Asia Leadership Fellow Program

1998 Program Report

Asia in Transition:
Localizing Strategies, Globalizing Processes

International House of Japan
Japan Foundation Asia Center

Contents

Foreword

This publication marks the third year of the Asia Leadership Fellow Program implemented by The International House of Japan and the Japan Foundation Asia Center. The program was jointly created in 1996 for the purpose of both bringing together Asian intellectual leaders from the Asia-Pacific region and providing opportunities for individual research and collaborative group work. Not only have the program activities brought together Asian intellectuals, but they have also promoted better understanding between Japanese scholars and the Fellows and deepened the discussions among the Fellows.

As in the previous two publications, this volume consists of the 1998 ALFP Fellows' reports and papers. This year's Fellows are from China (Liu Xin), Indonesia (Endo Suanda); Malaysia (Diana Wong), the Philippines (Sylvia Mayuga), Singapore (Janadas Devan) and Thailand (Suwanna Satha-anand). During the course of the Fellows' two to six month's collaborative work in Japan, a broad theme of "Development and Culture" has been set for them to work on together. The Fellows had also proposed specific topics of research, namely: 1). "Modernization and Its Discontents" (Liu Xin); 2). "Local, National, Global: Culturo-Political Dilemma" (Endo Suanda), 3). "The Concept of Asia" (Diana Wong), 4). "Religious Faith and Development" (Sylvia Mayuga), 5). "Asian Modernity" (Janadas Devan), and 6). "Religion and Social Change: Women and Buddhism" (Suwanna Satha-anand).

Through sharing of insights and dialogue with other public intellectuals in Japan and in light of the beginning of the Asian Economic crisis, the Fellows' research interests have deepened. They were somewhat 'inspired' by their collaborative work and networking with the other intellectuals. This is reflected in the Fellows' writings and their joint decision to entitle the public symposium, held at the end of the program, as "Asia in Transition: Localizing Strategies, Globalizing Processes". We felt assured that this title would summarize the main objective of the 1998 program and thus we decided to use it for this publication.

The International House of Japan and the Japan Foundation Asian Center also deeply appreciate the kind assistance and active participation from those who helped make the program successful in its third year. We cannot thank enough the resource persons who gave their time and shared their thoughts and insights with the Fellows in the seminars, symposium and retreat, and those who acted kindly to help the Fellows get around Japan during their field trips.

Special thanks also go to Ms. Taeko Kurokawa, who served as rapporteur and assistant for the program, for her tireless work and

hospitable assistance, and Ms. Chola Chek for wonderfully editing this entire report.

The International House of Japan and the Japan Foundation Asia Center are confident that hard work and dedication to the program by the Fellows, the resource persons and many others who have provided assistance, would surely help the program enter the new millenium with many more accomplishments.

The International House of Japan
The Japan Foundation Asia Center
Tokyo, March 2000

Profiles of the 1998 Fellows

Liu Xin (China)
Assistant Professor, Dept. of Anthropology,
University of California, Berkeley

Prof. Liu Xin started his career as a statistician in China
and later went into social anthropology. He has carried out intensive anthropological fieldwork in isolated villages in rural China and his publications include "Space, Mobility and Flexibility: Chinese Villagers and Scholars Negotiate Power at Home and Abroad" (1997); and "Yao: the Practice of Everyday Space in Northern Rural Shanxi" (1998). For the ALF program, Prof. Liu proposed a research topic entitled: "Modernization and Its Discontents". Prof. Liu received his BA (economics), Shanxi School of Economics and Finance, China, 1982; MSc (applied statistics), Renmin University, China, 1985, MA (1990) and Ph.D. (1995) in social anthropology, School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London. He has also taught at Renmin University in Beijing, Greenwich University and Westminster University in London.

Endo Suanda (Indonesia)
Chairman, Society for Indonesian Performing Arts;
Lecturer, Indonesian College of the Arts (STSI), Bandung

Mr. Suanda is an ethnomusicologist, scholar of Indonesian performing arts, as well as a distinguished performer. He has performed as a dancer, musician, choreographer, and puppeteer in Indonesia and abroad. He has also taught and organized performances at various universities in Indonesia and abroad. His published articles focus particularly on the performing arts in socio-political context. He is currently preparing a dissertation at the University of Washington, based on his research on the shadow puppet theater of Cirebon. Mr. Suanda received his B.A. from the National Dance Academy, Bandung, 1973 and his M.A. from Wesleyan University, 1983. For the ALFP his proposed topic is: "Local, National, Global: Culturo-Political Dilemma".

Diana Wong (Malaysia)
Visiting Fellow, Institute of Malaysian &
International Studies (IKMAS),
Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia

Dr. Wong is a sociologist who graduated from the University of Singapore and received her Diplom Soziologie (1977) and Doc. Rev. Soc. (1984) from Universitaet Bielefeld, Germany. She has written extensively and her publications include "Foreign Domestic Workers in Singapore" (1996), "Labour Migration and the Emergence of Plural Societies in Southeast Asia" (1996), and "Post- and Pre-Modern Ambiguities" (1995). Her proposed research topic for the ALFP is: "The Concept of Asia".
Dr. Wong also held past positions as Lecturer, Faculty of Sociology, Universitaet Bielefeld (1980-85); Research Fellow, Centre for Social Science Research, Universitaet Erlangen-Nuernberg (1985-87, 1989-92); and Deputy Director, Institute of Southeast Asian Studies (ISEAS), 1995-1998.

Sylvia L. Mayuga (Philippines)
Writer & Columnist; Chairperson,
Green Alliance for Mt. Banahaw

Ms. Mayuga is a leading environmentalist in the Philippines and has been extensively involved in organizing communities for sustainable development. Her work with the local people of Mt. Banahaw also led her and fellow eco-activities to found an NGO group 'Green Alliance'. This group is dedicated exclusively to a reasoned dedicated advocacy for the culture and the physical environment of the mystical Mount Banahaw. Ms Mayuga is also a prolific writer who received various awards including the National Book Award (1982, 1983) and the Focus Award for Best Essay of the Year (1973). Her other books include *Journey to the Center* (a monograph on Philippine art and ritual), *Earth, Fire and Water* (a compilation of essays on art, culture and the environment), and *Paraiso* (a poetic history of Mt. Banahaw). For the 1998 ALFP, her proposed research topic is: "Religious Faith and Development". Ms Mayuga received her B.A. from St. Theresa's College, Manila, 1963 and MSc. (comparative journalism) from Columbia University, 1966.

Janadas Devan (Singapore)
Special Correspondent & Leader Writer,
Straits Times, Singapore

Mr. Devan is a prolific writer where his publications include various papers published in academic journals as well as articles in newspapers and magazines. He is presently working on a book, *Model Nation: An Anatomy of a Rational State*, a study of how the 'founding' narratives of history in the postcolonial state enable specific social and political formations within the state. He has also written a series of essays on key moments in the history of modern Asia.   His proposed research topic for the ALFP is: "Asian Modernity".   Mr. Devan reads Economics, Statistics and English at the National University of Singapore, and did his postgraduate work in English Literature and Literary Theory at Cornell University (U.S.A.). He has also taught at various universities in Singapore, the United States and most recently at Brown University.

Suwanna Satha-anand (Thailand)
Associate Professor and Head of Philosophy Dept.,
Faculty of Arts, Chulalongkorn University

Dr. Satha-anand's main academic field of interest is philosophy of Buddhism, religion and of women. She has written numerous books and papers on philosophy and religion in contemporary society, including *Currents in Chinese Philosophy* (1996), "Healing the Earth with Women and Buddhism" (1994) and "Prostitution, Buddhism and 'New Rights' in Southeast Asia" (forthcoming). Her proposed research topic for the ALFP is: "Religion and Social Change: Women & Buddhism".   Dr. Satha-anand received her B.A. (first class honors and gold medallist for highest academic performance) in philosophy from Chulalongkorn University, 1977 and her M.A. (1978) and Ph.D. (1983) from the University of Hawaii.

Asia Leadership Fellow Program 1998
Schedule of Activities

Sept. 2   Introduction session

Sept. 3   Workshop I
              Presentation by Mr. Liu Xin
              (Discussion followed each presentation)

              Workshop II
              Presentation by Ms. Sylvia Mayuga

Sept. 4   Workshop III
              Presentation by Mr. Janadas Devan

              Workshop IV
              Presentation by Mr. Endo Suanda

Sept. 7   Workshop V
              Presentation by Ms. Diana Wong

              Workshop VI
              Presentation by Ms. Suwanna Satha-anand

Sept. 8   Workshop VII
              Discussion on the Collaborative Research

Sept. 9   Seminar on "Japan and the Asia-Pacific Region—
              Development & Culture"
              By Prof. Isami Takeda, Dokkyo University

Sept. 11   Seminar on "People's Asia"
              By Prof. Hisashi Nakamura, Ryukoku University

              Visit to the Institute of Oriental Culture, University of
              Tokyo
              Seminar on "Japan and Asia from the Maritime Viewpoint"
              By Prof. Takeshi Hamashita, University of Tokyo

Sept. 14   Seminar on "Japanese in Bali"
              By Prof. Shinji Yamashita, University of Tokyo

Sept. 16	Seminar on "The Social and Cultural Significance of Religion in Japan" By Prof. Yoshiya Abe, Kokugakuin University
Sept. 17-19	Symposium on "Population Movement in Southeast Asia: Survival Strategies and Changing Identities", at the National Museum of Ethnology, Osaka
Sept. 21	Seminars on: (1). "Development of the Concept of 'Development' in Indonesian Language" By Prof. Tsuyoshi Kato, Graduate School of ASAFAS, and Prof. Motoko Shimagami, Graduate School of Human & Environmental Studies, Kyoto University (2). "Politics versus Literature?: With Illustrations from Indonesia", by Prof. Umar Kayam, Gadjah Mada University
Sept. 22	Seminar on "History of Japanese Nationalism" By Mr. Shunsuke Tsurumi
Sept. 25	Seminar on "Intellectual History and Sociology of Knowledge in Japan" by Emeritus Prof. Takeshi Ishida, University of Tokyo
Sept. 28	Seminar on the current situation in Cambodia by Mr. Sichan Siv, Former U.S. Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for South Asian Affairs
Sept. 30	Seminar on "Individual and Culture in International Society" by Prof. Kenichiro Hirano, Waseda University
Oct. 1	Seminar on "Nationalism in Modern Japan—National Identity and International Relations" By: Dr. Eiji Oguma, Keio University
Oct. 2	Workshop VIII (Free discussion among the Fellows)
Oct. 5	Seminar on "The Role of Music in Development and Culture" By Prof. Yoshihiko Tokumaru, Ochanomizu University, & Prof. Max-Peter Baumann, University of Bamburg, Germany

Oct. 6	Seminar on Japanese Media and Asia By Mr. Noriyuki Wakisaka, Editorial Writer, *Asahi Shimbun*
Oct. 7	Seminar on the Economic Crisis and Japan By Mr. Tadashi Nakamae, Nakamae Institute of International Economy
Oct. 8	Introductory Seminars on Okinawa (1). "Contemporary Okinawa in the International Context" by Prof. Masaaki Gabe, University of the Ryukyus (2). "The Cocktail Party and Okinawan Identity" by Prof. Katsunori Yamazato, University of the Ryukyus
Oct. 9	Seminars at the University of the Ryukyus (1). "Okinawa and the Japanese Constitution" By Prof. Tetsumi Takara (2). "Development of the Okinawan House and Its Succession of the Traditional Design" By Prof. Nobuyuki Ogura
Oct. 13	Seminar on "Bali and the Japanese" By: Prof. Yoshinori Murai, Sophia University
Oct. 14	Workshop IX Free discussion with Prof. Hisashi Nakamura
Oct. 16	Seminar on "Nationalism and Gender: Revising the Public Memory" By Prof. Chizuko Ueno, University of Tokyo
Oct. 19	Seminar on "Civil Society and Democratic World Order" By Emeritus Prof. Yoshikazu Sakamoto, University of Tokyo
Oct. 21	Seminar on Human Rights By Prof. Kinhide Mushakoji and Prof.Hideaki Uemura (at Meiji Gakuin University Totsuka Campus)
Oct. 23	Weekend Retreat in Ito
Oct. 28	Public Symposium on "Asia in Transition: Localizing Strategies; Globalizing Processes"

Toward a Postmodern Asian Perspective

In recent years, particularly following the economic and financial crises in Northeast and Southeast Asia that began in mid-1997, scholars of Asian origin have grown interested in assessing the impact of globalization on national development. This intellectual shift has opened a window of opportunity for Asians themselves to seek alternative paradigms, to better reflect on the events in their region. The intellectual atmosphere seems increasingly in favor of postmodernism.

Postmodernism, in a nutshell, rejects modernism, which is understood in the context of universalism, grand theory, scientific rationality, and scientific models of progress. Postmodernism promotes particularism rather than universalism. It questions the principal tenets of modern architecture, attacks general scientific paradigms, and recognizes the importance of multiple instances of traditional wisdom and cultural knowledge -- in other words, a relativism of cultural knowledge.

This intellectual trend seems compatible with scholarly thinking in East Asia, as academic traditions in the region have been heavily based on cultural values and historical realities. Although Western scholarship has influenced Asian societies and Asians have gone to study in the West, Western scientific approaches have not always been taken seriously. The failure of liberal democracy, the emergence of the developmental state, and the so-called "Asian values" debate in East Asia have posed serious challenges to the Western idea of scientific progress.

In the 1998 Asia Leadership Fellow Program, Fellows from various countries outside Japan (mostly from Southeast Asia), resource individuals from Japan, and other participants sought, in their own distinct ways, to shed light on issues related to national development in the context of global vs. local cultural values. Although the discussions focused on several practical issues, the theme of this program raises the question of whether postmodernism has finally emerged as the appropriate perspective to explain Asia's recent dramatic changes.

I. The Fellows' Preliminary Thoughts

The 1998 Fellows of the Asia Leadership Fellow Program, initiated in 1996, include **Liu Xin** (China), **Endo Suanda** (Indonesia), **Diana Wong** (Malaysia), **Sylvia Mayuga** (Philippines), **Janadas Devan** (Singapore), and **Suwanna Satha-anand** (Thailand). Each of them offers some preliminary thoughts on their projects.

Liu Xin, a social anthropologist from China, reflected on the cultural logic of nationalism by focusing his attention on the socioeconomic conditions in rural China. His main contention is that the radical transition in the last twenty years has coincided with a lack of "moral order" in rural communities. Each moment in the recent past can be characterized as a unique combination of different elements derived from three macro-socio-historical sources: traditional, revolutionary, and modern. The historical shift from traditional meanings and symbols to revolutionary ideas and now to discourses of modernity has left people in rural communities confused. The new form of capitalism is without any form of governance and regulations. His main interest in anthropological research is in the area of corruption and business in Beihai city, Guangxi province, because it illustrates the total change or re-emergence of statistical and quantitative reasoning in the last two decades.

From Indonesia, **Endo Suanda** presented his preliminary thoughts based on his concern about different social dynamics in today's world: localism vs. globalism and nationalism vs. regionalism. He paid particular attention to the significance of cultural values in Indonesian villages, which have been damaged by what he calls the "national perspective" on development. In an attempt to create a national identity in the last 30 years, the state has intruded into local cultural traditions. He sees this form of state intervention as posing a "danger" to the survival of the village ways of life. Because of this unhealthy socio-cultural development, he views himself as a man in a mission to promote cultural pluralism, as opposed to "ethno-centralism".

Diana Wong of Malaysia expressed keen interest in social identities with regard to Asia in the context of global capitalism. Singapore, she argues, sought to champion Asian values not only because it was opportunistic and instrumentalist, but also because it had to present itself as "Asian" in order to be accepted as "global". Despite the economic crisis in the region, she proposes that we not abandon the concept of Asia, because it can help establish a learning community. She believes it would be more fruitful to consider Asia in the context of pluralism, however. Maritime Asia, not continental Asia, serves as a point for different civilizations to meet, as Islamic, Chinese and European civilizations did here. In her view, this kind of discourse would provide an opportunity for the reconstructing of a more pluralistic conception of Asia. Pluralism should be seen as a conceptual alternative to globalism or universalism.

Based on insights derived from her country, the Philippines, **Sylvia Mayuga** sees herself as a scholar/activist, who is interested in the concept of "sustainable development". Based on her philosophy, which emphasizes the spiritual dimension of culture and individuality, she has engaged in

activities related to environmental protection and advocacy. She calls for a return to the past, to learn from traditional wisdom –- in order to tap "mystical" traditional values -- and to organize communities for sustainable development. In her opinion, the East Asian economic crisis under the aegis of globalization should compel us to investigate its root-causes and to look for solutions based on deep insights found in religions and cultures from East to West.

Suwanna Satha-anand of Thailand has also taken a critical theoretical perspective by examining the ways in which the state ideology of economic development has denigrated the role of women in Thai society. Her interest in feminist interpretation of Buddhism led her to investigate the intersection of the state and Buddhism, one of the country's oldest institutions. But she found inconsistencies in this relationship. On the one hand, the state and the traditional institution worked together to promote economic development by not preaching the virtue of contentment. On the other hand, the state has taken the role of education away from the institution. In her work on Buddhism and women, she attempts to provide an alternative discourse that would "liberate" Buddhism from the hegemonic ideology found in the mainstream Buddhist church. She seeks to deconstruct the state-tainted ideology by putting her perspective within the context of Buddhist teachings, with the aim of revealing the neglected messages of Buddha. In her belief, such form of deconstructionism would help liberate Buddhism from traditional Thai culture and would ultimately provide a more useful base from which to pursue creative social action to promote change in Thailand.

Janadas Devan appeared to be the only Fellow who took the view that history and culture are not of significant relevance to our understanding of nations or communities. By making a provocative statement that Singapore is the only real country in Asia, he contends that this conception of a nation-state is based on the idea of instrumental rationality. He acknowledges the fact that Singapore is a by-product of British colonialism, but stresses that Singaporean nationalism did not exist until after independence. His concept of legitimacy is based on the idea of a vision of the future rather than a reliance on local history and traditions. For this ahistorical reason, Singapore, as a totally coherent and rational society, is, in his view, a perfect instrument and a perfect location for global capitalism. The multi-national corporations and the state, not local entrepreneurs, have built the national economy. The state has thus accommodated local differences only if they would not threaten the integrity of nation-building projects, such as the language policy.

In short, with the exception of **Janadas Devan** of Singapore, the Fellows who presented their initial reflections on their projects were in

agreement on the need to curb the tide of universalism. They believed in undertaking projects that would draw our attention to the virtue of local values and traditions untainted by state ideology or scientific models of cumulative progress. These projects can thus be categorized as a combined vision for a world based on respect for diversity. As a unifying theme of the proposed projects, diversity is to be expressed in the context of cultural pluralism at the regional level (Diana Wong) and at the national level (Endo Suanda). Diversity is also based on a vision for an inclusive community: moral economic order (Liu Xin), culture-based sustainable development (Sylvia Mayuga), and reinterpretation of a hegemonic ideology to emancipate women from patriarchism (Suwanna Satha-anand).

II. Reflections by Resource Individuals

During the 1998 Asia Leadership Fellow Program, a number of resource individuals were invited to give seminars, from 9 September to 21 October, on various topics. These topics were related to Japan's international relations, Japanese history and culture, Japanese nationalism and gender, Japanese media, the recent economic crisis and the future of Japan, civil society, and democratization and human rights. These seminars were intended to promote better understanding between Japanese and other Asian scholars, especially the Fellows and broaden the scope of discussions among the Fellows.

On Japan's international relations, Professor **Takeshi Hamashita** of the University of Tokyo and Professor **Isami Takeda** of Dokkyo University reflected on the role of Japan in the Asia-Pacific region. In his presentation on "Japan and the Asia-Pacific Region", Prof. Takeda examined relations between Japan and other powers inside and outside the region -- the United States, Russia and those in Southeast Asia. From a strategic point of view, the Japan-US security alliance remains at the center of Japan's foreign policy. Although Japan has had a close relationship with the United States, however, it has also developed an autonomous policy towards countries in the region, especially in the fields of economic, social, and diplomatic cooperation. According to Prof. Takeda, Japan's aid policy (Oversees Development Aid or ODA) toward Southeast Asia should be viewed in the context of strategic Sino-Japanese relations. For Japan, Southeast Asia provides a counterweight to China. The aid policy is thus designed both to help stabilize the incumbent governments in Southeast Asia and to provide a public insurance to the Japanese business community in the sub-region.

Prof. Hamashita sought to place Japan in the context of maritime Asia. He made the initial remark that Japan chose to enter the modern world mainly because of the political dynamics of Sino-Japanese relations in

the traditional tributary system, not because of the advent of European powers. In his opinion, the argument that Japan adopted a seclusion policy from the 17th to 19th century because of its "closed nature" and was forced to open up after Western powers came to the region needs to be reexamined. Japan's decision to leave Asia and enter the Western world was mainly driven by the need to counter the China-centered system, not by an attempt to westernize. Japan's absorption of Western technology and its drive for development, although it varied from region to region, rested heavily on the common agenda to cope with China. A careful reading of what Japanese leaders have done reveals that they were deeply concerned about re-entering the Chinese-dominated tributary system. Contemporary historians have confirmed that the seclusion policy during the Edo period and the process of "westernization" were not the primary objectives of Japanese leaders, but rather enabled them to reject the Sino-centric system by providing an alternative.

Moreover, Japanese nationalism is not the by-product of Western ideas, such as state sovereignty, but rather stems from the country's regional dynamics, evident in the 17th century. Japan was a society divided into different regions with their own cultural characteristics and connections with the outside world. In the 19th century, Japan was moving in the direction of a multi-racial and multi-cultural society.

Dr **Eiji Oguma** of Keio University examined the question of nationalism in modern Japan. He identified models of post-war nationalism to help clarify the Japanese position in relation to other countries. Similar to one of Prof. Takeda's points, he contends that Japan's economic aid to Asian countries must be put in the context of Japan-US relations and that it has benefited the Japanese companies involved. As far as the mythology of the emperor is concerned, he argues that the myth was established alongside the eradication of local beliefs during the modernization process in the Meiji period. The state monopolized the authority to read and interpret the myths and sought to suppress all elements in rebellion against its modernization policy. The process of modernization has reached the point where the Japanese no longer identify themselves in regional terms. Populist nationalism has taken root; it is no longer possible for anyone to talk about sub-national differences among ordinary people. Modernization has homogenized everything.

In his discussion on the individual and culture, Professor **Kenichiro Hirano** of Waseda University, echoed the preliminary thoughts of several Fellows (as noted earlier) by emphasizing the shift from the age of nationality to that of ethnicity, and somewhat challenged Dr Eiji Oguma's view on nationalism (as noted above). According to Prof. Hirano, there is an oscillation between particularism and universalism, as well as between

nationalism and globalism. In the post-nation-state era, ethnicity has emerged as a unit within international relations. This is the by-product of globalization, which worked to dilute a sense of separation between nations and allowed sub-national identities to emerge. He thus sees the possibility of cultural conflicts at the local level, rather than the clash of great civilizations as envisioned by Samuel Huntington of Harvard.

In his seminar on "The Cocktail Party and Okinawan Identity", Professor **Katsunori Yamazato** of the University of Ryukyus discussed the way the people in Okinawa (the Ryukyus) feel about their own identity within the Japanese society. They "have always occupied a marginalized position in Japan". Annexed by Japan in 1879, Okinawa was subsequently subject to the Japanese government's language- standardization policy. According to Prof. Yamazato, contemporary Okinawans do not think that their culture is inferior and many of them now believe that they do not always have to follow what goes on in the northern islands of Japan. Many Okinawan writers now believe that they can make literary contributions to the rest of Japan by using their own culture and language. But they remain ambivalent about their identity, as Japanese and as Okinawans. In Prof. Yamazato's own words: "Such vacillation will certainly persist well into the twenty-first century".

