



The Asian Public Intellectuals

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THE PARADOX OF THINKING



• The first public discussion held at the Thammasat University after the coup was announced.
• Photo courtesy of A. Magno

Though the coup on 19 September 2006 made the anti-Thaksin groups and those frustrated by the recent gloomy politics feel much more relieved, it came at the disappointment of those cherishing participatory democracy. It also led to burgeoning debate among academia and activists; and puzzled many whether it was committed rightly or not. We can use this opportunity to enhance the learning process in higher education for students and university personnel to broaden their understanding in politics.

In my view, the crux of the matter is the weight given to either the means or ends. Don't we agree that, by and large, we tend to lean toward the end rather than the means? In other words, we seem to not care about the means, but the desirable end. As a saying goes, "it does not matter what color the cat is, but its ability to catch mice."

Among those who proclaim themselves as academics and subscribing to the rule of democracy, particularly, the so-called participatory democracy, how do we approach this recent military-led coup? I have come across a plethora of interviews given by academics and political activists who claim to cherish democratic rule. They mostly came out to heap praises on the military clique for

“...if all academics and political activists who claim to cherish democratic rule still subscribe themselves to such a belief, it shows a blatant paradox of thinking.”

their bloodless operation to get rid of Thaksin from the political arena. Some went even further to label this coup as a non-violent action. Some claimed that this coup did much to the service of the nation. Whether or not all these claims are substantial is not the point. The facts will be verified sooner or later.

The point is by embracing the coup this time(or other times,) it shows that Thai society categorically accepts the legitimacy of the military taking over state powers. Therefore, it is fine for the military to use their judgment; and when they find it “reasonable enough,” they are allowed to commit a coup. And whether or not the coup is acceptable depends on how it was committed. It is acceptable if it has taken place “non-violently; but it is not acceptable if it has taken place “violently.”

Another interesting point is when addressing “violence,” all our attention is given merely to “physical violence,” i.e., the bloodlessness of the coup, etc. Structural violence seems to be taken for granted. We have to understand that a coup by individual military personnel or the military as a whole is obviously an act of structural violence; though no blood was shed during the operation. If we accept that the coup is legitimate, it also means that Thai society is heralding structural violence.

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This point is very interesting as far as the Thai political development goes since if all academics and political activists who claim to cherish democratic rule still subscribe themselves to such a belief, it shows a blatant paradox of thinking. It is undeniable that the horrendous approach adopted by former PM Thaksin has engendered widespread damage to the nation and the majority of people. We feel happy that he was deposed. At the same time, since I do not like the approach that uses the “end” to justify the “means,” how can I come out to cheer the usurping of powers by the military clique this time? What makes me feel most concerned is this kind of thinking has been enlivened by and large in Thai higher education institutions which function to instill education on the next generations. How then can we have any hope for the development of “participatory democracy,” or if that phrase has simply been used rhetorically for amassing of one’s personal powers?

If we hinge on our personal satisfaction and interests and use it for our own reasoning, anything can be justified. In that case, if a son of a village folk steals chicken, he will be condemned for breaking both laws and morality. But when it comes to us or our friends as the one who steal the chicken, we excuse ourselves for doing so by saying that we ought to commit the act since we need to feed our hungry babies and prevent them from dying. Therefore, we should be found not guilty; and even if the guilt can be established, it has been “reasonably” done so.

To my knowledge, such logic has been used extensively in Thai society. Those who want to be in a position or groups which throw support to their candidates opt for this logic; i.e., the means is not as important as the end, which to me is a very Machiavellian approach. And we tend to take it for granted for anything.

And if that logic is right, I wonder why we have failed to condemn the past actions by former PM Thaksin

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since many of them have been carried out based on placing more importance on the end rather than the means i.e., the Thai Rak Thai Party won a landslide victory, the buy-out of politicians, the use of nominees for business transactions, or the sale of shares with tax waiver. I do not find these actions different from the coup by the military. Similarly, both have been carried out

based on the use of the end to justify the means. I pray that all the committees appointed by the military clique for various functions will refrain from using this Machiavellian approach as the military has done.

It is very timely that social science lecturers get together to dialogue to enhance our political education. At least, it should help the young generation to understand this point clearer though there is less hope for changing the thoughts of the adults.

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BANGKOK CLASSIC

The downward spiral towards a coup stretched over several months. The prime minister came under attack from many former supporters, yet the former leftists in his entourage stayed loyal. Though he had acquired a reputation as a ruthless authoritarian, he suddenly made a complete U-turn and began to present himself as the defender of democracy.

Opponents charged members of the government with being critical and offensive to the king to the point of *lese majeste*. In particular, one statement from a government leader seemed to accuse the palace of trying to overthrow the elected government. Critics also pointed to corruption scandals involving ministers and massive sums of money. As an extra complication, an American-authored work on the Thai monarchy ruffled royalist sensibilities.

In the middle of all this, elections were held and subsequently condemned as “the dirtiest” in Thai history. As the government’s popularity sank, people joined angry demonstrations on the streets of Bangkok. While the army had a reputation for suppressing such demonstrations, in this case the soldiers seemed to offer protection, even encouragement. As the demonstrations called on the

“... as if the coup was an everyday part of the country’s politics.”

government to resign, fierce wrangling started over key appointments in the police and armed forces. Both sides seemed to be preparing for a coup.

