

SOUTHEAST ASIAN STUDIES AT THE UNIVERSITY OF PASSAU

REPORT ON CURRENT RESEARCH ACTIVITIES

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INTRODUCTION

In 2003 the state of Bavaria decided that one of the foci of the University of Passau should be Southeast Asian Studies. Previously subject to closure, the department for Southeast Asian Studies was expanded from one professorship to one professor for Island Southeast Asia and in addition a professorship for Mainland Southeast Asia. In December 2004 Susanne Schröter (from the University of Frankfurt) was appointed as professor for Island Southeast Asian Studies and Rüdiger Korff (from the University of Hohenheim) as professor for Mainland Southeast Asian Studies. Real work started with the summer term 2005. Thus, current research is mainly based on projects that had been initiated already before. At present several projects are in a planning stage and the application for funding will be forwarded in 2006.



STAFF

Susanne Schröter, Professor for Island Southeast Asian Studies

H. Rüdiger Korff, Professor for Mainland Southeast Asian Studies

Bernhard Dahm, Professor Emeritus

Harald Hundius, Professor Emeritus

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Arnez, Monika Post-Doc Fellow and Lecturer Supported by Hochschul- und Wissenschaftsprogramm (HWP)	Modern Indonesian Literature, Post-Soeharto women's writing	Indonesia
Brecht, Birte Ph.D.-student	Gender and Islam, cultural transformations	Philippines
Helbardt, Sascha Lecturer	Political change, civil society	Thailand
Hellmann-Rajanayagam, Dagmar Reader	History, local conflicts	Sri Lanka, Burma, Malaysia
Hintz, Martin Ph.D.-student Supported by Allianz Insurancy Indonesia	Development and social protection, poverty, Islamic finance	Indonesia
Meyer, Erland Lecturer	Sociology of development	Vietnam
Mohammad Aatur Rahman Ph.D.-student Supported by Friedrich Ebert Stiftung	Economic Development	Bangladesh
Nawichai, Patsharin Ph.D.-student Supported by DAAD	Rural development, ethnic minorities	Thailand

Rodemeier, Susanne Lecturer	Gender, rural development, kinship structure, oral traditions	Indonesia
Schlottmann, Dirk Ph.D.-student Supported by the DAAD	Media, Shamanism	Korea
Sisilia Astuti Lecturer	Gender, popular culture and Islam	Indonesia
Volk, Bettina Ph.D.-student Supported by Hansen-Stiftung	Death rituals, indigenous modernity	Pantar, Indonesia
Wehner, Stefanie Lecturer	Ethnic minorities, ecology and society	Yunnan

CURRENT RESEARCH

ISLAM AND GENDER IN MODERN INDONESIAN WOMEN'S WRITING: RE-DEFINITION OF THE FEMALE ROLE?

(Postdoc. Scholarship funded by the „Hochschul- und Wissenschaftsprogramm“, HWP)

The project aims at analyzing the role which Islam and gender play for Post-Soeharto women authors, the writers of *sastra wangi* (fragrant literature), on the backdrop of social and political change in Indonesia. Since women were assigned a conservative role by Indonesian politics, society and Islam during Soeharto's New Order, it is likely that the authors have written *sastra wangi* to open up a new way towards freedom. Although *sastra wangi* is a disputed term by both literary critics and authors alike because of its derogatory connotation, it is striking that the literary texts produced by the female authors since the fall of the Soeharto regime share some common aspects. One of the remarkable similarities is the open, partly even vulgar, description of sexuality in *sastra wangi* texts. Therefore, the starting point of analysis is the hypothesis that Post-Soeharto women writers tend to break taboos and use sexual desire as a leitmotif in their literary texts. The aim of the project is to systematically analyze the complex concepts which Post-Soeharto female authors create or use to re-define the female role. The project intends to contribute to answering the question, to what extent these concepts are linked with topics related to Islam and gender.

Researcher: **Monika Arnez**

DEVELOPMENT INTERVENTIONS, STATE ADMINISTRATIONS AND LOCAL SOCIETY: CONDITIONS FOR POLITICAL PARTICIPATION IN THE HIGHLANDS OF NORTHERN THAILAND AND NORTHERN VIETNAM

(Sub-project of the Research Programme (SFB 564): "Research for Sustainable Land Use and Rural Development in Mountainous Regions of Southeast Asia", University of Hohenheim. Funded by the DFG)

In some ways, Southeast Asia in general and Thailand in particular, is a success story for a region which, until recently, was basically agrarian and marked by social unrest and dictatorial, military rule, but then taking a spectacular economic take-off, with big business as the engine of the region's growth. Economic growth and improved well-being was, however, not evenly distributed. As McVey (2000) notes, a 'super-concentration of wealth and enterprise' in the region's capitals took place. In Thailand the boom did not at all reduce imbalances between its capital and the provinces, districts and rural areas. However, in recent years the rise of provincial capitalism considerably altered the relationship between city and countryside, and, at certain periods, even exerted its influence on national policies (Phongpaichit and Baker 2002).

