An invitation to discuss the future of NIAS

During the summer of this year, the Nordic Council of Ministers (NCM) evaluated the Nordic institutions, including NIAS (see Board Chairman Helge Hveem's editorial in NIASnytt, no. 3, 2002). We now know the main conclusions and implications of the evaluation which are of relevance for us:

- NIAS has been evaluated positively;
- The NCM may possibly be interested in detaching itself from the ownership of its institutions within the research sector, although the solutions for individual institutions may not be the same.

The next steps in the process are:
- During December 2002, the NCM will formulate the final terms of reference for the process;
- During the next six months, the NCM and NIAS will have to investigate new models for the governance of NIAS as well as options for financing.

The process is thus open and exploratory. We shall look at the services and benefits that we are currently providing to our users and the research community at large and those which we may provide in the future. We must see whether NIAS is able to provide those or whether there are alternatives. Finally, we have to consider our future situation, including a possible change of ownership, and the consequent financial requirements and implications which the institute will face.

The process will be interesting and exciting, and will open up opportunities for growth and development for NIAS as well as for our users and partners. In the final analysis, our future will be determined by our continued success in providing services of use to the Nordic Asia research community and to others with an interest in Asia in both Scandinavia and the broader international field.

You will hear more about the process during the coming months. In the meantime, we are interested in dialogue with our users and partners on the future of NIAS. We are therefore setting up a discussion list from 1 January 2003 at the address: the_future_nias@niias.ku.dk. On the list, you will find an introduction to the process, a discussion of the key issues and a series of questions that we would like you to comment upon and discuss. We would also be happy to know what we can do better and which new activities could be of interest to Asia researchers and students in the Nordic countries. I will moderate the list, and other relevant staff members at NIAS will also contribute.

The discussion list will help us broaden our vision and approach. There are, however, many other opportunities to discuss our future, and we shall be sure to make good use of all of them. Ultimately, the process should lay a basis for an even stronger future NIAS. Your participation will be essential to ensure that!

Finally, I would like to take this opportunity to wish all our readers a Happy New Year! We have been very pleased to work with you in 2002, and for all the positive reactions that we have received to the first three issues of NIASnytt this year (see p. 31). We also receive your suggestions for improvements, and we shall continually seek to implement these.

Jørn Delman
Director
THEME: PERCEPTIONS OF THE PAST IN ASIA

Introduction

by Soren Iversson, University of Copenhagen

In all societies, discourses about the past shape our understanding of the present. And ruling groups have always used perceptions of the past as an ideological tool to legitimate and thereby reinforce existing power relations. It is thus hardly surprising that perceptions of the past change when new regimes embark on creating new presents. They need to latch on to a new interpretation of the past. Or not so new: for example, a new regime that distances itself from its predecessor may prefer to unlearn the memory of past events which had been regarded as taboo. Such a change in the historical landscape is currently happening in Indonesia.

Under President Soeharto's New Order regime (1966–98), the state-sponsored dominant historical discourse – as disclosed in school textbooks, biographies of national heroes, monuments and national commemorations – expressed a particular national narrative with anti-communism and the military as guardians of the nation as central leitmotiv. In his article, Stefan Eklöf characterizes this national historiography of the New Order regime as 'extremely monolithic' and 'at best void of nuances and provided no room for discussions of alternative interpretations'. Still, Eklöf emphasises that it is too simplistic to see national historiography and national rhetoric – in contemporary Asian states in general and in New Order Indonesia in particular – only as tools of legitimation for authoritarian regimes. Such an interpretation, he argues, fails to recognize the essential meaning which the national project and its history have for many people in Asia today. Eklöf highlights this contrast between the official use of the national historiography and the meaning which the broader strata of the Indonesian population ascribe to it and the national project through a discussion of the outset of nationalist sentiment which took place in Indonesia in 1992.

After Suhrak's resignation in May 1998, post-New Order Indonesia experienced prolific historical debate in the public arena. Previously, the slaughter of up to 500,000 Indonesianese by the army and religious groups that happened after the failed coup attempt in 1965 had not been included in the anti-communist plot of the New Order nationalist historiography. The treatment of this chapter of Indonesia's recent past as a non-event has been challenged by foreign scholars and by non-public statements from the inside. With the coming of a post-New Order Indonesia, however, it has become possible to publish works in Indonesia on the killings and have commemorations that challenge the former historiography of the New Order regime. In her article, Katharina McGregor identifies the various barriers to opening this part of Indonesia's past by examining the diverse responses of Islamic organisations to such efforts.

School textbooks in general and history textbooks more specifically provide central resources for states to articulate and disseminate a national consciousness and the 'right' perception of the past. Due to the centrality of textbooks in the framing of national narratives textbooks often become the object for political controversies. At the turn of the twenty-first century a middle-school history textbook published in Japan created considerable domestic and international concern and protest. The book in question was the New History Textbook sponsored and authored by the group called the Japanese Society for Textbook Reform. In the mid-1990s, members of this group criticized Japanese history textbooks on the grounds that they toed the line of judgements of the Tokyo War Crimes Trials and promoted a 'nicely self-defensive view of history'. The aim of the group was to produce text books fostering pride in Japan's achievements rather than dwelling on its failures. The New History Textbook, approved by Japan's Ministry of Education and Science in 2001, was intended to fulfill this aim. When published the book was criticised for, among other things, distorting Japan's record of colonialism and for minimising the atrocities committed by Japanese soldiers during World War II.