On his presentation on intellectual history and the sociology of knowledge in Japan, Emeritus Professor **Takeshi Ishida** of the University of Tokyo, discussed four topics: nationalism (1945-1960), modernization (mid-1960s-mid-1970s), culture (1970s-1980s), and globalization (1990s-present). Prior to the end of World War II, two forms of nationalism had emerged: nascent nationalism and a type of nationalism bordering on Western imperialism. After that, Japanese intellectuals formed what is called "a community of remorse or regret", because they failed to stop the war and considered "imperialist nationalism" wrong. Although they idealized Asian nationalism at first, they became disappointed when the promising peaceful co-existence between China and India ended in 1959. The next generation of scholars sought to evaluate Japan as a nation more modern than the rest of Asia. During the Cold War, with the US assistance, the Japanese economy recovered rapidly. A new Japanese attitude emerged, at least in business circles: Japanese economic superiority, justified on the grounds that Japan provided other Asian countries with aid to help them raise their productivity. Although Japanese intellectuals were still bound together within the "community of remorse", they were now divided into two groups: one against the Vietnam War; the other pro-government and promoting modernization.

Out of this modernization emerged a sense of cultural pride. In the midst of the Oil Crisis in 1973, the Japanese economy proved resilient.

National confidence was strengthened to the point where Japanese culture was seen "unique" or "superior" to other cultures. The resilient culture was the reason for Japan's economic successes. This cultural pride became a part of what came to be known as "Asian values", the secret of economic growth in Asia and an alternative to the Western models.

But then came the final stage: globalization. Rather than stressing Japanese "uniqueness", a new language has emerged with more and more emphasis on global standards and free-market economics as the key terms. **Prof. Ishida** views the new Darwinistic developmentalism as potentially dangerous, because it can easily destroy the traditional welfare state and various social movements.

Professor **Chizuko Ueno** of the University of Tokyo focused her seminar on issues related to nationalism and gender. She raised the issue of whether women's equal participation in the military would be accepted as a goal to promote gender equality. According to her, American feminists who demand an equal opportunity for participation in combat are more nationalists than feminists. She criticizes the post-war peace movement because of the fact that certain motherhood was mobilized and utilized. She views nationalism as a collective identity of an oppressive nature. On the subject of Japanese aggression, she and other activists are growing confident about the success of the attempt to reconstruct the self-consciousness as "perpetrator" in Japan. Because history became a site of political conflict, the aim of women or gender history is to rewrite man-made history; feminist history should refute the "standard" history.

According to **Noriyuki Wakisaka**, editorial writer for *Asahi Shimbun*, Japanese media and intellectuals are also said to have a more active role in the process of development. There is a close relationship between journalists and intellectuals. A few journalists have become politicians -- even Prime Ministers; intellectuals have also left their profession to work as journalists. That said, interaction between journalists and intellectuals has been on the decline, in part because many of the latter have made no contribution to the policy-making process. Japan has also made an intellectual contribution to economic development. During the recent economic crisis, for instance, Japanese economists at the World Bank published a report entitled "East Asia, the Road to Recovery". For new insights and recommendations, the Obuchi administration has learned to depend less on the government bureaucracy, long considered the biggest think tank in the country, and more on business leaders and economists.

On Japanese cultural traditions, several resource scholars focused on a number of specific areas, ranging from religion, to the conception of individuality, to music. In his discussion on the social and cultural significance of religion in Japan, Professor **Yoshiya Abe** of Kokugakuin

University focused on the syncretism of Shintoism and Buddhism. Buddhism came to Japan in the sixth century and provided a political service, as it influenced the making of the rule of law and helped to systematize an advanced culture. The Buddhism that came to Japan was not original in form and became transformed by Shintoism, which had been recognized only as a national state cult before 1945. Buddhism emerged as a state religion intended to prohibit Christian practices. Missionaries brought Christianity to Japan by in the 16th century and introduced firearms, democratic ideas, and the ideology of markets around the castle. Confucianism has been treated by the Japanese as a political philosophy, not as a religion, and had a lot of influence on society. In contemporary Japan, religion has lost the majority of its functions, but still serves as a basis for the value system.

On the role of music in development, Professor **Yoshihiko Tokumaru** of Ochanomizu University expressed concern about the domination of Western international marketing, which reduces the level of appreciation for local music. Unlike in the 19th century, when people considered a certain type of music to be "the best" and others "primitive", people are now becoming more aware that traditional or tribal music is very complex.

According to other resource scholars, traditionalism continues to maintain its cultural relevance in the midst of globalization. Emeritus Professor **Yoshikazu Sakamoto** of the University of Tokyo discussed the concept of the "civic state" and "transnational civil society", seeing contradictions between capitalism, global market economy, and civil society. He also questions the conventional wisdom that posits that the middle class is the agent of democratic change. For him, political authoritarianism and capitalist development associated with the emergence of the middle class could go hand in hand. Civil society serves as the basis for democratization and is possible in traditional societies, not simply because of the rational organization of social life experienced in the West. Civil society is a historical concept and an open-ended process, based on the idea of equal rights of human beings (representing rationality) and mutual recognition of dignity (derived from the sense of awe to them). We propose a change to traditional culture and a critical reconstruction of traditional values.

On human rights issues, Professors **Kinhide Mushakoji** and **Hideaki Uemura** of Meiji Gakuin University shared their thoughts on how Japan learned to adopt liberal values, with external factors playing a key role in the process. When the Meiji government sent a mission to the US and Europe to negotiate unequal treaties with their leaders, the mission sent home a message saying it had been told that the country was not civilized because it still treated Christians in an uncivilized manner. The mission

asked the government to recognize freedom of religion. Japan has made numerous other efforts to westernize itself with the aim of proving itself a civilized nation. At a Stockholm conference on child abuse and prostitution, for example, Japan was told that it would not be accepted as a civilized nation unless it took up the issue of child prostitution and trafficking. This does not mean that human-rights issues are totally alien to Asian traditions, however. Grassroots social movements in East Asia have worked to fight all forms of discrimination and racism. Thus, one cannot say that Asia has no tradition of human rights. As far as human-rights education is concerned, the legalistic approach is not enough. Traditional values have a contribution to make. An Asian approach is needed that includes a broad range of rights: socioeconomic and political rights and civil liberties. Prof. Mushakoji disagrees with those who argue that human rights are universal and should be applied to all societies. What is important is to transform socioeconomic and political conditions so as to make it easier for human rights to be implemented.

In sum, these seminars provide another unifying theme regarding the ongoing trend toward postmodern thinking, which rejects universal ideas and scientific models of cumulative progress and acknowledges the virtue of cultural diversity and assimilation. The trend sheds light on new dilemmas (potential clashes between cultural values and between universalism and localism) and presents new opportunities for a greater appreciation of cultural diversity and relativism.

III. The Ito Conference

At the Conference in Ito, the Fellows presented their final findings. Presenters included Liu Xin, Endo Suanda, Diana Wong, Sylvia Mayuga, Janadas Devan, and Suwanna Satha-anand. Although the subjects for discussion were diverse, they made efforts to present what they had learned or discovered in the last several weeks.

Fellows such as **Sylvia Mayuga** continued to focus on issues related to the need for maintaining local traditions. She asked whether we need to return to a lost wisdom of interdependence destined to begin in Asia and the world. In other discussions, she defended this endeavor by referring to success in international solidarity among NGOs after "eliciting the genius of Indonesian people".

Endo Suanda also stayed the course by presenting his critique of what he considered the "problem of standardization" and the state's role in promoting certain "local arts" as superior to others according to criteria based on the national interests.

Suwanna Satha-anand returned to the question of values and human judgment in our subjective understanding of history and society. She mentioned that mutual recognition of human dignity, for instance, is in itself an expression of value. It also helps reintroduce the discourse of value and commitment of the human agency into the social sciences, privileges human evaluative judgment as the basis for civil society, and highlights the possibility of an inter-subjective collective set of value judgments.

Diana Wong also returned to her earlier theme of Asia as a more than geographical category and asked if an emancipatory project of Asia is possible. Based on the argument that Europe is not of the universalist cast, under which other particularities are subsumed, but rather an expression of regional particularities in a global order, she offered a vision for Asia. A sense of community could be built on shared experiences in the following areas: Asia as an invention of the West, cultural pluralism, modernization, and a history of early trade relations within the Chinese tributary system.

Liu Xin reflected on the question of the "we" often raised throughout the two-month period. The word "we" was frequently used and emphasized as a notion for suggesting that certain political positions are theoretically unquestionable. But, in his view, it is no longer easy to define the term in a systematic way; whenever we use it, we should explain its specificity. He then proposed that the word "we" be pluralized and argued that overemphasis on "identity" might result in a sharpening of differences between "we" and "they". The main difficulty is how to conceptualize the plural of the plural. He further argued that the emphasized "we" invoked the notion of subjectivity, as consciousness of consciousness, which was in turn deeply rooted in a humanist conception of history and reality. Without realizing this, one might not be able to see clearly the globalizing process as a historical force, through which human subjectivity is made and situated. In short, the notion "we" should be used more appropriately for the struggles of our time by modifying it in three dimensions: articulation of its specificity, pluralization of the plural, and objectification of subjectivity.

The discussions on the Fellows' topics were elaborated, as other participants; some of who did their own presentations, raised more questions and answers. A dominant theme seemed to be the question of what needed to be done to further a sense of community in Asia, based on shared values and a collective identity.

Some concerns were raised to confront the fact that what we see now is the strengthening of nationalism, not regionalism. The issue of how to get rid of nationalism was then discussed. Professor **Kiichi Fujiwara** of the University of Tokyo presented three possible approaches: elitist exposure to different societies, global identity building based on global concerns, and

detachment from the nation itself. He still believes that these are not the answers to the problem, however. What we should do is to live with it, by taking heart from the fact that extreme nationalism is on the retreat. Based on his fieldwork with the Ayta people in the Philippines, Professor **Hiromu Shimizu** of Kyushu University asserted that another strategy for dealing with the problem of nationalism is to go beyond the national border by promoting international citizenship. Prior to the eruption of Mt. Pinatubo, these people were unaware of their distinct identity. Afterwards, they became conscious of their distinct cultural heritage, but have since been willing to go in the direction of bilingualism and biculturalism.

More criticism was leveled against the objectifying certain sources of culture and the legitimization of national rule seen as part of dangerous "cultural logic". Professor **Yasuyuki Nagafuchi** of the Nagoya Institute of Technology emphasized the need and possible approaches to create a public space, which would not have to depend on "cultural logic".

The stress on the need to promote some form of an "Asian identity" based on the notion of cultural diversity was discussed in Professor **Masako Okamoto**'s, of Osaka University, presentation. Drawing on the problematic dichotomy in Turkey between "Western and traditional" or "secular and Islamic", she commented that we need to get away from this inflexible binary framework or rigid worldview. Instead, she argues, a more fruitful way to promote some Asian identity would be to concentrate on what Asians share in common, or on what does not alienate certain groups.

Toward the end of the conference, the discussion centered on policy-relevant issues associated with the Asian economic crisis. What needed to be done? Who should get involved in the decision-making process? Is there a need for a super-national agency to take charge? Should a global or region-based institution be built? Some argued that the state should be left to do this job; NGOs would not be able to do much, but should provide a useful social safety net. **Diana Wong** sees the crisis as an opportunity for non-economists to question conventional economic assumptions. **Suwanna** shared the Thai experience in which intellectuals and activists battled economists, played a mediating role in solving problems and conflicts brought about by rapid economic development, and contributed to the drafting of the new constitution. Professor **Fujiwara** sees the end of socialism and capitalism and the emergence of a social engineering of capital market, and has placed his bet on democratization. But the question of how to handle the free flow of information was left unanswered because, as **Janadas** put it, nobody could control or structure it.

The Ito conference continued to tackle serious issues largely driven by the postmodern agenda; the presentations and discussions remained centered on how to create visions for more inclusive communities based on

the idea of unity through diversity and mutual respect. The participants did some serious soul-searching for practical local solutions to the larger problem of nationalism and the negative impact of globalization on national and local development.

IV. The Public Symposium

After two months of intellectual interactions among the Fellows and other Japanese resource scholars and journalists, a public symposium was held on 28 October. The theme was "Asia in Transition: Localizing Strategies, Globalizing Processes". The theme again reflected the Fellows' interests in pushing their postmodern intellectual agenda in the midst of the Asian economic crisis. The questions and answers were centered on identity issues, the way in which the crisis should be understood, and how the problem of resurgent nationalism in Asia should be dealt with.

On the question of fragmented identity, **Suwanna** responded with a note in support of the need to reconstruct the images of women and to promote gender equality by following two steps. First, there is a need to deconstruct the traditional images of women as having a subordinate identity in the context of Thailand's Theravada Buddhism. There is also a need to locate or unearth hidden passages in the traditional scriptures that have been overlooked by the mainstream, male-dominated Sangha. Second, there is a need to search for traditional or religious values to form a basis for civil society. **Sylvia** is encouraged that there are many ethnological studies, which are subject to interpretation and which serve as a key to the new understanding of humanity's relationship with nature and with one another in small polities. But **Endo Suanda** sees Indonesia's value system as being in a very confused stage. Amidst this call for a greater appreciation of local values emerged a lingering doubt about the danger of national disintegration, which concerns state leaders. But **Endo Suanda** insisted that people be allowed to make their voices heard.

On the question of how the Asian economic crisis should be understood, the responses varied. **Janadas** argues that, while foreigners should be blamed for the problems, the rapid process of economic liberalization should be seen as the main cause. A more effective means to govern capital movements would be valuable. In Thailand, as **Suwanna** pointed out, two perspectives emerged: one put the blame on the Americans and so on; the other directed the blame at globalization itself. On the question of how to get out of the crisis, the response from **Janadas** was that, if the crisis did not last long, it could be a good thing in that it would help people do what they were supposed to have done a long time ago. It would also help bring a greater realism to all states in Southeast Asia. **Diana**
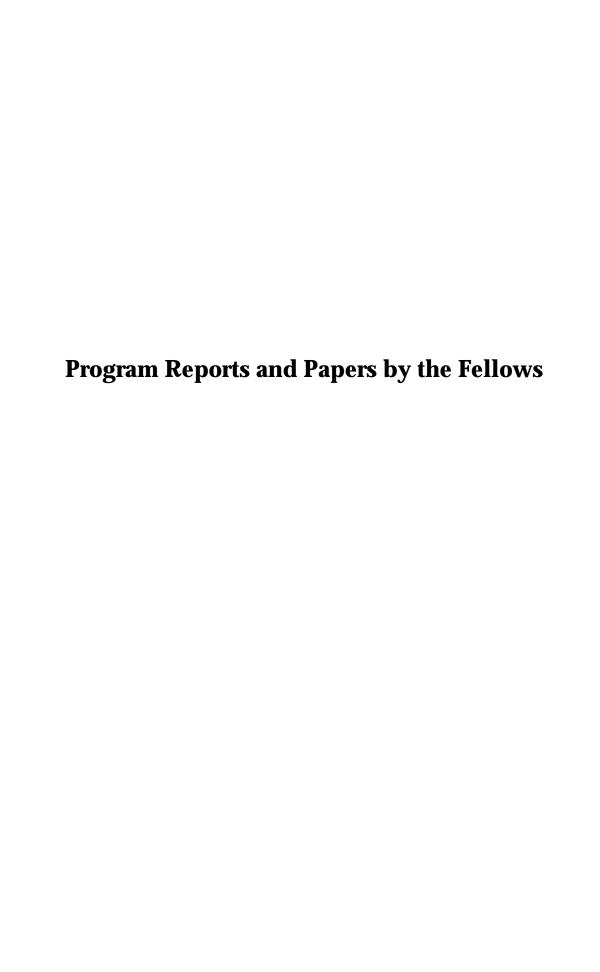
Wong echoed Janadas's notion of "realism" by emphasizing tremendous structural weaknesses in the Asian economies. It took the West hundreds of years to achieve what Asia did in twenty. Fundamental economic structure needs to be put in place to help generate sustainable growth, and the task will be time-consuming. Society should be given more space between the state and market forces.

The Fellows touched on the future of nationalism in different ways. Indonesia's new nationalism poses a threat. **Liu Xin** identified three forms of nationalism in China: popular nationalism, national nationalism, and official nationalism. While official nationalism is on the decline, popular nationalism is on the rise, to which we should pay attention. Not everyone saw nationalism as being out of control, however. **Suwanna** argued that, if there is a new form of Thai nationalism on the rise, it is one based on popular democracy, which might be healthier than the one the Thais have experienced for the last 50 years. In the Philippines, nationalism is being redefined; populism is beginning to articulate the folk wisdom of the Filipinos. As **Sylvia** put it: "We are becoming one community".

The public symposium was brought to a conclusion with the final remarks from Professor **Mitsuo Nakamura** of Chiba University, with his reflection on the late Soejatomoko, who viewed Asian modernization as a kind of art tied to the moral fabric of society threatened by rapid economic development. Behind the moral fabric, there is a system of traditional values. Modernization cries out for more attention to values and the moral foundation of society, which provide a sense of continuity on the Asian scene.

V. Toward an Asian Postmodern View on Development?

The 1998 Asia Leadership Fellow Program was by and large unique in that the Fellows from different Asian countries shared their personal thoughts on what went on in their societies one year after the economic crisis hit their region. The exchange of ideas among the Fellows and between the Fellows and other Japanese participants appeared to bring a higher level of awareness regarding the need to re-examine the impact of globalization on socioeconomic development from a postmodern perspective. If there was a common thread to the Fellows' projects, it was their joint call for a return to local wisdom in the midst of globalization and socioeconomic woes.

Program Reports and Papers by the Fellows

Japan and The Anthropology of Modern Life
The Asia Leadership Fellow Program 1998

By Liu Xin

This report consists of two parts. The first part is an account of the actual activities I participated in and of the various kinds of research I carried out, both during and after the period of collaborative research (i.e., from the 1st of September to the 30th of October, 1998). The second part deals with a particular question central to my own experience in Japan as an anthropologist, i.e., the question of how ethnographers may carry out field research in a modern society such as Japan, where traditional forms of collective or social organization used to provide an experiential basis for ethnographic fieldwork, have largely disappeared. In other words, the second part of this report is an attempt to rethink the place of anthropology in the study of modern life, which is not only my own concern but also a significant question for the contemporary debates in anthropology and beyond. Of course, my attempt here is preliminary in the true sense of the term.

Part I

My activities and research during these past four months can be divided into three main categories: 1) the collaborative research with other fellows, which included the interactions and exchanges with a large number of Japanese scholars; 2) field research in Japan; and 3) others, such as lecturing in Japanese universities or personal meetings with Japanese scholars. Let me have a brief discussion of each of these categories.

1) Collaborative Research

A list of the program activities during the period of collaborative research has been compiled by the International House of Japan, which can be used to show the discussion topics and research interests among the fellows. What I would like to do here is to comment on these activities, from my own personal point of view as a partial reflection on the degree of success of this program. The intention of this program was to create an arena for Asian scholars (or, more precisely, Southeast Asian scholars) to interact with each other as well as with Japanese scholars. As I understand it, this program was meant to bring influential (potentially in some cases) local scholars together, i.e., to provide an opportunity for these scholars to work collaboratively in order to see what kinds of intellectual questions may be raised as a result of interactions among them. If such was the purpose of this program, in my view, it achieved a great success, because a number of significant questions concerning Asia or Southeast Asia were only possible to be raised by the fellows working together as a group. In other words, questions raised or problems identified were the result of interactions and exchanges among the fellows, as well as between the fellows and Japanese scholars.

However, from another perspective, this successful aspect may be seen as being inefficient in the organization of this program, because particularly in the beginning of the collaborative research, there were times when interactions and discussions among the fellows seemed to lack any specific direction. But my feeling is that even those moments of hesitation and sometimes misunderstanding later turned out to be meaningful for the identification of any problems. Also, since the fellows were chosen from different regions and had different backgrounds, a certain period of time was needed for them to understand each other's concerns. But the question is how could the organizers help the fellows interact on a truly collective basis as soon as they arrived? One suggestion for speeding up this initial stage, may be that, instead of asking individual fellows to recommend Japanese resource persons, the organizers could introduce a selected number of Japanese scholars, to provide an initial and tentative framework for interactions and discussions with the fellows. As in our case, individual fellows recommended many Japanese resource persons, who came to join the discussion in the first few weeks of the program. In so doing, a diverse range of Japanese scholars were introduced to us, but a picture of how these scholars were related to each other and how they represented the Japanese intellectual scene was not made clear until later in the program. This is not to suggest that the focus of this program should shift from interactions among the fellows to exchanges between the fellows and Japanese scholars.

Rather, it should suggest that, in order to provide for the fellows an initial common ground for communication; individual Japanese scholars and the Japanese intellectual life could be placed in the larger picture of global production of knowledge, of which this program is a part. This would not be an easy task, but I believe that if some considerations could be made in this direction, it would benefit not only the fellows but also the two organizing institutions, i.e., the Japan Foundation (Asia Center) and the International House of Japan.

My own dilemma in the beginning of this program was that I found it difficult to relate my question about the condition of contemporary China to the inquiries of other fellows, whose concerns were more closely linked to the current economic and political crisis of Southeast Asia. The discussion and exchange among the fellows however, allowed me an opportunity to understand, from a very different perspective, the situation of Southeast Asia in specific and the nature of sociocultural struggles of our time in general.

2) Field Research in Japan

During the collaborative period of research, the fellows visited Kyoto, Osaka, Ito, and Okinawa. Afterwards, I made special trips to see a number of Japanese cities and local areas for the purpose of fieldwork of some sort. These trips were preliminary in two senses. First, none of these trips, although with a full anthropological intent, was long enough to be considered as fieldwork in its proper sense. I spent no more than a few days in each of these places I visited. Second, they were preliminary in the sense that, by visiting a variety of places in Japan, I hope to search for possible locations for future intensive fieldwork, which is part of my long-term research plan to write comparative ethnographies on East Asian societies. Below is a list of places that I visited.

1). November, 1998: Hokkaido, several cities including Sapporo, another face of urban Japan;
2). November, 1998: Nagaoka area, including Niigata but mainly Nagaoka rural areas;
3). December 1998: Shigoku, mountainous villages as well as local towns and townships;
4). December 1998: Kyushu, a wide range of places including both urban and rural settings.

If to use a recently invented anthropological term, my travel in Japan may be called "a multi-sited field research," because I was moving from one

place to another while observing the characteristics of modern life in Japan. A central question coming out from these trips, which I shall deal with in the second part of this report, is what the phrase "anthropology of modern life" entails?

3) Others

Some other activities of mine may also be mentioned. First, I gave three lectures in two Tokyo universities. The topics of these lectures were about the paradigmatic shifts in Western anthropology. These lectures allowed me the opportunity to meet with Japanese College students, i.e., to understand their concerns and interests, and these lectures also helped me to better understand the system of Japanese universities in terms of their function in society. Second, I participated in a number of cultural activities typical of Japanese society, as part of my anthropological experience. For example, I attended a Shinto wedding in rural Nagaoka; observed the ritual of kendo competition/performance between Waseda and Keio universities. This kind of experience has provided me an opportunity to understand the connection between cultural forms and social organizations in modern Japan. Third, I met a large number of Japanese anthropologists and China specialists in Japan. By meeting with these scholars from Tokyo University, Keio University, Sophia University, Kyushu University, and so on, I tried to initiate some kind of relationship with them for the purpose of building ties between Japanese, American and Chinese scholars. In particular, I am looking forward to meeting some of these Japanese scholars in Berkeley in the near future. Fourth, I attended a number of conferences or workshops. For example, I attended the workshop organized by the Future Generation Foundation, held in Kyoto on 4-7 December, which discussed the notion of generativity as their sixth topic of a series of discussions in search for a new public philosophy. Fifth, with the help from friends and relatives, I had some precious opportunities to spend a few nights in rural households, both in Nagaoka and Shigoku areas. This experience, although short, was very important for me to raise questions about the nature of change in Japanese society, which will be briefly discussed in the following part.

Through this diverse range of experiences, two objectives were achieved. The first one is that I have obtained a relatively comprehensive picture of contacts and contexts of scholarly interests in Japan, with which I will try to push for future collaborative research between Japan, China and United States. Second, these experiences strongly reaffirm my view that China scholars from the west should pay serious attention to the Japanese literature.

