



# MONSOON

NEWSLETTER OF THE SOUTHEAST  
ASIAN STUDIES PROGRAM  
AT OHIO UNIVERSITY

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## AMBASSADOR OF MALAYSIA VISITS OHIO UNIVERSITY

The Southeast Asian Studies Program was proud to host a reception on Friday, February 7 in the Southeast Asia Collection in Alden Library to welcome Malaysian Ambassador H.E. Dato' Ghazzali Sheikh Abdul Khalid to Ohio University.

Ambassador Ghazzali's visit is part of the preparation for Provost Stephen Kopp's scheduled April visit to Malaysia. The purpose of the trip will be to explore new possibilities for revitalizing OU's rela-



Ambassador Ghazzali (left) poses for a photo with Tim Abdul Razak, Chairholder Zakaria Ahmad and Dr. Drew McDaniel, Director of the Southeast Asian Studies Program.

tionship with Malaysia. Provost Kopp will be accompanied by Center for International Studies Director Josep Rota, Southeast Asian Studies Director Drew McDaniel and Tim Abdul Razak Chairholder Zakaria Ahmad.

The reception was attended by nearly 60 Southeast Asian Studies students, faculty and staff. Also present was John Grady of the Ohio Department of Development, who presented Ambassador Ghazzali with a gift on behalf of the State of Ohio. Refreshments included *Mee Hoon* (Fried Noodles), *Popiah* (Spring rolls), and *Seri Muka* (Malaysian rice dessert) prepared by Malaysian students at Ohio University. The Ambassador was given a tour of the Alden Library's Southeast Asia Collection and Malaysian Resource Center by Collection Head, Lian The-Mulliner.

\*\*Read more about the Ambassador's visit on our website! <http://www.ohio.edu/cas>

## DR. OSMAN BAKAR SPEAKS AT OU

Dr. Osman Bakar, Malaysia Chair of Islam in Southeast Asia at the Center for Muslim-Christian Understanding, Georgetown University, delivered a lecture on the "Impact of September 11 on Southeast Asian Islam" for the Southeast Asian Studies Program on February 21.

Formerly Professor of Philosophy of Science at Universiti Malaya, Kuala Lumpur (1992-2000), Dr. Osman obtained his B.Sc. and M.Sc. Degrees in Mathematics from London University and his Ph.D. in Islamic philosophy from Temple University, Philadelphia. Dr. Osman has published 12 books and more than 100 articles on Islamic philosophy and Science, Religion and Science, Sufism, Southeast Asian Islam and Contemporary Islam.

Dr. Osman will return to OU in April as a presenter in the Children and Islam: Faith and Social Change in Africa and SEA conference to be held April 10-12.



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### Report on the first TOT Workshop for Democratic Dialogue

By Elizabeth Collins



The first TOT workshop for democratic dialogue was conducted as a "Young Leaders Forum" from December 12-15, 2002, in Palembang South Sumatra. The topic of the workshop, "Democratic Reforms and the Culture of Violence in South Sumatra: An Action-oriented Workshop," was developed by local partners at Sriwijaya University (UNSRI), the National Institute for Islamic Studies (IAIN) Raden Fatch in Palembang, the Legal Aid Association (LBH) - Palembang and the Women's Crisis Center (WCC) in Palembang. The terms of reference for the workshop were developed in a series of meetings in Jakarta at CERIC University of Indonesia (UI) and in Palembang beginning in October 2002.

In preparation for the workshop, Elizabeth Collins met with Rosihan Arsyad, the Governor of South Sumatra, Ridho Jafar Ph.D., the Rector of UNSRI, and Prof. Dr. Jalaluddin, Rector of the IAIN Raden Fatah, and Dr. Sirozi, Dean of the Graduate Program at IAIN Raden Fatah.

TOT trainers from OU included Prof. Michael Malley (Political Science), Prof. Elizabeth Collins (Philosophy), Ann Shoemake (Ph.D. student, Interpersonal Communication), Ihsan Ali Fauzi (MA student, Southeast Asian Studies), Djayadi Hanan (MA student, Southeast Asian Studies), and Ganda Upaya (MA OU 2002, CERIC UI). TOT trainees (who will conduct TOT workshops in partnership with CERIC UI and OU in June 2003) included Rukmina Gonibala (CERIC Manado), Rosmery Sabri (CERIC Medan), Setia Budhi (CERIC Banjarmasin) and Zulfikri (CERPlus, UNSRI). Workshop participants from local NGOs, academic institutions and local government were identified by our local partners.

The workshop commenced on Thursday, December 12, 2002, with the final planning sessions with TOT trainers. The point of these sessions was to discuss with

team leaders in the workshop how to conduct participatory dialogue on "action plans" for reducing the level of violence in South Sumatra.

