



MONASH University

Centre of Southeast Asian Seminar Series

Weekly schedule – semester one 2010

- All seminars are held in the Elizabeth Burchill Room, located in the Performing Arts Precinct of the Clayton Campus. (Building 68 at E4/E3 on the Clayton Campus map: <http://www.monash.edu.au/pubs/maps/3-Claytoncolour.pdf>)
- The seminar of March 11 will be held in W1010, Menzies Building.
- Seminars commence at 11.00 am, and conclude at 12.30 am.
- Please send inquiries to the convenor: Julian.Millie@arts.monash.edu.au

March 4 Dr Emma Baulch
ANU

‘Writing popular culture: Indonesia’s music press’

Abstract

The paper presents *Rolling Stone Indonesia*, established in 2005 under licence from principle, New York-based publication, as a case study of changing and enduring in Indonesian middle class cultural politics. It draws together two bodies of literature that have not had much to do with one another. One focuses on Indonesian popular music and the other on the matter of class in Indonesia.

In the English language academic literature, how Indonesian popular music relates to (something like) class has been a compelling question for a lot of writers. In this a *kampung-gedongan* dichotomy is quite often invoked. These are terms that literally refer to the built environment (of the slums-of the buildings) but signify more widely a vulgar-refined. Despite their interest in popular music as a crucible of social hierarchy, none of these writers engage literature on the question of class in Indonesia; the way how evolving *kampung-gedongan* relations as expressed via popular music may help to understand an Indonesian class consciousness and its historical context is not discussed. At the same time, in the surge of literature to emerge on the subject of the Indonesian middle class beginning in the late-1980s and early 1990s, not much consideration is given to how popular cultural production relates to class.

A body of scholarship that speaks directly to my paper elucidates much about the way an Indonesian intellectual authority has developed in concert with specific cultures of print journalism, in which print media enjoy an authoritative role in determining truth. But most of the writing about this process of truth bearing has focussed on the politics of news reporting; there

has been little interest among popular music scholars in how music journalism serves to set the terms, the truth indeed, of music's classed dimensions. If we want to understand how class relates to Indonesian popular music, we should pay heed to how authoritative writings class specific genres.

Author bio

Emma Baulch began studying Indonesian in Year 8 High School, in the year 198 has spent ten of the last twenty years living in Indonesia. In the early 1990s, she involved in human rights activism in Jakarta and Melbourne. In the late 1990s, spectacular cultural changes brought about by changes in media ownership and c Indonesia impressed her greatly. Related phenomena continue to overwhelm her her interest. She has written about some of their facets; music subcultures, advert and the national popular music industry. Her research to date has been on the isla Java and Bali. In writing, she explores ideas about locality, history and class, not agency and resistance, and processes of mediatisation.

Emma was a doctoral candidate at the PSI at Monash University, and was awarded the degree in 2004. Since then, she has worked for QUT as a research associate on an ARC Linkage project, and undertaken a two-year post-doc at Leiden University's Anthropology Department. She now works at the ANU, where she is a post-doctoral fellow on an ARC-funded project administered by the Faculty of Asian Studies, and entitled "Middle Classes, New Media and Indie Networks in Post-Authoritarian Indonesia".

March 11 Dr Tony Donaldson

NOTE: This seminar is to be held in Menzies W1010 and is co-presented with the Monash Centre for Malaysian Studies

Quiet artists in silent cities: Contemporary artists in Malaysia

The art scene in Malaysia is conservative. Little is known of it outside of the country. Yet contemporary art is thriving in Malaysia. This seminar focuses on two artists in Malaysia to examine the aesthetics and preoccupations of their art in the context of Southeast Asia. In doing so, the talk will also bring out some unspoken features about the art industry in Malaysia, Indonesia, and Singapore.

The first artist to be discussed is the figurative artist Ahmad Zakii Anwar (1955 -). As a Sufi, his art explores identity issues and theological questions about the nature of existence, embodying certain universal values that are combined with Islamic references such as Ihsan, a concept of excellence and beauty.

The talk will then turn to focus on two recent works by the installation artist Zulkifli Yusoff (1962 -). In 2009, as part of his *Malaya series*, Zulkifli Yusoff produced a multimedia work titled *Merdeka 57* and a fibreglass piece titled *The Planter's Wife*. Both artworks were inspired by the 1952 film *The Planter's Wife*, which Yusoff used to explore issues that arose during the British colonial era relating to the position of three main racial groups in Malaya, their socio-economic situation, and their ideologies and feelings.