In the context of our project, research in Vietnam is one phase behind research in Thailand. Inspired by results found during phase 1 in Thailand, we set out for comparative research in mountainous north-western Vietnam, albeit against a different socio-economic background. Economic development in Vietnam in terms of pace and achievement is not really comparable with that in Thailand.

However, Vietnam's economy, besides a bias in development in favour of the South due to historical advantages there, is characterised by a huge rural-urban gap, too. In the early 1990s

Vietnam's economic development started to gain pace in the wake of "Doi Moi" [= "new transformation"]-policy, which the Vietnamese Communist party introduced on its sixth party congress in 1986 to loosen its grip on the economy and to allow private economic activities. This path of development favoured urban centres much more than the countryside, widening the rural-urban gap evermore – in a similar way as it is known from China. Like in many other developing countries the currently five export-processing and 37 industrial zones form



an important core of industrialisation in Vietnam. Yet the utmost part of them still adheres to urban centres with a few recently established exceptions. Understandably, this gap has a lot to do with infrastructural advantages that induce a virtuous cycle of improvement in preferred regions like Ho Chi Minh-City, Hanoi, or Haiphong, while it usually takes deliberate political action to improve competitive endowments in disadvantaged areas like central Vietnam or mountainous provinces. (During the three years of our research in Son La province we were lucky enough to experience such action when the Vietnamese government to our great

pleasure built a new National Road No. 6 from Hoa Binh to Son La, which substantially reduced travel time and increased travel comfort.) At the end of the 1990s this, with progress in Vietnam's industrialisation, widening gap sparked evermore articulate – at times even violent – protests from villagers with provincial and national leaders (Thayer 1998). Facing such potentially dangerous political developments, and supported by a range of bilateral and multilateral donors like for example the Asian development bank the Vietnamese central government has gone quite some way to slowly narrowing the gap, or at least to slow its widening. Infrastructure-projects are one example, extending provincial and local discretion in development-related issues is another.

With the expansion of political and economic activities from the centre to the periphery and vice versa, social science studies on the political system in Thailand started to pay increasing attention to events at the more intermediate levels of province and districts to examine local people's integration into processes originating from the centre and their responses to this process (Nelson 1998). Bangkok-focused studies as well as the old-fashion village studies became more and more obsolete. This research report, based on empirical surveys in the two districts of Pang Ma Pha (Northern Thailand) and Yen Chau (Northern Vietnam), can be seen as within this trend with respect to Thailand, whereas for research in Vietnam this is our prospected focus for the next phase.

(The project is funded until July 2006, a follow up project with a focus on the role of the district cities is currently prepared by Erland Meyer for Vietnam and Sascha Helbardt for Thailand)

Project director: Rüdiger Korff
Cooperation with: Anan Ganjanapan, Faculty of Social Sciences, Chiang Mai University
 Chau Dao Thu, Hanoi Agricultural University
Principal researcher: Hans-Dieter Bechstedt,
Researcher in Thailand: Wisoot Legsomboon, Patsharin Nawichai (until 2004)
Researcher in Vietnam: Ngô Trung Thānh, Erland Meyer

INSTITUTIONAL, SOCIO-CULTURAL AND LOCAL POLITICAL FRAMEWORK FOR BIODIVERSITY

(Sub-project of the BMBF financed Sino-German project “Conservation of cultural landscapes through diversification of resource use strategies and technologies for agro-ecosystems in mountainous Southwest China” coordinated by the Tropenzentrum, University of Hohenheim. Initial funding by the BMBF)

A landscape is primarily determined by land use and land use by human practices. Human practices are determined by social structures as well as institutions and policies. Accordingly they differ depending on socio-economic position and cultures (ethnicity). Through development processes the social structure of a society is modified and new institutions are emerging while others fall into decline. This has a direct impact on practices and values and thereby on land use pattern and consequently the transformation of the landscape. The aim of the research project is to understand how current land use practices are embedded into society, economy and culture in the sense of how social groups and classes differ with regards to landscape affecting practices and how the social structure is modified through development processes.



It is to be expected that significant differences between ethnic groups as well as social classes, along the altitude gradient and especially degree of urbanization (access to markets, socio-economic differentiation) with farming systems of greatly varying intensity will become apparent. Consequently, a differentiated approach to influencing people’s practices is likely to be called for. Furthermore, development trends are associated to rise and decline of

social groups, and thereby affect land use and thus the landscape.

The aim of the project is to analyze interactions between the socio-cultural and institutional-political environment summarized as “social diversity” with bio-diversity from a perspective of everyday life practices. Social diversity implies differences in regards to interactions between individual/household/group/ community and nature within everyday life practices. The landscape and ecology is, however, not simply resulting from human activities, but itself a factor defining possibilities of social and cultural developments. In other words, there is a dialectical interdependence between both. The main objective of the research is therefore to analyse “society in a landscape” and “the landscape of a given society”.