On Friday morning at 8:30 a.m., the workshop was opened by a representative of the Governor of South Sumatra. The first day of the workshop was devoted to presentations on the topic of violence in South Sumatra. Speakers on the first panel included Prof. Dr. Jalaluddin, who spoke on the Cultural Aspects of Violence in South Sumatra, Adrianus Méliala Ph.D., Associate Director of CERIC UI, a criminologist, who presented an overview of criminal violence in South Sumatra based on police statistics, Nur Kholis, Director of LBH Palembang, who discussed the emergence of violence in protests by peasants, workers, and students, and Yeni Rosilaini, who discussed the high incidence of violence against women in South Sumatra. These presentations precipitated a lively discussion, especially the presentation of Adrianus Meliala, who informed participants that South Sumatra has the highest recorded rate of stabbings and theft in Indonesia.

Speakers in the afternoon panel focused on democratic reforms that could lead to a reduction of violence. They included M. Husni Thamrin (CERPlus, UNSRI), who spoke on community governance, Amzulian Rivai, Ph.D. (Center for the Study of Human Rights and Terrorism, UNSRI), who spoke on law enforcement and violence, and Djayadi Hana (OU), who discussed the work of Ashutosh Varshney on Hindu-Muslim violence in India and its implications for reducing ethnic and religious conflict in Indonesia. These presentations also provoked engaged discussion, particularly the presentation of Djayadi Hanan on the role of formal and informal associations that are inter-ethnic and inter-religious in preventing violence.

The first day of the workshop ended with a final session in which participants broke up into four teams. Each team was led by a team leader or "mediator" from OU (or CERIC UI in one case) and a mediator from a local partner. The goal of the teams was to identify the roots of violence in South Sumatra and to produce an action plan for reducing violence. Four teams were set up with the following agendas: 1) Religions and educational approaches to reducing violence, mediated by M. Sirozi (IAIN Raden Fatah) and Ihsan Alief (OU); 2) Political approaches to managing conflicts so that they

do not become violent, mediated by Ardiyan Saptawan MS (CERPlus) and Djayadi Hanan (OU); 3) Law enforcement and conflict management, mediated by Yeni Rosliani (WCC) and Adrianus Meliala (CERIC, OU); 4) Structural and cultural approaches to reducing violent conflict, mediated by M. Husni Thamrin (CERPlus) and Ann Shoemake (OU).

The second day of the workshop began at 8:30 with a panel focusing on various approaches to reducing violence. Speakers on this panel included M. Sirozi PhD (Dean, Graduate Program, IAIN RF), who spoke on educational reforms supporting democracy, tolerance, and pluralism; Ihsan Ali Fauzi (OU), who spoke on Islam as a religion opposed to violence, and Prof. Michael Malley (OU), who discussed the implications of political reform and new local autonomy laws for management of local conflicts. Discussion was extensive so this session ran over its allotted time. As a result, team discussions were postponed to the afternoon, and the morning ended with a presentation by Imam Prasodjo Ph.D. (Director of CERIC UI) on participatory development as a trust-building strategy for rebuilding community after violent conflicts. This presentation was received with great enthusiasm as it focused on the ways in which NGOs in partnership with government and/or business might become actively involved in resolving pressing problems at the local level.

In the afternoon teams met to continue their work drawing up action-plans to reduce violence in South Sumatra. In several cases these meeting extended late into the evening. The final day of the workshop began with presentations by each team of their findings and proposals. The proposals made by the four teams were integrated into a final statement of workshop findings for the afternoon session. The workshop concluded with a decision that participants would constitute themselves as a new Forum for Democratic Dialogue which would meet at least once a month. CERPlus volunteered to coordinate these meeting and the Graduate Program at IAIN RF offered their facilities for the meetings. The participants resolved to move beyond discussion and criticism to action at the local level.

*\*\*Dr. Elizabeth Collins is currently in Indonesia on a Fulbright Fellowship, where she is teaching at the University of Indonesia and finishing research for her upcoming book. She will return to Ohio University in August 2003.*

## Grant Received from ALO

### Grant Received for University Partnership with National Institute for Islamic Studies, Jakarta

*By Sukidi Mulyadi*

The Southeast Asian Studies Program is pleased to announce that the Association Liaison Office for University Cooperation in Development (ALO) has funded our grant proposal titled "Strengthening Civic Education in Indonesia," which was developed by Southeast Asian Studies Faculty members Dr. Michael Malley and Dr. Elizabeth Collins. This grant will formalize the partnership between Ohio University and Indonesia's State Islamic University (UIN), which was initiated in October 2001 with the signing of a Letter of Intent for academic collaboration between the two universities.