Eventually the army moved. Tanks rolled on the streets.

The soldiers wore colored armbands to identify themselves to one another. In about an hour, they seized Government House, and the coup succeeded without a shot fired. A few hours later, the generals went for an audience with the king. Soon after, the king issued an order recognizing the new military government.

The coup makers promptly tore up the constitution, and assumed the right to appoint a new Cabinet. In justification, they said they had been forced to carry out the coup because the former prime minister’s intransigence left them with “no choice.”

19 September 2006? No. Forty-nine years and three days before that. All the above is an account of the coup of 16 September 1957.

Many people have trotted out the data on the numbers of coups in Thailand, as if the coup was an everyday part of the country’s politics. But the last occasion on which there was a successful coup involving tanks trundling through the capital was the Sarit coup almost half a century ago.

The coup of 1991 was a much more elegant affair, with the prime minister grabbed at gunpoint in the airport, away from public view. The tank-trundling coups of 1981 and 1985 were both failures. Tanks appeared on Bangkok Streets in 1971, 1973, and 1976 but these actions were not classic coups in the sense of a military overthrow of the incumbent government. Kriangsak’s successful coup of October 1977 was a quiet affair. The coup of 2006 takes us back not fifteen years, but almost fifty.



• Military personnel were more relaxed on the days following the coup.
• Photo courtesy of A. Magno

In 1957, the authoritarian prime minister who suddenly proclaimed himself as a democrat was Phibun Songkram. The coup-maker was Sarit Thanarat. The American-authored work which ruffled sensibilities was the film of *The King and I*. The big corruption scandal was over logs not airport scanners. The soldiers’ armbands were white not yellow. But many aspects of these two incidents are eerily parallel.

The events of September 2006 are a real classic, a piece of tradition, a throwback, a scratchy recording on technology thought obsolete, a dinosaur diorama. Thaksin, General Sonthi and all the others involved deserve congratulation for turning Thailand’s political clock back by almost half a century.

One last touch. I was told that some tanks which trundled on the 19th September might be the same vehicles that made the coup in 1957. Probably they are not quite that old, more likely early 1960s vintage, but have trundled on Bangkok’s streets before. This is a tribute to the Royal Thai Army’s maintenance section.

And in this Bangkok classic, that’s the only tribute that’s deserved.



Chris Baker is one of Thailand’s well-known historian and political commentator. This article first appeared on [Dateline Bangkok](#) third quarter 2006 published by the Foreign Correspondent Club of Thailand. Thanks to Chris Baker and Patrick Barta, [Dateline Bangkok](#) Editor, for permission to reprint the article.



A TEST OF INTELLECT

Indonesian poet and journalist Goenawan Mohamad once said that there are three most important institutions in transforming a complex society like Indonesia into a better place. The media, academia, and art, he said, are at the forefront of the democracy movement. Only its strength could lay the intellectual foundation much needed in fighting against the corrupted powers that took turn in haunting the country since its inception.

When I landed in Indonesia in 2001, I first witnessed the dynamism of intellectual interaction that proved Goenawan's point. Thousands of books, some of which has long been published underground, emerged in big and small bookshops. Everywhere, young and energetic people were openly engaged in discussions on issues once deemed "sensitive;" therefore, punishable by authorities. Artist

communities flourished and powerfully expressed themselves and their ideologies to the people. Students and journalists march on the streets demanding for freedom of expression.

While social struggle has no end and there is no guarantee for success, the role of the intellectual force in changing Indonesia's

Intellectual discourse which is known to be democratic and respectful of differences of ideas is replaced by emotion.

political landscape is undeniable.

The post-coup scenario in Thailand painted another complex picture. While the New Order Indonesia posted clear threats to the majority that changes are unavoidable, the Thai society now faces a question of democracy whose absolute answer is difficult to define. Division of opinions regarding the justification of the September coup led the Thai intellectual community into a serious split. Surprisingly, many active participants in the intellectual community are driven into choosing between two impossible choices: one is a so-called democratically-elected government known to have corrupted and damaged the system the way no government had ever done before; while another is an undemocratic institution asserting its undemocratic power in the name of democracy.

It is indeed a test of intellect for both the intellectuals and the society as a whole. One good thing is that this political situation generated active debates on democracy and its meaning. But somehow many debates turned into argument, frustration and disappointment; then hints of accusations and bitterness emerged. Intellectual discourse which is known to be democratic and respectful of differences of ideas is replaced by emotion. At this point, wisdom succumbs.

It is time that we look at ourselves carefully whether we truly believe that intellectual force is crucial in bringing a society to a point where people enjoy a decent life, freedom, and equality. While political power, regardless of who they are, will never get tired of taking what they want, one question worth answering is that whether our society has enough intellectual strength to fight back.

Sadly, I still do not know where to look for the answer.

Prangtip Daorueng writes for various media organizations including The Center for Public Integrity (ICIJ) in Washington, DC.



• A curious crowd gathered at the first public action against the coup.
• Photo courtesy of A. Magno

The coup never happened?