Project director:

Rüdiger Korff

Cooperation with:

Fuquan Yang, Yunnan Academy of Social Sciences

Researcher:

Stefanie Wehner

INDIGENOUS KNOWLEDGE OF THE LOCAL LANDSCAPE

(Sub-project of the BMBF financed Sino-German project “Conservation of cultural landscapes through diversification of resource use strategies and technologies for agro-ecosystems in mountainous Southwest China” coordinated by the Tropenzentrum, University of Hohenheim. Initial funding by the BMBF)

Reason and meaning of practices is based on established and culturally transmitted forms of knowledge. Consequently, diversity of landscape is directly linked to cultural diversity in the sense of diverse knowledge systems. Consequently, the protection of landscapes can not be limited to the biological dimension of protection of nature, but requires the understanding of indigenous knowledge.

Within a multiethnic, multi-cultural region different forms of indigenous knowledge co-exist, but nevertheless, are to some degree shared through interactions among groups. Since innovations result from such interactions, the understanding of the existing knowledge systems as well as the interactions and shared meanings are relevant to estimate possible interventions. Only on the basis of understanding of the meaning of indigenous species (plants, seeds, animals) for the local population and the integration of these into wider meanings systems and cultures, biological diversity can be protected in a socio-culturally integrated form. If the local knowledge and meaning systems are ignored, conservation policies alienate the people from the natural environment. The aim of the project is to understand current indigenous knowledge, by firstly analysing classifications of aspects of nature, and secondly, how these classifications are integrated into wider cosmologies by which they receive their meaning. The project does thus not look at selected techniques and



instruments, but how these are elements within holistic cultural systems. This will then form the basis for devising means of how to protect indigenous knowledge concomitant with the protection of landscape.

Since the last decade indigenous knowledge has become an issue in development related research. It has been recognized that indigenous local techniques, classifications and knowledge on plants can usefully be integrated into development activities. The problem with these pragmatic

approaches is that knowledge which only makes sense as a knowledge system gets fragmented. As much as in scientific research classification only makes sense within a wider system, indigenous classifications have meaning only in relation to other aspects, elements and practices. Furthermore, indigenous knowledge is, as much as any other form of knowledge, a social construct of communities. Consequently, the main task is the analysis of the “actor-network” in which local knowledge is created and maintained.

Indigenous knowledge is not fixed, but with the changes of the actor network, which can be social, economic, but as well ecological, knowledge is transformed, modified and new knowledge generated. This allows for interactions between scientific oriented knowledge generation and indigenous forms. Thereby indigenous knowledge can become a means for innovation. This is particularly the case with regards to neglected plants, animal raising techniques etc. and the search for alternative crops, agricultural products and agricultural techniques.

The dynamic aspect of indigenous knowledge allows to link it with conservation oriented interventions. In fact, based on such a linkage the policies become sustainable in the sense of local acceptance. Consequently, besides a scientific analysis of landscape, the landscape will be analysed based on indigenous understandings. This then allows to simulate as well, how the local understanding of landscape will be affected, and how interventions fit into cultural continuity instead of leading towards alienation.

Project director:

Rüdiger Korff

Cooperation with:

Yang Yongping, Kunming Institute of Botany,

Yin Shaoting, Department of Anthropology, Yunnan University

Researcher:

NN

GENDER RELATIONSHIPS IN BRIDE-WEALTH SOCIETIES WITH PATRILINEAL SOCIAL ORGANIZATION IN RURAL AREAS OF THE ALOR-ARCHIPELAGO (EASTERN INDONESIA)

(Postdoc. Scholarship funded by the University of Passau)

Already for quite a long time international organizations support programs to fight against poverty in rural areas of Asia and the Pacific. Some years ago it was decided to support mainly projects which aim at a symmetric gender relationship as well as better education of



women and girls. The Alor-Archipelago in Indonesia became a target of those recent programs. The research aim is to understand which effects such programs have on a local community in that area. Therefore we have to study some communities in depth to comprehend their emic view on gender relationships. During previous studies I found out that on the islands of the Alor-Archipelago post-marital residence is traditionally patrilocal. As soon as the bride moves to the groom her family of birth regards her as lost. The family's loss is compensated by bride-wealth payments from the groom to

the bride's father or brother. Seen from that angle one gets the impression that women are possessions of men who can transfer them regarding mainly the men's needs. On the other hand in some villages, women produce textiles and ceramics for the local market, for rituals, or to swap. Most probably women in those villages have quite a lot of influence because of their access to prestigious goods as well as to the monetary sector. In other villages women can own land and even pass it on to their children. It is quite possible that this also give them some autonomy from their husbands or brothers.