In her article, Margaret Mehl discusses the relationship between historical scholarship, education in Japan and the turn of the nineteenth century. From this perspective Mehl argues that the controversy surrounding of textbooks in the framing of national narratives textbooks is political rather than a question of historical scholarship, since both the authors of the New History Textbook and the Japanese opponents adhere to the same basic assumptions of history: a blend of nineteenth-century nationalism and historicism, and a positivist notion of historical truth. From this perspective, Mehl argues that the basic approach to history adopted not only in the New History Textbook but also in other textbooks should be discussed and questioned with reference to recent scholarship on the nature of historical writing. The textbook controversy from 2001 is further contextualised by Pankaj Mohan, who argues that the controversy in fact forms part of an overall pattern in conservative intellectual legacies not only in Japan but also in Korea – which recalled its ambassador from Japan in protest over the textbook. In the Japanese case, Pankaj identifies this legacy as an early-twentieth-century Orientalist and imperialist historiography designed to authenticate Japanese superiority over Korea. The conservativ Korean legacy consists of an early-twentieth-century discourse stressing a unique Korean identity and sense of community in opposition to the Japanese Orientalist vision of Korea. Throughout the last decades the socialist states of Vietnam and China have gone through major transformations and have redefined their positions in a changing world. Socialist command economies have been replaced with capitalist economies and former enemies have become major trading partners or donors of international development aid. These transformations have taken place under the guidance of socialist parties that promised to build communist societies when they once came to power. Vietnam and China remain one-party states and the changes in the economic sphere have not been accompanied by political pluralism. Two articles deal with perceptions of the past in these two Asian states. In a general overview of the central tenets of Vietnamese historiography over time, David Marr discusses changing Vietnamese perceptions of the Vietnam War. A subject which is a central trope characterizing the unity of the Vietnamese people against a foreign aggressor in post-colonial Vietnamese historiography. Marr argues that despite communist party efforts to defend and reiterate a single, authentic Vietnam War story, more nuanced views of the war have appeared in Vietnam since the 1980s. These views are typically expressed in Vietnamese fiction and film. Looking to the future Marr also envisions that Vietnamese novelists, not professional historians, will lead the way in defining what deserves to be remembered and forgotten about the War. In his article, Leif Lidström gives an overview of recent developments in historical studies in China. According to Lidström, since the 1970s, a space for new interpretations of the past has been opened up in China. This has made the use of new methods and approaches possible; it has also opened the way to a questioning of established orthodoxy.

In the last article Niels Brinnes discusses some recent monographs by Western scholars dealing with the nexus between British colonialism and caste in Indian society. Brinnes highlights how an essentialist view of caste as an allegedly timeless feature of Indian ‘caste’ – powerfully expressed by Dumont’s influential study Homo Hierarchicus – has been challenged since the 1980s by a constructivist approach, one which basically perceives caste as an ever-changing construct by colonial state and Western observers. Between these two extremes of an essentialist and constructivist approach to caste, Brinnes identifies a ‘middle course’ exemplified by Susan Bayly. This approach accepts the importance of British colonialism on the institution of caste while at the same time it also acknowledges the importance of the Indian contributions to the transformation of caste under colonial rule. With this discussion of recent Western scholarship on caste in Indian society, Brinnes takes up a crucial debate in the historiography of modern India which calls for nuanced explanations of the elusive hybridity of colonial society and consequently has relevance for our discussion and understanding of the interaction between Western colonialism on local societies in general.

Note:

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Contesting Visions of the Lao Past
Laos Historiography at the Crossroads
Edited by Christopher E. Goeschl (University of Lyon) and Soren Iversson (University of Copenhagen)

It is well known that Laos’ emergence as a modern nation-state in the 20th century owed much to a complex interplay of internal and external forces. This book argues that the historiography of Laos needs also to be understood in this wider context. Not only does this volume consider how the Lao have written their own national and revolutionary history ‘on the inside’, it also examines how others – the French, Vietnamese, and Thai – have tried to write the history of Laos ‘from the outside’ for their own political ends. Rather than divorcing these two trends, this book demonstrates that they were interlinked. This approach has applications and implications far beyond Laos.


NIAS News no. 4, 2002
Looking to the Future: Existential Meaning in Contemporary Indonesian Perceptions of History and the Nation

by Stefan Eklöf, Lund University

European visitors to Asia are often surprised by the fervent displays of nationalism which they encounter in many Asian countries. The flag waving, national parades and fiery nationalistic rhetoric prominent in many contemporary Asian countries all seem to represent an old-fashioned - or even primitive - style of nationalism which more advanced countries abandoned long ago (e.g. Lijphart 1993, pp. 164–165). National rhetoric and rituals as well as national historiography are seen, from this perspective, primarily as tools of legitimization for more or less corrupt or authoritarian regimes.

Although authoritarian regimes in Asia have frequently tried - and still try - to enhance their legitimacy by symbolically linking themselves to a national heroic past, such a condescending per-spective fails to recognize the deeply felt existential meaning which the national project and its history have for many people in Asia today. National history is central to the construction of a national identity and for the orientation of the individual towards the national project - but not always in the way envisioned by those in power. The contrast between the two perspectives surfaced in Indonesia in 1992 in the wake of a diplomatic row between Indonesia and its former colonial master, the Netherlands. The case highlights the contrast between the official attempts to use the national historiography for legitimising purposes and the existential meaning which the broader strata of the population ascribe to the national history (Eklöf 1999).

Indonesia's authoritarian New Order regime (1966–98) tried in several ways to link itself symbolically to the anti-colonial struggle and especially the struggle for national independence from the Netherlands between 1945 and 1949. These attempts were evident, for example, in the elaborate celebrations of national heroes, in the almost religious worship of the country's 1945 Constitution, and in the claims of the senior New Order leaders to represent the 'Generation of '45'. The role of President Suharto in the struggle for national independence, moreover, was heavily emphasised in school texts as well as billboard campaigns and other official contexts, whereas the importance of his predecessor and the country's foremost nationalist leader, Sukarno, was equally heavily downplayed. In 1989 Suharto inaugurated a large monument in Yogjakarta, commemorating a six-hour attack in 1949 by the Indonesian republican forces on the then-Dutch occupied city. The incident seems to have been the only military operation in which Suharto played a significant role, and the primary function of the monument was to glorify Suharto's role in the struggle for independence (Anwar 1996, pp. 7–8).

The overt legitimation of history by the New Order government resulted in an extremely monolithic official historiography which was all but void of nuances and provided no room for discussions of alternative interpretations of the national narrative. The national historiography, moreover, seemed to have little connection with the collective memories of most living communities, or the lived-experiences of most ordinary Indonesians. As a consequence, by the 1990s, many Indonesians - not least those with higher education and access to alternative sources of information - had come to lose interest in the official version of the national history as taught in schools and propagated in official contexts. The standard national narrative, as Heather Sotherland (1997, p. 90) observed, was 'creaking at the joints'.