Part II

An underlying question brought about by all these diverse experiences in Japan, as far as myself is concerned, is the question of how anthropologists may carry out field research in a society where traditional forms of social ties seem to have disappeared. They were also the very basis upon which the classic mode of anthropological knowledge was founded. In this part of the report, I would like to begin with a reflection on the question of anthropology of modern life, which is by no means a new question, as a clue for showing the progress of my thought during these four and half months spent in Japan. In so doing, an anthropological tone is inevitable in the second part of the report, which is indeed my intention to introduce into the report a substantial content. Later, I shall point out how such a specific question derived from anthropology is linked to a wide range of questions raised by the fellows of this program.

"Anthropology of Modern Life"

The conventional image of the anthropologist is that of a fieldworker whose method of research is known as "participant observation," i.e., to be part of a group of people in order to understand what is going on in a specific community. The doctrine of participant observation marked the establishment of anthropology as a scientific discipline, and in some sense such a doctrine continues to govern the rules of training students in anthropology. However, this doctrine has been criticized and challenged in the past few decades, from a number of different positions, in such a way as to make many anthropologists feel uncomfortable about the theoretical implications of its methodology.   Although every anthropologist is somehow conscious of the problems inherent to the discipline's methodological claims, the problem of methodology itself is far from being solved.

Although many anthropologists have argued for an anthropology of modern life, very few have succeeded in providing any systematic vision for how such an anthropology can be formulated. This is why I believe that it is necessary for me to comment on this question based upon my experience of modern life in Japan. It is also necessary to point out that this kind of criticism and challenge to the classic mode of anthropological knowledge not only concerns the conceptual enterprises of Western academic order, but also indicates the changing realities of social and cultural life of our world at the present time. It is in this context of change that the question of anthropology of modern life should be situated. And, therefore, a possible

answer to this question may illuminate us on the condition of our present society.

There are two fundamental presuppositions in classic anthropology. The first one is that anthropological knowledge comes from the experience that the ethnographer is supposed to have in the encounter with his subjects of study. In other words, anthropological knowledge is a form of knowledge that is directly derived from experience, i.e., personal experience of the ethnographer. The second one is that anthropology studies other people or cultures as and in their wholeness. This is an assumption closely linked with the functionalist proposition that the whole is larger than the parts putting together. In other words, there are certain qualities belonging to the whole itself, rather than in the individual parts that makes the whole. Because of these two presuppositions, the classic anthropologist finds a convenient site for fieldwork, i.e., the community, either a tribe or a village or a neighborhood. For it is only in the community that the wholeness of social life can be studied by experience.

The question that needs to be raised is this: when the anthropologist moves to study modern society, where the traditional mode of communal life is no longer dominant, could he still be able to carry out ethnographic fieldwork defined in classic anthropology? The question of methodology is crucial for anthropology, not only because anthropology is a discipline that depends upon one single method but also because the very single method, i.e., participate observation, is intrinsic to the justification of anthropology as a scientific discipline.

A major significance that an anthropologist will find, for example, when he travels in today's Japan, is that what constitutes experience in modern society is different from that in traditional society. What is experience? Assumptions about experience are central elements in the making of anthropological inquiry. Ethnographic experience is personal experience, which is the experience by which the ethnographer is to reach his knowledge on the one hand and, on the other hand, the experience in which the people as the object of ethnographic knowledge are made to be themselves. The sameness of the ethnographer's experience and the experience of the people under study is presupposed in the very heart of anthropology. What underlies this is a further assumption that people are made of by their real experiences. Therefore, it is only when the ethnographer experiences the experience of the subjects of his study that he will be able to understand the meaning of their life.

Thus, one must raise another question: what do we mean when we say that an experience is real? For the anthropologist who is ready to leave for fieldwork, there are often two senses of the real in his mind. The first sense is that the real means something that actually happened. That is, what

actually happened is real. In this sense, events, i.e., happenings, are given priority in the conceptualization of the real. In other words, this sense of the real means to suggest that the nature of these happenings is objective rather than subjective. What actually happened has to happen in a specific place. The specificity of a place in which events take place is therefore presupposed in this sense of the real. That is to say, if following this logic, an ethnographer cannot know what happened unless he goes to that specific place to witness by his own experience.

The second sense of the real is that of truthfulness, which concerns the way in which the agents render experiences into meanings. What actually happened is experienced by a certain group of people in a specific place. And those who have experienced them will process these experiences into meanings. This second sense of the real implies that there is a truthful rendering of these experiences into meanings. This is not an objective process because it is concerned with how people make sense of their own lives, but this sense of the real assumes that there is a-or perhaps the only-truthful rendering of these experiences. And the ethnographer further assumes that his task is to reach that very truthful process. This is to say that, in terms of how what actually happened makes sense for the agents, what is truthful is real. This not only means that the production of meaning needs to be truthful for the agents, but also means that it is the truthful experience of the ethnographer that sets up the foundation for anthropological knowledge.

As we have seen, there is a whole set of assumptions and presuppositions behind the belief in real experience. These assumptions and presuppositions have brought serious consequences on those who believe in it. In particular, I would like to point out one of such serious consequences, i.e., the one that concerns our conception of events in time. It is because what is real is considered to be what actually happened, and what actually happened could only happen in the past. For those who hold such a sense of the real tend to view the chain of events in terms of a single direction from the past to the present and then to the future. It is also because the truthfulness of an experience can only be the experience of what has been experienced, an order of things tends to be arranged in a way that gives what has been experienced a priority over what will be experienced. That is, in the authority of real experience, the happened determines the happening. In other words, in such a way of making senses, there is a tendency in associating cause with past experience. My argument is that this whole set of assumptions and presuppositions behind the belief in real experience is both an underlying principle of social organization in traditional societies and a methodological epistemology in classic anthropology.

Now let us turn to the other side of the problem, to see how such assumptions about real experience are no longer adequate to the study of contemporary societies such as Japan. Of course, Japan is a very unique society, which cannot be easily labeled either as modern or as postmodern. However, this difficulty in categorizing contemporary societies should not be an obstacle for us to discuss the differences between two types of societies in terms of the function of personal experience.

Let me begin with an ethnographic observation. Perhaps, no other society could be compared with Japan in terms of its fascination with various kinds of electronic games. In a gameland, so popular in Japan that a traveler cannot avoid noticing them, there are usually many machines for different kinds of games. What needs to be pointed out is that, although all these games are based upon a limited number of technological inventions, cultural or symbolic contents that these games try to imitate are very diverse, ranging from boxing to football games, from car racing to majiang, so on and so forth.

These gamelands may have a long history. Electronic machines have been improved from time to time. But it seems to me that there was a critical moment when the improvement of these machines made it possible for players to generate what is now known as "virtual reality," a term popular among journalists as well as among a number of particular academics. One who has never been to such a place will not be able to tell what this word "virtual reality" actually means. It is sometimes misunderstood as an equivalent to a certain kind of imagination, i.e., the kind of imagination that feeds back to reality. This is perhaps not quite right, because "virtual reality" is not a form of imagination but a form of reality. A decisive moment in the improvement of game machines must be the moment at which an "actual" event or a "real" person can be generated on the machine. This is precisely what makes "virtual reality," which is a reality without any "real" contents. This term "real" used in the previous sentence is the one that embeds both the actual and the truthful. "Virtual reality" creates a new sense of the real, which does not embed both senses of the actual and the truthful.

Here, we confront a difficulty of language. That is, within one word, we must distinguish two concepts. Or if we put it in a structuralist language, we may say that there is only one signifier but two signifieds. Perhaps, we may distinguish them by attributing one as "what happened" and the other as "what happens," i.e., the former as "actuality in the actual" and the latter "the actual in actuality." The former is easier to be understood, as we showed earlier. What actually happened is something that has completed the act of an event. And therefore, its actuality lies in the actualization of this event. However, for the latter, it is quite difficult for us to explain, because the language that we use is designed for expressing "real"

experience in its conventional sense. But let us try. "What happens," as we try to distinguish it from "what happened," is something that is actually happening but not actually happened. In other words, there is no completion in "what happens." Therefore, its actuality is not in the actualization of the event; rather, the actualization is a constant actuality. This sense of "what happens" is different from forecasting, because forecasting, particularly those based upon statistical knowledge, relies entirely upon what actually happened. This is to say that, although forecasting involves calculation of the future, in the temporary scale of measurement, the future remains to be seen as being dependent upon the past events. In contrast, virtual reality has nothing to do with the past.

This is precisely the nature of the gameland, where the conventional logic of time has been abandoned. "What happened" does not have the power in controlling what will happen. The person who plays the game may not know, or care for, what happened. I talked to a game player of a college, who was playing a football match, in a noisy lane near Osaka JR station. He was a friendly young man and not so reluctant in speaking English. The urge to talk to him was because, when I was in California, once I read in a local newspaper saying that the result of the 1998 World Cup Final, which was between Brazil and France, had been virtually played out in Japan by a game expert. The result was that France lost to Brazil by one to two. I was in Osaka in early October of 1998. The World Cup had finished by that time and ended in that France beat Brazil three to zero.

I could not understand what it meant in the Californian newspaper that said the game was virtually played out until I had the experience of watching Japanese boys playing football games on the machine. It is designed in this way that the game player controls one team and plays against the team controlled by the machine. One can choose to play a team listed on the machine against one's choice of another team. I talked to this college student how he might use the result of the real matches in playing out his game, when he was playing England against Argentina. He told me that he did not know the history of matches between these two teams, and what he was doing was simply to play.

This means that neither real qualities of each team nor actual results between these two teams mattered to him. In fact, he later admitted that he had no interest in sports. Rather, his interest was in games, and the football game was very popular during this past summer. When I asked why he chose these two teams, his reply was because he liked these two countries. The result of his match was not so important to him, but his skills of controlling the match were indeed impressive.

This example is perhaps not typical. It is probably true that the majority of people who go to play football games know more about the

background of each team, which one chooses to play. However, the point that needs to be made is clear: this is not a game that relies upon one's knowledge of previous matches between these teams. It is a game in itself.

In relation to the question of experience raised earlier, what we need to make clear is the extent to which game playing is representative of the mode of experience in today's Japan. In other words, to what extent can one say that this kind of game playing represents another mode of experience typical of Japanese society at the present time? Or can we say this at all? In this short report, I will not be able to provide a complete answer to this question. But I would like to point out that this example seems to suggest that, in terms of the constitution of experience, there seems to have emerged another mode of it in contrast to the traditional definition of "real" experience.

Let me try to explain what I mean by this. In contrast to the kind of real experience we discussed earlier, this mode of experience, shown by the example of game playing, have also two characteristics. First, this mode of experience, shown in the gamelands of Japan, is not dependent upon what happened. It is no longer natural to assume the existence of a natural link between what actually happened and what will probably happen, i.e., between the past and the future.

To say that the past determines the future means nothing to those who play the game of football between Brazil and France, because the starting point in their games is not "what happened" but "what happens"- right in front of them. This can be more clearly shown by looking at how young people playing other games, such as surfing. They may never be able to become a surfer but they can, with a little cost, play out the experience of surfing on the machine. This experience is real but it is not "actual" in the conventional sense of the term. For those who play the detective, they can kill as many spies as they like, depending upon their shooting skills. These skills are obtained from practicing on the machine rather than in real situations. In the act of game killing, the real does not invoke any sense of the truthful. Therefore, we must say that to play the game is very real, but what underlies the sense of the real in its conventional sense, i.e., the actual and the truthful, disappears. Or we may put it in this way: this kind of game experience is real but it is no longer actual and truthful.

A point needs to be reiterated here. When we say that the real in traditional societies implies the actual and the truthful, we mean that as the logic of experience there is a whole set of assumptions and presuppositions about what is real and what is fictitious. In a similar way, I pose the question of the extent to which the kind of game playing could be seen as a representative instance of another mode of experience. By doing this, I have by no means meant to suggest that every Japanese visits gamelands or every

individual has the same kind of experience. Rather, what I mean is that we must be able to talk about this issue in terms of the mode of experience, i.e., the dominant form of a general tendency.

If one takes the view that the kind of game playing is representative of contemporary Japanese society in terms of its organization of everyday experience, the anthropologist will find that it is very difficult to carry out field research without reconsidering what is supposed to mean by "real experience".   If the anthropologist claims that his knowledge is based upon his experience of the experience of another people, he must be able to identify a truthful rendering of what actually happened made by these people. But this truthful rendering of what actually happened by the people under study is now-if our example of the game playing is indeed representative of the general mode of everyday experience in today's Japan-impossible.

This is not only a dilemma for anthropology as an academic discipline but also indicates a crucial shift in contemporary society, in which there is no longer a natural association between-to put it in a crude way-truth and actuality. That is, what is real is shattered. The anthropologist used to rely upon the conventional sense of the real, which presupposes the unity of the truthful and the actual. If this conventional sense of the real is no longer representative of the general mode of everyday experience of the people under study, one who tries to be a Conrad of anthropology will inevitably get lost in "the heart of darkness." My argument is that, in order to think about anthropology of modern life, one must realize that there is a fundamental shift in the way in which our experience is shaped in today's world or, more precisely, in some parts of today's world.

It is clear that the implication of this discussion is far beyond the methodological issue of anthropology. It is important to note that, although I have taken anthropology, its methodology in particular, as my focus of discussion, the true question raised here concerns the shift taking place in our world at the very present time. Various kinds of postmodernists have brought the question of today's change to the forefront of our consciousness by introducing a large number of unconventional social and historical experiences.   But, so far, little has been done on the very nature of experience itself, which seems to me holds the key to the questions of our time, the time of information technology and transnational capitalism.

If I may continue to take the anthropologist's dilemma as an example, I will further point out that the idea of studying from within a community, a village or a neighborhood for example is quite problematic. For those whose experience of reality is modeled on game playing do not contextualize their experiences in real space. By saying this, I do not mean that there is no longer any form of community existing in Japan. Nor do I mean that the

existing communities, no matter what form they take, do not provide a social context for those who live in it to act. What I mean is that the general mode of everyday experience in Japanese society is not typically represented by that of communal life. Rather, it is the gameland that seems to be more appropriate for the image of everyday experience in Japan. That is, real experience is no longer rooted in a community defined in terms of geographic locations. So the question left for the anthropologist is this: how can we understand those whose experiences exist in a virtual community?

Local, National, Global: The Culturo-Political Dilemma

Presentation by Endo Suanda

The issues I have been working on concern the local traditions, values and performing art cultures, that have often been forced to change by the state authority and state hegemony. I would like to discuss some distinct cases in my research from different angles. I will deal with these issues from three angles: standardization, clarification, and professionalism in the cultural sector of Indonesia.

1). Standardization of Art

What I mean by "standardization" or "standardizing" is to create a kind of criteria, which is to be penetrated and applied to art. These include criteria of good and bad, foreign and original, and so on. There are of course a number of channels related to this issue, but I am going to discuss about some of them.

I would first discuss about Indonesian art schools, cultural offices, tourist offices, etc. The first traditional art school in Indonesia was founded only four years after independence, in 1951 in Surakarta of central Java. One of the main areas besides conservative purposes to keep the traditional arts alive was to create a kind of "national art" under the ideology at the time, or the "national culture". As a result, this school in central Java not only teaches Javanese art, but also Balinese art, Sundanese art, and other types of genres. The organizers were hoping that the students and faculty members would create another form of art; not traditional but a newly created traditional-based art, in order to identify that the national art is different from traditional and from other kinds of modern art. This school waited for a decade to be followed by schools in other parts of the country, such as in Bali, Bandung, then in Sumatra, Padangpanjang, and Sulawesi. More arts colleges were later founded in several places in Indonesia.

By now there are perhaps more than 10,000 graduates of these schools. They are spread all over the nation employed as government civil servants, meaning that those students who were trained in central Java with central Javanese art, have opportunities to teach in Irian Jaya, Kalimantan, and Sumatra. They are penetrating, so to speak, and re-teaching the artistic values that they had learned in central Java. This would create some kind of standardization where a civil servant needs to follow the state guidelines.

This is nationalism of art, but it can also be regarded as regionalism, meaning that Sundanese and Balinese arts are being relocated or penetrated in the different regions. But this is not regionalism, in another sense. It can mean a penetration of some regional values ("major" values, so to speak) to other "minor" regions.

Another kind of cultural and artistic activity, which is very common, is the government promoting or creating annual artistic competitions. This involves all levels of government administration from central, to provincial, and district levels. These competitions also give opportunities for different cultural traditions to compete with one another. On the national level, for example, you will have a competition between Aceh and Irian Jaya, which have totally different traditions and systems. The competitors have to win, one over the other, and these competitions can be viewed as a process of legitimizing or establishing artistic and cultural values by the government. This is not to mention that in some competitions, many of the jury does not have anything to do with art. Also, some invited art groups tend to be generous or to show favor toward government officers. This also generates interest from the lower classes of the villagers to be just like them. Who does not want to be popular, who does not want to be toured about? So this creates, slowly or quickly, a kind of standard.

A basic problem with standardization is that it would also mean discrimination. It regards one particular cultural value superior to others, and diminishes certain values. This is precisely the opposite practice against the philosophy of "plural society" that is continually addressed by the government. This policy however, lacks reality and is related to the issue of identity. The government not just wants to define a national identity, but they also want to define the local identities. Both are defined by the State. Therefore, almost everything has to be defined, including its identity and purpose, because the government does not like unclearness.

One of the most hilarious things appears to me is that the country, towns and provinces, have to have their own "official" identities. First, every single town or province in Indonesia has to have the date of its foundation. This is regardless of whether or not a historical research was carried out, and therefore, many of the leaders had to randomly decide on the date of foundation. Besides, each town has to have a motto as an identity.

2). Clarification of Art

The second point is an overemphasis on clarity and disbelief in unclearness. In my observation, unclearness, blurriness and flexibility of things are not only just the nature of art or culture but also its power. If

everything is already clarified, it is not interesting in making art. There has to be some flexibility. There has to be something of unclearness, unpredictability, spontaneity, and inspiration where you do not know what will come and when it will come. This is the power of artistic life, and government, and sometimes academics, do not like that. The government wants to clarify everything. They do not believe that unclearness can manage, can organize or can govern something.

Let me tell you about the festival in Cirebon. In Cirebon, there is a festival followed by about 30,000 people, and about 3,000 or more are involved in a huge parade. About 200 to 250 different art groups marched in a 5-hour-long parade – a masquerade, which had no leader. There was also no organizer who decides the order of the parade, for example, but 2,000 people just come and participate. And it worked. There was no explicit guidance, but the participants governed themselves and many folks enjoyed that parade. There were a lot of images. People made all kinds of creations, such as a picture of Saddam Hussein, naval army warships, a statue of an Islam teacher teaching people. All these are carried on trucks decorated with a stage, and people speaking with a huge microphone or the sound coming from a tape recorder.

If this festival is carried out by, say, the non-Islamic community, it would be viewed with very severe criticisms, but the community in Cirebon is basically Muslim. It is a fluid and natural kind of dynamics, which does not create any problems or offences. Hundreds of images including Saddam Hussein, missiles and robots are exhibited. Many people do not know what they are, but they still want to participate and do whatever they can, the best they can do there. That is what I mean by unclearness, and there is a kind of cultural and spiritual dialogues which do not create chaos or tension. The participants do not care whether things shown there – electric guitars, Chinese dragons, for example -- are foreign-originated or not.

In 1994, the government started to involve itself with the festival. They wanted to involve the tourist offices so that they could give awards to the best groups in the parade. This means that there would be a team of judges to evaluate the festival. By doing this, the people come to consciously think as "Oh, this is foreign," "This is Chinese," "This is modern," or "this is not so good," and so forth. And two years later in 1996, they banned the Chinese art elements involved there -- not just banning, but the police burned the masks. This is what I mean by "control". One of my perfect examples of "Unclearness is the power of art" is calligraphy. In calligraphy -- Islamic calligraphy especially -- it is usually done on a very clear sacred text of Quran. But the text, after it is drawn, becomes very difficult to read because the composition of letters can be anywhere, and the

script can be stretched all the way down or up, etc. But this is precisely the nature of art, which is in contradiction with the clearness.

3). *Professionalism in the Cultural Sector of Indonesia*

Next I would like to discuss the professional approach and consideration in the cultural sectors. So far, the cultural sectors of Indonesia are considered least important, and so anyone can be a cultural officer, or can even be the Minister of Culture, Tourism, etc. There are lots to say about this, but I just want to mention two issues as to what kind of person or authority wants to be considered an artist.

First is Soeharto. In 1991, Soeharto wanted to become the first official calligrapher, by writing the first sentence of the script of Musab Quran in the festival in Siklau. That was in 1995. This Quran has 42 different styles of script, but Soeharto wanted to make one the national Quranic Musab. However, he is an unpracticed calligrapher, so therefore his hands basically had to follow the lines of calligraphy prepared by another artist. Let me quote Kenneth George:

> *"In this way, Soeharto was [brought] into the material production and social legitimatizations of the national Musab. As signator and Indonesian president, he gave the Musab a seal of approval and legitimacy. As calligrapher, he yielded to artistic and religious authorities and so let others write through him and for him."*

Another interesting occasion is about Harmoko, when he was Minister of Information. He opened the festival of puppetry in Solo. He wanted to do the first opening of the puppet shows by performing a short scene of the puppet performance, but doing that he was trying to recite the religious kind of politics, or politicized religions. While he was doing the first show, he recited the "Al-Fatihah" which is the first Quranic phrase. We in Indonesia learned "Al-Fatihah" since we were three years old. And "Al-Fatihah" is recited maybe at least ten times a day, if one is practicing a five-time prayer schedule, which means that everyone must know the phrase. Unfortunately, Harmoko recited "Al-Fatihah" incorrectly, and the Islamic leaders accused him of intentionally insulting the Quranic phrases, because it is impossible that you cannot recite it well.

There is a culturo-political dilemma in Indonesia on the local, provincial and national levels, and this dilemma, I believe, is an issue which can also be witnessed in other parts of the world, and which needs to be tackled.

(This is an edited version of Endo Suanda's presentation at the Weekend Retreat in Ito in October 1998.)

The Asia Leadership Fellow Program 1998 – A Report

Diana Wong

I.   Introduction

This program has undoubtedly been invaluable to my further intellectual and social development and I would like to take this opportunity to express again my deep appreciation to the International House of Japan and the Japan Foundation Asia Center for their intellectual and financial sponsorship of the program and of my participation.

Much has already been said about the strengths of the program, but it still may bear some repeating in writing. Having had administrative experience myself, I am aware of the difference that senior management makes to such enterprises, and the vision, openness and flexibility displayed by the program coordinators from the International House and the Japan Foundation Asia Center was as exemplary as it is rare. At the same time, I should not fail to mention how impressed I, and my other colleagues, were by the younger staff of both institutions – by their enthusiasm, their intelligence, their training, their openness to the world. It would not be too far from the truth to say that I learnt as much about Japan and Japanese society, and about the value of cultural dialogue, from them as from the official program.

II.   Reflections on the Fellowship Program

It should be borne in mind that for fellows of the caliber and the standing envisaged for the program, two months is a long time. There is therefore an understandable desire to use this time as productively as possible. For some, this means the availability of time for individual reading and writing, but clearly, this is not the main intention of the first two months of the "collaborative research period". There was however, on the part of myself and my colleagues, a general sense of uncertainty, as well as anxiety, about this "collaborative research period". How can a group of randomly selected individuals from diverse fields and sites of research and political activities engage in "collaborative research" with an expected outcome, as planned for in the form of a weekend retreat with Japanese colleagues and a public symposium? In my opinion, this stated objective of the program is clearly

unrealistic and generated a great deal of undue anxiety, tension and ultimately, wastage of time.

And yet, equally clearly, the objective of the two-month program cannot be merely that of an individual sabbatical. It would appear to me that Kasian Tejapira`s characterization of the potential of this gathering as a rare, if not unique, forum for „Great Debates" among public intellectuals from Southeast Asian countries engaged in the great issues of the day in their own respective countries is most apt:

"The program provided the fellows with a rare and valuable opportunity and forum to air their domestically developed ideas and arguments before an audience of like-minded international colleagues, to let their views be examined, questioned, challenged, contested and criticized by the latter and see whether or not they could withstand the test and still hold water. Only through open, sincere, serious and uninhibited debates could there be a genuine exchange of ideas and mutual learning among the fellows".

Opportunities are increasingly available for Southeast Asians to meet and talk to each other, but these encounters tend to be limited to the conference circuit and thus to brief and casual conversations. This program, with its time-frame of two months, would have allowed for "a genuine exchange of ideas and mutual learning among the fellows".