In the research it has to be examined how much influence and autonomy women have under the described circumstances. As the on-going research is on gender relationships, one important focus is the impact the women's access to the market has and has had on that relationship. Part of the research is a comparison between those villages, where a poverty reduction program is running with those villages without direct foreign interference. Another comparison is between two villages which share traditional marriage relationships and live on the same land. Nevertheless the differences between those villages are high: crafts- "women" and their fishing and trading husbands live at the coast, follow the Muslim faith, and got permission by their neighbours to live on the land and use it. The neighbours live in the interior of the island, follow the Christian – usually the Protestant – faith, regard themselves as "lord of the land", and live almost subsistent on hunting, planting and gathering. The comparison of the gender relationships in those villages will throw special light on the facts which hinder or support symmetric gender relationships. Therefore an important result of the research will be to show whether the support of gender symmetry is a useful target to reduce poverty in the rural areas of the Alor-Archipelago. As the research area is culturally closely related to most parts of Eastern Indonesia main research results might be transferred with slight changes to other rural areas in the region.



Project director:

Susanne Schröter

Researcher:

Susanne Rodemeier

RELIGIOUS DIMENSIONS OF LOCAL CONFLICTS. A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF SRI LANKA, BURMA AND SOUTHERN THAILAND

(Funded by the DFG since December 2005)

In the wake of repeated attacks by Islamist groups the question has become urgent why religious arguments are used to justify these onslaughts. Is violence perhaps inherent to some or even all religions? Or is it just instrumentalised to let violence emerge, be implemented and justified?

While this question is discussed nowadays mostly with reference to Islam, religions like Hinduism and Buddhism have largely remained unsought in this regard. Yet, especially in countries with Theravada Buddhism like Sri Lanka, Thailand and Burma, and in largely Hindu India religious motives and reasons are used to justify violence by the majority as well as by minorities.

In historical perspective, phases of a close relationship between religion and violence alternated with those where violent conflict was not fought on a religious platform. Besides, it is often overlooked nowadays that not only violence can be justified by religion, but even more so de-escalation and pacification. This project therefore proceeds from the assumption that violence may refer to religion, but that violence does not have a congenital affinity to religion or certain religions.

The research question is therefore under what social and political conditions religion is connected to violence in different types of conflict situations. The aim is to find out, whether and which social and political basic patterns exist for the combination of violence and religion, what they look like and why religions of the most various provenience offer themselves to this combination.

To avoid the facile fixation on Islam, in a comparative approach violent conflicts tied to religion are investigated in several countries where Theravada Buddhism is the majority religion, viz. Sri Lanka, Thailand, Burma.

Project director: Rüdiger Korff
Principal Researcher: Dagmar Hellmann- Rajanayagam (Sri Lanka, Burma)
Researcher: NN (Southern Thailand)



DIGITALIZATION OF LAOTIAN SCRIPTS

(Initial research is supported by the Research Pool, University of Passau)

The project aims to facilitate research and dissemination of Lao literature and culture (and related research in Southeast Asian and Buddhist Studies as well as in local wisdom and indigenous knowledge) through the digitalisation of approximately 9,600 microfilmed manuscripts (1,006 rolls à 30 m, 35 mm) held at the National Library of Laos and the production of an English-language inventory.

These manuscripts were selected for microfilming from over 84,000 surveyed in Laos during the Preservation of Lao Manuscripts Programme (1992-2002/04), a cultural cooperation project funded by the German Foreign Office, and represent more than five centuries of the country's literary heritage.

In addition to canonical and non-canonical Buddhist texts, they contain a wide range of popular, learned and literary writings such as works about history, traditional law and customs, astrology, magic, mythology and rituals, traditional medicine and healing, grammar and lexicography, as well as poetry and a huge number of epic stories, folk tales and romances. The inventory and digitalisation will make this material accessible for systematic study by the scholarly community, and will enable analysis of the whole range of Lao manuscripts as well as more descriptive, annotated cataloguing of major works. The English-language inventory together with an existing Lao-language version will be electronically linked to the digitalised manuscripts and made available via the internet and with search facilities, information about the preservation programme, and links to other resources and institutions.



Project director: Rüdiger Korff
Research Supervisor: Harald Hundius
Cooperation with: National Library of Laos, Deutsche Nationalbibliothek
Researcher: David Wharton

DISASTERS AND DEVELOPMENT: A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF THE EFFECTS OF THE TSUNAMI IN ACEH AND KHAO LAK, THAILAND

(Initial research was supported by the Research Pool, University of Passau)

Most research on disasters has its empirical focus in the US (research on tornados and hurricanes) or other industrialized countries. The studies commonly focus on risk analysis and pre-disaster preparation. Even though disasters with most casualties (in difference to economic damage) take place in the developing world, research on the implications of disasters in such regions remains very limited. The Tsunami that struck Southeast and South-Asia is one example. Even though much assessment of damages and what can be done for re-construction has been conducted, basic research hardly is undertaken. The question is, in how far can the approaches developed in countries with a working infrastructure, efficient agencies and where most people are insured, be applied for developing countries?