For most of the people in Thailand, the September coup took place on TV screens or computer monitors. Although some of them went out to the streets and took pictures with the tanks, all they remembered about the coup were those images that they took. These reflect how people relate with the events around them - in a very personalized way, in an increasingly individualized and visualized society of Thailand.

For these people, they felt no great change in their lives (except, of course, some spectacles, out of a boring daily life.) The post-coup cabinet promised investors that

“... the coup was just another power-grappling game among the political elite cliques.”

it will not make any radical transformation in economic policies; despite the lip service of bringing about a sufficiency economy. There was no sign of sincere attempt to diversify the nationalistic concepts that permeate every fabric of the

society under the age-old banner of “Nation, Religion, Monarchy” by the explicitly royalist coup makers; despite the recent apology by the PM to the Muslims in the southern provinces. No decision can be made by the communities on various issues around the country; the state was more centralized.

Life, good and bad, just goes on under the new regime without any decisive break from the Thaksin era. Perhaps there was a little bit more, yet fleeting, spice of reality-show-style entertainment (from PAD mobs, June celebration, to September coup) of change at the surface level. It leads one to ask, amid thousand other eye-dazzling extravaganza of this type of changes, “Did the coup really happen?” From the perspective of everyday life, one is tempted to think that the coup was just another power-grappling game among the political elite cliques.



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HUMAN RIGHTS SITUATION IN POST COUP THAILAND



• Sarawut (center) at the Royal Thai Army - headquarter of the military junta.
• Photo courtesy of Sarawut Pratoomraj

After the coup on 19 September, I observed four main trends in the human rights situation in Thailand. First, there are three main protest groups who are against the military junta. These are: 1) the Thaksin followers, 2) the student-led 19 September against the Coup, and 3) the minority NGOs and lay people.

Second, the military junta legitimized their rule by setting up a representative National Legislative Assembly (NLA). From the 1,982 names nominated, it was narrowed down to 200, and finally 100 members were selected at its first meeting on 18 December 2006. Of the thirty five members of the drafting committee, the military junta was entitled to name 10 members from outside of the representative assembly. The entitlement to appoint was against the idea of a representative body.



• Deputy Secretary General of the National Security Council receives the letter of protest.

Thirdly, the junta allowed groups to demonstrate in Bangkok but not outside of Bangkok. Villagers who marched towards Bangkok were blocked along the way. This was a violation on rights to assembly and expression.

Fourth, on 10 December - Human Rights Day - pro-democracy and human rights groups organized activities at the 14 October Memorial Hall in Rajchadamneon Avenue. After the press conference, a protest letter was submitted to the military junta at the Royal Thai Army. It demanded to re-install democracy and to uphold the six human rights standards in the Constitution namely; human dignity, universality and inalienability, indivisibility, equality and non-discrimination, participation and inclusion, accountability and the Rule of Law.



Thailand will need a lot of time to be a democratic country. I hope that other countries do not experience the same violation of human rights as in Thailand.

Sarawut Pratoomraj is a Thai lawyer and human rights advocate.

Military Coup and the Future of Southern Thailand

The recent military coup in Thailand elicited a question: "what is the impact on the peace building initiatives in the three southern border provinces of Thailand?" The first hypothesis is that the military coup or the fall of former PM Thaksin will accelerate peace building since the conflict emerged during his government.

The second hypothesis is that the fall of former PM Thaksin has no meaning if there is no structural reform in the south with regard the power relation between the central government and the Malay-Muslim population. However, the bombing incidents still continue after the military coup; and there is no sign that the violence will end.

The current military regime can use the National Reconciliation Commission recommendations to resolve the problem of violence in the south; for example, by establishing the Peaceful Strategic Administrative Center for Southern Border Provinces (PSAC), Southern Border Provinces Area Development Council, and Fund for Healing and Reconciliation. The problem is that all of the reconciliatory, intermediate, and sustainable measures recommended by the NRC are necessary conditions for

“The political violence in Southern Thailand has a root on the structural changes ...”

reconciliation. It is not sufficient to build permanent reconciliation since the commission does not include the power sharing between Malay-Muslim and Thai-majority. Besides, it looks that the recommendations lack enough support from Thai majority and central government.

The political violence in Southern Thailand has its root on structural changes, that is, the power relation between political elites and also the power relation between the Malay-Muslim population and the central government. The political violence can be caused by structural changes and repression by the state apparatus (Tilly 2003: 75). Structural changes, mainly of the political structure, will encourage changes in group organization both in state and civil society. It will bring about group mobilizations among the conflicted organizations that

“...state repression as reaction to collective violence will deteriorate the situation...”

will lead to collective action in relation to the power struggle. The collective action led directly to collective violence because the conflict is not being transformed into political institutions. On the other hand, the state repression as reaction

to collective violence will deteriorate the situation and directly instigate collective violence. Therefore, the violence becomes larger and complex.