In retrospect, I regret not having made more of this unrivaled opportunity. There was so much more I could have learnt from Suwanna about Thailand, Endo about Indonesia, Sylvia about the Philippines, Liu Xin about China, Janadas about Singapore, and thus about Southeast Asia and East Asia in general, so many more debates which could have been conducted. As it is, I have learnt much, most of it anecdotal and incidental. The two best sessions in this respect were, I believe, the ones in which we finally sat down together in a formal setting to discuss the crisis.

Drawing on this experience, my suggestions would include the following:

1.   A clear statement of the objective of the program would be helpful, and thereby, perhaps a reformulation of the term "collaborative research period". Collaborative research connotes consensus, documentation, and coherent presentation. What should be prioritized however are contestation, debate, and free and open-ended exchange of ideas.

2.   The official program should be designed to allow for more time for such discussions among fellows. These discussions should be restricted to the fellows themselves, and at the most, one or two Japanese staff members. For such discussions to be really fruitful, the atmosphere has to be informal

and intimate, with all present engaged in debate, rather than a debate engaged in for observers. There is also no need for facilitators for such discussions, as the fellows come to Tokyo, in Kasian`s words, "fully formed and mature". As mentioned earlier, the sessions that I found really fruitful in this regard were the two held on the crisis; unfortunately, there was only time in the official program for two such sessions.

3.   These collective discussions should of course be related to the symposium with Japanese colleagues at the weekend retreat, as well as to the public symposium at the end of the two-month program. What should be retained is the selection of a specific theme – such as the role of intellectuals, of culture or of the crisis – in order to provide some degree of coherence to the discussions and to the public presentations. Within this borad thematic however, our experience was that individual fellows made presentations on areas of concern to themselves, sharpened by the mutual exchanges during the course of the program, rather than the putative results of the collaborative research. This, it seemed to me, worked out rather well.

4.   I found the reports written by previous fellows extremely interesting and thought-provoking and would suggest that all reports be circulated to all the fellows from the various years. They should be circulated in advance to incoming fellows, in order to give a sense of what can be expected and what can be achieved during the two months. They should also be circulated to past fellows too in order for a sense of shared and cumulative experience and institutional memory to emerge for the network.

III.   Globalization and the Southeast Asian Crisis

For the 1996 program, the Fellows chose to discuss the question of the public intellectual. For the 1997 Fellows it was the question of culture. In the year 1998, there was one, clear, all-consuming question - the question of the Asian crisis, or the crisis of global capitalism.
       This question of nomenclature was more than merely academic. Just prior to the chain of events, which led to the collapse of the Southeast Asian economies, their remarkable record of economic growth and social infrastructural development of the past two decades had lent credence to the notion of an alternative development model or an alternative mode of embedded capital. With the collapse of the Soviet model of enchained capital in the late eighties, this apparently successful "Asian" model had seemingly remained as the only competitor to the neo-liberal model of unfettered capital.

Against this broader ideological backdrop, the sudden onset of the currency crisis generated considerable confusion, both regarding the economic as well as the social import of the crisis.

I recall the events as they unfolded last summer. I was then at a research institute surrounded by professional economists. When the baht was under siege, my economist colleagues told me that the Thai government would not devalue - the consequences would be too disruptive. When the baht was devalued and the ringgit fell in its wake, I was told that it would only last three weeks to a month, for that has been the normal length of a currency crisis, and so I hastily converted all my Singapore dollars to Malaysian ringgit. And when the month passed, I was assured that the economic crisis would not last longer than three months, for the US and European economies were still robust, and would sustain the export-oriented economies of Southeast Asia. The confusion continued, of course, with the highly publicized debate between Mahathir and Soros, Jeff Sachs and the IMF.

Were inherent weaknesses of the much-vaunted "Asian" model responsible for the "bursting of the bubble", or were the disruptive forces of a newly technologically empowered unfettered and irresponsible global capital wreaking havoc on the solid achievements of a whole generation of developmental effort. Was it, in other words, an Asian crisis, or the first crisis of global capitalism? The stakes for an intellectual and political position were high. Was the nation-state to be defended against the ravages of global capitalism, or was global capitalism to be embraced as the continued and even more potent harbinger of economic growth and political liberty?

This was at least the issue as seen from the commanding heights of the national economy in the think-tanks and universities I was familiar with in Singapore and Malaysia. The I-House discussions brought out for me the elite and state-centric bias in this particular formulation of the issue. Indeed, what the discussions foregrounded was that capital in the "Asian" model had been embedded in the structures of the state, embodied in the political centre, and not in society. And that the moral, social, and ultimately economic price to be paid for this entrapped capital was intolerably high. The case of Indonesia, with its oppressive and repressive developmentalist and modernizing state, was exemplary in this respect.

The prevailing consensus in the past two decades had been that the strong states of Asia had been able to "deliver", and that their legitimacy lay therein. Yet the charges against Suharto - the charges of corruption, nepotism and crony capitalism – were moral charges. As Endo pointed out, the construction of the developmentalist state in Indonesia, to harness the forces of the market in order to speed up "development" and economic

growth, resulted in the attainment of high growth rates, but also in undermining the moral fabric of society. The unfettered forces of the market, in collusion with the autocratic power of the state, engendered indisputable wealth, but also enormous inequity and corruption.

As Liu Xin pointed out in his paper on China, the issue can be formulated as one of modernity and morality. The predicament here was that of the late-comer state. Like a faustian pact, socio-economic dislocations", in the terminology of the technocrats, were accepted by many intellectuals as necessary for the leap into modernity these countries had to make. But modernity without morality is unacceptable. The crisis was a reminder of this sociological postulate.

In light of the crisis, the nation, it would appear, has to be defended against the ravages, not merely of global capital, but of the state as well. Suwanna`s concerns about civil society brought out for me most forcefully this point: whilst for the nationalists of the founding generations, questions of modernity and morality were focussed on the state, at this new conjuncture of globalizing and localizing forces, it is society which has to take centre stage.

The lack of transparency over the cause of the crisis was paralleled by a similar absence of surety over its social impact. In earlier recessions, the causes were easily identifiable - the hike in the price of oil, the decline in the price of rubber etc. Similarly, the affected groups were easy to identify - the peasants who marched to the district capital, the proletariat who picketed at the factory gates. Who really constituted, and what really moved, the mob which wreaked havoc in Jakarta and forced the resignation of the President?

A year and a half after the emergence of the crisis, there are still no convincing analyses available of the social impact of the crisis. In part, this is due to the fact that the very nature of the crisis has meant that it has impacted in quite a different way to that of earlier crises. The agricultural sector has been spared, so has the manufacturing. Badly hit has been the construction sector - but this sector has relied heavily on migrant workers, either foreign or from the provinces. Lay-offs in the financial and commercial sectors have affected the middle-class in particular, and the depreciation of the currency has meant an indiscriminate decline in purchasing power for all social classes.

The inability to go beyond such preliminary statements lies in part in the paucity of information. Beyond the problem of information, it is the the problem of having to draw up a new map, given that the affected sectors, and the distributional impact are so different from those of past recessions. Beyond the technical problem of cartography however, lies, I think, a more fundamental problem, to which Endo and Liu Xin drew attention: the seeming dissolution of the old social categories and forms of collectivities on

which social analyses have hitherto depended - in particular, that of class. Classical social analysis has been predicated on the relations of production generated within the confines of the national economy. The penetration of global capital into the very interstices of the domestic economy - with the attendant role of mobile labour and capital - has blurred the old distinctions. Which are the classes in terms of which a social analysis can be made, indeed, is class a category that can still be deployed, are, as Liu Xin said, new forms of collectivities, new forms of collective struggle, of the constitution of the we, more appropriate for the recent history of capitalism which the crisis has made visible.

Globalization, Janadas and Liu Xin argued, is an ineluctable historical force, a "historical inevitability", against which nativist appeals to an unreflective local "we" may appear persuasive, but are ultimately vacuous and deceptive. By the same token, the unreflective global "we" of neo-liberal provenance obscures the social constitution and the social location of global capital. The crisis, Suwanna said, marks a critical transition in the post-war history of Thailand and the region, namely, the end to the history of prosperity of the last forty years. These two months of reflection and discussions at I-House underlined for me the vast intellectual labour which lies ahead to re-think the new agenda of modernity and morality facing the region.

IV.   Encounters with Japanese Scholars

A valuable outcome of the two-month program was the introduction it provided to Japanese scholars and thinkers. I found this to be particularly valuable as, given my lack of command of the Japanese language, and the relative absence of English translations of Japanese academic literature, there has been no other way to acquire any familiarity with Japanese thought other than through direct encounters of the sort which the program made possible. It was a deep privilege to have been able to meet with men of the stature of Shunsuke Tsurumi, Takeshi Ishida, Yoshikazu Sakamoto and Kinhide Mushakoji – public intellectuals who felt and thought passionately about the new agenda their nation had to fashion in the aftermath of the war. Fortunately, the program also introduced us to younger Japanese colleagues working on issues of common interest, such as Eiji Oguma and Chizuko Ueno, as well as area specialists such as Takeshi Hamashita. The participation at the Osaka symposium, the visit to the Center of Southeast Asian Studies in Kyoto and in particular, the weekend retreat in Ito was particularly valuable in this respect, as it gave me the opportunity to meet with a range of area specialists with whom I am likely to remain in professional contact.

V.   Conclusion

Future cohorts will certainly miss the presence of the initiator of the program, Tatsuya Tanami. Given the team spirit which has supported the program so far, and the degree of institution-building which has been achieved in these first three years, I am confident that the program will continue to be of great value to all future and past fellows. I would be very happy to see its network character strengthened in the future and I look forward to contributing to any further activities in this direction.

The Future/s of Globalization
A View from Southeast Asia

Diana Wong

It was the Second World War that first accorded full weight to the contribution from everywhere, to the globe as a whole. The war in the Far East was just as serious as that in Europe. It was in point of fact the first real world war. World history as a single history of the totality had begun. From now on the interim period of previous history appears as a dispersed field of unconnected ventures, as so many beginnings of human possibilities. Now it is the totality, which have become the problem and the task. It ushers in a complete transformation of history. The decisive thing is that there is no more "outside". The world closes. It is the earth's unity. New threats and opportunities appear. All essential problems have become world problems, the situation is the situation of humanity.

Karl Jaspers, Vom Ziel und Ursprung der Geschichte

I

Current debates on globalization tend to focus on the challenges of economic globalization deriving from the spectacular growth of trans-national trade, investment and finance capital flows in the last two decades. An influential body of writings on globalization has also drawn attention however, to the significance of increasing global interdependence for *cultural* understandings of the world. For Roland Robertson, the Pittsburgh sociologist to whom the popularization of the term globalization can be attributed, the process of globalization entails not only the growth of concrete global interdependence, but also the *consciousness* of this new globality (see Robertson 1992). Similarly, Anthony Giddens, whose recent work has embraced globalization, conceptualizes the process not merely in terms of the emergence of large-scale world systems, but highlights the erasure of the boundary between the out there and the in-here that is constitutive of globality (Giddens 1996).

Central to the notion of contemporary globalization has thus been its reflexive and relativizing character, the realization of the inter-connectivity between local, day-to-day activities and events happening on the other side of the globe, and hence a heightening, as Robertson notes, of civilizational, societal, ethnic, regional and, indeed individual, self-consciousness (with)

constraints on social entities to locate themselves within world history and global future (Robertson 1992: 27). With the retreat of the state from the domain of political economy as a result of economic globalization, it will be in the realm of culture and as a source of cultural identity that the nation-state, it has been suggested, will, in future, position itself (Fukukawa 1998).

In this paper, I shall argue that the forms of social hybridity spawned by the erasure of in-here/out-there boundaries, and the relativizing forms of consciousness identified as constituting a new globalization are, and have been, constitutive of the condition of being in post-colonial societies since their very inception. From that perspective, "global" consciousness is the belated recognition in erstwhile hegemonic nations of the loss of monopoly control over the making of the world. In societies in which the fluidity of cultural and social boundaries have been the norm rather than the exception, and certainly no novelty of recent global provenance, contemporary cultural politics operate on a differently formed terrain and with different terms of reference. In the second part of the paper, I shall attempt to delineate part of this terrain of discourse as found in Southeast Asia.

II

In his major work on world history, Jaspers, as quoted in the epigraph above, attributes the epistemological transition to the globe as a whole to the profound impact of the Second World War, after which there is no more outside. And yet, in an excellent and profoundly moving anthology of *Writers on World War II* published in 1991, the world at war continued to be constituted almost entirely, apart from a few pieces on Hiroshima, by the European and American imagination (see Richler 1991). Even in this editorial project committed to seeing the war in its totality, the distinctively local Western European and American perspective could be taken - without further self-reflection - to represent the world. Such naiveté derives, I suggest, from a cultural climate informed by an intellectual tradition in which, as charted by Hegel's *Phenomenology of the Mind*, world history culminated in, and was constituted by, Western history. This conflation of western history with world history also meant that western historical consciousness remained essentially self-referential. There was no need to locate oneself within world history and global future as there was no world history and global future outside of one's own. It was from this understanding of the world that all other societies bent on modernity were said to see their future selves mirrored in the Western present.

Needless to say, post-colonial societies did not enjoy the luxury of this unquestioned self-production and the epistemological self-certainty it

engendered. As the Japanese social thinker Takeuchi has noted, modernity is the self-recognition of Europe, the recognition of Europe's modern self as distinct from her feudal self (quoted in Sakai 1988). For all post-colonial nations, the emergence of free capital and the nation-state has been experienced as forces not entirely of their own making. For such societies, the project of modernity has been defined not merely in terms of their own past but also in terms of the present of others. The collective self could not be entirely self-referential; the imperative to relativize, to locate in respect to the world, was given in the very terminology of development and modernization, which came with the birth of these societies. The awareness of the global conditions for its own production and reproduction was thus a fundamental constituent of the self-consciousness of post-colonial societies.

From its very inception as well, plurality and hybridity defined the social self. Four aspects of globalization have been identified by the globalization theorist, Martin Albrow, as determining the distinctive character of contemporary global socioscapes: values that draw from the world, access to and influence by events elsewhere, direct interaction with other parts of the world via telematics, and maintenance of lifestyles and life routines in new places by migrants (Albrow 1997). Contemporary global cities are said to exhibit these new conditions of daily life (see Eade 1997). Stripped of the technological innovations, such as telematics, these socioscapes have been paradigmatic features of the great port cities of the colonial and post-colonial world since the late nineteenth century. It is only in the context of the relatively homogenous nation-states of Europe that the daily experience of alterity in the everyday life-world represents a dramatic and profound break with the conditions of local existence in the past.

The discovery of the global as a condition for the reproduction of local life forms reflects, I would thus argue, a specific shift in *western* subjectivity in the late twentieth century. In the recognition of the Other as constitutive of its own being (the erasure of the out-there/in-here boundary), it marks the end of the identity of Self and World which western thought has been able to take for granted in the history of modernity. In that respect, it is indicative of the end of the remarkable 400-year era of western hegemony over the world.

It also marks, if one so will, a reversal of the expected approximation of post-colonial modernity to that of the west. The emergence of postcolonial conditions of being and consciousness in the west itself represents as it were, an unpredicted and unexpected approximation of western modernity to that of postcolonial societies. Ulrich Beck's concept of the risk society as characteristic of Europe's Second Modernity under conditions of globalization (Beck 1992), or Richard Sennet's concept of contemporary American post-fordist short-term capitalism in which a coherent narrative of the self based on the subjugation to a coherent fordist production is no longer possible (Sennet,

this volume), are further exemplification of this process of reverse approximation.   Post-colonial societies have always been quintessentially risk societies in which the individual and the collective self have never been able to construct and control stable conditions of regular and predictable reproduction.

Paradoxically, I would thus argue, the discourse on globalization in the west represents the increasing realization of its own parochiality, in its recognition of the co-existence of multiple worlds within a new global order. The seminal status, as well as the widespread reception, accorded to Samuel Huntington's *Clash of Civilizations* thesis attest to this new recognition of the existence of Significant Others. And paradoxically, the parochiality reaffirms itself in the postulation of this newly emergent subjectivity as a profoundly novel condition of the global.

These discourses on globalization thus refer to the highly unsettling, complex and contradictory transformative forces, and the varying stances taken in respect to them, in the cultural politics of contemporary western societies. Its most avid and eloquent exponents and advocates have been an unlikely conjunction of transnational capitalists seeking to penetrate markets outside of the metropolitan centres, and diasporic intellectuals seeking to articulate their position in the interstices of the boundaries they have crossed. The new capital and labour mobility however, threatens the welfare consensus between state, market and society underlying post-war European prosperity as well as political identity. The proclamation of the end of the nation-state in the wake of a relentless and an ineluctable globalization has been increasingly countered by the reassertion of the future of the nation as the site of *cultural* identity, at the same time as *Europe* is being constructed as a larger regulatory entity.

III

In East and Southeast Asia, or what was known as the Far East before the onset of global consciousness (as still used in the above translation of Jaspers), the cultural debate around the issue of globalization has had a different history. Up to two years ago, the future was being envisioned in terms such as "The Pacific Century", "The Asian Renaissance", "The Rise of East Asia". These were *projective*, not descriptive terms. They projected a future pregnant with the promise of a final rupture with the history of intercultural relations of the past four hundred years - the history of western hegemony. Notwithstanding its projective, and hence, fictional, nature, this discourse bore witness to a new relationship of proprietorship to modernity in Asian self-consciousness - if not as that of producer of modernity, than at least as its consumer. As such, it signaled the end of a self-consciousness in which the Self was defined by an

absence, mirrored in the Western gaze as a site of backwardness and failure and as its hapless and unwilling victim, the eternal object of a commanding western subjectivity. This Asianist discourse testified, paradoxically, to the emergence of a new economy of the Self in which the Other was no longer construed in terms of the West/East dichotomy, but in which the omnipresence of *the* Other has been replaced by the presence of serialized and multiple others.

It was in Southeast Asia too that the term "globalization" was perhaps unmatched in its popularity and acceptance, for Southeast Asia saw itself as a beneficiary of globalization, and globalization as the context in which the Pacific Century, the Asian Renaissance, would be staged. As has already been noted above, "globalization" has been no stranger to the region, and indeed, it may be argued that unhindered flows of capital and labor have been central to the making of modern Southeast Asian states and society. The region, in its pre-colonial, colonial and post-colonial pasts, has been exceptionally open to world trade and cultures, with plurality and diversity woven into its social fabric as part of the "natural" order of things. "Globalization, that's us" - this celebration of globalization by the New York Times in one of its recent columns could just as well, although with a different referent, have been voiced in Southeast Asia.

Today of course, these terms have lost their currency. And globalization has changed its meaning: from the promise of a fundamental re-structuring of the old order, to the threat of an even more massive and powerful continuation of the old centric order, shorn now of the protective cover of nation-state structures and institutions. A sense of crisis pervades all countries in the region. Beyond the stark reality of the economic crisis and its social and political consequences however, the crisis can also be seen as one of the imagination - of the ability to imagine alternative futures (Tejapira 1999).

The gravity of the crisis however, has also provided space for the re-emergence of utopian critique in recent intellectual and public debate. The strongest champion of globalization in Southeast Asia had been the state. Engulfed by a financial and economic collapse widely understood in Asia as constituting the first crisis of a newly emergent global financial system, both globalization and the state - hitherto virtually unquestioned agents of development and modernity - are being subject to severe criticism. Under the aegis of the developmentalist state and a favorable globalization, the social imagination had been leashed to the dictates of instrumental reason. With the crisis, development and modernity, at least in the purely statist and economistic garb with which state and market had endowed them, no longer exhaust the imaginings of the future.

With globalization imagined as a neo-imperialist threat, the nation certainly, has assumed a new salience as a site of cultural identity. Similarly,

religion as a collective project has strengthened its presence in public discourse. Here however, I would like to draw attention to three other imagined trans-national social spaces which are engaging intellectual discourse on cultural futures, in which globalizing forces are not seen ipso facto as a threat but as emergent forces subject to collective direction and transformation.

For the critique of the excesses of the authoritarian developmentalist state which had engineered the export-oriented growth policies of the post-colonial states in Southeast Asia, the shared values and practices of a trans-national civil society have been critical. In particular, impulses for the democratization of political institutions, for an end to relentless environmental degradation, for the concerns of those at the national periphery, have come from global coalitions located in this trans-national space. Local groups in Southeast Asia have been actively engaged in the construction of these other forms of globality and as these concerns enter mainstream national discourse, so will the engagement in this trans-national space and its project of alternative globalities.

Another trans-national space in the making is that of diaspora. I would like to make a distinction here between the concept of diaspora and that of minority. Diasporas designate trans-national social spaces in which "dwelling in difference" (Clifford 1994) is practiced, minorities on the other hand, occupy social spaces assigned by the practices of the nation-state. Diaspora cultures were constitutive of a pre-modern, pluralistic, cosmopolitan order, in the Islamic civilizations of Muslim Spain, Mughal India and maritime Southeast Asia. They were accorded a more subterranean existence in the colonial empires that replaced these older cosmopolitanisms. With the advent of the nation-state, state-sponsored nationalism imposed an official narrative of cultural homogeneity designed to erase all traces of diasporic cultures. The recovery of the diasporic in recent Southeast Asian discourse can also be read as the desire to affirm the pluralistic fabric of local life-worlds and to forge new forms of cosmoplitanisms more reminiscent of the familiar plurality of its own historical experience.

The question of plurality is also central to the third discursive project I wish to draw attention to, the project of region-building. Notwithstanding the vacuity of the state-sponsored "Asian Values" rhetoric, the utopic vision of an Asia as a distinctive regional formation continues to exercise the imagination. In contrast to the project of Europe, and in contradistinction to the rhetoric of "Asian Values", the project of Asia cannot be constructed on a foundation of shared values and culture. Asia, as has been often observed, is nothing more than a geographical expression, a derivative concept, an empty category. There is no equivalent to the commonwealth of shared values and institutions derived from the legacy of Christianity. Takeuchi, the Japanese thinker already quoted above, had concluded from this the necessity for a non-

essentializing conceptualization of Asia - the principle of its unity, as he put it, has to be found outside of itself (quoted in Sakai 1988).

The project of Asia has to be conceived in pluralistic terms, and the terms of its plurality will have to differ from that developed in Europe. Anchored in a fundament of shared values, plurality in the tradition of Western thought and political practice has referred to the possibility, and toleration, of divergent and contesting opinions derived from the same set of core values (Walzer 1997). In Asia, in the absence of a historical monopoly of one set of truth-claims, plurality has to be grounded on the contiguity of incommensurably heterogenous traditions. Tolerance has to mean the recognition and acceptance of irreducible alterity.

IV

The globalizing forces emanating from changing scales of production and consumption in the world today cannot be denied or simply wished away. Neither should they be conceived as purely abstract forces unfolding their ineluctable consequences all over the globe. As I have tried to show, discourses on globalization have their own histories, just as there are different histories of globalization. The future, even the future of globalization, remains contested terrain.

The article appeared as: "Die Zukuenfte der Globalisierung – Ueberlegungen aus der Perspektive Suedostasiens", in Joern Ruesen, Hanna Leitgeb, Norbert Jegelka (eds.), Zukenftsentwuerfe. Ideen fuer eine Kultur der Veraenderung, Campus Verlag, Frankfurt/New York, 1999.

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Touching Bedrock

Sylvia L.Mayuga

"all shall be well and
all manner of things shall be well
by the purification of the motive
in the ground of our beseeching."

- T.S.Eliot, 'Little Gidding,' The Four Quartets

The Asian financial crisis going global in the autumn of '98 infused a sense of urgency into the Asia Leadership Fellow Program, seeding the theme of its concluding symposium, 'Asia in Transition: Localizing Strategies; Globalizing Processes.' With daily news on the fault lines, casualties and emergencies of a fading "Asian Miracle," the year's Fellows were compelled to a widening context for the crisis in their own countries.

Large questions came up. What is this crisis saying about the structure and ideology of the world economic order? Are we looking at the death of global capitalism or only a traumatic readjustment to the 'borderless' world economy touted by its drumbeaters? Is there a way out of this currency trap? If culture is part of the problem, might it also be part of the solution? Why is Japan standing still?