Not the least due to the limitations of the state agencies, re-construction depends heavily on local initiatives and support from international organizations. Through the involvement of international organisations and media globalization spots emerge in commonly remote regions. Thus the disastrous event leads to specific pattern of linking local communities and groups and global organisations, whereby local and global processes get articulated. This structure reminds of development projects in which international organisations initiate local projects with the objective to establish new structures and institutions.



Similar to the development discourse, in the discussion of disasters vulnerability is of main importance. However, empirical findings indicate that the local communities tend to be far

less vulnerable than expected, and even more so, the post-event work, namely saving and taking care of victims depends strongly on local capacities. Accordingly, the resilience of local communities to cope with disastrous events is of crucial relevance. The question is, in how far the reconstruction work improves local resilience.

In an initial phase general data have been collected in Aceh and Khao Lak. Based on these initial findings a research project will be designed.

Project director: Susanne Schröter, Rüdiger Korff
Researcher: Mario Wilhelm, Mara Dehmer, Mathias Hüger,
Philipp Baumgartner, Andrea Fischer

POP CULTURE, ISLAM, AND GENDER IN INDONESIA: A TENSION OF INTERPRETATION

This research will observe the interrelationship among Popular Culture, Islam, and Gender Issues in Indonesia. The recent development in the country shows the deeper intrusion of religious based content into the supposedly secular popular culture, as seen from the larger portion of TV programmes for religious material or the high sales figure for Islamic teen-lit. Apparently the marriage between Islam and Popular Culture in Indonesia is evidently growing. This may be due to facts that the majority of Indonesian is Muslims, hence the largest market for popular culture; or there is increasing political power of Islamic movement since the late 1990s. The former indicates that the market of popular culture dictates the Islamic content to be accommodated –for purely profit motive; while the latter states the other way around: the Islamic political power occupies the, supposedly non-sectarian, politics of popular culture.

Instead of analysing the political economy of Islam and popular culture, this research shall investigate how the audiences receive the more Islamic content on their popular culture intake. Are there any dynamic and active processes for receiving such phenomenon? Or might be there a tension between the interpretation of Islam represented in media and the so-called real/pure Islamic thought? Moreover, the tension of interpretation of Islam within the popular culture medium is evident on the issue of women. The common idea that women are always subject to media exploitation might not necessarily be true as the audience/consumer of popular culture may have different way of interpreting the issue of womanhood –therefore they are not passive on what they consume.

All above mentioned research problems refer to interwoven relationship among producers and consumers of popular culture on Islam and Women. To deal with those questions, this research will, first, investigate the rationales and interpretation of producers on the issues. Second, it will describe the way the audience responses to the issues as represented by the producers. Third, it will also draw the dynamic interpretation mechanism that relates both producers and consumers to interact with each other. This research will employ the related theories on popular culture, consumption, media, and identity.

Supervisor: Susanne Schröter
Researcher: Sisilia Astuti

MICRO INSURANCE IN INDONESIA

Poverty is primarily caused by the poor's high vulnerability to risks such as illness, accident, theft and natural disasters. The poor's high vulnerability to risks stems from low incomes and lack of resources which limits possibilities for efficient risk management. Micro insurance enjoys increasing attention as a measure of improving the poor's risk management capabilities. Micro insurance provides - for relatively low contributions - coverage against risks that the poor face. In Indonesia, practical experience with micro insurance is virtually non-existent (McCord 2005).

However, with 7.5% of Indonesians living on less than 1 USD and 52.4% living on less than 2 USD a day (UNDP 2005) the need to reduce poverty is apparent. Micro insurance may be one of several tools to do that. Central question of dissertation: Can micro insurance increase risk management capabilities of poor households in Indonesia on a sustainable basis? Methodology: Empirical data from a GTZ-Allianz-UNDP micro insurance pilot project in Indonesia, running from approx. 2006 to 2008, will be used to measure the impact of micro insurance on poor households. Special emphasis is put on relevant socio-cultural factors. Moreover, micro insurance will be analyzed in the context of national poverty reduction strategies and the international debate on development and social protection.

Supervisor: **Susanne Schröter**

Researcher: **Martin Hintz**

THE IMPACT OF STRATEGIC GROUPS ON PRO-POOR GOVERNANCE REFORM AND THE ROLE OF PUBLIC SPHERES IN FOSTERING SOCIO-ECONOMIC CHANGE- A CASE STUDY FROM CAMBODIA

(Sub-project of the currently applied for DFG-Forschergruppe "Strategische Gruppen", coordinated by the Kulturwissenschaftliches Institut, Essen)

According to the current international donor discourse, responsive and accountable governments are crucial to the enabling environment for poverty reduction. However, despite critiques in many low-income countries about the "disgraceful state of public services", reforms for pro poor governance remain difficult.