The focus of this project involves staff and faculty development, collaborative research and program development through faculty exchange, and strengthening research capacities and civic education curriculum through seminars and workshops. In the next two years, Ohio University will host three research fellows from UIN who will spend one quarter as a visiting lecturer at Ohio University. The first research fellow, Dr. Yusuf Rahman, is scheduled to arrive for Spring Quarter 2003. Two staff members from UIN, Sukidi Mulyadi and Achmad Ubaidillah, have already begun their course of study at Ohio University and will graduate with Master's Degrees in International Affairs in 2004.

The collaboration between OU and UIN is aimed at building research and teaching capacity in civic education, developing models of active teaching and problem-based learning for civic education for the K-12 network of Islamic schools, and strengthening the teaching and research mission of the SEAS program at Ohio University. During the course of the grant, workshops will be held in Indonesia by OU faculty members Michael Malley (Political Science), Elizabeth Collins (Philosophy), Benita Blessing (History), Jaylynne Hutchinson (Education), Claudia Hale (Interpersonal Communication) and Drew McDaniel (Telecommunication).

# New Student Profiles

## *Achmad Ubaidillah*

I am from Indonesia. I graduated from Jakarta Islamic State Institute of theology faculty. I also have been working there for seven years as a faculty staff. I have been involved as an assistance staff in some education research particularly in Civic Education as well as in its workshops and seminars. In 1999, I obtained an opportunity to participate in the Higher Education Workshop held by McGill Indonesian project in Jakarta.



Now I am student in the Southeast Asian Studies Program. I hope I can study more about SEA historically, culturally, and politically. I have been devoted to the study of civic education since the fall of Indonesian military regime in 1998, I plan to focus my study here on the politic of Southeast Asia, especially on Indonesian democracy. Furthermore, regarding the importance of promoting democracy among Indonesian students at large, my campus founded an institution concentrating on democracy studies called the Indonesian Center for Civic Education (ICCE) where I was elected as one of its presidium members. In addition, the civic education program has been active throughout the country since 2001, with about 165 lecturers and more than 2000 student participants.

Finally, regarding my program above, I fell lucky and proud to be here because I can study and plan research on civic education and democracy education. I look forward to talking with other overseas students about how to broaden and transform democracy movement in Southeast Asian countries. Hopefully, I can enjoy my time here.

## *Elin Driana*

My name is Elin Driana. I am from Indonesia. I have been living in Athens since August 2001. My husband, Putut Widjanarko is a graduate student at School of Telecommunication Ohio University. I have three children, Faikar (9 years old), Hanum (7 years old), and my "American baby", Ranti (5 months). Actually, I am admitted at Southeast Asian Studies in Fall 2002. I decided to enroll this Winter because my baby was born two weeks before the Fall quarter began.



## *Haruyuki Hidaka*

My name is Haruyuki Hidaka from Japan, and I have just entered the Southeast Asian Studies program this winter quarter. Actually, I already have been in Athens about one

year half as an OPIE student. My interest in Southeast Asia is the political and economical relationship between Southeast Asian nations and Japan, such as Japanese Multinational Corporations in Southeast Asia. I would like to relish in this program. Thank you.

## *Erda Handayani*

My name is Erda Handayani from Banjarmasin, South Kalimantan (Indonesian southeast Borneo). I like listening to music and singing and when I was in my teens, I was one of the singers in my school and university bands. I also like to compose poetry and enjoy it by myself. Therefore, reading poetry in front of the audiences, like I did with my husband last October in the Annual Poetry Night, which was my first experience and, of course, it will be unforgettable. In my free time I was involved in Aisyiyah (one of the largest Muslim women organizations in Indonesia). We worked together to pursue a better position for women both in domestic and professional lives, especially in my province where women have less access to jobs, information, as well as political and economic decision-making although we outnumber men in population.



In my hometown, I am an English teacher in a Public Junior High School. Most of the students who come to the school are from very poor families. I often felt very sad when I found that some students couldn't even buy a single notebook. Fortunately, things have improved as now the government has special fund for poor students, otherwise many students would drop out of the schools. It is not surprising that teaching English in such a situation is not easy. Furthermore, most students think that English is one of the most difficult subjects besides Mathematics. I have to use many ways to make them interested in English. For instance by showing them some pictures about other countries or tell stories about the countries. However, it's only a picture, it's not my own experience so it is difficult to convince them how important English is in their future life.

Having a chance to study at Ohio University in Athens is a dream come true for me. Now I could say to my students that by having an English skill they will have a better opportunity in every field and that it's possible for them to go abroad some day. Once I go back home, it will be easier for me to teach my students by using photos that I'm taking here and by telling them about my own experience of studying and living in US. Also with my experience of having discussion and interaction with my professors as well as international students and Indonesian scholars studying here, I have gained a lot to contribute to my profession and my organization.

# New Faculty Profiles

## Dr. Doris Chang

The Southeast Asian Studies Program is proud to welcome Dr. Doris Chang to Ohio University and the Southeast Asian Studies Faculty.