To answer such violence, the following are suggested: (1) implement the NRC recommendation, (2) withdraw the military and police from the southern border provinces, (3) give more space for writing the history of Pattani as part of Thai history, (4) and answer the aspiration of Malay-Muslim population with regard the power sharing between the Malay-Muslim and the central government, as Haji Sulong demanded. They are as follow (Syukri 2005: 94): the governor in the southern border provinces should be Muslim and from the Malay-Muslim population, Malay language should be taught in school, all taxes from Pattani should be used for the welfare of Pattani people, majority (80%) of local government officials should be Muslim, Malay should be allowed to be the formal language along with Thai,

Islamic law should be implemented in the southern border provinces, and the Majelis Ugama Islam be given full authority for laws and regulations regarding all Muslim problems and Malay culture. Besides structural approach, the most important factor in resolving the separatism



of the minority is acknowledgement by the majority of the historical claim of the minority people on autonomy. Trust building between majority and minority is a pre-condition for reconciliation.

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REFLECTIONS ON COUPS AND THE MILITARY ACADEMY

The Thai coup in September 2006 has renewed interest in the role of the military in society. The leadership of two principal Southeast Asian countries - Thailand and Indonesia - is now in the hands of former military men, while Myanmar remains under the rule of a repressive military regime. Whether this is a happy observation or not, it demonstrates the fact that the military remains an important source of national leaders in Southeast Asia. If we accept that the prospect of military men (serving or retired) assuming leadership of a Southeast Asian country, either through free elections or otherwise, is a possibility that will continue into the foreseeable future, then there is a case to be made for understanding how these leaders are formed at the military academies.

It has been observed that coups in the Philippines (none of which have succeeded) were led by military academy graduates who belong to the same cohort year. The Class of 1971 of the Philippine Military Academy (PMA), for instance, figured prominently in the coup attempt of 1986 which led to the "People Power" revolution that ousted the Marcos dictatorship. A failed mutiny in 2003 was led by young captains from the PMA Class of 1995. This phenomenon has given rise to the view that the strong bond between academy classmates undermines

"The education of our future leaders is too important to be left to the generals."

the very democracy that the military and police are supposed to protect. The practice of "freezing" members of a disgraced class to prevent any reactionary movement - the fate reportedly suffered by former Thai PM Thaksin's classmates at the Thai Armed Forces Academies Preparatory School and at the Thai Police Academy - suggests that the military itself recognizes the danger of strong class ties.

Is there a link between academy training and *coups d'etat*? Except for some isolated cases in the past, military academy administrators try to isolate cadets from coups and overt political activity. Thai cadets participated in the 1932 coup (and were exempted from exams for their trouble) but there was no indication that they were even remotely involved in last September's coup. In 1987, Filipino cadets attempted to join a coup, only to be bitterly rebuked by society. In the Philippines, at least, enlisting the support of impressionable cadets for a coup is viewed as irresponsible and opportunistic.

Is the close brotherhood of academy graduates a threat to democracy? In his book *Closer than Brothers* (Yale University Press, 1999), historian Alfred McCoy documents how military socialization in the academy forges strong bonds between classmates. Once its members have attained seniority in the military organization, a class becomes a potent force, indeed. Nevertheless, McCoy observes that the interaction of academy graduates with

the ruling regime, more than their academy training, is the stronger influence on the political choices of individuals.

It has been argued that an idealistic, professional military and a corrupt government do not make good bedfellows, and may result in the military taking over the reins of government (Jose Almonte, *A reforming AFP poses a threat to a corrupt state*, *Philippine Daily Inquirer*, May 15, 2005). This controversial view has been used to explain or justify the coups in Pakistan, the Philippines and, most recently, Thailand. Nevertheless, few would seriously suggest that societies whose leaders are perceived to be corrupt do not cultivate idealism and professionalism in its military for fear of military intervention. Blunting a knife's edge does not make it safe; it makes the knife useless.

In the Philippines, the abolition of the military academy in the aftermath of a coup attempt has been proposed, often too shrilly, in the view that it is the source of putschists. Closing down a military training institution would not bring an end to military intervention; good government would. The transformation of the Japanese military from its belligerent pre-WW II posture to its present role as defender of democracy offers many lessons for Southeast Asia's fragile democracies. Moreover, it is in the interest of society to maintain an active interest in the military and its military academy, to examine the values it inculcates in the cadets, to engage its leaders in constructive discussion, and to hold it accountable to civilian authority. For in Southeast Asia, graduates of military academies



don't only lead troops; they sometimes end up leading the nation. The education of our future leaders is too important to be left to the generals.

Michael C. Morales is the Director of the Center of Academic Excellence of the Philippine Military Academy.

THE FATE OF BURMESE MIGRANTS IN THAILAND



• Kokaew (left) with Burmese migrant workers in Phang-nga.
• Photo courtesy of Kokaew Wongphan

Early this year 2006, after the tsunami, I had the opportunity to work with the Thai Action Committee for Democracy in Burma (TACDB) on Burmese migrant issue for five months. My field work is in Phang-nga Province, one of the famous tourist provinces in the south of Thailand, which was badly destroyed by the tsunami and where many tourists died. The news was broadcasted throughout the world; but no local and international media reported about the Burmese workers who died in the disaster. TACDB gave the figure of about 3,000 fatalities.

There are two million Burmese migrants in Thailand working in factories, fishing boats, and shops. This figure is unofficial information because almost all are illegal.