The purpose of the research study is a) to analyse the processes of knowledge production on poverty and Good Governance in Cambodia from a perspective of interactions between international, national and local groups of actors, and b) to assess the impact of an emerging public sphere in fostering socio-economic change. In other words, this work aims at identifying longer term social and economic processes which could strengthen demand for pro-poor change in Cambodia. The definition and thus the policy formulation of poverty on one side, and

Good Governance on the other side, result from the figuration of strategic groups, and the pressures exerted from a public sphere or civil society on the state. Pro poor governance requires a pattern of strategic group formation that enables the rise of a public sphere in which the voice of the poor is heard. The study aims at understanding in this dilemma the logics and realities, i.e. the interests and agendas of politically relevant groups of actors. The successful

implementation of development strategies and more specifically of the Poverty Reduction strategies in a democratic way is closely connected to the interests and strategies of local strategic groups such as the political parties, the military, the bureaucracy and the growing group of NGOs. These strategic groups have an important impact on the current state formation, i.e. on the ongoing democratization process.

The theoretical assumption is that poverty and governance can be defined differently by the respective actors, agencies and strategic groups as well as by the “poor”. This diversity leads to me-connaissance unless it is communicated publicly. Therefore, poverty reduction policies require a public sphere. I argue that the definition of poverty and thus practical responses result from the figuration of strategic groups, and the pressures exerted from a public sphere or civil society on governance on the global as well as the national, country level. Strategic groups are the agents of social change or development and not the ultimate beneficiaries of development, even if they sometimes appear to be so on purpose. In other words, pro poor governance requires a pattern of strategic group formation that enables the rise of a public sphere in which the voice of the poor is heard.

Supervisor: Rüdiger Korff

Researcher: Ruth Sharifa Djedje

POVERTY AND DEVELOPMENT: ORGANIZING THE PEOPLE IN BANGLADESH

(Research has been funded by the Friedrich Ebert Stiftung)

What is poverty? How is it measured? Who are the poor? Defining and measuring poverty and calculating the percentage of poor people in a country or a region is not just a matter of numbers and averages. Poverty is a complex, multifaceted world that requires a clear analysis in all of its many dimensions. “Human beings are thoroughly diverse; you cannot draw a poverty line and then apply it across the board to everyone the same way, without taking into account personal characteristics and circumstances, poverty analysis should focus on an individual’s potential to function rather than the results the individual obtains from functioning.” (Sen 1999b).

Sen went a long way within economic analysis of well-being. By developing his capability approach to understand people’s quality of life, he allowed for insights into the economic evaluation of well-being that other theories on this issue would not permit. In particular, he address a strong critique towards the utilitarian approach, however utility may be interpreted. Modern economics employs “utility” to illustrate everything that an individual maximises and that led to the fact that “mathematical



exactness of formulation proceeded hand in hand with remarkable inexactness of content.”(Sen 1999a, 1985,p.2).Opposing therefore this kind of simplification,“ which has the effect of talking a very narrow view of human beings (and their feelings, ideas and actions), thereby significantly impoverishing the scope and reach of economic theory” (Sen 1999a,p.3), he proposes a view that sees a person’s well-being in terms of his or her “functionings”, i.e. what the person succeeds in doing or being. Yet, being fully aware of

these personal and social limitations, Sen's capability approach rests with rather individual centred view. It does not allow considering instrumentally the difficulties that arise for a person living with a society and interacting with other individuals to achieve certain functionings, or to choose among potential achievements for the assessment of that person's quality of life. This study aims to give insights into the fact that people are living within a social networks, that people's behaviour will be determined, to a certain extent, by the interaction with others and that this interaction can contribute to people's capabilities.

Even individual capacities and competences have lacking to define vulnerability or resilience; nevertheless, individual well-being and capabilities provide the real scenario of poverty and development. When relations and interdependencies determine agency, it is obviously that, social networks (social capital) has strong effect on individual well-being and capabilities which explained poverty and development. This study examines the impact of social networks (social capital) on individual well-being and capabilities on the rural households at Mymensingh sadar Upazila of Mymensingh district and Meghna Upazila of Comilla district in Bangladesh. Four villages (two villages from each district) were selected for this study. A snowball sampling technique was followed in this study. Data were collected from 140 respondents (35 respondents from each village) through field survey by using pre-designed questionnaire, PRA and observation technique. Sen's Capability Approach was used by using Nussbaum's list of basic capabilities to determine individual well-being and capabilities, and social network analysis to determine individual Ego networks and complete networks, and centrality.