In 1992, however, the so-called 'Prakor affair' - named after the Dutch minister of development and co-operation, Jan Pronk - erupted, demonstrating the importance and existential meaning which many Indonesians still attached to the national past, in spite of the dysfunctional official historiography. The background to the row was Dutch criticism against the Indonesian government over the Dili massacre in East Timor in November 1991, in which Indonesian troops shot dead probably between 100 and 200 demonstrators. In the wake of the criticism, the Indonesian government, in a sharply worded open letter to the Dutch government, announced that it expected further development aid from its former colonial master. The letter, moreover, spoke of a "history which was extremely painful as a result of centuries of inhumane colonial oppression as well as of barbaric cruelty by the colonial troops during the war for independence fifty years ago" (Kompas 26 March 1992). In Indonesia, the announcement apparently triggered an immediate strong outburst of nationalist sentiment and a chorus of support for the government. Commentators, politicians, intellectuals and educators all praised the government for its firm stance while denouncing the allegedly colonial attitude of the Dutch government. Jan Pronk, who had long been a vocal critic of human rights violations in Indonesia, was described as the prototype of a colonial inspector (Schuur Nordholt 1995, p. 141). One commentator even named minister 'Jan Pieter Pronk' in order to discredit his name with that of the notorious Jan Pieterszoon Coen, a seventeenth century governor-general of the Dutch East India Company who had been one of the most ambitious and ruthless leaders of the company (Angkasa Borneo 30 March 1992).

The outpour of support for the government was by no means unexpected, and to some extent the expressions of national fervour were driven by opportunism or a desire on the part of the commentators to enhance their own nationalist credentials. Strikingly, however, there were very few voices in the public opinion which pursued the theme of colonial oppression and barbaric cruelty by Dutch troops, which the government had so clearly spelled out in its open letter to the Dutch government. Almost invariably, the commentators emphasised the themes of national pride and sovereignty. The government was praised for enhancing Indonesia's national self-esteem and prestige and for confirming that Indonesia was a free and sovereign nation on equal standing with other free nations in the world, including its former colonial master.

The Prakor affair occurred at a time when Indonesia, just like several of its neighbours in East and Southeast Asia, had come to assume a more assertive international political and economic role. Since its beginnings during the late colonial era, Indonesia's nationalism did not just involve the achievement of national independence and sovereignty, but also, importantly, a vision of progress, economic prosperity and modernity. Indonesian nationalisms, in 1945, just as in the 1990s, saw national independence as a gateway to a brighter future, with improved standards of living and greater social and economic equality as major objectives for the national project. It was in this sense, more than anything else, that nationalism continued to provide a strong and existentially meaningful orientation for a majority of Indonesians in the 1990s.

Even though the Prakor affair, from one perspective, was a reasonably successful attempt by the Suharto government to enhance its own legitimacy and nationalist credentials through the use of history, the outburst of nationalist sentiment also demonstrated the importance which many Indonesians attached to the history of national liberation from the Netherlands. The relevance of that history, however, lay neither in its nostalgic or retrospective potential, nor in the officially proposed legitimising version of the national history. The meaning which most Indonesians still attach to their country's history of liberation from colonial subjugation is instead intimately linked to the continuing relevance of the national project in itself. This meaning lies primarily in the orientation of Indonesian nationalism towards the future and towards visions of progress and modernity, themes which from the outset had been central in Indonesian nationalism.

As the outpour of nationalist sentiment in Indonesia in 1992 demonstrated, there is a fundamental difference between contemporary Indonesian nationalism and most of its Western European counterparts. Whereas many European nations today are troubled by their historical association with imperialism, colonial aggression and the mass slaughter of two world wars, Indonesian nationalism - in spite of the New Order's attempts to manipulate the national historical narrative - is more readily perceived in positive terms by the vast majority of Indonesians. More than anything else, the contemporary relevance of Indonesian nationalism lies in its orientation towards the future and towards building a prosperous and modern nation on an equal footing with other nations.

References


Digging Up the Past in Post-Suharto Indonesia

by Katharine E. McGregor, Melbourne University

In the wake of the 1965 coup attempt the army and religious vigilantes killed up to 500,000 Indonesians. Because of the consequences of being considered a communist sympathizer, there was limited room during the New Order for the public expression of sympathy for communist victims and their families. The end of this authoritarian regime presented former political prisoners from 1965 and the families of victims of the killings with the first opportunity to openly discuss and investigate the killings. Their efforts to open this past have, however, met with a range of responses. This article examines the diverse responses of Islamic organizations to these efforts and some of the specific challenges faced by the post-Suharto governments in dealing with this issue.

In November 2000, the Foundation for the Investigation into Victims of the 1965/66 Killings, organised the first exhumation of a mass grave from 1965 in Dempse forest, just outside of Wonsore. Hundreds of people from East Java and Yogyakarta, the majority of whom were family members of victims of 1965 attended the exhumations. These people wanted answers to questions which they had not been able to ask for almost forty years such as where their own family members had been buried. When, however, YPKP attempted to rebury these corpses from the Wonsore grave not claimed by family members in the town of Kalaran their efforts met with extraordinary resistance. On 24 March 2001, the day before the scheduled reburial, a mob of young men from the organisation, Forum Ulukah Islama Kalaran (Kalaran Islamic Fraternity) blocked the road leading to the house of Irawan Mangunapersama, an ex-political prisoner who had donated land for the rebury. They erected banners reading “The Islamic Community rejects the rebury of ex-PKI”. “There is no place here for PKI skul” and “Burn the PKI skul” and “Stop this” near the house. When members of the organizing committee tried to file the area in two vehicles together with the remains of seven corpses in small coffins, a group of around fifty protestors from FUKU stopped the second vehicle. They assaulted the driver, and a member of the organizing committee, and dragged the coffins out of the vehicles and threw the remains on the ground. The skeletons were recovered for later rebury, but the mob burned the remaining coffins and destroyed Irawan’s house.