Dr. Chang has recently joined the department of Psychology as an Assistant Professor. She earned her Ph.D. in Clinical Psychology and her M.A. in Clinical Psychology from the University of California, Los Angeles. Her B.A. was earned in the Honors Program at the University of Texas at Austin.

Her specializations include cultural psychology, ethnic minority mental health and domestic violence in immigrant communities. Dr. Chang is particularly interested in the mental health of Asian American communities. Since 2000, she has been the Principal Investigator for a project titled "Interventions for Domestic Violence in Asian American Communities." She is currently conducting an ethnographic pilot study of culture-specific strategies for outreach, education and interventions for domestic violence in five Asian American communities.

Dr. Chang's overseas experience includes fieldwork and language study in the People's Republic of China and Taiwan. She speaks fluent Mandarin Chinese. In association with the Southeast Asian Studies Program, Dr. Chang plans to expand her research to Cambodia.

Here at Ohio University, Dr. Chang will teach courses on Culture and Mental Health, Diversity Issues in Research and Clinical Practice and Clinical Supervision.

*\*\*Read more about Dr. Chang's research and interests at [www.psych.ohio.edu/people/faculty/chang/dchang.html](http://www.psych.ohio.edu/people/faculty/chang/dchang.html)*

## Dr. Glenn Matlack

The Southeast Asian Studies Program also welcomes Dr. Glenn Matlack to Ohio University and the Southeast Asian Studies Faculty.



Dr. Matlack joined the faculty of Environmental and Plant Biology in 2002. He earned his Ph.D. in plant population biology and forest ecology from the University College of North Wales, UK in 1984.

Dr. Matlack's research is largely focused on forest conservation and management and the spatial and temporal structure of habitat as it influences the distribution, abundance, and reproductive success of plants.

Dr. Matlack enjoys working with students on research projects and welcomes inquiries from both graduate and undergraduate students. Topics of recent student projects under his guidance include: interactions of plant mobility, habitat turnover and habitat spatial structure; long-term impacts of land use in forests of SE Ohio; watershed; plant invasions as a community assembly process; and interactions of clonal growth and local environmental heterogeneity.

In the department of Environmental and Plant Biology, Dr. Matlack will teach PBIO 109: Americans and Their Forests, PBIO 435/535: Plant Population Biology, and seminars in Tropical Ecology. As a member of the Southeast Asian Studies Faculty, Dr. Matlack plans to pursue his research interests in Thailand.

*\*\*Read more about Dr. Matlack's research and interests at [www.plantbio.ohio.edu/epb/faculty/faculty/grm.htm](http://www.plantbio.ohio.edu/epb/faculty/faculty/grm.htm)*



## Children and Islam:

### *Faith and Social Change in Africa and Southeast Asia*



The Southeast Asian Studies program in collaboration with the Institute for the African Child at Ohio University will be hosting a conference on "Children and Islam: Faith and Social Change in Africa and Southeast Asia." The conference will take place from April 10-12, 2003 and will be held at OU.

Islam provides a central focus for socialization in Southeast Asia and Africa, affecting family and community life, education, politics, the world of work and the wider economy and inter-group relations. We have an exciting group of both young and senior presenters from around the world ready to open up dialogue amongst disciplines and between the two world regions.

# Winter Break Fieldwork

## Wesley Byers: Vietnam

Over winter break I had the opportunity to return to Vietnam and continue research for my thesis. My research is centered on two war memorial monuments (Liêt Sĩ) in the village where I was born, Chu Lai. Chu Lai was once the location of the most important U.S. air base outside of Saigon during the American/Vietnam war.

After the war, the Socialist Republic of Vietnam (S.R.V.) constructed war memorial monuments throughout Vietnam. I believe that these monuments were constructed to honor the soldiers who died for their country, to inspire nationalistic patriotism and to heal the wounds of war. My research has led me to question how the Vietnamese interact with these monuments today.

During my stay in Chu Lai, I was able to tape record conversations about these monuments. I transcribed and translated these conversations with the help of a good friend, Nhat Bui. My conversations began to reveal how Vietnamese people think about and honor the deceased. A gentleman repairing one of the memorials told me "in Vietnam the living and the dead are very close to each other". Family graves are often located adjacent to homes and families regularly tend to their ancestors' graves.

Throughout the year there are a number of festivals dedicated to inviting the souls of the deceased to join their families. I was also told "according to



Vietnamese concept the grave should be open to allow the soul to return home to join the living".

Many Vietnamese believe that if a person is not buried properly that person becomes a "wandering soul". My grandfather has two brothers who died during the war and whose remains are still missing. Although their remains have not been found they are honored at one of the memorials in the village. The Vietnamese government is still actively searching for the remains of soldiers lost during the war. Within the past two years the remains of three soldiers from Chu Lai have been discovered. Families still gather once a year to find out if the government has any news about their relatives' remains.