They disperse in the big cities, the center of economic activities, and in tourist provinces. Ranong, Phang-nga, Krabi, Phuket are four provinces along the Andaman Gulf where Burmese migrants seek work.

In Phang-nga, almost all Burmese migrants work in fishing boats; while some work in rubber tree plantations, as sellers, or as domestic workers. There are 22,571 Burmese migrants registered at the Provincial Employment Office. In fact, there is more than twice the number than those registered because some employers do not want to pay (3,800 baht or 100 US dollars per person per year) for the work permit of employees. They do it for some employees to show when the police come to investigate; but they hire more than those they register.

For the illegal workers, they have to hide to avoid the police. They live in very low quality of life with low pay, no accommodation, and no social welfare. Sometimes, they face problems like criminal, sexual abuse, and police intimidation. They have no choice - they have to live and work in another country where they can earn for their family.

There are 300 children born in Phang-nga Province alone. It will be difficult when they grow up without legal identities - they are not Burmese and not Thai. I saw many eight to 12-year-old children help their parent in fishing boats and rubber tree plantations. They do not go to school.

The political conflict is a big problem for Burma. When Burmese migrants go to another country, they can be accused and investigated by the authorities. The government mistrusts their citizens who go out of the country; especially those who work as volunteers in NGOs in different countries. Governments worry when their citizens face difficult situations like kidnapping by terrorist, natural disaster i.e. tsunami, earthquake etc. It is the government's responsibility to help them. But the Burmese government did not take responsibility over the victims of the tsunami.

Some democratic movement activists in Thailand said that to solve the problem of migrant workers, we should also help the Burmese fight for democracy. The people will have a voice to solve their problem when Burma changes to democracy; and everything will be better.

Burmese migrants want to go home even when they have lived in Thailand for more than 10 years because even if they earn more, they will always be considered third class citizens in Thailand.



Kokaew Wongphan is a freelance journalist and Thai Action Committee for Democracy in Burma (TACDB) volunteer. She is also undertaking a Master's degree at the Walailak university in Nakorn Sri Thammarat.

JCDN MEMBERSHIP DANCE FILE

In 1998, when the Japan Contemporary Dance Network (JCDN) Foundation project was started in Kyoto, one of the first preparatory steps was to make a tour of Japan so as to become acquainted with the dance situation nationally. Through discussions with dance artists and dance-concerned organizers and producers across the country, it becomes clear that one of the factors halting the growth of contemporary dance in Japan was the inaccessibility of the following information:

- dance artists currently active, their bases of activity and the types of performances and workshops they are active in;
- location of dance-related venues and theaters, and the types of dance projects and dance artists active in these spaces; and

- variety of dance producers and critics active throughout Japan.

It became very clear that the creation of a contemporary dance information system accessible to all would be one of the most important tasks for JCDN. The JCDN Membership Dance File is at the base of this information system to provide information on dance-concerned individuals and groups throughout Japan who support JCDN as Active Members (including dance artists, performance venues, local government offices, cultural foundations, producers and critics.) It is updated and published each year alternately as a book and as a CD-ROM. This file enables direct contact with JCDN's Active Members who support our stated mission to build a favorable environment for dance within Japanese society.

Since 2002, the JCDN Membership Dance File project has been supported by the Art Organization Human Resources Development Program of the Agency for Cultural Affairs, making possible the publication in both Japanese and English versions.



Ritsuko Sato Mizuno is the Artistic Director of the Japan Contemporary Dance Network (JCDN). For more information, visit <www.jcdn.org> or email <jcdn@jcdn.org>.

TWO-WEEK GUIDED TOUR IN INDONESIA FOR JAPANESE GRADUATE STUDENTS

Ultimate education knows no boundaries, and the university staff is sometimes requested to become an overseas tour guide to make students aware about international public issues and locally intrinsic issues outside of campus. The Initiatives for Attractive Education of Graduate Schools program was launched by the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology (MEXT) in the FY 2005, and the University of Tokyo has newly established a research and educational community, AGRI-COCOON (Agricultural Research Incubator Community for Cooperative Network of Public, Administrative, Business, and Academic Sectors) at the Graduate School of Agricultural and Life Sciences. The mission is to contribute to further advancement and enrichment of the graduate program through collaborative relationship among academic, business, government and private institutions.



• Indonesian ex-commander of the Japan's army during the World War II (third from the right) with Tetsuya Araki (third from the left) and students.
• Photo courtesy of Tetsuya Araki

I work as assistant professor in the Department of Global Agricultural Sciences. The department was involved in the newly-established community with two overseas training programs - one was held in Thailand, and the other in Indonesia.

Four graduate students joined the two-week training program of *Food Systems in Asian Countries* held in Indonesia last 27 September - 11 October 2006. They visited many places with me - Bogor Agricultural University; national tea factory; local and central wholesale markets for fresh produce; Monument Tower of Independence (Monas); National Museum; Yakult Company; Borobudur and Prambanan temples; Udayana University in Bali; irrigation

“...they became aware of the relationship between the haves and the have-nots...”

project sites in Lombok; and so on.