Why did these reburials spark so much ire so long after the killings? One man from the local area of Kalaran (Central Java) made the comment to journalists who recorded this event that “this is not a PKI area, it is not a suitable place for the rebury of these bodies” (Shadow Play documentary 2002). Another spokesperson for FUKU, stated that he feared the rebury site could become a pilgrimage site and that from this the PKI might rebuild itself. These comments replicate New Order discourse that the PKI was a contaminant that would somehow stain the good name of the Kalaran community and of the entire present threat of a PKI revival.

FUKU’s responses to the killings represent the voices of some Islamic groups and individuals who strongly oppose efforts to reopen this past. Their views are, however, representative of all Indonesian Muslims. The responses of members of the largest Islamic organisation in Indonesia, Nahdlatul Ulama to efforts to open this past have been diverse. The youth wing of NU, Anjar, was highly active in the killings. Gus Dur, a liberal Muslim and former head of NU, made the brave move during his presidency of proposing that the ban on communism be lifted and that of making an apology to families of victims of 1965. The Yogyakarta branch of Anjar responded by making an official apology to victims. Many members of NU, however, rejected Gus Dur’s initiative. Yusuf Haqsim, who was a key link between NU and army co-operation in the killings, rejected the proposal on the grounds that the 1965 coup was the second chapter of the PKI, the first being the Madiun of 1948. Yusuf claimed that there was no religious basis for an PKI aggression towards Muslims prior to the 1965 coup and also in the Madiun affair of 1948 and that to say sorry would mean that NU was at fault. For Haqsim, the central issue was who were the real victims of history were: Moslems or Communists. While, of course, there were those involved in the killings to be the most unsupported supporters of leaving this past not rest, some members of the younger generation who did not live through the killings have also resisted efforts to open this past. Many Islamic youth groups took to the streets to protest Gus Dur’s proposal to apologize to victims of the 1965 killings and lift the ban on communism. Most of the members of FUKU were also quite young. So what explains their opposition? At the time of the killings some religious groups justified them on the grounds that communists rejected and threatened their religion. Islamic resistance to opening the past may be connected to the idea promoted in the New Order that in the leftist Guided Democracy period Islam was suppressed. Although the New Order regime kept political Islam in check until the mid-1980s, in the 1990s Suharto awarded Islam an increasing political role. It is possible there fore that contraception over interpretation of the past is a product of fear of loss of recently accumulated political power of some Islamic groups, especially if leftist or populists are included. There is no evidence of any undue concern about the implementation of the Islamic political order; instead, the groups have reinforced New Order interpretations of the past may therefore have more to do with the future political role of Islam than the past itself and attempts to reinforce the definition of Indonesia as a religious society. It is not that the only force motivating these youths. National dignity may also explain their response. For the 1965 killings, in which case of the 1965 killings the ideological direction Indonesia has taken including not only years of indoctrination into anti-communism, but also the increasing influence of Islam have created concrete barriers to reorganizing in the interpretation of the killings. The response to Gus Dur’s proposal to lift the ban on communism and apologise to the families of victims of the killings highlighted the risk that, even a person of his Islamic credentials, exposed himself to being supported by PKKP. Although I am aware of her views on the victims of 1965, Megawati’s position is even more sensitive because of her father’s closeness to the PKI and the willingness of many politicians, if given the chance, to play the Islamic card against her.

The 1965 killings are also different to many other instances of genocide in that unlike the Holocaust, there has not been extraordinary pressure from other governments to investigate the 1965 killings. This is particularly true of Western governments, such as America and Australia, which turned a blind eye to the killings and, in the case of America, perhaps also shared some complicity in the killings. The legacy of the Cold War constructs a further barrier to opening this past.

At the core of this debate over digging up the past are serious issues such as what would mean for Indonesia to write the official record of the killings to acknowledge that they were not justified? What would such a version of the past say about Indonesia, a country which prides itself on unity?

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Tanegashima – The Arrival of Europe in Japan

Oleg C. Litvin
University of Copenhagen

The Right History?  
Historical Scholarship and History Education in Japan

by Margareth Mehl, University of Copenhagen

As I write this, Japan’s Historical Association (shigakukai), founded in 1889, is preparing to celebrate its one hundredth conference (the conferences have been held annually since 1899 except for the last years of WW II). This event is not likely to receive much attention outside Japan, a gathering of historical scholars, however, eminent, attracts little public interest. When the Western public shows any interest at all in how the Japanese relate to their past, it focuses on Japan’s perceived inability to acknowledge its role as an aggressor in the first half of the twentieth century.

One example of this is the latest textbook controversy, which was reported widely in the Asian and Western press. It was provoked by a book licensed in 2001 and entitled New History Textbook (Nishio Kanji et al. eds., Anakai rekishi kihonkan, Tokyo: Funkoisha, 2001). The editors are members of a group called the Japanese Society for Textbook Reform, and their stated aim is to produce history books that foster pride in Japan’s achievements, where we pass rather than dwell on its failures. The controversy surrounding the textbook and its portrayal of Japan’s aggression in Asia is political rather than one of historical scholarship.

In this article I shall outline the relationship between historical scholarship and education in Japan since the emergence of history as an independent discipline in the 1890s and place the textbook in this context. I suggest that this and other books revolve around notions about history as a whole, which should be questioned in the light of recent scholarship on the nature of historical writing.

The establishment of the Historical Association in 1889 represented the symbolic beginning of history as a modern academic discipline in Japan. Significantly, 1889 is also the year the Meiji constitution was proclaimed. As in other countries, the emergence of the modern discipline went hand in hand with the modern nation state. This is well documented for Germany, and indeed Germany became a model for Japan, when in 1887 the German historian Ludwig Rüffel (1861–1928) was invited to teach history at the Imperial University of Tokyo. He participated actively in the establishment of the Historical Association.

At the inaugural meeting of the Association, Shimizu Yaunosuke (1827–1910), one of the founders of modern historical scholarship gave a lecture with the title Those Who Engage in Historical Research Must be Impeccable and Fair Minded. Here he defined the historians’ task. History, he stated, should record the times as they were, investigating the facts and recording from that position. This is not much different from the way academic historians in general, including German historians, saw their task in Shimizu’s time.