War memorial monuments play a significant role in reminding the Vietnamese of the soldiers who sacrificed their lives for their country. Listening to their voices will help us to better understand social and cultural changes that have occurred in post-war Vietnam. I hope that my thesis will provide a deeper understanding of what these monuments represent for the Vietnamese and essentially for all of us.

Please allow me to express my deepest appreciation to the department of Southeast Asian Studies and my thesis committee.

*\*\* Wesley Byers is a second year student in the Southeast Asian Studies Program.*



## Todd McCabe: Philippines

### Avian Diversity in an Agricultural Landscape on Camiguin Island, Philippines

Deforestation is threatening the biodiversity in the Philippines. Logging and the unrestricted expansion of agriculture have reduced forest cover to its present state. Presumably, the conversion of rainforests into agriculture systems results in a total loss of biodiversity. Recent studies have shown though, that agricultural eco-systems are becoming important to conserving biological diversity (Pimental et al, 1992, in Greenberg et al, 1997). The objective of my study was to see if plantations of coconut (*Cocos nucifera*), mangoes (*Indica mangifera*), lanzones (*Lansium domesticum*), gmelina (*Gmelina arborea*), bananas (*Musa spp.*) and mahogany (*Swietenia mahagoni*) support avian diversity.

I established stations (total number 16) spaced approximately 200 meters apart and conducted point counts identifying birds within a 50-meter radius. (Initially, I had selected a distance of 25 meters but, because of the spacing of vegetation I expanded the range to include a larger number of observable species.) I also measured the vegetation around each station on two spatial scales: shrubs and saplings within a five-meter radius and trees within an eleven-meter radius. I identified twenty species of birds in my study. Avian diversity was most abundant in coconut plantations, riparian zones and in vegetation dividing adjacent properties.

My preliminary conclusion is agriculture systems are capable of supporting avian diversity. Currently though, plantations are not being used to their full potential. Many of the sites I visited consisted of monocultures. Increased complexity of the vegetation would not only provide habitat conducive to bird populations but also additional sources of income to the landowner. I plan to address this issue in future studies by working with individuals and the local governments establishing more efficient land use plans.

#### Bibliography

- Greenberg, R., P. Bichier, A. Cruz Angon, and R. Reimosa. 1997. Bird Populations in Shade and Sun Coffee Plantations in Central Guatemala. *Conservation Biology* 11 (2): 448-459.

\*\*Todd McCabe is a Graduate Student in the Environmental Studies Program.

## FIELD STUDY OPPORTUNITY

### 2003 VIETNAM FIELD STUDY

July 10-30, 2003

*Trip Details:* For detailed itinerary, enrollment information and application form, log on to:

<http://www.firelandia.bgsu.edu/fuc/bmuego/vietnam>

#### Major Vietnamese Cities in Itinerary:

Hanoi (official capital of Viet Nam), Ho Chi Minh City (formerly Saigon), Hue (imperial capital of Viet Nam), Da Lat, Danang, Nha Trang and Quy Nhon

*Other Places of Interest in Itinerary:* Ho Chi Minh Trail, Cu Chi Tunnel, Cao Dai Temple (in Tay Ninh), Lang Son (along the border with the People's Republic of China), My Lai, Cua Lo, Khe Sanh and Quang Tri

*Cost of Trip:* Total cost is US\$2,929.00 (the breakdown of the total cost is as follows: US\$1,320.00—roundtrip airfare from Cleveland, Ohio or any other city in Ohio to Viet Nam, via Taipei and Kuala Lumpur; US\$1,025.00—all hotels, all meals, all ground transportation and museum admission fees, for 17 days; US\$534.00—tuition fee for 3 credit hours; and US\$50.00—Vietnamese visa processing fee)

*Enrollment/Payment of Fees Deadline:* June 2, 2003. To reserve a seat in the course, complete an application form and mail it to: Dr. Benjamin N. Muego, Professor of Political Science, 140 McFall Center, Bowling Green State University, Bowling Green, Ohio 43403-0021, along with a check for US\$50.00 payable to Bowling Green State University

*Other Requirements:* A valid passport (if you do not have a passport, apply for one as soon as possible; for US citizens, application forms are available at the county courthouse located in the county where the applicant lives; proof of citizenship, e.g., a birth certificate and two passport-size photographs are required; there is a nominal application and service fee and turnaround time is 4-6 weeks)

*Inquiries:* For further information, call Dr. Benjamin N. Muego at 419/372-2752 (11:00AM-2:30PM, Tuesdays and Thursdays) and 419/372-0670 (10:30AM-3:00PM, Mondays and Wednesdays) or send him an e-mail at: [bmuego@bgsu.edu](mailto:bmuego@bgsu.edu)

## TET Vietnamese Lunar New Year

The Vietnamese Student Association (VSA) hosted a magnificent Tet Celebration on Saturday, February 8 from 6:00-8:00pm. They provided delicious Vietnamese food, great entertainment, and thought provoking speakers. More than 150 people were in attendance! Below is a speech on the meaning of Tet, written and delivered by former Southeast Asian Studies Student Rick Welch, who is now the Morgan County Prosecuting Attorney.