I left the Philippines in August with initial figures of the crisis on home ground: a conservative estimate of 5,000 jobs lost everyday, already totaling 100,000 in the first quarter of 1998 alone, swelling daily with the closure of more factories and small and medium business enterprises. Philippine Air Lines, Asia's first flag carrier, was itself threatened with closure or sale to foreign investors in the unfortunate convergence of labor unrest and ballooning dollar-denominated debt payments - a national humiliation deepened by the centennial celebration of the First Philippine Republic.

Our first Fellows' exchanges marked tectonic movements. Philosophy professor Suwanna Satha-anand informed us that Thai professionals like herself were already suffering a 20% cut in salaries. Ethnomusicologist Endo Suanda, who crisscrosses Indonesia with a message of inter-tribal unity through the arts, brought firsthand accounts of chaos, soon underlined by news of the beheading of Madurese migrants by

Dayak tribesmen to whose ancestral lands they had been transplanted without consultation.

On our first week together, Mahathir Muhamad plunged Malaysia, sociologist Diana Wong's country, into panic with a sudden reimposition of foreign exchange controls and the imprisonment of his own chosen successor, Anwar Ibrahim, for opposing the move. Immediate impact seeped into Malaysia's former state, Singapore, where its capital made up 40% of global investments. Mahathir's autocratic spasms recalled recent ASEAN history - Ninoy Aquino's solitary confinement and assassination under the Marcos regime in the 80s and the imprisonment of our Singaporean colleague Janadas Devan's father, Devan Nair, for organizing transport workers in prosperous Singapore's own fitful 60s.

Our Beijing-born colleague Liu Xin's biography telescoped more historical turbulence. Like the dilemma that once faced a young Vaclav Havel, the label "counter-revolutionary" on his father during the Chinese Cultural Revolution left Xin no choice in a college education. Statistics became this humanist's passport to a local college and a scholarship, facilitated by missionaries, for graduate studies in London. The massacre on Tienanmen Square in 1989 finally saw him leaving for the course of his choice at the University of California. Now an anthropologist, Xin's struggle "to make general statements about Chinese society" was a formidable task in the progressive breakdown of a moral universe under growing economic and ecological pressures.

Substance, constriction and escalating historical challenge in the lives of Asian intellectuals framed our unfolding discovery of Japan, recalling the title of a lecture by the Filipino sociologist Walden Bello on the 1996 APEC Summit: 'Six Adjectives in Search of a Verb.' This became "six troubled economies watching Asia's most powerful economy" as Japanese realpolitik emerged in the ALFP lecture workshops.

International relations Professor Isami Takeda drew a very small triangle illustrating the boundaries of Japan's traditional foreign policy map - itself at the left, America to the right, China on top. Southeast Asia, with major Japanese investments held hostage by crisis, remained a vague bloc towards the equator. Economic historian Takeshi Hamashita who lectured on trade relations in ancient maritime Asia confirmed the impression in a wistful admission of limitations to traditional scholarship on South-east Asia at the imperial university's Institute of Oriental Studies.

A picture was emerging postwar Japan, much like a colonized Philippines, has identified more closely with America than with its relations to the south. There were in fact, conflicting schools of thought on whether Japan was Asian at all. In the succeeding weeks, I began to catch the drift of a residue of guilt struggling with denial of the World War II experience. It

came with an apparent blend of shyness and sense of superiority that define Japan and the Japanese apart from the rest of Asia.

A complex reality was beginning to combine in word and flesh in a way that particularly delights writers, prodding an exploration of living context - on strolls and subway adventures, in restaurants, shrines, shops, casual conversations, the I-House library, even while feeding the carp in its classical Japanese garden. A book title hastily scribbled by Program Director Tatsuya Tanami became a vital thread to discovery - 'The Book of Tea' by Okakura Kakuzo, best known in Japan by the pseudonym Tenshin, the 'heart of heaven.'

Painter, art historian, the finest of writers, Tenshin turned out to be a worthy global interpreter of the Japanese soul and its landscapes - now enduring, now shifting in the alternating shock and illumination of encounter with the world outside its introspective island borders. Written and published in English nearly a century ago in Boston and New York, the 'Book of Tea' is a classic of Japanese history told through the metaphor of "teaism."

"*Wa-kei-sei-jaku*" - harmony, respect, purity, tranquillity -, the essential ideals of *chanoyu*, the Way of Tea, not only summarize centuries of spiritual evolution in becoming simplicity and intimacy with nature. They remain an urgent prescription for social and personal equilibrium at the uncertain eve of a new millennium. The book's recent revival in Japan hinted at an uneasy sense of standing at the edge of great changes, a groping for surer footing on bedrock older than 20th century dominance of the world market.

Through *chanoyu*, Okakura unfolded a web of Asian influences rooted in Taoism, Confu-cianism and Buddhism that animist tribal Japan brought to exquisite peaks of ritual, art and craft, today surrounded by protective circles of global cognoscenti. A political dimension in his second book 'The Ideals of the East' swept from micro to macro in the accretion of continental influences that gradually made Japan a "museum of Asiatic civilizations." A spiritual insider to a society whose basic reflexes have changed little since his time, Tenshin became my Virgil to patterns still moving like a silent undertow in a modern Japanese psyche linked it, like it or not, to Asia's larger story.

The centuries shed light on the ALFP '98's own weaving of trends of contemporary Japanese thought "at the cutting edge." Singularly vivid was a lecture by the 37 year-old professor Eiji Oguma whose protean transformation from agricultural biologist to cultural historian and philosopher had already delivered two books with a bold challenge to his society - to reexamine itself and its one-dimensional ruling mythology.

As long-suffering Japanese sensitive to global winds look longingly outside its tight ceremonial confines, Oguma documented and analyzed a closed system's great resistance to diversity. Its costs, shared by its citizens and foreign relations, are highest among Japan's ethnic and economic minorities - Ainus, Koreans and Okinawans still deprived of a just share in Japan's postwar democracy, prosperity and global standing. It was a startling backdrop to the courteous culture that meets the casual eye - early tribal mythologies co-opted from their deepest sources in the folk soul and flattened to the "emperor mythology" of an elite ruling from the center, turning sources of new life and energy into periphery with great system and scant sympathy.

Oguma's thesis shared passion and vantage point with a lecture by Shunsuke Tsurumi, author of a history of Japanese nationalism, fittingly delivered after a *chanoyu* in the old capital of Kyoto. His metaphysical leaning focused on a sense of time as a tracer to Japanese history. Fact and theory blended into insight on a reality poignantly familiar to the rest of Asia: how the "communal time" of agricultural centuries marked by seasons, planting cycles and tolling temple bells gradually vanished with the industrialization that began in the Meiji Restoration of 1868.

Over a century hence, a scholar mourned the discovery of a survey in Tokyo that "*Hayaku! Hayaku!*" (Hurry! Hurry!) are the words most frequently dinned in the ears of schoolchildren running a competitive race to a ticking industrial clock. It runs trains with pinpoint precision in the world's second largest economy, yes, but going or gone are strands of life-giving custom. Japanese children playing Mozart at great speed with many mistakes is a comic detail of a pervasive sense of scarce time but gone as well is the helping hand older children traditionally extended to younger ones. *ayaku! Hayaku!* has already delivered tragedy - a shocking statistic of Japan's suicide rate, today the highest in the world, with teen-agers 14 to 16 as the most numerous.

Having "erased 5,000 years of history, the Meiji machinery is still going on intact today," said Tsurumi. Was this the root of paralysis obstructing farsighted solution of deep trouble in Japan's banking system? Estimates of bad loans facilitated by an entrenched Confucian Old Boy network spread-eagled across business and government bureaucracy has spiraled from an initial 13 trillion yen to the 150 trillion of this writing, equivalent to 30% of Japan's economy. Following a previous increase in sales taxes and lowered interest rates on savings, a new scheme to bail out erring banks with more taxes proposed to continue penalizing an obedient citizenry for the follies of giants.

Japan's internal drama deepened with the autumn, as the "Asian flu" crept to Russia and Brazil - marked by wildly fluctuating dollar to yen rates

in a counterpoint of mass panic and world-class profiteering by currency speculators led by the 10% who already control the whole world's wealth. The global economic "order" was turning into a field for poets and sages, recorded in bold media strokes bordering on prophecy.

"We are losing the rationality of the order of things. This calls for a redefinition of East and West," Prof. Hamashita had observed. "The Big Postwar Institutions are Becoming Obsolete," echoed the columnist Jim Hoagland. "Global Capitalism, Once Triumphant, is in Full Retreat. It will not soon regain its aura of infallibility," announced the economic analyst Robert J. Samuelson, urging "a gentler way" to prevent global recession with the formerly unthinkable measure of debt relief to developing countries.

Like Mikhail Gorbachev in the late '80s and the new Prime Minister Keizo Obuchi at the U.N. that fall, Henry Kissinger joined the call for debt relief, castigating the IMF for "lack of knowledge and responsiveness to Asian realities." Columnist William Pfaff called for "a new Bretton Woods Agreement," scanning the horizon for "a new John Maynard Keynes" to create a new framework for a world economy coming unmoored.

Skewed power sharing between Japanese center and periphery described by the political scientist Takeshi Ishida in his lecture workshop had become globally translatable. Local protest against the construction of a nuclear power station in Maki, continued anti-U.S. bases rumbling in Okinawa, local and foreign NGO protest against ODA misuse by ruling elites in recipient countries all fell into a pattern linking the bursting of Japan's "bubble economy" with the vaporization of the "Asian Miracle."

Overflowing liquidity with the doubling of the yen's value by the Plaza Accord of 1985 - an attempt to close the ever conflict ridden U.S.-Japan trade gap triggered the dizzy over speculation in real estate and construction in Japan, Asia and the U.S. that climaxed in Mitsubishi's purchase of controlling stocks in New York's Rockefeller Center in 1989. This, in its heyday, was what Mahathir called "the flying geese model" - Japan flying to a risen Asian sun, followed by ASEAN and South Korean economies flapping growing industrial wings in ascending covey.

But defying gravity too fast in speculative ventures tenuously linked to mass consumer markets could not be kept up indefinitely. Dramatic collapse of the Tokyo Stock Market in 1989 burst the bubble and led to discovery of over-exposure to speculators by major Japanese banks quietly disguising large defaults with "creative accounting." Here began the unraveling of the banking sector replicated four years later in Thailand, its aftershocks in Asia now circling the globe with new lessons on old laws like time, growth and gravity.

The ALFP offered glimpses of alternatives. The first came with Prof. Hisashi Nakamura, laughingly describing himself as a man "with no

discipline" as he traced his shifts from European history to development economics to agricultural engineering and finally to a teaching job in a small private college and NGO work with the *Buraku*, Japan's impoverished minorities. Economic crises have historically led to shooting wars but in a nuclear zero-sum game, "the most important part of the solution is the transformation of American globalization," he said. In his book 'A People's Asia,' he pressed a "people-to-people politics" in "a war with the monopolistic power of the U.S."

Suwanna and I, both NGO familiars, warmed to Nakamura's confirmation of a track that had also taken us beyond professional boundaries into more open-ended, less-trodden paths. She challenging Thailand's Theravada Buddhist establishment with feminist scholarship and NGO action, and I helping to lay stakes for grassroots-based sustainable development with the Filipino NGO community. Hopes for a new global paradigm were fanned higher by Professors Yoshikazu Sakamoto, Chizuko Ueno and Yoshinori Murai.

A powerful theoretician, Sakamoto offered sensitive historical analysis of civil society's leading role in the evolution of the democratic ideal. "Regressive tragedies" of war, human rights violations and ecological crisis in tandem with "the dynamics of competitive capitalism" were hastening the growth of a trans-border consciousness of interdependence and collective responsibility. This statesman-like s*ensei*'s faith in the transforming power of civil society came to a willingness "to die for it" - moving us all, bringing Liu Xin to promptly declare his own willingness to die for a vision.

From one of its frontiers came the ALFP's lone woman lecturer Chizuko Ueno. This brilliant feminist scholar cut closer to the bone on the issue of Asia's "comfort women" than even the question of direct compensation. Briskly lifting a curtain on internal debate, she pointed out an unresolved historical double bind in Japan's "sacred war against colonialism". Japan's wartime feminists protected new suffragette space by supporting, even promoting, a war that shamed thousands of Asian women to invisibility by their use as the "public toilets" of Japan's Imperial Army.

Ueno *Sensei* called for breaking more silences on official war history beyond Japan while sharing experience that counseled greater sensitivity to unspoken and unacknowledged memories still injuring and dividing both conqueror and conquered. This, too, was Diana Wong's point in her thoughtful paper, 'Memory Suppression in Singapore' that traced self-justifying myths of wartime nobility claimed by the British colonial government, the communists, the nationalists and the Japanese Army preceding Singapore's own founding myth of "history's beginning" in 1965.

'Her'-story versus 'his'-tory and Japan's uneasy relatedness to the Asia-Pacific were thoughts of an autumn festival weekend in Okinawa in mid-October. Tension between the warm wisdom of an ancient matriarchal culture centered in the sacred groves of old Ryukyu and its fate as geopolitical football presently bristling with 38 U.S. bases preceded our encounter with Yoshinori Murai.

This youthful s*ensei* drew more details into a big picture of imbalance between Japanese center and Asian periphery in the collusion of Japanese construction firms and government for ODA projects contrary to people's needs and wishes in Indonesia and the Philippines. Rich with people-to-people experience in NGO formation, federation and networking southwards from Japan, Murai's work promised growth for Asian civil society.

But something else was becoming clear as the lecture series ended. The rarity of Uenos, Sakamotos, Nakamuras, Murais and other globally minded activists bodes slow growth for Japan's own civil society. The vice of Japan's consensual virtue - individual initiative discouraged by hierarchy and isolationism afloat in First World comfort - will require much time and doing to strike fire sufficient for the kind of "people power" already winning democratic space and a larger share of state power in far less secure parts of Asia.

We had luxuriated in exceptions to the rule in the ALFP, even as shared crisis challenged the emergence of a new paradigm in a region still discovering its common identity after centuries of colonialism. After sharing initial insights in the public symposium came time to look deeper into intriguing traces of living spirit glimpsed *Hayaku! Hayaku*! with the Fellows in Osaka, Kyoto, Okinawa, ocean-sprayed Ito and time-warped crannies bypassed by the crowds of frenetic Tokyo.

On the Kumano *Kodo*

It began with a weekend at the Kii Peninsula in Wakayama Prefecture southeast of Tokyo, with a young official of the Japan Foundation who "abducted" me on the last program day. Maho Sato is also a member of a fascinating NGO called Albatross. It was led by the 32-year old visionary Hiroshi Etani who was motoring from Osaka with a complement of *Shugendo* practitioners eager to cross-pollinate with a student of animism and mythology from Nanpo, "the islands of the south" in Japan's ancient chronicles.

Two days on the road edged the timeless - beginning in hillside graveyards with rows of gray stone Shinto markers and moon-faced Jizos wearing red bibs, vegetable plots, rice fields and farmhouses alongside

silver threads of river that welcomed us to Wakayama. Gone were all traces of city gloss as our night bus came to a stop in coastal Shingu-Shi.

About-face from fishing boats and dried fish at the harbor, we ascended to an undulating blue panorama of low mountain ranges with cypress, pine, cedar, oak and cherry trees in a play of shadow and light such as Lafcadio Hearn once described to be "gentle as the light of dreams."   The name of this ancient pilgrimage site is fitting - "Kumano," variously said to be a corruption of *kumo*, hidden, and *kami*, gods or spirits. Their home in tribal worship was given the name "Shinto," the way of the gods, as late as the 19th century, and only to distinguish a thriving native animism from the Buddhism which arrived in Japan in 6 A.D.

"This is where the mountain gods married the ocean gods," said Hiroshi Etani as we viewed elevations lapped by a shimmering Pacific at sea level. Before us roared Nachi *taki*, the waterfall at the core of *Seigantoji*'s spiritual tradition, arguably Japan's oldest. Its lore says the Indian *sadhu* Ragyo sailed into Kumano Bay with six companions in 4 A.D., wandered to these mountains and received a vision of Kannon *Bosatsu* while meditating behind that *taki*.   This encounter with the *boddhisatva* of healing became the founding event of a community of mountain ascetics and healers, monk and lay, practicing *Shugendo* all over Japan today.

Also known in China as Kwan Yin, the much-loved Goddess of Mercy, and to India, Nepal and Tibet as Tara and Avalokitesvara, Kannon's central place in Kumano 1,600 years since Ragyo *Shonin*, St. Ragyo, indicates tribal Japan's welcoming syncretism. Nachi *Seigantoji* is a statement of its creative longevity. Through the centuries, Ragyo Shonin's hut beside the Nachi Falls was succeeded by a small temple, then a monastery melding three religious traditions in ascetic training centered around 48 waterfalls. Long famous for healing body and soul, Nachi *Seigantoji*'s present-day complex of Shinto shrines, Taoist and Buddhist temples, monastery, guesthouse and museum compresses centuries of spiritual and artistic history in great beauty.

Its ecumenical charisma has survived major fires, persecution by the shogun Oda Nobunaga in the 16th century and interference by the Meiji government in the 19th.   In earlier and intervening centuries, perilous mountain passes, wide rivers, forests with beasts and bandits could not deter a growing number of pilgrims on the Kumano *Kodo* - the Road to Kumano. Among them was a long line of emperors and nobles from Nara and Kyoto, seeking blessings and memorializing a difficult journey to the "home of the *kami*" in poetry, wayside markers and shrines, as well as the gradual laying of a path of cut volcanic stones. Today extant remnants of that original Kumano *Kodo* are hidden in cedar, pine and bamboo groves

inviting long meditative walks bypassed by narrow mountain roads linked to a modern highway network.

Among edifices of architectural refinement, endowed by nobles from *Seigantoji*'s beginnings down to the Meiji Era, is its oldest Shinto shrine - the hollowed-out trunk of a centuried oak. Entering it summoned a feeling of numinous unspoken presence, the same one palpable in another center of indigenous spirituality - my home ground on the higher elevations of the Banahaw mountain range towering over southern Luzon.

As Albatross led on through the gentler elevations of the Omine Mountain Range extending from Kumano in the south to Yoshino in the north, its kinship with animist Banahaw became a fascinating line of continuity. Antedating the imperial version that led to war, tribal Shinto's sacred spaces - cordoned by woven ropes of rice straw, the *shimenawa,* and strands of triangular prayers in paper, the *gohei,* recalled Banahaw's own pilgrimage route of rock, cave, waterfall and river *puestos* with candles, incense and incantations etched in stone. Different climate and vegetation were like the different flags and symbols expressing the same reverence for common bedrock of spirit and geology.

Waking at the edges of the forested Wakayama Protected Area with mushrooms in all colors and sizes, drifting mist, hawks and crows sailing in the blue air of a fragrant dawn brought a resolve to return before we even left. Albatross and I had many shared mysteries to decode between archipelagos linked in a Pacific Ring of Fire. No sooner had the thought occurred than it was put to a test - my companions would not hear of letting me sleep some more while they bathed in a famous *onsen,* a hot spring*,* on the *Kodo.* I was not sorry. Soaking in scalding waters in birthday suit with perfect strangers, crimson *momiji* (maple) branches peeking from a cliff in cold autumn glory, was a return to innocence perhaps as conducive to holiness as *Shugendo*'s freezing waterfall meditations.

The end of our brief time together was followed by more compelling sights on the descent back to Shingu. Burned slopes planted to saplings in straight rows nature never intended, milky silted stretches of the Totsugawa River where it had been transparent upriver, quarries gouging cliff-sides in the beginnings of heavy flooding and dead rivers such as we know too well in the Philippines. Blind to ancient beauty and wholeness, "progress" was crunching into the home of the *kami!* As rising alarm struggled with lack of sleep, I saw a giant Kannon *Bosatsu* emerging from a sheer limestone cliff - arms outstretched, summoning a civil society army….

I was back 18 days later with research, camera and Japanese phrase book, to be met by a larger Albatross circle. This welcoming cradle, more proof of Etani's charisma and organizational ability, had been woven by e-mail. It would now swing me in southeastward arc from Wakayama City at

the prefecture's northwest end, completing my traverse of the Kumano *Kodo* on the Pacific coastline.

So much treasure is hidden in the world's countryside. Upon arrival in Wakayama City, Albatross member Junya Hanai, aspirant Yoshihiko Miyamoto and I were instantly swept by a hurricane named Chie Matsushita. Calculating backwards from the train schedule to our next stop, she pointed to the bridge where the Kumano *Kodo* begins near a Tokugawa castle, plied us with simultaneous tea, cakes and folklore in the children's books she both writes and illustrates. She led us through a Shinto shrine with a startling sea of dolls and animal figurines to be set adrift in petition and thanksgiving, pointed to the island where the shamanic empress Jingu floated to safety after being cast to sea by a disbelieving consort. She also fed us lunch, drove us to the train station with packed doughnuts and time to spare. En route we also learned that bears still roam the lower reaches of Wakayama's mountains and that Chie-*san*, too, practices *Shugendo*, possibly explaining her stellar energy.

Tanabe, Taiji and Shingu hugged a coastline of more incredible beauty, with off-shore islands and rock formations whose sharp edges indicated relative geological youth as yet unsculpted to roundness by wind and rain. Blessed by such a variety of natural forms, the Japanese tribal mind has a story for each *shima*, island and atoll, no less than every *onsen*, river, old tree, rock and *taki* - linking romance with faith, nature and the *kami* down an ascending and descending Kumano *Kodo*. Such a landscape is as much a paradise for artists and storytellers as for scientists and saints who have roamed it in their respective realities down the centuries.

In Tanabe, rolling hills touched by pink clouds of dawn softened a vista of creeping industrialization and real estate development in the shock of recession. Here the Albatross network included environmentalists, journalists, scientists and more *Shugendo* practitioners, one of them also a modern artist. Preparing and serving a welcome dinner of fresh seafood himself, our host Deguchi-*san* caused table talk on animism to explode in laughter by declaring that he, too, was *kami*. The "joke" was sound Shinto however. *Kami* are not only emanations of nature, founding divinities and ancestral spirits but also living persons bringing a breath of spiritual power no less to faith and scholarship than to the dinner table and the gallery displaying Deguchi-san's fine potter's art in the next room.

This hospitable theology met us in action down the length of the *Kodo*. In Tanabe, it is preserving the unique coastal eco-system of Tenjinzaki, 700 ha. -watershed enclosing a bay teeming with marine life in untypically warm waters credited to the yearly Black Current. It is also disseminating the vision of one Minakata Kumagusu from a hilltop museum in his name, with a roof deck view sweeping from Tanabe Bay to the layered blue velvet

silhouettes of the Kumano mountains and to the east, a perfect metaphor for the life of a pioneering naturalist born at the eve of the Meiji Restoration.

Besides folklore, astronomy, archaeology and anthropology, the holistic Kumagusu's main field, botany, took him to study at the Tokyo University and Ann Arbor in Michigan in his early twenties, on to extended research in London's British Museum. Back in Wakayama at 34, he plunged into "the treasure chest of wildlife in the Kumano mountains," studying fungi, lichen and other flower-less plants. This earned him a global reputation but plunged him into historical controversy.

When the Meiji government's sword of imperial mythology cleaved Shinto shrines and Buddhist temples organically bonded for centuries, it also combined Shinto shrines to administer a now official state religion from Tokyo. This struck at the heart of tribal centers of worship inside dense forests, alarming Kumagusu with prospects of deforestation. Leading a nationwide protest campaign threw him briefly into prison (there he discovered a new fungus on the walls) and saved a few forest shrines. But despite a succeeding invitation to lecture on fungi to a curious Emperor Hirohito, nothing could stop a historical tide that marginalized a Japanese Goethe's vision until its late 20th century revival by ecologists and folklorists.

Links of folklore, faith and nature revealed more ancient traffic between the *Kodo,* Asia and the Pacific as we traveled on. One of these was the legendary Jofuku mentioned in Han Dynasty records as an emissary of the Qin emperor, sent to search for the "elixir of life" in Kumano's forests in 200 B.C.. Archaeological evidence of pottery-making coastal tribes in Japan's Yayoi Era supports oral tradition that Jofuku did not return to a tyrannical emperor's court, instead settling in Kumano where he taught medicine, agriculture and paper-making.