Shigeno also shared with German historians the view that history had a role to play in educating patriotic citizens. Unlike his German counterparts, however, he deliberately distinguished between academic history and history for the purpose of education. Nor was he the only scholar to do so. His critical League Kame Kotake (1839–1931) distinguished between those who applied historical knowledge and specialists, another historian, Tsuno Kameo (1858–1936), spoke of ‘pure’ and ‘applied’ history.

This idea of two kinds of history was cemented by official sanction in Japan’s first textbook controversy in 1911. That year the authors of the first history textbook compiled under the auspices of the Ministry of Education were ordered to reform the textbook in a way that denied the existence of the comfort women courts in the early 1940s. Subsequently historians of history told their new students that they were learning a different version of history than the one they had been taught at school.

Today the Ministry of Education does not itself compile textbooks as it did in the early twentieth century. Instead it certifies textbooks compiled independently. But the view that historical scholarship and history education should be kept separate still lingers on in the minds of many historians. Most people would probably agree that history as it is taught to children and young teenagers cannot be the same as historical scholarship pursued at university level. How then should the textbook be presented in a way appropriate to their level of maturity. Nevertheless school textbooks should reflect the possibility of different interpretations of history.

The general editor of the New History Textbook is Nishio Kanji, a specialist in German literature, but the book was written by a team that includes academic historians. So how do the authors envisage the relationship between historical scholarship and history education? While they do not tell us explicitly, the books includes incomplete references to the pupils stating what the study of history is about. It starts with the assertion that there is no such thing as a correct history. Instead the authors point out that different peoples can be expected to each have their own view of what is. Thus the notion is that historians in one and the same country can have different views.

The conclusion with following the admonitions to the pupils:

Let us stop thinking about history in a fixed way, as if it were something immobile. Let us stop applying notions of good and evil to history and making its study into a contest on our part we pass judgment on the basis of today’s values. Let us look at history with historical, unbiased eyes, being together more careful in our views and carefully ascertain the facts.

This passage suggests that the authors recognize the complexity of history and even accept a measure of relativism. The main text of the book, however, gives a different impression. Like other history textbooks, it presents the country’s history from the earliest evidence of human inhabitation to the present day in one continuous narrative supplemented by thematic and biographical ‘columns’. The book is superbly illustrated with maps, emblems, and maps, a picture or graph and many of them are in full colour. The impact of this coherent narrative on the users of the textbook will surely be much stronger than any statement about the possibility of different interpretations of history.

The book includes a number of student activities, some of which appear to stimulate (investigating the history of a chosen object in the home, learning about local history, imagining how it would have been like to live in a given period). Few, if any, of the activities, however, involve comparing different accounts of a past event. Given that the textbook admits the possibility of differing interpretations, this would seem an obvious task to set the pupils. The omission is all the more glaring, since the authors occasionally hint, without going out into detail, that there exists controversy surrounding certain questions (location of the ancient kingdom of Yamatai, p. 295; Nanking massacre, p. 295).

Opponents of the New History Textbook usually demand that the version of Japanese history it presents be replaced by their own version, which they perceive as the ‘true’ one. No one seems to ask whether a history textbook should present any one single version as the truth.

The problem with the New History Textbook and others that are based on a merely coherent, continuous narrative is that they gloss over the detail and complexity of the past. However balanced such a narrative may be (and it is perhaps never very balanced when too much is at stake), it conveys a false impression of history and the historian’s task, which today’s historians describe differently from Shimeno.

Writing history is not so much about recording the past as it is about examining evidence from the past in order to construct meaning out of humanity’s experience in the process of time. It appears then, that not only nineteenth-century nationalism, but also the nineteenth-century historism and a positivist notion of historical truth are alive and well in the minds of both the authors of the New History Textbook and their opponents.

Notes

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Private Academies of Chinese Learning in Meiji Japan
The Decline and Transformation of the Kamakura Juku

Margareth Mehl, University of Copenhagen

The establishment of a national education system soon after the Meiji Restoration of 1868 is recognized as a significant factor in Japan’s modernization; hence research on education is concentrated on the state system. However, this development did not mean the disappearance of the juku, the private academies which were so much a feature of the Tokugawa period. Indeed, these played a far greater role than has been appreciated so far and this book aims to rectify the omission. This comprehensive study of a little-known but significant area not only contributes to a better understanding of education in the Meiji period but is also relevant to the reform of Japan’s public education system today. The modern state-controlled system we take for granted is just as much a product of historical circumstances as the juku was; it, too, must therefore be open to challenge.

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NIAS/stud no. 4, 2002
The Imagined Histories of Early Korea

by Pankaj N. Mohan, University of Sydney

The horizon of historical consciousness in Northeast Asia at the dawn of the new millennium resonates with the weight of two recent textbooks published in Japan. Thi Atarashii rekishi kyokusha (The New History Textbook) presents a modified and simplified version of the atrocities Japan perpetrated during its colonial occupation of Korea. The Korean government gave Japan a list of 32 ‘distortions’ in the text that needed to be revised, and when Japan refused to oblige Korea recalled its ambassador from Tokyo and suspended its partnership with Japan in defence arenas. Dichotomies in the memories of the past in the two lands across the East Sea is not a new phenomenon. The history of mutually conflicting interpretations of Korean history can be traced to the Meiji era (1868–1912).

This article attempts to understand the circumstances in which nationalist historiographies originated in Japan and Korea over a century ago. It suggests that the Japanese historiography on Korea was informed by the contemporary political imperatives of the imperialist expansion of Japan and suffused with biases generated by the country’s success in initiating the Imperialist West. In the context of the character of early Korean historiography I argue that the Korean intelligentsia of the early twentieth century considered the writing of history as an instrument to construct a nationalist space of shared legacies. In other words, the Japanese historians of Korea treated knowledge as indispensable to the creation of a collective memory.