Of course, we can not expect them to write their reports immediately. At least the tour guide should encourage them to do it before they leave for Japan; otherwise it is almost impossible

for them to complete their writings. During the two weeks, they were assigned to take notes and to make cards with headlines everyday. They shut themselves in the hotel in the final two days in Bali - although they were tempted to go sightseeing - to submit a draft of their common understandings. Their efforts saved a lot of time to edit the sixty-three-page-report; it took just a week.

One of the students saw beggars sitting on the streets and passers-by giving them some money. She was embarrassed, firstly whether she should give them some money or not; and if she should do so, when, to whom, and how much? This is just a case that they became aware of the relationship between the haves and the have-nots - like many other cards that indicated new learnings from their own experiences. The two-week guided tour brought them a lot of awareness in a way that ordinary lectures inside the campus cannot provide.

I believe that the API Community has the great potential to implement such guided-tour programs for students and citizens because it has human networks in five countries. I would like to take another guided-tour supported by API Community members with the goal of social awareness in the near future.



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TYPHOON REMING

On 30 November 2006, super typhoon Reming struck the provinces of Bicol Region in the Philippines with a maximum sustained winds of 95 to 195 kph. This super typhoon destroyed hundreds of thousands of homes and wrought unprecedented economic destruction in the region particularly in Camarines Sur, Catanduanes and Albay in the Philippines.

Basic services i.e., electricity, telephones, water supply, banks, gasoline and grocery stores ceased to exist for days; and in some cases weeks in parts of Albay. Many residents bathed in rivers, slept in improvised shelters or went to evacuation centers. Their clothes were hung out to dry on toppled trees. Others lost their homes, investments and their sources of income due to the mudflow. The number of people missing and buried under the mudflow have not been accurately accounted for.

The government, private organizations and concerned citizens provided food and temporary shelter to thousands of victims. The Department of Health conducted psycho-social stress debriefing; deployed psychiatrists to handle acute traumatic disorders; continued its disease surveillance and regular rapid health assessment surveys; provided medicine supplies, logistics and technical assistance to the local government units (LGUs); and monitored the health status in all affected areas.



• A scene of devastation in the mudflow areas in Albay Province, Philippines.
• Photo courtesy of Fe delos Reyes

Despite sustained relief efforts, destroyed dwellings and badly damaged houses peppered the once beautiful sceneries of Mt. Mayon. Government and non-government agencies carried out relocation and reconstruction of houses. The homeless were encouraged to build new communities and face life with renewed vigor.

Given the existing conditions, there is still an urgent need to provide assistance to the homeless people. To date, the Priority Actions/Plans of the government, private sectors and private individuals in the affected areas such as the provinces of Catanduanes, Camarines Sur and Albay of the devastated typhoon Reming are the following:

- coordinate relief and aid assistance from the international community and aid agencies to ensure proper allocation, distribution and accounting,
- sustain emergency relief operations in all critical and affected areas, formulate and develop the early recovery plan (beyond relief) in areas affected, and
- identification of relocation sites declared geologically safe by the Mines and Geosciences Bureau of the DENR in close consultation with the LGUs concerned.



Fe delos Reyes is a neurologist and Executive Director of HELP Learning Center in Naga City. She is involved in the psycho-social interventions in the typhoon affected areas. For further inquiries, please email <fdr_naga@hotmail.com>



UPDATES FROM FELLOWS



Aprilia Budi Hendrijani officially resigned as a researcher at the Centre for Asia Pacific Studies, Gadjah Mada University on 29 August 2006. She now works as an independent researcher.



Fumio Nagai is involved in a large-scale survey research project on decentralization of Thailand. Questionnaires were sent to all local governments, except for Bangkok, with a return rate of almost 50%. Analysis is expected to come out in two or three years. He is also associated with institutional building of local cooperation management in Thailand as a JICA expert. Lampang, where he spent three months under the API Fellowship, is selected as a pilot site, thus his local knowledge is utilized.



Akiko Tashiro is a research fellow of the National Research Institute for Cultural Properties in Tokyo since June 2006. She is with the Center for International Cooperation in Conservation and is now responsible for the Japan Consortium for International Cooperation in Cultural Heritage (JCIC-Heritage) project. The project aims to create a common base for Japan's coordinated and collaborative international cooperation for overseas cultural heritage preservation. Through her research experiences in Southeast Asia, she try to build an international and regional network on cultural heritage preservation between Southeast Asia and Japan.



Mizuki Endo was the Networking Curator for the Singapore Biennale 2006. He will publish two interview books on Indonesian art scene and Japanese curators. He will conduct a research on practices of American curators in the USA for six months, supported by Asian Cultural Council.



Ritsuko Sato Mizuno, Artistic Director of Japan Contemporary Dance Network, is involved with their annual tour project *We're Gonna Go Dancing!!* They have visited 17 cities all over Japan with three more to go. A total of 40 artists/groups are involved. This year, their project is a dance workshop with local people and senior citizens in Yamaguchi, Fukuoka, and Kyoto. They will also have a collaborative creation with choreographers and musicians. For more information, visit <www.jcdn.org> or email <jcdn@jcdn.org>.



Itsue Ito, Ceramic Artist, was in Fukuoka several times for commissioned artwork and a show. She is also preparing for two upcoming shows in Tokyo. She spent a week with the *Furusato Sensei* [community teachers] Program offered by the prefecture government to teach ceramic arts in an elementary school.