Two short films on each artist will be screened.

Tony Donaldson is a former Visiting Research Fellow of the Institute of Southeast Asian Studies in Singapore where he initiated a research project on contemporary art in Asia. He is a former Honorary Research Fellow at the Monash Asia Institute. His research and publications focus on the cultures, religions and art of Indonesia, Sri Lanka, India and Malaysia.

March 18 Dr Fiona Miller
University of Melbourne

‘Rethinking Vulnerability: Changing Approaches to Understanding Vulnerable People and Places - the case of the Mekong Delta, Vietnam’

Abstract

This seminar will explore changing approaches to our understanding of vulnerable people and places with reference to historical and contemporary environmental change in the Mekong Delta, Vietnam. The seminar will situate earlier research on perceptions and responses to environmental risk in this highly productive and dynamic part of Vietnam with more contemporary developments in Vietnam and the Mekong Basin. Increased attention on the threats associated with climate change and its interaction with other environmental and development processes has raised the importance of considering social vulnerability to such changes. Few studies, however, consider the ways in which historical, cultural and political processes influence how vulnerability and resilience to environmental change is shaped.

Bio

Fiona Miller is a Future Generation Fellow in the Department of Resource Management and Geography, the University of Melbourne. Prior to this Fiona was a Research Fellow in the Risk, Livelihoods and Vulnerability Programme of the Stockholm Environment Institute. She has also worked as a lecturer in Human Geography at Macquarie University and with the Australian Mekong Resource Centre, the University of Sydney.

Fiona has a PhD in Human Geography from the University of Sydney for her research on the political ecology of risk and society - water relations in the Mekong Delta, Viet Nam. Fiona has considerable experience conducting research on the social dimensions of environmental change in the Asia Pacific region, notably Vietnam, as well as Australia. She specialises in research on social vulnerability, water resources management, political ecology, sustainable livelihoods, resilience and community participation.

March 25 Professor Richard Tanter, Dr Arabella Imhoff
Nautilus Institute, RMIT

‘Nuclear power as a solution to Indonesia's energy needs: pros, cons and volcanoes’

April 1 Mr Andy Fuller
University of Tasmania

Poetries of the Road: Performance Practices and Street Life

This presentation is based on a film project involving the reading of poetry in public space. These performances are part of a questioning of the intersection between contemporary literature and urban space and societies. This film project seeks to emphasise three aspects of 'poetry': 1) movements through urban space, 2) the sounds, melodies and noises of daily urban life and 3) the 'poetry' that is read in a particular location. This film and presentation draws on ideas from Ghassan Hage (regarding 'the modern'), Marc Augé (regarding 'non-places'), Richard Sennett (on 'the spectator'). The film and presentation also addresses discourses on Indonesian urban spaces and on contemporary Indonesian literature. An edited version of the film, *Poetries on the Road*, will be shown, followed by a discussion of the film. The film is a collaboration between Andy Fuller and Binhad Nurrohmat.

Andy Fuller is a PhD candidate at the University of Tasmania. His research is on the practice of flânerie in the writings of Seno Gumira Ajidarma.

April 8 NO SEMINAR – MID-SEMESTER BREAK

April 15 Dr James Gomez
Monash University

***Social Media and Opposition Parties:
Networking for Singapore's General Elections***

Abstract

This paper seeks to extend the scope of research on opposition parties' use of the internet in Singapore by analysing its use of online social media. Ever since 2000, when online social media platforms became publically available, opposition parties in Singapore have been experimenting with this medium which includes Flickr, Wikipedia, YouTube and Twitter. Of the different types of social media, Facebook – the largest social networking site – is the most popularly used by the opposition parties, its key figures and its supporters. This paper looks into the opposition's use of social media and argues that compared to other online platforms, social networking sites such as Facebook allow the volume of opposition supporter base to be visible in a manner that was not possible before. It also allows key party members to establish their own individual support base. As a result, Facebook will be the platform to watch in Singapore's next general elections scheduled to be held by February 2012.