The Japanese Construction of Korean History in Meiji and Taisho

The intellectual tradition of Meiji Japan, anchored in the Kokugaku (National Learning School), authenticated the popular Shintoist belief that Japan was a divine land, and the imperial myths found in the 19th-century texts Nihon shoki and the Kojiki were established as an articulation of Japan’s historical consciousness. The popular Japanese mind was overwhelmed with a nostalgia fixated on the myth-historical accounts that Silla was conquered by Empress Jingo and the southern Korean king-dom of Kaya served as Japan’s colonial outpost. They cried out for a revival of their so-called lost imperial glory beyond the border. Yoshida Shoin of the late Tokugawa period, who was haled as the father of the Meiji restoration, argued passionately that Korea needed to be penalized for her long negligence in the observation of her duties towards Japan and be ‘instructed to show obedience, as the did during the glorious imperial period of ancient Japan’. An echo of similar sentiments can be heard in a number of publications of the time. It was in this charged atmosphere and amidst the slogan of seikunism (Conquer Korea Debate) that the Department of History at the Tokyo Imperial University was set up in 1897, and modern historical scholarship in Japan took root. It is also interesting to note that Shigeno Yosunori, Kume Kunio, and his students, and the three pioneer scholars assigned to the newly founded department, were previously employed in the government’s Bureau of Historiography. Kume Kunio (1839–1931) and Hino Hidetsugu (1859–1917) specialized in the ancient history of Japan, and because of the questions of ethnicity and identity that their field involved, they had to delve into some aspects of ancient Korean history as well. Kume’s Nihon no fukusei no enshu (A History of the Periphery of Japan) and Hino’s Nihon no jinrin no nihon no mikoto wo nobe te no shinshin aiboku ni tsuka ru (Some Questions to True Patriots Regarding the Ethnology of the Japanese Race), published in the 1890s, deal with ancient Korean history. Some other Japanese scholars of the early Meiji era were known on both sides, and what is striking is the fact that they adopted singularly political topics such as Imura (Japanese ‘Munara’ or Kaya, the Kwantung o’edote, and the origin of Samhun, which were relevant to the contemporary political climate of the ‘revivification’ of Japan’s hegemonic politics in Korea. The Nihon shoki-based history of the Kaya league and the famous ‘seven year’ passage in the Kwantung o’edote were widely used as indubitable evidence of Korea’s early historical development was inevitably manipulated by external forces, enemy. Lim, Shiren Shin, in particular, stressed that the Meiji era was ‘a historical character of the twenty-first century, whose historical writings can be described as explorations of the intertexts ( newUser ) about the Korean past. They were characteristic histories charged with an intense realisation of Korea’s unique racial identity and sense of community. They were, furthermore, specifically addressed to the challenges of Japanese theories to Korean history, and were intended as a means to promote the national self-renewal and enlightenment movement. Shin’s emphasis on Munchusa as an integral part of Korea’s geographical self-identity and on Tangan as the symbol of racial uniqueness were an articulation of a nationalist historical consciousness and represented a response to the challenge of Western imperialist historiography. The Japanese emphasis on the migration of Kija, a sage-prince of the Yin Dynasty of China, as a basis of state-formation implied that the Korean state was not an autonomous enterprise in a time when the contemporary reality of Korea’s subjugation by an external power was not an abstraction but formed part of a historical pattern. In contrast, the nationalistic historians of the early Taisho period, such as Tangan, believed to have been born out of the union of the Son of Heaven and a hero-named woman and to have founded the first state of Choson on the Korean peninsula in 2333 B.C.

Shin’s theory of history identified the conflict between self (a) and non-self/other (p-a) as the major stimulus of the development of history, which implied that the early history of Korea was characterised by spatial dichotomies between Korea (self) and China (other), so that the indigenous culture of Korea had to wrestle with the imported Chinese civilization (taxes levied on) and to retain its independent identity. This explains why Uchida Mononokuro, who fought the Sino-Japanese war as an ideologue of the Meiji restoration, argued passionately that Korea needed to be penalized for her long negligence in the observation of her duties towards Japan and be ‘instructed to show obedience, as the did during the glorious imperial period of ancient Japan’. An echo of similar sentiments can be heard in a number of publications of the time. It was in this charged atmosphere and amidst the slogan of seikunism (Conquer Korea Debate) that the Department of History at the Tokyo Imperial University was set up in 1897, and modern historical scholarship in Japan took root. It is also interesting to note that Shigeno Yosunori, Kume Kunio, and his students, and the three pioneer scholars assigned to the newly founded department, were previously employed in the government’s Bureau of Historiography. Kume Kunio (1839–1931) and Hino Hidetsugu (1859–1917) specialized in the ancient history of Japan, and because of the questions of ethnicity and identity that their field involved, they had to delve into some aspects of ancient Korean history as well. Kume’s Nihon no fukusei no enshu (A History of the Periphery of Japan) and Hino’s Nihon no jinrin no nihon no mikoto wo nobe te no shinshin aiboku ni tsuka ru (Some Questions to True Patriots Regarding the Ethnology of the Japanese Race), published in the 1890s, deal with ancient Korean history. Some other Japanese scholars of the early Meiji era were known on both sides, and what is striking is the fact that they adopted singularly political topics such as Imura (Japanese ‘Munara’ or Kaya, the Kwantung o’edote, and the origin of Samhun, which were relevant to the contemporary political climate of the ‘revivification’ of Japan’s hegemonic politics in Korea. The Nihon shoki-based history of the Kaya league and the famous ‘seven year’ passage in the Kwantung o’edote were widely used as indubitable evidence of Korea’s early historical development was inevitably manipulated by external forces, enemy. Lim, Shiren Shin, in particular, stressed that the Meiji era was ‘a historical character of the twenty-first century, whose historical writings can be described as explorations of the intertexts (newUser) about the Korean past. They were characteristic histories charged with an intense realisation of Korea’s unique racial identity and sense of community. They were, furthermore, specifically addressed to the challenges of Japanese theories to Korean history, and were intended as a means to promote the national self-renewal and enlightenment movement. Shin’s emphasis on Munchusa as an integral part of Korea’s geographical self-identity and on Tangan as the symbol of racial uniqueness were an articulation of a nationalist historical consciousness and represented a response to the challenge of Western imperialist historiography. The Japanese emphasis on the migration of Kija, a sage-prince of the Yin Dynasty of China, as a basis of state-formation implied that the Korean state was not an autonomous enterprise in a time when the contemporary reality of Korea’s subjugation by an external power was not an abstraction but formed part of a historical pattern. In contrast, the nationalistic historians of the early Taisho period, such as Tangan, believed to have been born out of the union of the Son of Heaven and a hero-named woman and to have founded the first state of Choson on the Korean peninsula in 2333 B.C.
Vietnamese historiography, past and present
by David G. Marr, Australian National University