On a coastline to which the Black Current brought not only foreign boats but also whales come to winter and spawn. Other archaeological findings dating Japan's whaling tradition to 200 BC give credence to more lore that it was also Jofuku who introduced whaling to the tribes of the Kii Peninsula. It is still practiced in the old whaling center of Taiji south of Tanabe, if on a much smaller scale since a world moratorium on capturing mink and sperm whales in 1988, much priced by the Japanese pisco-vegetarian diet that owes much to centuries of Buddhist influence.

Albatross' vision of Japan's Austronesian roots shared with Nanpo and the rest of the Pacific also receives confirmation in Kumano - in Polynesian words and melodies found in the Kii Peninsula's festival songs and distinct Pacific influence on the shapes and decorations of boats celebrated in the oldest extant paintings of the whale hunt in Japan. This cross-pollination cut a wider swathe of time and geography.

Inside a wooden shed on the grounds of Shingu's *Fudara-ku* shrine, a main way station of the ascent to Nachi *Seigantoji*, is a replica of the ancient funeral boat on which aged *Shugendo* monks were once sent out to sea to their reward in the Buddha's Pure Land. Kannon *Bosatsu* is also believed to have come to Kumano by sea from her home in "*Fudara-ku*," the Japanese name for Potala, the Dalai Lama's palace in Tibet, transformed by time and distance to a literal heaven.

That the way to the heavenly mountain is through the ocean is a variation on a very old Austronesian theme - death as a return to the origin of life in the waters. Also evidenced in the funereal practices of Hinduism on the Indian subcontinent, the spread of this belief invites further discovery. Funeral artifacts found in the Philippines from that time called "prehistory," for instance, indicate that our ancestors either set the dead adrift on coastlines and riverbanks like the Hindus, or else buried them in graves facing the open sea. The latter is still practiced in the archipelago's farthest pre-Christian reaches in Sulu.

There is much to learn from the Kumano *Kodo* and the ancient reality to which it linked the wide world to Japan's oldest pilgrimage route leading inwards to Yoshino, Ise, Nara, Kyoto, Osaka, Chichibu and beyond. If Jizo deities in red bibs down its length are tender protectors of children into the next life and the ubiquitous *shime-nawa* a symbol of the unity of earth, fire, earth and water, a sense of life inter-linked approaches the awesome in giant statues of the whale in Taiji and "the spirit of the *ayu* fish," a chubby human mother, on the road to Yoshino. Yearly rituals of thanksgiving and apology for taking their life to feed the human community open deep layers of a psyche still drawing life from ancient memory of a sacred unity of existence transcending time, space and species.

Lifelong rites of passage celebrated to this day by Shinto families home to this memory, polished to a high sheen with the passing of time and the gradual birthing of the variant called "shrine Shinto" from the matrix of tribal Shinto. Among its shrines, some have been selected *taisha*, shrines for a special purpose. In Kumano, three of these *taisha,* collectively named Kumano *Sanzan*, have been the main objects of pilgrimage by rich and poor since the Heian Period in the 8th to the 10th century. Who is to say the *kami* no longer respond to human need on the late 20th century Kumano *Kodo*?

Because the Albatross network did not have enough time to work out all travel arrangements in detail before our journey began, Miyamoto-*san* and I arrived in Shingu with only the name of a *ryokan,* an inn, for the night. Without the names of contact persons, we became the objects of a series of happy coincidences. The first came with Katsuya Maeoka, an official of the City Tourist Bureau who, out of curiosity, joined the official guide assigned to meet us at the last-minute. Listening to our tales of

animism on the road traversed, he smiled and said with quiet pride that he was a Shinto votary himself. Quickly he dropped a plan to show us the delights of natural landscape, walking us to over the Hayatama *Taisha* instead.

Guiding us on the inner state in which one must cross its welcoming bridge and entrance arch called *torii*, approving my familiarity with the water cleansing ritual common to Shinto and Filipino animism, Maeoka-*san*'s next impulse was to request a purification ceremony for two strangers. Finally I would receive the deep reverberation of the *taeko* drum that had beckoned mutely at the Osaka Museum of Ethnology, the shrines and temples of Kyoto, a wayside shrine in Okinawa. Offering a sprig of the sacred bush called *sakaki* and a strand of *gohei* at the altar then sipping sweet shrine *sake* from the hand of a lovely shrine maiden, a *miko,* ritual learning that had begun in Nachi *Seigantoji,* the *taisha* for healing, was completed in Hayatama, the *taisha* for the forgiveness of past transgressions.

At the time still innocent of these theological underpinnings, my own received Christianity suggested the meaning of a moving moment as it flowed into another happy coincidence. That bright Sunday morning in late November also happened to be a late celebration of Children's Day at the Hayatama *Taisha*. We were next receiving a blessing out of time with rows of beautiful Japanese children. "Unless ye become like little children, ye shall not enter the kingdom of heaven," Biblical words became the bass notes of an ecumenical thought - perhaps Kannon *Bosatsu* herself was really looking kindly on a visit to Kumano by a stranger now feeling like a child welcomed home.

Gaps between reason and intuition, faith and logic dissolve in experience. How does it happen, I wondered as we traveled on, that *saka* which is 'slope' in Japanese, means both 'to climb to a higher elevation' and 'farming' in Tagalog? Is their *kumo,* meaning 'hidden,' related to our own *kumot* meaning blanket? Does *inaka*, their word for 'countryside' share a philosophical root with *ina,* Tagalog for 'mother'? Why does *saya*, Japanese for scabbard, mean 'skirt' in Tagalog? And how did the all-important Japanese *kami* for 'god' or 'spirit' become the pronoun 'we' in the Philippines?

The sense of homecoming deepened as the Shugendo monk Tateishi Kousho stood on a precarious ledge high on the Kumano *Kodo*, blowing a *kunchi* trumpet, a giant conch shell once under the Philippine Sea, to notify the *kami* of our arrival in *tambuli* fashion. This was followed by chanting "AUMMM" as long as breaths could hold. Lungs ventilated and limbering exercises done, we chanted our way to a daylong taste of *Shugendo* training in trans-border and trans-specie consciousness. It led to clear pools, slippery silica-coated flats, deer tracks in river sand, an impressive variety

of ferns and lichens, basalt cliffs and volcanic rocks of all shapes and sizes. With or without a path, we tiptoed and jumped, slid down, heaved up to *taki* upon *taki*, nine in all, through gorges and gullies brimming with flaming maples, golden oaks, fragrant pines and cedars under a radiant sky.

Treks like this are their own reason for being, exhilarating beyond words - if sobered by stories of worsening floods and 40 tons of old cars disposed by modern ignorance down Kumano's cliff sides, picked up and airlifted by Albatross and *Shugendo* volunteers from this patch of forest at their own expense last summer. Years of spiritual search that have taken Kousho-*san* to India and Bali have taken him back to Japan's own sacred mountains with an exuberant pioneering will.

Around a village shrine flying *Seigantoji*'s rainbow pennant in Higashi *Muro-Gun*, this modern monk plants food crops with a new spiritual community "beyond monks." Together they break the silence of dawn chanting "*Nami yama no kami sama*" to bronze bells jingling and *taeko* thumping loud enough to wake the dead. In the evening, they gather around a hearth fire dug into earth in the way of the ancients, cooking food while warming a new global vision. Kousho-*san* has already taken an American Indian shaman to this hearth and is eager to revive the traditional fire-walking ceremony such as tribal Shinto once practiced with Asia and the Pacific.

In the continuity of life that is the Kumano *Kodo*'s greatest gift, the *karasu*, the crow, still hovers over its forests in the dignity of ancient memory. Legend goes that it was a magical three-legged crow that led Jimmu *Tenno*, the first emperor, from Kumano to the fertile plains of Yamato, the future heartland of the Japanese Empire in Nara. What would the original *tenno* say, I wondered, about times that reduce the *karasu* to a scavenger in deforested cities led by the new imperial capital of Tokyo? What lamentations would his court unleash at the present state of the mighty Totsugawa linking Nara to its mythic origins all the way to the Pacific? The drying of its riverbed by entire kilometers began with damming for electrification at the price of fallen forests in the 50s, exacerbated now by commercial tree-felling progressively drying a legendary watershed year after year.

How fitting that imperial Japan's mythic point of origin is today a hidden source of renewal. A mountain-fold away from Kousho-*san*'s shrine is the Forest Conservation Society in Kumanogawa-*cho.* Here Prof. Toyota Sakamoto and Keiko Matsumoto campaign for the preservation of Kumano's forests as they train Asian students for reforestation beyond national borders. Pine saplings from civic supporters are growing at this writing, to be planted on Nepal's denuded slopes in the spring. The *kami*

willing, it may next be bamboo groves to prevent yearly flooding around Banahaw.

Up the steep ascent to the Kumano Sanzan's third *taisha*, the Hongu Grand Shrine, down to its original site beside a shrunken Totsugawa, Sakamoto *Sensei* reflected on the syllable "*do*" in *Kodo*. It is the Chinese "*tao*," "the way without a way," he said, as we approached the eloquence of empty space where the original *taisha* dedicated to wishes for the future once stood. "Teaism is Taoism in disguise," came an echo from Okakura Tenshin as a new page flipped open in a living 'Book of Tea.'

Memories of the vanished trees and wildlife of a youth spent roaming thickly forested slopes accompanied our slow drive through the breathtaking loveliness of yellow carpets, lilac patches, orange and crimson slopes in the full glory of autumn at the border of Kumano and Yoshino. This, said Sakamoto *Sensei*, is where 60% of Omine's original forests still stand. The rest have succumbed to "progress" and the massive tree-felling for nationwide rebuilding after Japan's imperial war. In their place now are mono-cultured pines and cypresses that, while lovely, have meant extinction for indigenous wildlife in an ecosystem with intricate laws that wait to be learned and relearned even as the new threat of acid rain begins to creep into Omine.

Much must be remembered. But from Omine's highest point - *Kimpusen*, the golden peak, on Mt. Tamaki - a wide vista had revealed as much danger as hope. In *kami* human and divine met down the Kumano *Kodo* - patiently protecting the waters of Tanabe, honoring tradition in Taiji and Shingu, keeping rich faith in Nachi, rekindling primal fire in *Higashi Muro-Gun*, planting saplings from *Kumanogawa-cho*, chanting under the thousand year-old native trees serving as columns for *Kimpusen-ji*, *Shugendo*'s high temple in Yoshino - is an enduring strength that can move mountains. Arms outstretched to a wider world, it can preserve the home of spirit in nature and the forgetful cities of urban man on a global *kodo* of renewal from sacred bedrock but only if enough people remember.

REPORT ON ALFP, 1998

Janadas Devan

ALFP 1998 was highly successful. Intellectually, it was stimulating; socially, it was instructive; personally, it was one of the happiest experiences in my life.

The credit for all this is due, chiefly, to the courtesy, care and kindness of all those involved on the Japanese side of the programme. I might mention, in particular, Mr. Tatsuya Tanami, Mr. Isamu Maruyama and Ms Naoko Shimamura from the International House of Japan; and Ms Mariko Oka-Fukuroi and Ms Maho Sato from Japan Foundation. Ms Taeko Kurokawa, the Rapporteur in the programme, was a tremendous pillar of support. She, like the others, became a friend. The fellows gelled as a group in no small part because the Japanese participants in the programme were excellent facilitators.

The other reason why the programme was successful was the fellows involved. Our year saw an interesting collection of specialties and personalities. For the most part, we got along. More importantly, we stimulated each other. Our difference, when they surfaced, were productive; and our agreements, when they occurred, were not merely confirmatory of our respective prejudices. In this way, we learned from each other. I personally learnt a great deal from each of my fellow fellows. Professors Diana Wong and Lui Xin, both anthropologists, brought an informed rigor to our discussions. Mr. Endo Suanda and Ms Sylvia Mayuga, the first an artist of exceptional talent and the other an environmental activist of an interesting variety, reminded us of recognition not always available in the academy. And Professor Suwanna Satha-anand, a philosopher, infused our discussions with a sense of values, all the more profound because she did so not merely by articulating them but by her very being. I regard it as a stroke of extraordinary good fortune that I had the opportunity to meet these people.

The final reason for the programme's success was the distinguished academics we met. We had fruitful discussions with so many, I cannot possibly name them all. I'm grateful in particular to Dr. Isami Takeda of Dokkyo University for his personal kindness; to Professor Ryosei Kokubun of Keio University for speaking to me at such length; to Professor Hisashi Nakamura of Ryukoku University and Professor Mitsuo Nakamura of Chiba University and Professor Hisako Nakamura of Bunkyo University, who opened their hearts and their homes to us; and to Professor Kiichi Fujiwara of Tokyo University, from whom I learnt so much about Japan, the

world and my own region. I'm grateful to all these and others for their courtesy and generosity.

Seminars

The seminars I-House organised were useful. In addition to the seminars, which were scheduled prior to our arrival, Mr. Tanami arranged additional seminars for the fellows to satisfy our particular interests. Beside these formal seminars, the fellows also met in private sessions among themselves -- in the seminar room; over breakfast, lunch and dinner; in trains, busses and taxis; and on one memorable occasion, in the garden, swatting bugs as well as ideas).

The formal seminars introduced us to the concerns and research interests of Japanese scholars and activists; and the private seminars introduced us to each other, and were useful in clarifying and refining our own concerns and interests. In these private sessions, we also decided the theme of our public seminar, where we presented papers.

It is difficult to specify which was more useful – the formal seminars or our private sessions – but in a way they had contradictory purposes. I don't intend the following remarks as a criticism of the programme, but these contradiction purposes reflect a contradiction in the programme itself. Let me explain.

On the one hand, the programme aims to bring together "third track" fellows from Asia so they might exchange views and establish networks among themselves. On the other hand, the programme also aims to bring these Asian fellows in contact with Japanese intellectuals so they can learn something about Japanese culture and society. These aims are laudatory – it would be a pity if the programme sacrificed one for the other -- but sometimes they clashed.

The first aim, in essence, was formulated to promote the research interests and concerns of the fellows themselves. The second aim, in practice if not in intent, tended to promote the dissemination of information in a one-way process – from Japan to the rest of Asia.

As a result, sometimes but not always, I found myself oscillating between the concerns of the fellows and the concerns of Japanese academics. Sometimes we were engaged in a collaborative process of inquiry and exchange; and sometimes we were information gatherers, intellectual tourists.

On one memorable occasion, the two aims of the programme came together. This occurred during the retreat I-House organised in Ito

peninsular, where the fellows spent two delightful days and nights with a distinguished group of Japanese scholars. It seems to me the programme will benefit enormously if the rubric of that retreat was applied to the programme as a whole.

The retreat was highly beneficial primarily because all of us – the Japanese scholars as well as the fellows – came together on a common theme. Information was exchanged, but it wasn't a one-way street; views were shared, but we didn't do so as intellectual tourists, acting as though we were each other's native informants.

I recommend that in future the programme organises its seminars around themes instead of individuals. Most of the seminars I attended in 1998 involved the fellows listening to individual scholars, and then asking them questions, all in the space of an hour or two. Often, these seminars were little different from lectures.

If, instead, the seminars were organised around themes, and if a day or so were devoted to each theme, then we might envisage the following organisation. First, a group of Japanese scholars (say, three or four) will distribute their papers in advance. Fellows will read these papers prior to the seminar. Second, at the seminar itself, the Japanese scholars will present summaries of their papers, followed by specifically designated fellows (say, one or two) responding formally to the papers. And three, the seminar will open itself to general discussion.

To be useful, the themes chosen for these daylong or half-day seminars should dovetail with the general interests of the fellows. In this way, the formal seminars the programme organises, and the private seminars the fellows hold among themselves, will feed into each other.

I understand that ALFP 1999 included a Japanese fellow among the group. This, I think, is an excellent idea. Notwithstanding the fact that the fellows in my year learnt a great deal about Japan from the presentations of Japanese scholars in formal seminars, I think we learnt as much, if not more, from our daily interactions with the staff of I-House and Japan Foundation, and Ms Kurokawa. Friendship, not the parceling out of information, is often the best bridge between cultures.

Personal Project during the Two-month Seminar Period

Throughout my six months in Japan, and in particular during the two-month seminar period, I spent some time on my book project. This project examines the articulation of race, gender and national identity in the postcolonial state, focussing (but not exclusively) on the case of Singapore. I study the 'founding' narratives of

history in the postcolonial state: how these inscribe a variety of authorised identities; what interests of power they serve; how they enable specific social and political formations within the state.

The project locates itself at the intersection of different registers. First, it deploys certain contemporary theoretical insights in the fields of philosophical and literary studies to study non-literary texts in the postcolonial state. Second, in investigating the present causes productive of specifically configured pasts, it describes a conjunction between narratives of history and the 'context' of their constructions. Third, it analyses particular state policies -- concerning, for instance, language policy or the status of women -- with reference to the meta-narratives of the state or its ideological self-image.

A key term in the study is "management". One of its central concerns is the elaboration of the paradigms of economic or corporate management and its protocols of rationality, to serve at once as the model and chief beneficiary of what Michel Foucault has called the "pastoral" function of the state: shaping individuality in a form, and submitting it to a pattern, that produces, and *validates,* a certain form of power. Involved in such an examination is an exploration of the relationship between the structures of desire that impel political discourse and theories of governance, and the structures that actuate the production (in general) of historical, literary and philosophical texts. These structures inscribe an economy of power relations even as they invoke reason and aesthetic coherence as their justification.

I argue, in this context, that the 'aesthetic state' refers not just to a state of mind but is a principle of political value and authority informing the technologies of management which shape the material practices of the political state to accomplish its pastoral function. Political discourse, in producing and applying knowledge, appeals repeatedly to aesthetic principles to mediate between knowledge and action. My working hypothesis is that a certain conception of the 'aesthetic' informs the 'founding' narratives of history in the postcolonial state. An aesthetically conceived history, that is, serves to define the idealities of racial and national 'identities' and to prescribe the modalities of political legitimacy. The aesthetically invoked counters of race and nation -- properly speaking, catachrestical counters, metaphors that produce what they invoke -- circulate in general political discourse to generate the legal norms deemed essential in the establishment of a 'new' state, and to subject its citizens to precisely that pattern of relations and values which best serve those norms.

During my months in Japan, I managed to revise one chapter in this project, and made a preliminary draft of another.

Project During Four Month Personal Research Programme

I spent much of my time in the additional four months I spent in Japan after the conclusion of the collaborative period, talking to a great variety of Japanese, in academia, business and government, on current affairs. These discussions had more to do with my journalistic interests, as a leader writer of the Singapore Straits Times, than they did with my academic interests, but it is impossible to draw a firm line between the two.

While I was in Japan, the global financial crisis of 1997/98 was its height. It seemed to me that the crisis was such that the assumptions governing research on Asian societies would have to change. Before July 1997, almost everyone had assumed that the "Asian 'Tigers'" will continue to enjoy for the foreseeable future the growth rates they had enjoyed for more than two decades. When I began my current book project three years ago, I too had assumed this. The critical reading I had undertaken of the concept of 'Asian Values', for example, was governed by the assumption that the ideology of 'Asian Values' was supported and validated by the apparent success of Asian economies. This assumption -- on the part of both the promoters of 'Asian Values' as well as those, like myself, who criticised the concept – was exploded by the crisis.

While in Japan, my main focus was to investigate the current understanding among Japanese intellectual of post-War Asian history. For better or worse, Japan -- by virtue of its economic power -- has exerted a strong influence on Asia's conception of itself. In the pre-Crisis period, roughly from the late 70's to the early 90's, Japan's 'example' served as the model of Asian economic development. My main interest was to ascertain what impact Japan's 'example' would have in the immediate future.

Some of the issues I explored with the numerous people I met were:

a). Did the economic crisis occasion a critical re-examination of the direction Asian economies and societies took from the 1960's to the 1997? What was the view among historians, political scientists and economists of that period -- a period that witnessed the doubling of Asia's share of the world economy.

b). What effects did the crisis have on Japan's conception of itself as an "Asian" nation? Did the crisis bring into doubt the concept of an "Asian model of development" -- in vogue barely a few years ago -- or did it occasion a redefinition of that concept?

c). What effects did the crisis have on Japan's view of globalisation? That a global economy exists is not in doubt; the proof of its existence was

negatively available in the way the crisis ricocheted from country to country, continent to continent. What was in doubt, however, was the existence of a global society -- an affective moral community, stretching across national boundaries, and able to arrive at certain common recognition. Japan, as the world's second largest economy, will inevitably wield a tremendous influence in the creation of such a society. What was the current state of thinking on such matters in Japan?

I spoke to an enormous number of people – my notes of conversations indicate I spoke to about 67. Among them were individuals I had met in seminars and workshops held during the collaborative period. In addition, I saw people in journalism, think tanks, NGOs and universities; in political parties and government; and in the private sector, including banks.

I should place on record here a fact that belies the popular image of Japan in many foreign countries: As a practicing journalist, I had a far easier time meeting people in Japan, including in its government, than I have had in any other country. Not a single person I asked to see declined to see me; not a single person I called did return my call; not a single person I saw was other than frank and open. To my amazement and delight, I found Japan a journalist's delight.

Conclusion

My memories of my stay in Japan will always be among my most treasured memories. Among the many, two in particular have recurred to me often since I left in March 1998. It is strange why these, and not the others, should recur, but there is no accounting for such mysteries.

The first is of the last dinner the fellows had among themselves at the end of the collaborative period, together with Naoko and Taeko, in the latter's home. It was a sad occasion. We knew that it would be the last occasion we would all be together.

The second is of the stone garden in Ryoan-ji in Kyoto. I visited it first with my colleagues in the programme and latter with my wife and child when they visited briefly. The garden held in repose a fascinating but indifferent beauty. The abstract arrangement of rocks and pebbles seemed to scratch a gleam of light from the dark, cold, fathomless vastness of empty space – but that light had nothing to do with our all too-human concerns. This memory still amazes a troubled midnight.

Limits of Multiculturalism

Janadas Devan

There are three parts in this essay. In the first, I merely assert a thesis about culture in general: namely, that every culture describes not an essence but a collection of potentials. In the second, I attempt to place the question of multiculturalism in Singapore in a larger global context. I do this by examining in some depth a formulation that will, I think, have a great deal of influence in the coming decades: namely, Samuel Huntington's *Clash of Civilisations*. In the third, I turn to a consideration of multiculturalism as such, especially as it relates to Singapore. This part constitutes the heart of what I'm trying to get at, namely, my doubt as to whether multiculturalism, as an ideology, is an adequate response to multiculturalism, as a social fact. I hasten to add that I do not mean to suggest at all that multiculturalism is a false value. Not in the least. What I'm trying to get at is that multiculturalism as an ideology may well be as bad as the disease it attempts to cure, cultural chauvinism or exclusivity, unless multiculturalism contains within itself recognition of something beyond culture. I will call that something beyond culture, a radical secularism. If I were braver, I would have called it truth.

I

Anyway, the first part of my presentation: The thesis that any culture, at any one time, is but a collection of a variety of attributes; which means to say, no one culture is ever true to itself, its so-called singular genius or essence. Raymond Williams, the late British Marxist cultural historian and literary critic, put it thus: every culture, he said, was a conglomeration of the residual, the dominant, and the emergent. I think this is basically true, only I think Williams' tripartite, Hegelian structure, though more adequate than most models of culture, is itself a simplification of a reality that is altogether more confusing and in excess of any dialectic.

It is difficult to illustrate this, except empirically. I can do no better here than refer to my own field, the European Renaissance. Consider just one aspect of this period, religious expression. If you look at Baroque art or sculpture, you will conclude that people in this period were all in a state of chronic emotional excitement about God: the figures wave their arms, roll their eyes, swoon, their hands clutch palpitating hearts, they are unconscious. Bernini's St. Teresa, for instance, is a recumbent figure, her eyes closed, her lips parted; a smiling angel hovers over her, about to pierce her with a huge arrow; to all intents and purposes, religious ecstasy is indistinguishable from sexual ecstasy. When we turn from art to music, however, we get a completely different feel of Baroque sensibility. A figure like Johann Sebastian Bach, for instance, is the opposite of a religious sensibility run riot. One cannot listen to his St Matthew's Passion, for instance, or his religious cantatas, and hear in them what we see in Bernini's St. Teresa. Textbooks on the Baroque sensibility, of course, will point to their common concern with intricate detail. But in art, that concern with detail fed excess; in a Bach fugue, on the other hand, or in polyphonic music in general, intricacy was the servant of order. You never forget, when listening to a Bach fugue, that every thread, every figure, in the music, no matter how far it strays, or threatens to stray, always comes back home. There is no

such thing as a cadenza in Bach, which breaks the bounds of what is always a well-tempered scale of emotions.