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Chao Cac Ban. Hello to all of my friends and to all of you who are here tonight.

I want to thank you for giving me the distinct privilege to not only share this very important holiday with you, but also to be chosen as one of your guest speakers.

It is my pleasure to be here and to be accompanied by my wife (Vo Toi), Huynh Hoa, formerly of Nha Trang, and my good friend Yvette Harper, who is really more like part of my family than just a friend.

Now, I have to admit, I am not an expert on the Vietnamese Lunar New Year Holiday, more commonly known as TET. However, I know more about it now than I did earlier in my adult life.

For many years, I must confess, that when I heard the word "TET" mentioned, it conjured up negative images of the fighting and suffering that occurred on all sides during the TET military offensive in 1968. And if that is all that one remembers or understands about TET, then you will almost certainly miss the depth and importance of this special day and time and what it really means to the Vietnamese people.

I know all people are subject to the folly of "ethnocentrism"...looking at others through their eyes, images, filters, culture and values. But I think as an American, I especially have been guilty of that in the past. And when we do that, we are in danger of missing the beauty and importance of peoples, places, events, and things in other cultures. It can also complicate our relationships with people in other cultures.

Several years ago when I was just a young man, I traveled to Japan with a group and spent several months there. My friend Ron and I were staying with a young Japanese man (an engineer with Toshiba Industries) and his elderly mother. Now she thought that Americans ate a 7-course meal for dinner each night and so she made plans to feed Ron and I in that tradition. She also knew that in Japan, if you wanted to please your host, it was customary to eat well and leave just a little on your plate to show the host that you had enough to eat and couldn't eat it all. BUT, Ron and I were taught that we should always clean up all of the food on our plates in order to be polite and respectful to our host. SO...the STAGE WAS SET for a CLASH of CULTURES of a GIGANTIC PROPORTION!!!!

The first night's meal came and our host served up a very large and delicious meal. We began eating and she kept putting food on our plates and we kept cleaning it up. Her faced beamed with a

smile of satisfaction that her new American friends liked her cooking. However, when we had cleaned up everything from our plates on that first round, she disappeared into the kitchen and soon returned with more food. She motioned for us to eat and of course, we did. As that round of food began to run out, she disappeared again into the kitchen. This time she was gone just a little longer than before, but she returned with more food, but of a different kind than before. Although she was still smiling, the beaming smile of happiness had turned into a more nervous smile of anticipation as she was waiting to see if we could still eat more. Of course, to please her, we continued to eat and clean up our plates, even though we were getting extremely full (no roi). As she saw the plates getting empty, she hurried into the kitchen again. I know Ron and I were thinking...man, will she ever stop bringing more food...we are getting stuffed!!! This time, after she had gone for about 20 minutes, Ron and I were getting worried about her. We asked her son if he should go into the kitchen and check on his mother. He then apologetically and with a twinge of embarrassment told us that his mother had run out of food in the kitchen and she had to go to the



market to get more because she thought we were still hungry. WE LAUGHED and said that we weren't hungry anymore, especially after the first round of food, but that we were just eating to be polite and to please her. He then shared with us the Japanese custom about leaving some food on your plate as a sign you were pleased with the food. When his mother returned, he told her about our American custom and we apologized for causing her to worry and we all had a very good laugh about the misunderstanding.

Well, that probably doesn't have much to do with TET except to show that if we look at this holiday in our superficial way or without trying to understand it, we will miss how important it really is to the Vietnamese people.

Americans might have a tendency to equate TET with our own New Year's Holiday. While it is similar, it is not an adequate comparison to explain or understand the significance of TET.

Although TET has the qualities of our THANKSGIVING holiday with all of its food; and CHRISTMAS with the anticipation of gift-giving; and NEW YEAR'S holiday with its celebration and making of resolutions to change things for the new year; and MEMORIAL DAY with our remembering of our family and ancestors, ALL these holidays combined still do not show the magnitude and importance of TET to the Vietnamese culture.

TET combines all of the above qualities of our Holidays and MUCH, MUCH, MORE.

Vietnamese TET is the festival that epitomizes the identity of Vietnamese culture. It expresses the communion of man and nature;



it seals the union of the living and the dead (inviting ancestors to return...visits to family gravesites); it gathers extended family members together, even from far away places; it is a time for reconciliation (e.g. mothers & daughters-in-law); a time for détente (neighbors mending fences and resolving disputes); and a time to hope for prosperity, good health, and long-life in the year ahead.