Supervisor: Rüdiger Korff
Researcher: Mohammad Aatur Rahman

SHAMANISM IN SOUTH KOREA

(Research has been funded by the DAAD)

In Korea, a newly-industrialized nation with a rapid developing IT-technology, shamanism is enjoying a revival as a uniquely Korean cultural heritage. The new presence of shamans in TV, World Wide Web, on stage and the public practice in urban districts, national shrines, mountain areas or village festivals reflects significant legal and social changes in Korean society's attitude toward its own widespread shamanist traditions.

The ethnographic research examines the place of shamans within contemporary society, exploring shamanism as a cultural practice in which people and shamans make use of shamanic ritual and construct a new collective identity, popular culture and, in a more artistic context, performing arts.

Particularly, with regard to the self-portrayal of shamans in the World Wide Web an analysis of modern shamanism necessarily requires a research about self-conceptions and the concepts of public relation.

The question if Korean shamanism is part of the global phenomenon of the revival of ethnicity and cultural nationalism or just a phenomenon of cultural conservation that is used for tourist purposes or visual art, demands an answer that investigates the relation between shamans and clients, shamans and the new developed ritual industry in urban contexts and shamans and their media skills.

Supervisor: Susanne Schröter
Researcher: Dirk Schlottmann

MUSLIM WOMEN'S LEADERSHIP IN THE SOUTHERN PHILIPPINES. DISCOURSE AND CULTURAL TRANSFORMATION

The main focus of this research is the role of Filipino Muslim women as reformists in a minority society.

Since the 60s more and more Filipino Muslim Women have access to higher education and because of this to public employment. These circumstances brought about a change to the women's role and the relationship between the spouses. Especially women that occupy leading positions in politics or economics challenge the traditional definition of their role as mothers and their exclusive connection to the social field.



One main question of this research will be how women in leadership positions actively enforce this cultural transformation and how they employ Islam for their purpose. Furthermore it will be interesting to see how the women in leadership positions are referred to by other Muslims, so to say other Muslim women, the religious elite and the own family.

On a more general level, beside the conflict between the rebel groups and the Philippine government, the minority situation, which has the potential of multiple influences on the Filipino Muslims, has to be considered. The questions of how the women leaders deal with these circumstances, how they use them for their own or how the possible threat from outside can also work against them, will be dealt with.

To record the supposed cultural transformations this research will, by keeping in mind the thesis that discourse leads to cultural change, focus on the discourse on and of Muslim women leaders. Interviews of the leaders as well as from family members and the religious elite will be conducted. Newspaper articles and historical data will be collected. And, to detect the actual transformation, discourse manifestations, like new laws or different social behaviour will be looked upon.

Supervisor: **Susanne Schröter**

Researcher: **Birte Brecht**

DEATH RITUALS AS APPROACH TO AN INDIGENOUS MODERNITY IN THE ALOR-ARCHIPELAGO IN INDONESIA

Death rituals are the most important life-cycle rituals in eastern Indonesia. Death has a deep impact on the social life of a society and goes often hand in hand with the fear of supernatural forces. In most cases the cause of death is not seen as natural but as caused by witches and evil spirits. Because of that the question of guilt and the prevention of further fatalities are of great importance. The prevention of further fatalities can only be reached by reinstalling the social order in the way the ancestors want it since the ancestors will punish any delinquency against this order. They will punish the members of the society by withdrawing their protection against witches and evil spirits if they feel neglected.

This reinstalling of the proper social order can only be achieved by a faultless carried out death rituals. The influence and acceptance of Christianity and Islam does not seem to have changed this importance of death rituals.

Death rituals are not static but are sensitive to changes in a society and reflect the particular modernity of a culture. Thus death rituals are always modern rituals and an ideal field for understanding the indigenous modernity of a certain culture.

The research will take place on Pantar, an island in the Indonesian Alor-Archipelago, on which is up to this now nearly no ethnographic data exist. On Pantar followers of four different religions live close together. Often the members of one family have different religions. Thus the purpose of this research is not only to analyse the local particularities of death rituals and to check if the



data on death rituals in other areas of eastern Indonesia apply also to Pantar but also to examine the consequences of this special situation on the performance of death rituals.

Supervisor: **Susanne Schröter**

Researcher: **Bettina Volk**

GENDER AND ISLAM IN SOUTHEAST ASIA

29.9. - 1.10. 2005 at the University of Passau

Islam today is widely seen as the most challenging belief system in the world. For some right wing politicians in the West it has come to represent a locus of evil that spawns radicalism, communal violence and terrorism; for many religious and political leaders in the East it represents the only effective counterforce against Western imperialism and cultural hegemony. Both within and outside Muslim communities all over the world people debate whether Islam is compatible with democracy and human rights, and, if so, how they are to be articulated and realized within an Islamic framework. The debate is triggered by globalization, mainly by the phenomenon of the global flow of media, technology, ideologies and consumer goods and also by the establishment of international institutions. Nations, communities, families and individuals respond to these developments and engage, sometimes voluntarily and deliberately sometimes not, in the process of creating their own modern Muslim culture and identity. The result is a great variety of contemporary “Islams”, the stances of which can range from reformist, to fundamentalist, or conservative, or feminist, or patriarchal, and the degree to which elements of local and/or national culture are integrated into these views varies just as greatly.