The question is which art form best defines 16th and 17th century religious sensibility? What relation does either art form have with the actual religious experience of those who lived through it? Can one, in fact, construct a common genealogy for the art and music of the period, and relate both to the religious experience of, at one extreme, the contemplative of the period, like the profoundly ascetic St John of the Cross, and at the other, the common folks? And to press the matter a little further: can one relate, structurally or analogically, the religious sensibility with the social and economic facts, the murderous religious wars, or the beginnings of modern science in the founding of institutions like the Royal Society, or the explorations of the New World?

It seems to me that the answer to each of these questions has to be a qualified no. Every period exhibits, not a synthesis, but a collection of dramatic opposites and incompatibles. Our own period is at once the age of the silicon chip, space exploration, the genome project, as well as the ubiquitous hamburger, astrology and Diana, the Princess of Wales. All the characteristics of human nature exist at all times in every culture. Undoubtedly, for a number of reasons -- ideological, economic, political, or purely technical -- some of these characteristics find themselves actualised

or emphasised at some periods, while others remain in abeyance or unemphasised. I am by no means claiming that all historical generalisations of a period, like those one finds in the text books on the Renaissance, or the deeper structures that someone like Cangulheim or Foucault detail, are intrinsically false. Obviously, they aren't. What I would claim is that (a) these generalisations are abstractions, sometimes helpful, sometimes not; and (b) that these generalisations are the product of present causes: the history of any period or of any culture, is almost invariably the product of present concerns which are themselves abstractions from an altogether confusing present reality.

To illustrate the second, let's turn to something closer in time and space, and of relevance to us -- explanations for the East Asian "economic miracle". It is astonishing to remark that what is now taken to be a truism -- namely, that this miracle can be traced to certain cultural traits that were always present -- would have struck almost everyone, no more than a few decades ago, as an absurdity. Max Weber, at the turn of the century, thought that Confucianism lacked the dynamism of Protestantism. His successors in mid-century held that a certain number of culturally-specific social and psychological qualities had to obtain in societies before modernisation was possible. If one had taken a look at some of those qualities in the 1960s -- radical individualism, for one, the personal achievement motive, for another

-- one might well have concluded that East Asian societies had no business succeeding. But succeed, they did.

The point here is not that Weber was wrong and Kishor Mahbubani is right. The point is to situate a doubt about cultural explanations, in general; and to suggest, in particular, that cultural explanations of complex historical processes may be defined as an interested selection from an otherwise unmanageable multiplicity of factors, thus reducing that multiplicity to a semblance of unity. If so, cultural explanations of history have at best an uncertain relation to reality, and at worst, a thoroughly falsifying one. Asian values, as much as the Protestant work ethic, may well be formulations that announce, at a particular time and place, not peculiarly revealing readings of history, but rather the self-valuation of particular elites.

II

Having said this, and revealing to you my own view regarding cultural explanations, I will move on to the second part of my presentation: a reading of Huntington's thesis, and in conjunction with that reading, a placement of the cultural politics of Singapore in the global context.

This juxtaposition of Huntington and Singapore is not as forced as it appears. Huntington's book mentions Mr. Lee Kuan Yew, the Senior Minister, more often than it does almost any other contemporary political figure. The Senior Minister gets 10 entries in the book's index. By contrast, Mr. Lee Teng Hui appears four times, Pak Suharto three, and Dr. Mahathir four. Other distinguished Singaporean figures, like diplomats Tommy Koh and Kishore Mahbubani, also make appearances in the book – Mr.

Mahbubani three times, as many occasions as the next name in the index, Mao Zedong, the Great Helmsman himself.

All this prominence is of course most pleasing to Singaporeans, but it is astonishing nevertheless. Why should a country of no more than three million elicit such avid interest?

Strangely enough, not only does Huntington have Mr. Lee much in his mind, Mr. Lee too has Huntington much in his. When I wrote a review of *The Clash of Civilisations* for a Singaporean newspaper in 1997, I was scooped by, of all people, the Senior Minister himself. Mr. Lee had actually commended Huntington's thesis at an election rally no less; and he didn't just mention it in passing; he actually discussed the book at some length.

Now, the reason why Lee commended Huntington was that he had praised Singapore's system of "Shared Values" in his book. "Shared Values", of course, refers to the state-endorsed ideology that declares the basic values of Singaporeans to be: (1) Nation before ethnic community and society above self; (2) Family as the basic unit of society; (3) Community support for the individual; (4) Consensus instead of contention; and (5) Racial and Religious Harmony. As Huntington notes, these "Shared Values" were meant to emphasise that Singapore was in crucial respects an Asian society. As the government document announcing the Shared Values of Singaporeans explained: "Singaporeans are not Americans or Anglo-Saxons, though we may speak English and wear Western dress. If over the long term Singaporeans became indistinguishable from Americans, British or Australians, or worse became a poor imitation of them, we will lose our edge over these Western societies," an edge "which enables us to hold our own internationally."

Singapore, that is, has to remain Asian for competitive economic advantage. The logic is impeccable: Singapore fears becoming like America, not because it fears losing its Asian soul, but because becoming like America will weaken its ability to compete successfully in the global market, become a full-blown developed economy, and thereby become like America. Singapore, in other words, has to remain Asian in order to become Western.

Obviously baffled by this logic, Huntington, despite his admiration for Singapore, is driven to cite the tiny island-state as a prime example of why a clash of civilisations -- between the Sinic and the Western in this instance -- is inevitable. Lee figures so prominently in the book, not only because Huntington admires him, but because Lee, more articulately than any other Asian political figure, has denied the universality of something called western values, and insisted forcefully that something else called Asian values informs the logic of Asian modernity.

Singapore, then, is a strange case -- at once evidence of a threat to western universalism as well as reassuringly familiar. The peculiar position

Singapore occupies in the imaginary of someone like Huntington --
"goodness gracious," you can almost hear him say, "this lot want to become
more like us in order to remain more like themselves" -- this curious but
understandable reaction makes Singapore a good test case for asking: What
precisely is at stake in believing that a clash of civilisation is inevitable?
What is being obfuscated, what possibilities are being denied in asserting
the priority of cultural identities or civilisational affinities over, say, class or
political identities? At the similarity between Lee (and the Singaporean
establishment in general) and Huntington (and the American right in
general) is a re-formulation of political choices as cultural choices, and the
fashioning of those cultural choices in ways that best support the local
manifestations of what is, for better or worse, a single global economic
system. Indeed, "Asian values" in Singapore is a construct that achieves the
same ideological effects as Huntington's own insistence on the Judeo-
Christian tradition as the informing genius of Western civilisation. The
effects of both ideological constructs are so similar that it is difficult to tell
whether we are witnessing a Westernisation of Oriental values or an
Orientalisation of Western values, or what either of these categories --
Western or Oriental -- might mean. In both instances we find an attempt to
legitimize strikingly similar political and economic agendas by locating their
source in what is offered as the essential identity of a culture or civilisation.
The question is this: given the remarkable similarities of political agendas,
why then is there an insistence on cultural difference, differences so
insistent that they may well result in clashes? Why must the same be
distinguished as threateningly different?

I must confess at once that I don't really have a clear answer to this
question. In what follows I will try merely to establish why the question
forces itself upon us. If for no other reason than to establish that the very
possibility of asking the question situates a doubt as to the rationality of the
distinctions we are being offered -- east and west, Asian modernity and
western modernity, and so on. I will first highlight the salient points in
Huntington's argument of especial relevance to Asia, or more specifically
East Asia. I will then discuss briefly the cultural politics of contemporary
Singapore. And I will finally attempt a halting answer to the question: Why
must the same be different?

First, Huntington's thesis: It seems to me that the first thing that
ought to be noted about it is its rhetorical power, its sheer preformative
force. *Clash of Civilisations* -- what can be more arresting as a commanding
metaphor for a totalising vision of global politics? One gets a sense, reading
the book, of a species of intelligence whose insights unfold with the
machine-like inevitability of figures of speech.

We normally associate such minds with the so-called softer disciplines, like literary or cultural studies, and not with realpolitik -- a prejudice that is a little surprising, given the disastrous role played by figures like "Deutschland Uber Alles" or "Iron Curtain" or "Falling Dominoes" or "Great Leap Forward" in the politics of the past half-century.

This is not to imply, of course, that Huntington's formulation is without intellectual content whatsoever because of its rhetoricity. But it does mean that its capacity to convince is not wholly dependent on empirical evidence. It is a formulation that aims to determine, *a priori*, our perception of events. Huntington himself claims that his aim in offering the figure is to produce a shift in perceptions somewhat along the lines of the paradigmatic shifts that occasionally take place in the sciences. As ludicrous as this boast might seem, we ought to take the boast seriously.

For it is its very freedom from empiricity which explains in part the extraordinary influence the thesis has had. For one thing, when compared to Francis Fukuyama's altogether cheerful and larky "end of history" -- that other equally rhetorical, equally figural summation of contemporary history -- Huntington's "clash of civilisation" possesses a certain impressively dark and despairing realism. In any contest between a cheerful theory of human reality and a cheerless one, the latter almost invariably will prove to be the more influential. The book's thesis, or figure, also catches the news – the Balkans, ethnic conflicts in the former Soviet Bloc, Hindu-Moslem conflicts in the Indian subcontinent, the growing paranoia in the US about China -- which it then amplifies. Whether the confidence with which Huntington amplifies the figure is related to all the news or only some of it, remains uncertain, but it is instructive to trace his own growing confidence in the figure.

When he first offered the figure in an article in 1993, just a couple of years after the collapse of the Soviet Union, it came somewhat humbly dressed with a question mark -- "The Clash of Civilisations?" It was possible to argue in 1993 that Huntington was merely warning of the possibility of a clash and not recommending it. Four years later the question mark disappears from the book's title. Huntington makes it plain he is no longer merely advancing a possibility but a description of reality and not merely sounding a warning but a call to action. He is also not merely urging the West to be realistic in advancing the universality of its values but urging that it reaffirms its identity, its uniqueness, and unite "to renew and preserve it against challenges from non-Western societies".

In four years, the figure has grown great with ambition; like George Kennan's article of 1947 calling for the containment of the Soviet Union, it now aims at affecting policy. And it is as proposed policy that I think it ought to be considered -- which

means to say we have to take seriously not only its cognitive status as a description of reality, but also its status as a performative act, its power to achieve what it states. The question -- what sort of world does Huntington describe? -- is inseparable from the question -- what sort of world does he want?

On the face of it, it is a rather reasonable world: one might even be tempted to say that there is in Huntington a certain wise generosity regarding the conditions that would best ensure world peace. Huntington believes that clashes of civilisations -- in particular, "the conflicts generated by western universalism, Muslim militancy and Chinese assertion" -- "are the greatest threat to world peace." Thus, only "an international order based on civilisations" and mutual respect among them will protect us from a world war.

The United States' ability to underwrite a global order, he also argues, will become increasingly untenable as the relative economic, military and cultural power of the West declines. The world beyond 2020 will look like the world of the 15th century, before the rise of colonialism and the hegemony of the West. Relations among nations sharing the same cultural values will be more intense than relations between nations from different civilisations. Also, relations between civilisations will vary from less to more conflictual patterns, depending on their shared histories and values -- less conflictual, in the case of the West and Latin America, and more conflictual, in the case of, say, Sinic and Hindu or Sinic and the West. Peace will depend on managing and ameliorating the more intense conflictual patterns among civilisations.

Huntington's prudent generosity regarding international relations, however, turns sour when he considers the position of the West itself.   Like Oswald Spengler almost a century ago, Huntington is haunted by a sense of the West as a declining civilisation.

It may well be. But not only does Huntington bemoan the "moral decline, cultural suicide and political disunity" of the West -- in terms remarkably similar to Mr. Lee's, I might add -- he

bemoans also the racial and cultural diversity of the United States. A multicultural, "multicivilisational US," he says, "will not be the US, it will be the UN." Huntington is actually very explicit about this point: he says clearly, Western civilisation must assert itself within the US, or its decline will be accelerated.

Here is one typical passage: "The futures of the United States and of the West," he says "depend upon Americans reaffirming their commitment to Western civilisation. Domestically this means rejecting the divisive siren calls of multiculturalism. Internationally it means rejecting the elusive and illusory calls to identify the United States with Asia".

In less polite language, this means that the barbarians beyond the city walls have to be combated because the barbarians are already squatting within the walls. Huntington's paradigm of a global clash of civilisations is in fact motivated and accentuated by a vision of the US riven by similar conflicts within its borders. His willingness to jettison the universalist claims of western culture is not unrelated to the recognition that those universalist claims, which must of necessity be inclusive, can be at odds with the desired racial composition of the United States.

It follows too that an unwillingness to work a "multicivilisational" United States must result in an unwillingness to work a "multicivilisational" foreign policy. Thus, the recommendation for the United States to reassert the primacy of the Western alliance -- against, among other things, "the elusive and illusory calls to identify the US with Asia". Given these policy recommendations -- domestically, a uni-cultural United States, and internationally, a US-European military and economic combine -- it is fair to ask: is the policy the logical corollary of a world divided into nine self-enclosed civilisations impossibly at odds with one another; or does the world have to appear so treacherously impossible for the sake of the policy? Must the West place itself in purdah because it has to or because it wants to?

Let's consider one aspect of this seemingly impossible world by way of an answer. Huntington's observes that many

countries in Asia are at present re-ethnicising themselves. He is not wrong in this regard. Modernisation, indeed, has been de-linked from westernisation, at least rhetorically. Those who once spoke of modernising their cultures now speak of signifying modernity or Hinduising it or Islamising it.

The West, in other words, is no longer seen as the only model of modernity. Because modernisation does not equal westernisation, and because non-western countries will become increasingly influential, definitions of modernity will proliferate. The insistence on "Asian Values" in countries as various as Malaysia and Singapore is an indication that the project of modernity can in fact be founded on cultures quite distinct from the West, contrary to what Weber, Durkheim and their followers believed.

This development should not in itself be surprising. The genesis of an idea has never determined, in every respect, the development of that idea. The end is never the same as the beginning. Mao Zedong proved that with Marxism; and figures as various as Deng Xiaoping, Mahathir Mohammad (till he went bonkers over George Soros) and Mr. Lee has proven the same with Capitalism.

What is at issue is whether the proliferation of modernity must necessarily give rise to a clash of civilisations. Huntington believes it will, inevitably, and thinks therefore that the only certain basis for world peace is a sullen withdrawal of nations into their own civilisational boundaries and a careful policing of the fault lines along those boundaries. And to establish this model he either ignores or slights some not altogether insignificant factors that tell another possible tale.

Firstly, popular culture, which he dismisses as an irrelevance. "Somewhere in the Middle East," he says, "a half-dozen young men could well be dressed in jeans, drinking Coke, listening to rap, and, between their bows to Mecca, putting together a bomb to blow up an American airliner." Other than its gratuitous viciousness, what this representation reveals is his

ignorance of the extent to which popular culture today is no longer purely Western in origin.

In Asia at any rate, sushi bars and fast food joints, the Japanese fashion houses Hanae Mori and Issey Miyake, the 'Cantonese-pop' of Hong Kong and the Malay serials of Malaysia, are all instances of a vast and irreversible absorption of Asian cultures by a devouring global culture. They are, if anything, evidence of the incredible capacity of contemporary capitalism to reduce to a depthless surface any cultural form. We consume as little of Japanese culture when we eat sushi as we do Italian culture when we eat pasta. We consume, rather, the commodified artifacts of a global culture that offers us, indifferently, now this and now that. If Hanae Mori brings back the kimono, it will be in a form so reduced as to be as popular in Buenos Aires and New Delhi as in Tokyo or San Francisco. It won't be the *Japanese* kimono any longer.

And popular culture does not come by itself. What is happening in the realm of popular culture has already happened far more intensely in the realms of science, economics and technology. Huntington ignores these factors altogether, or dismisses them as aspects of what he calls an elitist "Davos culture" -- after the annual gathering of high-level government, corporate and academic figures in Davos, Switzerland. Is the culture shaped by the global economy and technology really restricted to 1% of the world's population outside the West, as Huntington claims?

China invented printing in the eighth century and the movable type in the eleventh, but both inventions did not reach the West till the fifteenth. By contrast, new technology, not only products but also processes, courses through the world today in a matter of years, if not months. Europe took centuries to industrialise, but Japan telescoped the same process into half a century, and the newly industrialised economies of East Asia into a few decades.

What is extraordinary about late capitalism is not only the remarkable explosion of knowledge and techniques, but also their

remarkable portability, their spread, their capacity to reduce to a similar set of operations the lives of billions of people who have never met each other. A Ford motor plant in Beijing makes the same demands on Chinese workers as a plant in Detroit does on American workers. Mechanical engineering, cybernetics, aeronautics or quantum mechanics do not acquire Chinese airs in China or Indian features in India -- if they did, neither country would be able to explode H-bombs or make airplanes. The global economy, as well as science and technology have indeed erased to an astonishing degree the specificity of different cultures, the local.

Why, then, against this globalisation of technology and the practices that go along with it, is there a process of re-ethnicisation. Huntington is not wrong to assert that this process has in fact become more pronounced in some Asian states in recent years. Our test case, Singapore itself, to which I will now turn, is evidence of that process.

Why would a country that now has a higher per capita income than Great Britain, where English is spoken extensively, a country that actually feels more westernised that say Taiwan or South Korea, why would such a country insist on the Asianness of its modernity? And equally to the point, why would someone like Huntington acquiesce to such a characterisation as altogether obvious, evidence indeed of a law of modernity: its ability to proliferate definitions of itself, to break with its own modal origin, and thus situate a challenge to that origin.

Significantly, the ideological and economic challenge posed by Singapore in particular, and East Asia in general, to the hegemony of the West, has been represented, in both America and Asia, for not entirely incompatible reasons, as a conflict within capitalism.

Both parties seem to agree that a cultural division between, and not a political division within, each of its contrasting manifestations now rive global capitalism across the Pacific Ocean. Thus, for the "Singapore School" of ideologues, the division that matters is between a communitarian East and an

individualist West. Thus, for figures as various as Huntington and William Safire, the division that matters is between an Eastern "authoritarian capitalism" and a Western "liberal capitalism".

The protagonists in this particular transoceanic cultural war, we ought to note, have only recently discovered their dislike of each other, after having cooperated closely in the Cold War. The distinction between "authoritarian" and "liberal" capitalism is less an argument over the spoils of victory than an argument as to what that victory means.

Consider, for instance, the great play that has been made in organs like the *Wall Street Journal* of the fact that the economy of Singapore, and of a good many other East Asian countries, is dominated by their governments. This, coupled with the political controls at the disposal of various Asian regimes, is supposed to render East Asian capitalist miracles demotic versions of true capitalism. Leaving aside for a moment why capitalist systems dominated by big government-linked enterprises should be any worse (or better) than capitalist systems dominated by big private conglomerates, the distinction is too pat for more immediate reasons.

First, contrary to what is commonly believed, the active participation of governments in market economies is not exactly an East Asian invention. Bismarck's Germany got there first before Meiji Japan. Indeed, if there is any one particular ideological inspiration for the form of capitalism that Singapore practices, it comes from the West: namely, that model of the mixed economy that Fabians of Britain's Labor Party successfully exported to many former British colonies. (Singapore's ruling party even produced a manifesto in the 1970s that christened the system of managed capitalism they had instituted, "Socialism that Works" -- in contrast, presumably, to the version in Harold Wilson's Britain that didn't.)

Second, though the extent of public sector participation in Singapore's economy might well shock free-market orthodoxies in the US, what has powered Singapore's transformation is not

indigenous but foreign capital -- to be exact, multinational capital, much of it from the US. If authoritarian capitalism is dramatically different from liberal capitalism, admirers of the latter ought to explain why so many Fortune 500 companies have found the miracle economies of East Asia such salubrious destinations. To dismiss the relationship as purely exploitative -- greedy American corporations exploiting cheap labor; or ruthless Eastern despotisms taking advantage of American gullibility -- is to miss the mutualities involved altogether.

This is the discomfiting truth that western critics of regimes like Singapore's have considerable difficulty recognizing. It is easy enough to dismiss as irrational a system that you find objectionable; but if the objectionable system comes tricked out with all the features of a rationality of which you approve, you are then faced with the disagreeable task of extricating yourself from a judgment that is not also a self-condemnation. Singapore is an economic powerhouse precisely because its political, social and legal institutions have been shaped in ways to ensure its assimilation into a global economic system that emanates from the West. Contract law, for instance, the mother's milk of international commerce, functions in Singapore in the same way it does in the United States or Britain or the European Union. Entities like Hewlett-Packard and Microsoft know that; the Singapore government knows they know; and all the cutting things that liberal capitalists have said about authoritarian capitalists have not prevented JP Morgan from inviting Mr. Lee to sit on its board of advisors. Also it did not prevent the Nixon Center for Peace and Pragmatism from awarding Lee the "Architect of the New Century" prize, or the US Pacific fleet from using Singapore as a forward logistical base.

It is within this context, I believe -- the convergence of global economic interests -- that the Singapore government's enthusiasm for "Asian Values" should be understood. American liberalism reads "Asian Values" as merely a challenge to liberalism's ideological sway, a threat to liberalism's sovereign presence at the "end of history". In many respects, "Asian

Values" does constitute such a challenge; East Asian regimes have indeed invoked it to denigrate civil liberties as western importation, or in Singapore's case, to limit the growth of democracy beyond the exercise of a free vote at periodic intervals. But to read "Asian Values" as merely a cultural challenge to the West would be to underestimate its power and scope, its continuation of a logic that remains thoroughly Western.

The very discovery of "Asian Values" was driven by the need to manage, not to resist, an increasingly successful industrial state. The invocation of "Asian Values" functions, that is, not merely to contain the growth of rights beyond those already granted to achieve modernity, but also as a means of processing indigenous cultures into fit instruments of modernity.

In Singapore, "Asian Values", I believe, is largely a code word for the Confucianism that supposedly underpins the worldview of the Chinese-majority. Rediscovered locally only after its presence was detected by Western academics like Ezra Vogel to explain the startling growth of East Asia, Confucianism is now offered by East Asian ideologues as their answer to the Protestant work ethic. In the space of a decade, a philosophy that fifty years ago had been an object of almost universal derision among Chinese intellectuals as the cause of China's backwardness, has been miraculously transformed into a system of "communitarian" beliefs and values. At once, this factor explains the genesis of Asian capitalism as well as ensuring its continued growth.

Recently bundled into a more neutral-sounding but amorphous set of "Asian Values", Confucianism in Singapore continues to function as the ground of what Chua Beng Huat, borrowing from Gramsci, has called the "ideological hegemony" of the state. Linked to rationality, providing the justification even for radical rearrangements of traditional social structures, this invented tradition affords the state a means of subjecting the population to a structure of values whose chief beneficiaries are the distinctly modern protocols of capitalism, even as the state stages that modernity as a continuation of an unchanging past. By

yoking in this fashion the past to the present, the local to the global, "Asian Values" provides Asian elites with an efficient machinery for completing a process that has been going on for more than a century -- the subjection of indigenous cultures to the demands of modernity.

"Asian Values" constitutes, in this respect, ideological machinery that is continuous with the Orientalism of imperial metropolitan powers. Singapore, indeed, may well be the most perfect modern fulfillment of the Orientalist project -- conceived and executed, this time, by Orientals themselves. No other Asian country has created as efficient a mechanism for selecting, defining and controlling an "Asian" identity that is so fully consonant with the requirements of a modern market, even as it sets aside as waste what it deems decadent and dangerous in the West.