After I married into a Vietnamese family, I knew TET was more important than I had previously thought, however, it wasn't until I went to Vietnam in 1999 to celebrate TET, that I FELT how important it was to the Vietnamese culture and people.

From the moment I arrived in Ho Chi Minh City, I could feel the excitement building in anticipation for TET. As we traveled north up the coastal highway to Nha Trang, I could see people everywhere preparing for the celebration to come. When we arrived in Nha Trang, I watched as our family began its own preparation for the holiday.

Soon after I arrived, I met with my friend and teacher, a 74-year-old Vietnamese Kung Fu Master (who looked only about 50). He began taking me to many houses where he had been invited to share a meal celebrating the end of the old year, and to prepare for the New Year. It seemed like we ate 5 or 6 meals a day for several days. This is more than I was used to eating, even in America.

*It was then that I began to learn about the phrase, "AN TET" (Eating TET), because it seems like all I did for awhile was eat, and eat again. But true to the lesson I had learned from my Japanese friends, I left a little food on my plate, just to be safe! And when I wasn't eating, I was watching my family prepare for the TET holiday. They were busy (1) cleaning and decorating the house; (2) getting our "New Year's Tree" with its beautiful yellow blossoms; (3) preparing many of the traditional New Year's foods, including "banh chung" which I helped my brother-in-law prepare; and (4) preparing for a visit to the grave sites of our family.....AND it made me tired just to watch it all!!! And then, THE DAY CAME...it was NEW YEAR'S DAY...and everyone was both excited and nervous. Excited because we were going to begin a long celebration with lots of food and fun....and nervous because they wanted to do everything just right and not do anything that would bring them bad luck or cause bad luck to anyone else.*

When I went out to the street, I noticed that all the shops were closed and the usual hustle and bustle of merchants, tourists and travelers was replaced with just a few traveling to the homes of relatives to begin the New Year with family.

The family was preparing for that all important "first visitor", because that was an indication as to whether good fortune would come on the family in the coming year or not. So, in order not to leave that to chance, the family had made sure to invite a notable person from the city and to set the time for them to come, so he would be the first visitor.

I also took delight in teasing my sisters-in-law and nieces by making it look like I was going to sweep the floor, clean up, and throw out the trash, before the appointed time (at least not until after the second day). Of course, we were constantly walking on the hulls of what seemed like several thousand watermelon seeds that had been consumed. (I also think I brought home about a thousand pounds of them for my wife and Vietnamese friends here).

Then we started eating...and we kept eating... and I don't think we stopped eating until I got on the plane to come home. And it

was always a feast fit for a King.

One of the highlights of the holiday was watching the children line up and peek around the corner to our room where they were in anticipation of the little red envelopes (lêse) that contained wealth for them. They would come in one at a time, politely bow, receive their gift, then quickly dash out of the room and tear open the envelope.

Another highlight was to hear the beating of drums as they came nearer to the house, and watching everyone run to the street to see the dance of the Unicorn. When the Unicorn appeared, it most certainly brought peace, happiness, and prosperity to the family.

I'm sure I missed some of the meaning of TET when I was there, but I think the one thing that I liked most was the EXCITEMENT, HOPE, and OPTIMISM displayed by all of the people, even though times were hard for some. And the best part was that it lasted not for 1 day but for several...and we ate...and ate...and ate...and ate some more as we celebrated TET 1999.

And I must say, I have never participated in or celebrated a holiday with so much food or for so long a time as the Vietnamese TET celebration.

So, in February 1999, my understanding of TET changed forever. IT both impressed and inspired me! It was then I became determined to learn more about the language, culture, and history that makes up the Vietnamese half of my family.

So TET no longer conjures up those negative images I had earlier in my life. They have been replaced with a beautiful picture of the essence of what it means to be Vietnamese--a proud and noble people who love life and wish good health, long life, and much prosperity and good fortune on all people.

Again, I want to thank you for inviting me to be one of your guest speakers tonight and for ADOPTING me into your Vietnamese family.

CHUC MUON NAM MOI !!!

I wish each of you a long life, good health, and much good fortune and prosperity in the New Year.



Rick Welch and VSA President, Minh Nguyen

## SEAS Lecture Series Winter 2003

The Southeast Asian Studies Program is proud to have hosted a number of excellent guest lecturers during the winter quarter.

*Dr. Rick Shriver*, Associate Professor of Electronic Media at Ohio University's Zanesville campus, presented "Digital Recording of Traditional Malaysian Instruments" on January 17.



*Dr. Benjamin Muego*, Professor of Political Science at Bowling Green State University, visited OU on January 31 and presented a lecture titled "Presidential Politics and the Blame Game: An Analysis of the Current Philippine Political Landscape."



*Frank Smith*, the Heritage Language Program Facilitator of the Southeast Asian Studies Summer Institute (SEASSI) at the University of Wisconsin-Madison and the Khmer Language Coordinator, presented a lecture on February 4. The title of his presentation was "Bringing Southeast Asia Into the Classroom: Linking Content Area and Language Instruction in an Intensive Khmer Language Program."