Chan Chee Koon published *Renegotiating the Social Contract: Challenges to Health and Social Policy in Japan*; based on his API project. The article was published in *The Japanese Economy*, vol. 33, no. 4, Winter 2005-6, pp.128-45.



Lim How Ngean is directing a solo theatrical performance by Anne James, one of Malaysia's respected theatre veterans.



Mustafa Kamal bin Anuar commented in *The New Straits Times* on the recent United Malay National Organization Assembly addresses on the need for an underlying sense of morality in representatives/leaders.



Khoo Su Nin Salma was the keynote speaker at the 19th Baba Convention held at Royal Phuket City Hotel last 1-3 December 2006. It was a community convention that brings together the Baba Nyonya/Peranakan/Straits Chinese from the associations in Penang, Melaka and Singapore. Hosted annually by each association by rotation, this was the first year that the event was hosted by the Phuket Baba, which marked their entry into the normally closed society of the Straits Chinese. The event was mainly sponsored by the Phuket Provincial Government and private sponsors.



Nick Deocampo published *Lost Films in Asia* printed by Anvil Publishing. The book project was in collaboration with the South East Asia Pacific Audio-Visual Archive Association and with additional support from the Mowelfund Film Institute and the API Follow-Up Grant.



Flaudette May Datuin launched a new website <www.trauma-interrupted.org> featuring the multi-pronged project - workshops, international exhibition, and international conference linking trauma, art and healing.



Chalida Uabumrungjit, of the Thai Film Foundation, and other colleagues is circulating a petition to preserve film and other AV material at risk in Thailand. They call for support from the international community. Please see the petition on <www.petitiononline.com/filmnow/petition.html> and email chalidau@googlemail.com for further inquiries.



Penchom Saetang wrote two articles *Open the Record of 50 Years of Minamata* and *Minamata from the Eyes of the Victims and Volunteers* in the *Greenworld Year 15*, Issue Number 6, January-February 2007. Another API Fellow **Darunee Paisanpanichkul** provided additional photos.



Jess Santiago composed and sang two songs while **Nick Deocampo** presented images of leprosy in cinema at the launch of the Global Appeal 2007 to End Stigma and Discrimination Against Leprosy Affected People last 29 January 2007 at the Philippine International Convention Center, Manila.



API Country Workshops and Award Ceremony/ Orientation for API Fellows 2007-2008

Philippines	2-3 March
Indonesia	7-8 March
Thailand	16-17 March
Malaysia	20-21 March
Japan	24-25 March

New UKM Vice Chancellor and IKMAS Director

Datuk Dr. Sharifah Hapsah Syed Hasan Shahabudin is the new UKM Vice Chancellor. He replaces Prof. Datuk Mohd. Salleh Yasin who retired on 27 August 2006. The new Director of IKMAS is Prof. Dr. Nik Anuar Nik Mahmud. Prof. Dr. Ragayah Haj. Mat Zin has retired from this post but continues to be the API Program Director for Malaysia.

ACAS Book Launch and Conference

The Ateneo Center for Asian Studies (ACAS) in cooperation with the Ricardo Leong Center for Chinese Studies and the Japan Foundation Manila organized *Democracies in Asia: Political Processes, Memories, Rights and Traditions* last 25 August 2006 at the Ateneo de Manila University. Jose M. Cruz, S.J., API Director for the Philippines and API International Selection Committee member, gave the remarks for the ACAS book launch of *Negotiating Globalization in Asia*. Amongst the speakers at the conference were API Fellows Allan Jose Villarante on *Pursuing Public Governance Under a "Rule of Law" Regime: Contextualizing Experiences of Selected Asian Countries*, Rosalie Arcala Hall on *Popular, Partisan, Pacifist and Patriotic Voices: The Changing Terrain of Japanese Security Debate*, and Patrick Flores on *After Seni Rupa Baru: Emergence of Contemporary Curators in Post-Suharto Indonesia*.

Chulalongkorn University Transitions



• Dr. Sunait (third from left), founder and first IAS director
Dr. Khien Theeravit (fourth from left), and Dr. Supang (rightmost)
at the turn-over ceremony.

• Photo courtesy of IAS

Dr. Sunait Chutintaranond is the new Director of the Institute of Asian Studies (IAS) of Chulalongkorn University effective 26 January 2007. A turn-over ceremony was held last 29 January 2007 attended by former Directors and current staff. He is a historian and a Burma expert and heads both the Thai Studies and Southeast Asian Studies Programs. Dr. Sunait was the IAS Deputy Director for Academic Affairs before he took over the position of Director. He was also consultant to two of Thailand's epic movies - *Suriyothai* and *King Naresuan*.

Dr. Supang Chantavanich served as IAS Director for seven years. During her term from 2000, a several new important projects were launched and it was under her guidance that the API Fellowship Program established its roots in Thailand. Since 2005, the API Office Thailand succeeded the responsibility as the regional Coordinating Institution. Dr. Supang will continue to lead some of the IAS projects and will remain close to the API Fellowship Program endeavors.

Assoc. Prof. Surichai Wun'Gaeo was appointed Director of the Social Research Institute of Chulalongkorn University effective 27 December 2006.