It is useful to recall that this didn't occur overnight. "Asian Values" did not always mean conservatism, even in Singapore. Mr. Lee used to say in the 1960s that "the English-educated" -- namely, Westernized Singaporeans -- "don't riot". By contrast, the Chinese-educated -- namely, authentically Asian Singaporeans -- did, with great vigor. Contemporary Chinese political culture, only thirty years ago a threat to modernization, has become the repository of conservative values, a confirmation of capitalist principles. The extraordinary transformation of cultural identities this has required suggests that the re-ethnicisation that Huntington speaks of is not quite a rediscovery of essential cultural identities, but is rather an ideologically-driven reformulation of those very same identities to meet particular political exigencies.

The claim of differential cultural identities, for instance, enables Asian establishments to reject the democratic ethos already present in modern Asian history -- from the May Fourth movement in China to the nationalist, anti-colonial struggles in India, Indonesia and elsewhere -- as an aberrant foreign importation. Such erasures of recent Asian history are especially useful in Singapore because the state here is itself the agent of a democratizing process -- involving social and economic

enfranchisement as well as the ballot box -- which it also wishes to contain. The very success of Singapore's modernity has led the state to formulate a sanitized cultural inheritance to restrain its citizens from demanding political rights beyond those already granted to achieve modernity. By representing, thus, political possibilities *within* Asian modernity as a choice *between* Eastern and Western cultural identities, the state can contain the threats to its power that its own success has generated.

Ironically, Western commentators like Huntington who fail to note that the source of such contradictory political possibilities is Asian modernity itself, and choose instead to regard the contradictions as evidence of a flawed modernity diametrically different from their own, confirm the very terms of the debate that Asian establishments seek.

The question is why? Why this extraordinary insistence among entities within the same party that they are really very different? As I warned at the outset, I haven't a clue what the answer to this question might be. It is possible to give some offhand answers -- assert, for instance, that the proliferation of cultural differences facilitates political control. But such an answer though applicable to the assertion of "Asian Values" does not make sense where Huntington's thesis is concerned. Why urge that Western civilisation give up the claim of universality at this very instance in history when a globalised economy suggests the triumph of that universality?

I would suggest that that very coincidence -- the assertion of cultural uniqueness coinciding with the material fact of globalisation -- is itself the explanation. Capitalism, hitherto, has been understood to be continuous with a particular culture, as David Landes has described with great depth in his recent book The Wealth and Poverty of Nations. That continuity has been broken by globalisation. The very fact that capital is trans-national renders capital in excess not only of nation but also of culture. The threefold link between the rationality of the Enlightenment, cultural identity and the interests of capital has become a twofold link between rationality and capital with a

purely instrumental notion of culture mediating. The fact that "Asian values", for example, can now signify competitive economic advantage -- culture on par, as it were, with a well-trained work force, an efficient infrastructure and favourable tax structures -- is evidence that transnational capital is also transcultural. Which means to say the structures, habits and belief systems transnational capital requires for its functioning are to a remarkable extent quite independent of any particular cultural formation or nation state.

Culture has emerged as a question of enormous moment, I suggest, because it has been forced to join the ranks of the alienated by transnational capital. The production of cultural differences, and all the potential ugliness that such differences involve, is a means of recovering value, including national sovereignty, in a context where the universal as such has become the province of transnational capital.

Globalisation will further exacerbate this alienation, and not only in East Asia. It is highly significant that our theorist of civilisational conflicts, Samuel Huntington, is an American. It is significant, too, that Great Britain, the other country beside the US which has profited the most from financial liberalisation, has refused thus far to join the single currency area, largely for cultural and nationalist, not economic, reasons. There are many people in the US and Britain who resent globalisation's encroachment on their political sovereignty.

As the British authors of a recent book on globalisation, entitled Global Transformations, put it: "Political space in respect of political power and the accountability of political power is no longer coterminous with a delimited national territory. The growth of transboundary problems creates overlapping communities of fate: that is, a condition in which the fortunes and prospects of individual political communities are increasingly bound together."

The phrase they use, "communities of fate", is significant: The trouble is "communities of fate" are not only no longer

coterminous with delimited territorial states, they are no longer coterminous with definable "We"s either. A global economy doubtless exists, but there is no global society, a socious, nothing that answers to a global "we". When Huntington rejects multiculturalism – which he sees as the weak cultural analogue of economic globalisation – he makes the same gesture as when Jesse Helms rejects the UN, or when Patrick Buchanan rejects free trade and NAFTA, or when Margaret Thatcher reject the Euro. What all of these widely divergent figures have in common is the perception that globalisation reduces the traditional power of the state, the power of a particular people within a definable territory, to determine their own fate. In this respect, they are no different from Dr. Mahathir of Malaysia, whose rejection of capital account convertibility is based on the argument that the electronic herds of international capital markets are unaccountable, and therefore irresponsible.

Before we dismiss all of these people as ignorant and reactionary, it would do us well, I think, to take seriously the paradox that they reflect: On the one hand, socially meaningful life exists locally, in a particular time and place, or it does not exist at all. On the other hand, the global economy is a fact completely at variance with the conditions of socially meaningful life. The global economy doubtless exists -- it implicates even those with no access to potable water or electricity -- but it has no location. It is a vast transactional system involving people who are far more unlikely to meet each other than are people who live in the same country, and are far less likely to understand each other when they do meet. The problem is how do we connect the first mode of social existence -- here and now, in particular communities, in particular spaces -- with that other, equally real mode, the global, which in essence has no location?

Culture has become of great moment because it is one of the few avenues left whereby a community's most cherished notions – of sovereignty, of self-determination, of autonomy – can be vindicated. Tom Friedman of the New York Times argues quite persuasively in *The Lexus* and the *Olive Tree* that all nations, which wish to participate in the global economy, must assume what he calls the

"golden straitjacket". This is a set of uniform economic and social policies which the markets, not particular states, demand. When a community or polity can no longer assert itself economically or politically, that community only has reality if it translates as cultural identity. The category of culture, it seems to me, has acquired the prestige it has in many parts of the world precisely because cultural identity may be the only means available for a community to assert the priority of the local over the global.

III

It is within this context that I want to situate a doubt, very tentatively, very

hesitantly, as to the validity of multiculturalism, as an ideology. As a social

value, there can be no doubt about the virtues of multiculturalism: try to be

a little kinder to each other, try to be a little more understanding of cultural

differences. Such values are always valid, now perhaps more than ever.

But multiculturalism as an ideology is more than just a message of tolerance or even acceptance. It is also, fundamentally, an assertion of the priority of culture as a category of understanding.

If cultural identity exists today, as I assert above, as a category of exclusive value primarily because of globalisation -- as a form of self-defense, almost -- the question naturally arises: can assertions of the priority of cultural categories, like multiculturalism, be a sufficient solution to a problem whose structure it shares? Can the category of culture, in other words, even if it comes dressed up as inherently multiple and relative, function usefully in an arena where culture as such has become a problem? Can the fox be asked to look-after the chicken-coop?

This doubt about multiculturalism has become particularly acute in the United States. It is not only people on the right, like Huntington, who criticise its assumptions, but also people on the left, like Arif Dirlik and Michael Benn Walters, and more circumspectly, Edward Said. While the right's criticism -- that multiculturalism is an attack on the priority of the western narrative -- can quite safely, and correctly, be dismissed as uncomprehending, I'm not sure if the left's criticism can be similarly dismissed. Fundamentally, the doubt the left has concerns the validity of substituting identity politics -- African-American, Hispanic, Asian, or gender or sexual identities -- for the project of modernity. What happens to the "We" in "We, the people" in the absence of a radical secularism whose

protocols of rationality are not coincident with any particular culture or race?

The same question might be asked, I would suggest, of Singapore. The dynamics of inter-racial relations in Singapore has never been purely dependent on internal factors. For better or worse, Singapore's nationalism has always been mediated through the cultural nationalism of its various indigenous groups. There would have been no such thing as a Singapore nationalism -- or for that matter, Malayan nationalism, which was the only thing we knew prior to 1965-- if there had been no Chinese revolutions, no Indonesian revolution, no Indian national movement. What inspired Chinese Singaporeans in the 1950s, for instance, was the victory of the Chinese Communists in 1949. When Mao declared on the steps of Tiananmen that "China has stood up", that statement was taken not merely as an expression of national self-assertion applicable only to a particular nation-state, but also of cultural self-assertion applicable to all ethnic Chinese. The political consciousness of Malays and Indians in Singapore and Malaya were also formed in strikingly intimate ways by events in Indonesia and India respectively.

The fact is nobody in Singapore would have thought of asserting his or her national identity if he had not felt himself authorised to do so by nationalist movements elsewhere in Asia. The fate of nationalism in Singapore was tied up inextricably with pan-Asian political and cultural movements. The exogenous origins of Singapore or Malayan nationalism have from the beginning defined that nationalism as an ideology divided against itself. Singapore's nationalism thus has always existed in a tense relationship with the extra-national sources of that nationalism -- the cultural nationalisms of its various component races. How we mediate the extra-national origins of Singapore's nationalism is not merely a political burden but a historical and philosophical one as well. The problem of inter-racial relations in Singapore is rooted in the fact that Singapore nationalism -- by definition, an assertion of unique identity -- has never been coincident with its

various cultural nationalisms -- by definition, assertions of trans-national cultural identities.

I would like to suggest that the best hope for multi-culturalism in Singapore, in this context, is not to be found in something called "Asian values" -- which almost invariably will be defined in hegemonic, if not exclusive, terms -- but rather a form of radical secularism that accepts the separation of the national, or social and political spheres, from the cultural sphere.

Such a separation, however, is not without its problems. A radical separation of the national from the cultural can mean the co-optation of the national by the so-called cosmopolitan -- in practice, the exclusively English-educated. It is precisely such a separation in India, where the secular is identified with the English-educated, that has prompted the rise of Hindu chauvinism.

Despite the problems of separating the national from the cultural, though, I don't see what alternative there is to such a separation. In practice, the separation has already occurred in Singapore, legally and formally; but the separation has yet to acquire an ideological power. We keep slipping, ever so often, from the protocols of modernity into the protocols of race and culture. The best hope for multiculturalism in Singapore, it seems to me, is to reject cultural identity as an all-encompassing cognitive category, to recognise race as fundamentally a fiction, and to become, in some as yet un-thought manner, a-unicultural, a-uniracial.

ALFP 1998 Report:
(Substantive Program Evaluation)

Suwanna Satha-Anand

Introductory Note

The 1998 program took place under the shadow of the Asian economic crisis, which served as a basis for "common concern" among the fellows. However, it is obvious that some fellows are more well versed in the discourse of "global economy," while others are more connected to "local organizations" struggling with the impact and influence of that globalizing process. The common concern and the differences among the fellows set the dynamics of the program at four different levels. They are:

> Personal to Group Dynamics
> National to Regional Dynamics
> Japan to ASEAN and ASEAN to Japan Dynamics
> Asia in Japan and Japan in Asia Dynamics

Personal to Group Dynamics

It seems to me that the composition of the group itself reflects the complexities of the "globalizing processes" and the "localizing strategies." All six fellows: a Marxist anthropologist working on the fragmentation of life in China who is searching for a "belief," a spiritualist NGO persona from the Philippines in need of a rational discourse, a grass-root artist from Indonesia who is struggling to "demonopolize" nationalism in aesthetico-political terms; a globalist journalist from Singapore who questions all easy answers from local people in the globalizing process, a leading researcher from Malaysia who grapples with the conceptions of Asia, and a student of Buddhist Philosophy who attempts intellectual mediations between the Thai traditional Sangha establishment and the civil society, defy easy labeling. In spite of all their differences, they are all more or less educated in the "globalizing" West, and thus form the basis of their communication.

The tensions within the group can be seen as not only indicating the different degrees of willingness to listen and to learn from each other, rather it reflects the necessity and the limitations of the interfacing of the globalizing and localizing agents. At times of economic prosperity, certain elements of the "locals" are easily co-opted into the rapid economic

development process, leaving behind their traditions; whereas during economic downturns the conflicts of interests come to the foreground, and local traditions are called upon to help out.

Against this backdrop, I learn to understand the wider contexts of my work. How my intellectual challenges to an institution of traditional culture like the Thai Sangha, can be most meaningful in the sense that, if this conservative tradition can be better equipped to communicate with the emerging civil society, perhaps the transitions Thailand is facing, whether economic, political or cultural, can better serve Thai society as a whole. The tensions between traditional and modernizing forces are not limited to Thailand, all ASEAN countries are facing the same dilemma. My participation in this program helps me realize the wider implications of my work, as well as its connection to other socio-political situations in Asia. The conceptions of Asia, with their complexities become very much alive in the process of the program.

National to Regional Dynamics

After realizing that my work can be part of a national agenda, I was also challenged into thinking about the possibility that some other ASEAN countries are keeping an eye on Thailand's economic recovery. Thailand has been an "obedient" follower of the IMF package, and in that sense this country "cannot" fail. (Some local Thai newspapers call the IMF "Our Father.") It is surprising for me to realize that Thailand is expected to be a case of "hope" for recovery. My instinct tells me that Thai leaders are great at staging a facade.

However, I doubt that Thailand could be a case study for the "economic recovery" as the paradigmatic thinking about what constitutes a good or desirable society has not changed. Alternative visions of a "good" society have not gained adequate public support. If the Thais could work out some kind of a more equitable and viable process of negotiations between the rural, the urban, the localizing and globalizing elements, and between civil society and state; then the mechanics of this process could be the best gift Thailand can offer to her neighboring countries.

It is also interesting to mote that Thailand has been "fortunate" to have the years between 1992-1997 as a time of great political optimism. The Parliament just passed the Peoples' Constitution and the Chuan Leekpai government still enjoys relatively high degree of legitimacy. (This is in sharp contrast to the Indonesian situation where an authoritarian government immediately loses its legitimacy at the onslaught of the economic crisis.) The Thai social fabric is still functioning. Malaysia, on the

other hand, is facing great political uncertainty, which does not help the current economic downturns.

What is important is I learned all this through personal interactions with other fellows. It certainly is very different from reading the news from the newspapers.

Japan to ASEAN and ASEAN to Japan Dynamics

It is quite obvious that the major focus of the program is for these six fellows to "encounter" leading Japanese scholars in various fields. As a result, I believe that all six fellows learn a lot about Japan in terms of her current situations, her cultures, and her history. However, it is also desirable that more time be devoted to inter-ASEAN sessions. Frankly, one of the most impressive moments I had during my entire two-month stay was when five of us had a session on the roles of the Chines in South-east Asia during the recent crisis. We all felt that more sessions like that would certainly be very enriching for us.

In light of the above, I also feel that it might be fruitful to invite interested Japanese intellectuals to participate in the workshops when the fellows first discussed about their own works. The Ito experience is essentially for the fellows to present their reactions to the seminars so far, not about the works of the fellows in their homebase as such. I think that a synthesis of the fellows' background and the program can be better achieved in combining these two processes, which are somehow still quite separate.

In short, more opportunities could be created for communications among fellow ASEANS as well as from ASEAN fellows to Japanese scholars.

Asia in Japan to Japan in Asia Dynamics

Perhaps a short explanation is needed to articulate the phrase "Asia in Japan." First, it is interesting to note that in Mr. Nakamae's three scenarios of economic prospects of Japan, there is **no** mention of ASEAN. There are of course, the US, Europe and China. The session indicates to me that, perhaps Japan does not exist in Asia, but that Asia exists in Japan. (There is of course a big difference between geography and economics, although the two are crucially related.) Japan is a major but nervous player on world economic stage, ASEAN is a minute appendage between India and China.

Second, Professor Shiraishi's brief but important presentation on the relationship between Japan and Asia again tells me that at least in the minds of some Japanese industrialists, Asia exists in Japan. (Prof. Shiraishi talks about the fact that it is **impossible** for Japanese car manufacturers to

conceptualize their production plants **without** Asia.) In this sense, the relationship between Japan and the "rest of" Asia is conceptualized under the necessity of having Asia **within** the production process of Japanese manufacturing.

However, I believe that the organizers of the ALFP see the situation otherwise. A stronger Asia helps nurture a stronger Japan, and ASEAN is part of the whole. In this sense, Japan needs to reconcile with the rest of Asia. Japan needs to "return" to Asia with grace. Grace is achieved through communication, not on economic front, but on intellectual and cultural grounds. From this perspective, the ALFP helps "re-situate" Japan within Asia.

My independent trip to Matsuyama to meet Mr. Masanobu Fukuoka informs me that Japan has a "hidden" treasure. He is a "crazy and stubborn" old farmer who refuses to use chemicals in his farms. Mr. Fukuoka commands little recognition in Japan, but he has been an inspiration to many NGOs in Asia, Europe and Africa. The globalizing processes make him more accessible across national borders, and thus increasing his influences. His localizing strategies help generate income and, perhaps more importantly, hope, for many poor farmers in the world. The irony is, a person like this little stubborn man from Japan, can be a key to the global environmental crisis. Few people take notice of him because alternative visions of good societies are not readily available as a common frame of reference.

There are many ways ASEAN peoples can look up to Japan, and there are many ways Japan can learn from ASEAN peoples. The ALFP can be a perfect point for mutual learning and communication. Thus perhaps, the globalizing processes can be embraced with less harms, and the localizing strategies can achieve more without resort to violence.

Crisis in Transition, Transitions in Crisis: Roles of Thai Public Intellectuals in Economic Hardship

Suwanna Satha-anand

Introductory Note

All societies are in constant transition all the time. But some transitions are more significant than others. Major transitions in many parts of the world are being defined by the complex relationships between the local and the global. The term "global" here indicates key international powers, which could mean colonial powers, multi-national corporations or the global economy. The term "local" here involves geographical lesser-powers with complicated relationships with the global. Take for example, for many people in remote rural areas in Thailand, Bangkok represents the "global" because Bangkok represents the "world" for them. However, at the same time, many forms of international powers also dictate Bangkok. In the latter sense Bangkok is "local" in relation to other world communities.

Apart from being defined by the relationships between the local and the global, the nature of transition itself can take many forms. First, a transition can be a spontaneous transformation with no radical discontinuity with its own past; or second, a transition can also mean radical changes which give rise to qualitatively new mode of existence. In both ways, a transition implies a moment of "being-in-between" two stages of existence. It can be a moment of anxiety as well as a moment of hope.

Periods of Transitions

In recent Thai history, we can delineate at least four major transitions or transitional periods.

1). Thailand's modernization during the reign of King Rama V in late 19th to early 20th Century.
2). The 1932 change from Absolute Monarchy to Democracy.
3). The early 1960's government's decision to "develop" Thailand with loans from the World Bank and other international agencies.
4). The recent economic crisis, when the symptoms of economic prosperity are becoming a myth of the past.

All these major transitions need also to be seen within the context of Thai political development.

Since 1932, non-elected Prime Ministers (mostly military generals) have headed approximately two thirds of all Thai governments. Since the 1960's, authoritarian leaderships have justified their rules by delivering economic growth. After 40 years of privileging economic growth over and above other aspects of the national life, the income share of the poorest 20% has actually dropped" from 6% in 1975 to 4% in 1991.

On the intellectual scene, great debates for a serious alternative form of society ended in the late 1970's. Nothing comparable to that "Age of Ideology" has emerged in Thai society since then. After the 1992 May event, the military has kept a low profile on political issues. Last year, just a few months after the onslaught of the economic crisis, there were cries for the military to stage a coup état, but they restrained themselves. In 1997, for the first time in Thai history a civilian holds the position of the Minister of Defense. Whether this administrative and symbolic positioning will lead to a "democratic civilizing" of the Thai military remains to be seen.

Transitions in Crisis

In the past five years before the current economic crisis, we have seen a gradual strengthening of the emerging civil society championed by the urban middle-class. Last year the "People's Constitution" was passed by Parliament. Again, for the first time in Thai history, there was a popular participation implemented in the drafting process of the Constitution itself. Many public intellectuals were instrumental to the drafting of this Constitution, which is aimed primarily at creating and strengthening institutional mechanisms for "cleaning up" Thai politics, guaranteeing more transparency, accountability and protection of the rights of the Thai citizen.

In many ways, the years before the economic crisis have shown signs of healthy transitions for Thai society, the most important of which are, first, the fading out of military-led state authoritarianism, and second, the rise of democratic consciousness among the general population. I believe that this "breathing space" period is instrumental to the absence of total social disintegration in the face of the current crisis. Another reason seems to be that there is a general feeling that "we" are all in this together. This is might not be a fair statement because the poor farmers and villagers had nothing to do with this crisis as actors. And yet, there seems to be no strong sense of alienation against each other. Actually, one of the reasons why General Chavalit had to step down was because he delivered a very divisive speech, trying to blame the "Chinese" for creating this crisis, calling them "it." He had to resign soon after that.

From one perspective, we can say that the economic crisis was forced onto the "democratic" transition. This results in putting the first transition in transition. A favorable solution to the economic crisis might or might not lead to a maturing of the "democratic" transition. That remains to be seen.

Another aspect of the current transition is the changing nature of the relationship between the "local" and the "global." In the past, symbolic subordination/domination in the forms of taxation and forced or coerced labor recruitment in times of war or big royal projects could characterize the relationship. In recent decades, especially at the height of the globalizing process in Thailand, the locals were urged and coerced into selling their land that was their only means of livelihood and long-term security. This means that, in a matter of months, a buffalo boy roaming in the rice field who might inherit the land from his family, was turned into a caddy boy in an "international" golf course, with members coming from Japan and Taiwan. Today, the same boy might be forced back to being a buffalo boy, except that now neither the buffalo nor the land belongs to his family. He is now only a "labor." In this way, it can be said that globalization has totally subsumed the "locals" within its powerful processes. On the other hand, we cannot deny that globalization itself has also produced a condition wherein many "locals" could be better equipped to cope with the totalizing effects of globalization itself.

Roles of Public Intellectuals

In many cases, Thai public intellectuals are rural or urban locals who become "globalized" through Western education and training. Many public intellectuals in Asia are educated in Western universities. Some return home to their locality, some stay on while others going back and forth. In many ways, public intellectuals are "mediators" between the locals and the global. They are critical of the limitations of the technocrats and the bureaucrats who essentially perform the role of importer and blind supporter of the globalizing processes. In Thailand, public intellectuals have been the mediators between government bureaucrats and the local villagers; between NGOs and urban public; between civil society and traditional religious institutions and between civil society and the state. It seems that their roles are increasingly needed in times of crisis and transitions.

In practical terms, with the government projection of two million unemployed by the end of 1998, the Thai government has set up several types of emergency funds made available to different groups of people, ranging from farmers' cooperatives, various community organizations, home industry promotion groups and others. Many NGOs with public

intellectuals as their advisors or leaders try to make sure that, first, the information from the government gets across to the people, and second that they get across to the right groups of people. A case in point, The Foundation for Children Development, headed by a well-known public intellectual, prepared and presented a report on the "Situation and Choices of the Underprivileged in Economic Crisis," for comments and inputs by the public in August 1998. The report was then submitted to members of parliament, the media and relevant government agencies and to the interested public.

At another level, many public intellectuals in Thailand are re-reading Buddhist scriptures to bring out many neglected elements in Buddhism that could be a basis for more social equality as well as for more gender equality. The traditional exploitation of the concept of "karma" as justifying social and gender inequality also needs to be reformed. Many new researches are bringing out more progressive elements in Buddhism. MA theses at the Philosophy Department, Chulalongkorn University deal with topics such as "Human Rights and Buddhist Ethics," "Karma and Social Justice in Buddhism," to cite a few examples.

Inconclusive Concluding Note

In conclusion, I would simply say that a crisis is better than "unearned comfort" in bringing out the best potentials in people. I see the economic crisis in Thailand as an opportunity to re-examine oneself in one's future participation in the global economy. I see signs of hope from and for the public intellectuals in their mediating roles between the local and the global, and thus strengthening the process of localizing strategies.

I would like to end with the philosophy of Watsuji Tetsuro, who proposed in *The Study of Ethics as the Study of Man* (Rinri gaku), that to properly understand the human situation, one needs to understand the "betweeness" between man. This "betweeness" also needs to be radically re-conceptualized. In other words, the question now is how do we deal with the multiple "betweeness" between man created by the globalizing processes? Or how could we make sense of ethics in such complex and multiple sets of simultaneous relationships? The "betweeness" of the public intellectuals is certainly helpful and important, but will it be enough?

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