Vietnamese have long taken history very seriously. At the state level, chronicles began to be compiled and dynamic histories written from the 13th century. From the 15th century the state incorporated myths and folklore about bronze-age peoples who pre-dated the millennium of Chinese rule that ended in the 10th century. In the 1920s, the French unwittingly bolstered these myths by uncovering sophisticated bronze artifacts at a village called Dong Son, the name which came to represent a culture extending across present-day southern China and northern Thailand as well as northern and north-central Vietnam.

When scores of additional bronze-age sites were discovered in the Democratic Republic of Vietnam (DRV) from the 1960s onward, the communist party eagerly declared them to be proof of a Vietnamese national identity stretching back 4,000 years. Disputes quickly arose among Vietnamese, Chinese, Thai (and western) archaeologists about who possessed the oldest bronze-age sites. Hanoi took to using the top of a Dong Son bronze drum to symbolize Vietnamese patriotism and resistance to foreign aggression. Years later, at a quieter academic level, some Vietnamese archaeologists came to admit that Vietnam had no monopoly on Dong Son culture. Some historians went further, arguing that Vietnamese identity is better dated from the 10th century AD, being a unique synthesis of early bronze-age and later Chinese colonial elements.

But from the corridors of power, Vietnamese families have been recording their genealogies since at least the 13th century. These are linked to annual religious ceremonies, especially the death dates of recent ancestors and more exceptional events such as Lunar New Year (Tết) observances. Some genealogies are quite elaborate, particularly if mandated by generals or accomplished poets can be claimed. At the height of the Vietnamese revolution genealogies were denounced as feudal, and not a few were lost in wartime. Since the late 1980s, however, genealogies have been reconstructed energetically, often with the help of academics needing the money to supplement pitiful salaries. Some nouveau riches families have sponsored conferences on illustrious ancestors and then subsidized publication of the proceedings.

In the space between state and family, the writing of Vietnamese history has always been a riskier business in Vietnam. Pre-colonial rulers were used to considerable lengths to enforce an ‘authentic history’ (chinh nhien), which most literati did not dare to challenge. Dictators did circulate manuscripts, but woodblock printing remained under state control. This changed dramatically under French rule, with the Vietnamese intelligentsia defined in large part by its love affair with the printing press and history a popular object of discussion. Colonial censorship rules changed according to metropolitan politics, with 1924–25 and 1934–38 being particularly lenient. Historical topics ranged from 15th century Mongol invasions to Vietnam’s 18th century civil war, from a critical history of western imperialism to national liberation struggles in Italy, Poland and Turkey.

It was biography that most captured intelligentsia imagination, with book-length accounts of the lives of George Washington, Lord Nelson, Sun Yat-sen, Vladimir Lenin and a host of Vietnamese heroes. When the colonial authorities in July 1939 organized an observance of the 150th anniversary of the French revolution, they focused on the Basile and Napoleon, whereas the Indochinese Communist Party chose to stress class conflict and Robespierre.

Amidst 30 years of war in Vietnam (1945–75), it should not surprise anyone that history writing was subject to tight state controls. The DRV disseminated its correct line on millenniumennial resistance to foreign invasion, historical materialism, peasant uprisings, colonialism/ anti-colonialism and communist party legitimacy. Some of Vietnam’s best historians avoided study of the 19th–20th centuries entirely, in favor of earlier eras when the country was less mercurial. Even there, they sometimes had to limit themselves to translation work. In Saigon, most anti-communist writers tried to eliminate Ho Chi Minh as a national hero and excoriate the communist revolution. It was dangerous for anyone to publish differently. Beyond those topics, however, Saigonese historians contained a wider range of historiography than Hanoi.
Post-modernisation or Normalisation in China

by Leif Littrup, University of Copenhagen

In the last quarter of a century the field of historical studies in The People’s Republic of China has, just like the lifestyle of millions of Chinese, seen major changes for better and for worse. On the positive side, history as an academic discipline has been liberalised. New methods and theoretical approaches have been introduced, and established orthodoxy has been questioned. On the negative side, the prestige of teaching and researching history has declined. Even the best university departments of history now have difficulties filling their intake with students who have history as their first priority. This may reflect the decline in the status of history among students in primary and secondary schools. Looking at text books this decline is not so difficult to explain. They have been relatively slow to change, with a strong focus on the traditional patterns, but over the last ten years a deliberate differentiation between the sophisticated metropole and the backward provinces has been expressed by word-of-mouth, within families, among friends, and through educational authorities. The reason for this is that students are more interested in the more recent history. This is in line with the general trend towards a more modern and cosmopolitan culture.

Deconstruction of the grand narratives

China is in the process of modernisation (sinodernis) but post-modernism (xiezaiandai) is by no means unknown to Chinese intellectuals, and in some respects the developments in Chinese historiography have a flavour of post-modernism. Historians who are active in this perspective might object strongly to such a characterisation. They have lived long enough with labels and terms from the past – that have limited their intellectual abilities but the deliberate use of words like “deconstruction” (jiapo) has placed them in this tradition.

It is among the historians of non-Chinese history who probably find the most advanced work along these lines. With their knowledge of foreign languages and constant exposure to foreign historiography they are more familiar with theoretical developments and their application in empirical research. What is to be deconstructed is the Euro-centric world view found in the grand narratives of world history in the traditional patterns, but over the last ten years a deliberate differentiation between the sophisticated metropole and the backward provinces has been expressed by word-of-mouth, within families, among friends, and through educational authorities. The reason for this is that students are more interested in the more recent history. This is in line with the general trend towards a more modern and cosmopolitan culture.