Contemporary Islam has many faces, among them syncretistic ones, which incorporate a diverse array of local belief systems, matrifocal ones that integrate women-centred social structures, others that focus strictly on the Golden Age of 7th or 8th century Arabia and feminist ones which offer a new interpretation of the Holy Book and the traditions of the Prophet. The diversity of the modes of life all sustained by Islam is particularly striking in Southeast Asian societies, where observers have often commented on their flexibility and more gender-egalitarian characteristics, especially when compared to many cultures of the Arab world or the Middle East. In the Philippines and in most societies in the region Islam is a minority religion: in Indonesia, the country with the world's largest Muslim population, it is part of a multi-faith national enterprise (the Pancasila) and in Malaysia Muslims co-exists peacefully with non-Muslim citizens.

Despite Islam's heterogeneity and diversity, gender issues are very often the focus of local, national and transnational discourses. Women's bodies and dress, their access to education and professional employment, their participation in social and political affairs, family law and sexuality are matters of controversy. What exactly is meant by the notion espoused by numerous religious scholars that women are “equal but different”? What does such equality encompass? On what basis are lines of difference drawn? Is culture the obstacle to the empowerment of Muslim women or is it a particular interpretation of the Qur'an and sunna. What are the consequences of recent developments like the introduction of the shari'a or democratic reforms? Which problems result from state politics and from the so called "war on terror"? Which possible courses of action remain open to activists facing such obstacles as civil war, military oppression or a warlord-system?

Southeast Asian Muslim women's and men's positions towards these issues are as multifarious as the versions of Islam to which they profess. Some activists are part of

revivalist movements and demand the introduction of the shari'a, others are engaged in liberal and democratic reform processes, in peace-keeping endeavours and denounce violence against women. Many women are engaged in women's networks at the grass root level, others are scholars in universities or work as politicians in state institutions, or are active as lawyers and journalists. Regardless of their political stance or the colouring of their religious views, their project is to change society and to create a new Asian modernity.



Yet the significance of these processes cannot be understood purely as phenomena embedded in particular national or local cultural systems. Thanks to technological innovations, communication and exchange can take place with an ease, frequency and intensity not possible in previous times. Much as a butterfly's wings stirs a current of air that can set off a storm on

the other side of the globe, so too can very specific local events set off a maelstrom in places very far away. In this context, peace and human rights become a global project, the success of which rests on understanding and accepting those usually regarded as "other".

The symposium intended to contribute to such a process of mutual understanding. It brought together scholars from various countries and disciplines, many of them activists, in order to encourage interdisciplinary discussion and to deepen the understanding of Islam and gender relationships in Southeast Asia and beyond. By hosting this conference in Germany we also wished to take a stand on anti-Islamic and anti-Muslim prejudices and work together for the establishment of an interfaith dialogue on human rights and peace.

TSUNAMI WORKSHOP –

KATASTROPHEN UND DEREN BEWÄLTIGUNG: EINE HERAUSFORDERUNG AN WISSENSCHAFT UND PRAXIS

8. – 9.07. 2005 at the University of Passau

Scientific implications of catastrophes in developing countries only takes up a minor role in disaster research due to language barriers, cultural differences and limited scientific expertise in those areas. In addition, not much is known about the political implications of catastrophes on development. Therefore, the Tsunami that hit South and Southeast Asia in December 2004 poses a challenge for both disaster research and developmental politics.



Throughout the reconstruction process, actors within both domains have to consider how an analysis of reconstruction processes and the implementation of relief efforts can be realized in a sustainable manner.

The workshop „Katastrophen und deren Bewältigung:

Eine Herausforderung an Wissenschaft und Praxis“ held at the University of Passau in July 2005 provided a great opportunity for dialogue / discussion between scientists, NGOs activists and development agencies.

IKAP WORKSHOP

25.10. 2005 at the University of Passau

On October 25th 2005 delegates of the IKAP-Network, a Chiang Mai based NGO working on the incorporation of indigenous knowledge and cultures in MMSEA (Mainland Montane South East Asia), held a workshop at the chair of Southeast Asian Studies at the University of Passau. The network presented their plan to build up the Indigenous Peoples' Regional Institute for Southeast Asia, an institution that would link, for the first time in history, the indigenous hilltribes of six countries in the region (Burma, Thailand, China, Vietnam, Cambodia and Laos). It is assumed that there are over 300 ethnic groups in the mountainous areas of these countries with over 40 million people. The representatives of some of these ethnic groups, who came to Passau (among them Karen, Lahu and Hmong), were surprised to find that there are local ethnic Bavarian traditions in Germany which share the same fate of being threatened by rapid processes of modernization.

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