Obituary



• Yasuhiro Mizutani passed away on 23 October 2006. As Japan API Fellow 2001-2002, he conducted a research on the development of modern police institution in Thailand. He was about to finish his doctoral dissertation at the Center for Southeast Asian Studies at Kyoto University. Yasuhiro is fondly remembered and will be greatly missed by those who knew him including many of us in the API Community.



THE EDITOR

This issue 13 is a follow up of the previous two - issue 11 that focused on non-violent political movement in Thailand and issue 12 on the Philippines under Arroyo. While the two countries have had similar political crises in the recent past - abuse of power, loss of integrity of the government, increasing citizens' unrest, undemocratic power grabs - one needs to take a closer look to avoid sweeping and easy generalizations.

In the evening of 19 September 2006, a military junta took over the reins of the Thai government while former PM Thaksin was in New York to speak at the United Nations. It was a quick overnight coup - with no resistance from the government or the people. It was heralded locally as bloodless and peaceful. While the general public sentiment was that of relief at ousting PM Thaksin, there were public discussions and actions of students opposed to the coup, debates amongst the social movement activists on its position/s to the coup, and concern from the international community.

For non-Thai speakers, information was limited to English news or grapevine news on the affairs of the state. To grasp these, one needs a better understanding of Thai politics and culture; especially important to note is the role of the monarchy and the military in shaping the country to what it is today.

In this issue, we feature two important political commentators - Dr. Uthai Dulayakasem and Dr. Chris Baker - to provide insights into Thai politics. Dr. Uthai challenged the academic community to be critical and circumspect of the recent coup citing structural violence and the need for participatory democracy. Dr. Chris Baker's historical take on the coup reminded us of the complicity of the military in the country's political landscape.

We also invited API Fellows to share their views. Thai journalist Prangtip Daorueng posed the question whether Thai society has the intellectual strength to respond to the challenges of the political situation. Thai researcher Sing Suwannakij observed that the recent coup was just another power grab amongst the political elite and that the spectacle was watched by its citizens as a matter-of-fact.

Thai human rights advocate Sarawut Pratoomraj shared that Thailand still need time to become a truly democratic country that recognize and uphold its Constitution. Indonesian researcher, Cahyo Pamungkas, who recently concluded his research in Southern Thailand, cited that political violence in Southern Thailand has its roots in the power relations between political elites and between the central government and the Malay-Muslim population.

Lastly, Filipino soldier and academic Michael Morales observed the increasing role of the military in leading nations in Southeast Asia; and noted the important role of military academies in training future leaders.

In the midst of the many political turmoil in the region and the urge to move on, is a coup the way to go?

► *A. Magno*



THE FOUNDATION

I have been involved with the API Fellowship Program for more than eight years. Each year was full of events and episodes since its launch in 2000 or even from the preparatory period in 1998. Yet, I am convinced that 2006 was very special. I will not forget the series of events I experienced and witnessed.

The year 2006 started with planning on how to realize what Mr. Yohei Sasakawa, Chairman of The Nippon Foundation, proposed at the opening ceremony of the 4th API Workshop in Kota Kinabalu in November 2005. He proposed to make the API Community as a "Think tank and Do tank."

As a result, we asked the API Partner Institutions to organize the Country Workshop and to invite all Fellows from the first to the current batch. Honestly, we did not have a clear plan how to proceed but we were convinced that meeting each other should be the starting point. Fortunately, the Country Workshop in each country ended with strong momentum among the Fellows to mobilize the API Community.

Representatives from each country later met in Bangkok in July and in Phuket in November. They worked energetically from early morning till midnight for days to discuss; putting their precious time and wisdom for the difficult task of creating a community composed of people with varied backgrounds. I cannot find the proper words to express my gratitude for their dedication and efforts.

While attending those meetings, I recalled the big warm smile of the late Dr. Ishak Shari, one of the founding fathers of the API Fellowship Program, as he shared the dream to create something like the API Community in the region. I believe that even today, he is watching us and guiding us to the future.

The process to mobilize the API Community will take more time. Yet, I am very optimistic. The API Fellowship Program has produced so many people who share the same dream and passion. I have no doubt that we can overcome any predicaments along the way.

The API Community building events made me happy and excited throughout the year. Yet, I was saddened with the passing of Mr. Yasuhiro Mizutani, Japanese API Fellow from the first batch. He was one of the most unforgettable Fellows who attended the 1st API Workshop in Cebu. During the last session, he suddenly burst into tears and confessed how much the Workshop changed his mind and widened his views by meeting with and learning from other API Fellows. Since then, he had been very supportive of all activities of the API Fellowship Program. He also shared the dream with us that creating the community of public intellectuals is important and much needed.

I was not able to attend his funeral but had a chance to visit his parents. They kindly told me his life - a wonderful life. Although it was short, he lived his life seriously and joyfully without wasting any moment. Together with Dr. Ishak Shari, I am sure that he is also watching us.

I sincerely hope that the year 2007 will bring more excitement and development of the API Community and the API Fellowship Program to make it an even more special year in the history of the program.

► *Michiko Taki*



API FELLOWSHIP PROGRAM MISSION STATEMENT

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

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