Key words; Singapore, general elections, opposition parties, new media, social media,

Author

Dr. James Gomez is presently Senior Lecturer and Head of Public Relations, School of Humanities, Communications and Social Sciences at Monash University, Australia. His current projects include, Gomez, James and Hayes, Mike, (co-editors) *New Media and Human Rights in Southeast Asia* (2010) Routledge: London and New York. His publications on Singapore include, "Online Opposition in Singapore: Communications Outreach Without Electoral Gain", (2008) *Journal of Contemporary Asia. Vol.38, No.4* and "Citizen Journalism: Bridging the Discrepancy in Singapore's General Elections News", [Sudostasien Aktuell](#) - *Journal of Current Southeast Asian Affairs*. (6/2006) German Institute of Global and Area Studies, Germany. He can be contacted at james.gomez@arts.monash.edu.au

April 22

Dr Susie Protschky
Monash University

'Dutch still lifes and colonial visual culture in the Netherlands Indies 1800-1949'

Abstract

Still life paintings are most widely associated with seventeenth century Dutch art and culture. It is less commonly known that still lifes were also a popular visual genre in the Netherlands Indies (colonial Indonesia) until the twentieth century. This paper considers what such images reveal about colonial notions of the relationship between nature, culture and civilisation. Early modern scholars have cogently argued that Dutch flower pieces from the seventeenth century typically reflected georgic discourses on human mastery over nature. However, three centuries later flowers were largely absent from colonial still lifes in the Indies: painters and photographers were more inclined to depict tropical fruits, a preference which reflects the development of modern colonial discourses of an abundant tropics, where nature flourished even in the absence of cultivation. Such notions were commonly employed by Europeans in Southeast Asia to justify the need for colonial intervention in the tropics while minimising the role of Asian labour in enriching European economies.

Biography

Susie Protschky is an ARC Postdoctoral Fellow in the department of History (SOPHIS) at Monash University. She gained her PhD in History from the University of New South Wales (Sydney) in 2007, and was a Lecturer at the University of Western Australia (Perth) from 2008 to

2010. Her first book, *Images of the Tropics: Environment and Visual Culture in Colonial Indonesia*, has recently been accepted for publication by KITLV Press (Leiden). Susie specialises in using visual materials as primary sources, and her work to date has focused on topics in the history of the Netherlands Indies ranging from colonial representations of nature and landscape to customs surrounding food and eating. Her current project investigates the role of the House of Orange-Nassau in Dutch colonial expansion.

April 29 Dr. Gerhard Hoffstaedter, La Trobe University

'Islamicity – Islam, space and being in peninsular Malaysia'

(Presented by the Monash Centre for Malaysian Studies)

In this paper I look at the role Islam as a religion and more importantly as a way of life plays in the lives of mainly urban Malays. I am particularly interested in the way Islam is used as a tool to delineate space, both metaphorically and in very real terms. Lefebvre sees space as a triplicate, a threefold experiential phenomenon; namely as perceived space (in the physical environment), as conceived space (the semiotic abstraction that informs how people negotiate space as well as the space of corporations, planners, politics) and finally as lived space (the body lives life in interaction with other bodies). The latter two intersect and also appear to have deep fault lines running through them. I aim to elucidate some of these looking at the establishment and protection of Islamic spaces in the media, state policies, and everyday life through the use of icons, state policies and discourse. As disparate as these may sound, they form a close relationship and play an important role in creating, reshaping and maintaining boundaries between people in Malaysia today as well as creating spaces of certainty for Muslims.

Gerhard has a BA in Social Anthropology and Politics and MA in Social Anthropology from the University of Kent at Canterbury and a PhD in Anthropology and Sociology from La Trobe University. Since finishing his PhD on Muslim Malay identity politics he has been a research fellow at the Institute for Human Security at La Trobe University working on refugee identity politics in Southeast Asia and the human security debate and its usefulness for anthropology. He has also lectured on anthropological theory at La Trobe and continues to work on Islam in Southeast Asia.

May 6 Dr Peter Riddell

Camb. MS. Or. II.6.45: the oldest surviving commentary writing on the Qur'an Southeast Asia

In 1600 the Islamic Sultanate of Aceh, already a significant regional power in Southeast Asia, was on the threshold of its golden age under the rule of Sultan Iskandar Muda (r. 1607-1636). Yet few documentary records survive from early 17th century Aceh. Given the Sultanate's significance to regional history, it is essential that surviving records from that early period be subjected to dedicated research.

Cambridge MS. OR. Ii.6.45 contains the earliest substantial portion of exegesis on the Qur'an in the Malay language, presenting extended commentary upon Sura 18 (*al-Kahf*). It can be dated to around 1600, and was most likely collected by one of the earliest Dutch maritime expeditions to Aceh.

Apart from its historical significance as an early document, MS. OR. Ii.6.45 is important for other reasons. It provides an important window into the theological concerns of Malays at a crucial period of Islamisation of the Malay world. Furthermore, it contains a style of exegesis which had become controversial in Arabia at the time of its manufacture, so it raises questions about the extent of disjuncture between theological directions in Arabia and the Malay world.

