concerned ethnic minorities as well, and it is rarely effective, as the example of the US interference into the affairs of the ethnic Vietnamese in Thailand or Cambodia during the First and Second Indochina Wars shows.

However, these minorities have, mostly because of their economic position, certain traditional ways of smoothing conflicts at their disposal. This concerns especially the Chinese, and, to a minor degree, the Vietnamese. The problem here is first of all the overall situation of state relations with the neighboring larger states, where these minorities originated from, like China, India, and Vietnam, and second the socio-economic situation of competition or complementation, isolation or integration within the countries of migration.

The situation varies from one country to another, but two points can be observed: First of all, the mass migration of these foreign Asians was connected with the economic opening of Southeast Asia during the times of Western Colonialism in the late 19th and early 20th century. Longstanding traditions of integration and even assimilation with the native populations were therefore postponed. Second, first colonial rulers and later nationalist or authoritarian governments often used these so-called foreign Asians as a scapegoat in order to dissolve attraction from the failure of their own socio-economic policies, as point in their own internal clique struggles, or, in the case of colonial rulers, to 'divide and rule'. In the end, these measures always aggravated existing problems, but never solved them. Later, when governments were forced to change their policies, to introduce openness and initiate economic

reform, they had again to accept or even to woo these economic dominant minorities, which reconfirmed or strengthened their economic dominance.

Integration, equality, natural or voluntary (not forced) assimilation of the minorities concerned and the economic or intellectual advance of the majority populations are the only lasting solutions, which will remove this conflict potential forever. Such a result will not be achieved overnight. It needs time, often generations, strenuous efforts of both sides despite all possible setbacks, and farsightedness of the national governments and the minorities concerned. However, the general mood of removed tensions, regional cooperation, and economic progress, which is still prevailing in Southeast Asia, makes such an undertaking both possible and desirable.

List of Speakers at the Colloquium

Prof. Dr. Vincent J. H. Houben, Professor for History and Society of Southeast Asia, Humboldt University Berlin

Mekonnen Mesghena, Department Migration Policy, Heinrich Böll Foundation

Prof. Dr. Thomas Engelbert, Professor for Vietnamese Language and Culture, University of Hamburg

Prof. Dr. Volker Grabowsky, Professor for Southeast Asian History, Westfälische Wilhelms-Universität Münster

Prof. em. Dr. Hans Dieter Kubitscheck, Professor Emeritus for History and Society of Southeast Asia, Humboldt University Berlin

Jean-Louis Margolin, Maître de Conférences, Université de Provence, Member of the Institut pour le Recherche Sudest-asiatique (IRSEA), Marseille

Jana Raendchen, MA, Researcher (Wissenschaftliche Mitarbeiterin), Research Project "Traditional Communities of the Tai," sponsored by the DFG at the Westfälische Wilhelms-Universität Münster

Mary Somers Heidhues, PD, Göttingen, Former Visiting Professor, Department of Southeast Asian Studies, University of Passau

Michael Steinmetz, MA, Former Wissenschaftlicher Mitarbeiter, Research project "Ethnic Development in Laos," sponsored by the DFG at the Humboldt University Berlin

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