*Dr. Osman Bakar*, Malaysia Chair of Islam in Southeast Asia at the Center for Muslim-Christian Understanding at Georgetown University, presented "The Impact of September 11 on Southeast Asian Islam" on February 21.

*Dr. Siti Kusujanti* is an Assistant Professor in the Department of Social Sciences at Warren Wilson College in Asheville, North Carolina. She presented "Indonesia in Transition: Institutional Changes in Rural Areas and Women's Roles" on March 14. She is currently working on a book entitled "A Tale of Two Villages: Gender and Power in Rural Java" with Dr. Ann Tickamyer, Director of the International

## Malaysian Fulbright Scholar at WVU

Fulbright Visiting Scholar, *Mohamed Ghouse Nasuruddin*, will be based at the Parkersburg campus of West Virginia University from January until June 2003. Dr. Nasuruddin received his Ph.D. in Drama and Theater from Indiana University in Bloomington. He is a regular lecturer at Universiti Sains Malaysia in Penang. In addition to being a scholar, he is also a playwright, director, choreographer, musician and performer.

Dr. Nancy Nanney, Chair of the Humanities Division at WVU, Parkersburg, and an adjunct faculty member to the Southeast Asian Studies Program, is coordinating Dr. Nasuruddin's visit. In addition to teaching a course on theater appreciation while at WVU, Dr. Nasuruddin will also stage two productions on the Parkersburg campus. One, held in February, was a workshop demonstration of Asian performance techniques. The other will be an East-West dance/drama production involving students at WVU.

Dr. Nasuruddin plans to collaborate with OU's Malaysian students and participate in the Southeast Asian Studies Association's annual "Spring into Southeast Asia" event scheduled for April 18 at 6:30pm in the Baker Center Ballroom.



*Dr. Mohamed Ghouse Nasuruddin (right) shown here with Malaysian actor and playwright Mano Maniam, who visited OU in February.*

## Alumni News

The Southeast Asian Studies Program would like to congratulate **Aziana Elianor Mohamed** on her recent engagement and upcoming June marriage. A 2000 graduate of Ohio University, Aziana is now working for Maybank in Malaysia (the Selangor and Negri Sembilan office). She is a Risk Officer, who assess the risks in giving loans to commercial and business enterprises. Congratulations Aziana!



**Major Tom Weaver**, a 2001 graduate of the Southeast Asian Studies Program, and wife Dawn are currently stationed in Honolulu, Hawaii. In September of 2003, they will be transferred back to Thailand where Major Weaver will work at the Joint US Military Advisory Group (JUSMAG-THAI). They will be stationed in Thailand for three years. Shown below are their girls Savannah and Shelby and new baby boy, Wynn.



## Winter Graduation 2003

The Southeast Asian Studies Program would like to congratulate **Yosep Bambang Margono Slamet**, who will graduate after winter quarter with his Master of Arts in International Affairs Degree. Yosep presented his Capstone paper, titled "Out of Balance: Javanese Society in Turiyo Ragilputra's Poetry", in the Southeast Asian Studies Colloquium on March 7. Following graduation, Yosep plans to return to Indonesia where he will return to teaching. Yosep will also continue working on translating Javanese short stories and poems into English, which he hopes to someday publish. He is also interested in continuing his scholarly research on contemporary Javanese literature and its social and cultural significance.



### Mark Your Calendars!

The Southeast Asian Studies Association's annual "**Spring Into Southeast Asia**" event will take place on Friday, April 18 at 6:30pm in the Baker Center Ballroom. This year's event will feature a dinner of Thai, Malaysian, Indonesian and Vietnamese cuisine and entertainment by professional Cambodian Dancer **Chanrithy Him** (right) and Malaysian musician **Mohamed Ghouse Nasuruddin**.



## Images of Southeast Asia Calendars Still Available!

The Southeast Asian Studies Association still has some Images of Southeast Asia calendars left to sell! The cost of the calendars has been reduced to \$5. Profits from the sale of the calendars will be used to buy school books for the children of Cisuara School in Purwakarta, Indonesia. Please contact Karla (740-593-1841 or [schneidk@ohio.edu](mailto:schneidk@ohio.edu)) to purchase your calendar.



## A Note of Thanks....

On behalf of VSA, I would like to thank SEASA for helping us to organize the Vietnamese Lunar New Year Celebration successfully. I also would like to give sincere thanks to Dr. McDaniel, Dr. Amarelle, Karla, Wesley, Jennifer, Sophia, Jenny, Vichea and Yeheng. Without your help, VSA could not have organized such a wonderful celebration. I would like to thank all who came to join the celebration with us.

Sincerely,

Minh Nguyen, President of VSA



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