This paper presents a report on work in progress. We will consider the history of MS Ii.6.45 within its Acehnese context, its sources and theological orientation, as well as aspects of the Malay language of the MS.

Peter Riddell took his PhD at the ANU, focusing on Islam in Southeast Asia. He studied Qur'anic Exegesis at L'Ecole Pratique des Hautes Etudes/Sorbonne (Paris) and has previously taught at the ANU, the Institut Pertanian Bogor (Indonesia), SOAS in London, and was appointed as Professor of Islamic Studies at the London School of Theology, where he served from 1996-2007 as the founding Director of the Centre for Islamic Studies and Muslim-Christian Relations.

Peter has published widely on Southeast Asia, Islam and Christian-Muslim Relations. His books include *Transferring a Tradition* (Berkeley, Centers for South and Southeast Asian Studies, Univ. California, 1990); *Islam and the Malay-Indonesian World: Transmission and Responses* (London, Hurst, 2001); and *Islam: Essays in Scripture, Thought and Society* (edited with Tony Street, Leiden, Brill, 1997). He has also published over 50 journal articles and book chapters on aspect of the study of Islam and Southeast Asia.

May 13

Dr Craig Thorburn

Peacebuilding in Aceh – The Good, the Bad, and the Silly

Nearly five years since the signing of the Helsinki Memorandum of Understanding between the Government of Indonesia and the Free Aceh Movement, peace is still holding in Aceh, and the lives and livelihoods of the 1.5 million people who consider themselves victims of the conflict – indeed, of the entire 3.9 million people in the province – have improved markedly. The incidence of political violence, and of violent crime of any sort, is now lower in Aceh than most other Indonesian provinces. Three successful elections have been held since 2005, for Governor and *Bupatis* in 2006-07, then Parliamentary and later Presidential elections in 2009.

Thirty years of warfare exacted a heavy toll, and the province faces many challenges rebuilding its shattered economy and tattered infrastructure. Lack of funds, however, is not one of these challenges. Under the terms set out in the Helsinki MoU the Government of Aceh

stands to receive an estimated additional Rp. 78.6 trillion (US\$ 7.9 billion) in special autonomy funds between 2006 and 2027. Combined with central government and international donor funds allocated to post-conflict reconstruction and peacebuilding, the total value of Aceh's 'peace dividend' comes to 130 percent of the provincial cost of the conflict (conservatively estimated to be Rp. 67.3 trillion, or US\$ 6.7 billion), giving Aceh a real chance to 'build back better'. Serious capacity constraints, however, continue to hamper reconstruction.

Agricultural production and petty trade are recovering, as are most people's livelihoods. The 'top end' of the Aceh economy, however, remains relatively stagnant. Oil and gas production are declining, while investors continue to take a 'wait and see' attitude toward the province. Government and donor reconstruction expenditures remain the primary engine of growth in the Aceh economy, as they have been since the December 2004 tsunami.

In 2008-09, the World Bank together with the Aceh Peace-Reintegration Board (BRA), BAPPENAS, AusAID, DFID, the Embassy of the Kingdom of the Netherlands, UNDP, the USAID-SERASI Program undertook a major Multi-stakeholder Review of Post-Conflict Programming in Aceh (MSR), intended to support better planning and coordination of post-conflict recovery and peacebuilding efforts, based on a shared understanding and strategic vision. This talk summarises some of the key points from the MSR report.

Craig Thorburn is a human geographer and long-time practitioner of community-based development and resource management in Indonesia, and Co-ordinator of the Monash Master of International Development and Environmental Analysis (M.IDEA) program in the School of Geography and Environmental Science. Craig has over 25 years experience working with local and international NGOs, and bilateral and multilateral aid programs and organisations, and has been involved with both tsunami and conflict recovery programs in Aceh since 2005, including positions as Senior Research Adviser to the Aceh Community Assistance Research Project (ACARP) study of post-tsunami recovery in 2007, and 'Senior Report Researcher' (i.e., lead author) of the MSR report in 2008-09.

May 20

Dr Marshall Clark
Deakin University

Dimensions of Indonesia-Malaysia Relations: Islam and Popular Culture

This seminar will explore to what extent in recent years the concept of Southeast Asia as a region appears to be more of a reality in the sphere of popular culture than in regional politics, due to the unprecedented growth of intra-regional pop culture flows. One trend is the so-called 'Indonesian invasion', whereby Malaysia has become flooded with

Indonesian music and cinema. Indonesian soap operas, on the other hand, are characterised by the ubiquitous presence of Malaysian actors. Another regional trend is the emergence of cultural texts with a strongly Islamic content. For centuries Islamic linkages within Southeast Asia have made a powerful contribution to cultural and political identity in the Malay world. More recently, Muslim culture is increasingly becoming part of Indonesian and Malaysian popular culture through film, soap operas, novels and songs. This has political implications. The films by Yasmin Ahmad and Hatta Azad Khan, for instance, reflect on the rise of *ketuanan Islam* (Islamic supremacy) and *ketuanan Melayu* (Malay supremacy) ideologies in Malaysia. These ideologies are closely associated with the strict implementation of Islamic law and values in recent times as well as ongoing attempts to transform the concept of ‘the Malay’.

Similarly, in the Indonesian context popular culture, far from being mere entertainment, can at times be at the very heart of Indonesian national politics. The post-authoritarian boom of *film kearab-araban* (Arab-icised, or Islam-centric, films), for instance, which follows hot on the tails of the campaign to outlaw pornography, can be regarded as an element of the recent assertion of ‘popular front’ Islamism, whereby Muslim groups are increasingly jockeying for greater political leverage. By analysing these trends, this seminar will delineate the intersection of culture and politics in Southeast Asian regionalism.

Biodata

Dr. Marshall Clark spent several years studying literature and the art of shadow puppeteering in Yogyakarta, Central Java. His writings on literature, cinema and Indonesian masculinities have appeared in the journal ‘Indonesia’ (2001), in the edited collection ‘Popular Culture in Indonesia’ (2008) and in his forthcoming book, ‘Maskulinitas: Culture, Gender and Politics in Indonesia’ (2010). He is currently a Visiting Research Fellow at the Southeast Asia Forum, The Walter H. Shorenstein Asia-Pacific Research Center, Stanford University, USA, where he is working on a joint research project with Juliet Pietsch, ‘Indonesia-Malaysia Relations: Culture, Politics and Regionalism in Southeast Asia’.

May 27

Ms Melissa Crouch
Law School, University of Melbourne

Government Warnings, Religious Prohibitions, and Accusations of Blasphemy: The Case of Ahmadiyah in Indonesia

Abstract:

Ahmadiyah, a minority religious community that identifies with Islam, has existed in Indonesia since the 1920s. Over the years, however, Ahmadiyah has experienced increasing tension and hostility from conservative, orthodox Islamic groups in Indonesia. On 1 June 2008,

this culminated in a violent attack on supporters of Ahmadiyah by militant Islamic groups at the National Monument (known as 'Monas') in Jakarta. Shortly after this incident, the Indonesian government issued Joint Decree 3/2008 as a 'warning' to followers of Ahmadiyah, though stopping short of an outright ban.

This presentation will analyse the origins of Ahmadiyah and its formation in Indonesia in particular. It will examine the efforts of three key actors pushing for a total ban on Ahmadiyah in Indonesia: the Indonesian Ulama Council (MUI); the Coordinating Board for Monitoring Mystical Beliefs in Society (known as 'Bakor Pakem'); and radical Islamic groups. Melissa will argue that although the Indonesian government compromised by issuing a 'warning' (not a total ban), and by prosecuting two of the leading perpetrators of the Monas incident, this has only created confusion about the status of Ahmadiyah in Indonesia and has failed to prevent further violent attacks against them. Further, the Indonesian Constitutional Court's recent decision to uphold the blasphemy law leaves open the potentially for accusations of blasphemy to be directed at followers of Ahmadiyah in the future.

This presentation is based on the Background Paper Series of the ARC Federation Fellowship on Islam, Syari'ah and Governance, Number 4, available at: <http://www.lindseyfederation.law.unimelb.edu.au/go/publications/islam-syariah-and-governance-background-papers>.

Bio:

Melissa Crouch is a PhD candidate in the Melbourne Law School, the University of Melbourne. She is also a Research Assistant at the Asian Law Centre. In 2006, Melissa completed Bachelor of Arts and Bachelor of Laws (Hons.) degrees at the University of Melbourne. Melissa's doctoral research is supported by an [ARC Federation Fellowship](#) doctoral scholarship and an Endeavour Australia Award. Melissa has had articles published in the Asian Journal of Comparative Law, the Australian Journal of Asian Law and the Singapore Journal of Legal Studies.

June 3

No seminar in this week