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Caste between Essentialism and Constructivism

by Niels Brinnes, Aarhus University

For more than a century caste has loomed largely in practically all discussions about the nature of Indian society. Similarly, historians have frequently caste as an institution capable of explaining the peculiar features of Indian history. Often, but not always, caste has been depicted as the great barrier to the modernisation of Indian society. In an article from 1992 Nicholas Dirks gave a concise formulation of this view of caste when he wrote that: ‘caste has become a central trope for India, metonymically indexing it as fundamentally different from other places, synecdochically expressing its essence’ (Dirks 1992, p. 56). Since the 1980s, however, this view has increasingly come under attack and the last three years have witnessed the publication of two important monographs – written by Nicholas Dirks and Susan Bayly – challenging the idea that caste is the essence of a distinct Indian civilisation.

Moreover, these monographs exemplify the way in which scholars today attempt to come to terms with the elusive hybridity of colonial society. In this sense they can be seen to represent a crucial debate in the historiography of modern India.

According to Dirks, the essentialist view of caste culminated in Louis Dumont’s Homo Hierarchicus first published in French in 1960 and translated into English in 1980. In what has become a classic in Indian anthropology, Dumont argued that the ruling principle of Indian society was the principle of hierarchy as expressed in the opposition between pure and impure, and that the caste system was the social manifestation of this abstract principle. The principle of hierarchy was defined as religious, and thus helped to explain why the ‘king’ – and by implication the state – had always been weak compared to the (Brahman) ‘priest’ in Indian history. Moreover, the principle of hierarchy was defined as static and, according to Dumont, the task of historians of India was not to look for historical change, but to search for ‘fundamental constants in Indian civilisation’ (Dumont 1980, p. 195).

In the 1980s American anthropologist Ronald Hall challenged this view. Inspired by Edward Said and the broader tendency within historiography to question the origin and authenticity of allegedly timeless ‘traditions’, they began to view many of the features of traditional Indian society as ‘invented by the colonial state and western observers. A leading figure was the Chicago-based professor Bernard Cohn who summed up the constructivist position in the following way: ‘In the conceptual scheme which the British created to understand and to act in India, they constantly followed the same logic, they reduced vastly complex codes and their associated meanings to a few metonyms … India was redefined by the British to be a place of rules and orders where the British had defined to their own satisfaction what they construed as Indian rules and customs, then Indian settlers had no choice but to conform to these constructions’ (Cohn 1996, p. 162). Such a view implies that, rather than being an age-old essence of Indian society, caste was a colonial invention. In a similar vein another Chicago-based historian, Ronald Hall, identified ‘caste’ as one of four major essences constructed by westerners in order to ‘control’

Niels Brinnes is Associate Professor at the Department of History, Aarhus University. (Photo supplied by the author)
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Politics in a Fragmented World

by Geir Helgesen, NIAS

Towards the end of the 20th century, democratic progress towards democracy was made on a global scale and on the eve of the new millennium 140 countries — 70 per cent of all the countries in the world — had experienced multiparty elections. This progressive expansion has not, however, solved the basic problems of development, according to the latest UNDP Human Development Report: Deepening Democracy in a Fragmented World. Poverty, unequal distribution of wealth and social tensions linger on. The aim of the following discussions is to reflect what sorts of governance will be needed to overcome the ill-characterizing the contemporary world. One aspect that will be touched upon is the alleged disparity between ‘Western’ and ‘Asian’ approaches to good government.

The UNDP report is a fairly authoritative source when taking the temperature of and giving grades to governance — and governments — worldwide. Not surprisingly, Western countries occupy the top five levels with regard to both subjective and objective indicators of (good) governance. In this respect, the Report may contrast with the achievement of the classical comparative study by Almond and Verba (1963) The Civic Culture: Political Attitudes and Democracy in Five Nations. With all due respect to the merits of this pioneering publication, the problem was that American scholars found that North America (and Great Britain) were more democratic than ‘alien’ countries such as Germany, Italy and Mexico. The authors did not reflect much upon their clear preference for domestic ways when judging other states. Although later studies take a more sophisticated approach and introduce measurements which take local values and norms into consideration, the 2002 Human Development Report resembles the classical study in this respect.

Problematic definitions

The Human Development Report states, ‘Human development is about people, about their choices to lead livable lives. Economic growth, increased international trade and investment, technological advancement — all are very important. But they are means, not ends. Whether they contribute to human development in the 21st century will depend on whether they expand people’s choices, whether they help create an environment for people to develop their full potential and lead productive, creative lives.’ (p. 13)

The basic idea is that development for people is a commendable goal. Some would say that this is obvious, but unfortunately it is not. The report reveals appalling information about the current state of affairs in the world. Poverty is still the most urgent problem, and in some areas it is growing. But development means a question of expanding people’s choices, a term used twice in the above paragraph. If this implies abolishing unjust rules and rules and providing opportunities for all people — weak and strong — to live a decent life, then the goal is highly relevant. On the other hand, if development is ultimate individual freedom, then the basic assumptions and ideals of the report are problematic.

Governing and democracy

Good governance and democracy are overlapping terms in current political vocabulary, and political pluralism is seen as the cornerstone of a democracy. In the post-cold-war period, the number of countries introducing multiparty elections virtually exploded. Today, however, elected governments often disappoint people and fail to provide jobs, services and personal security to their citizens (p. 4). Consequently, personal and social well-being is not necessarily secured through political pluralism. There is no automatic link between democracy and development (pp. 60—61). Still, the importance of good governance is maintained. Politics matter for human development because people everywhere want to be free to determine their destiny, express their ideas and participate in the decisions that shape their lives’ (p. 1). Hence it follows that freedom of thought and speech must be the most fundamental political values, and participation the way of executing political influence. Based on general experience with different political systems in modern times, it seems obvious that only democracy promises participation and genuine political influence. Yet, this cannot be taken for granted: ‘Even where democratic institutions are firmly established, citizens often feel powerless to influence national politics’ (ibid.). This claim is substantiated by referring to a large-scale survey conducted in 60 countries in 1999 by Gallup International, in which more than 30000 people were asked whether their countries were governed by the will of the people. Less than 30 per cent gave a positive response to this question (p. 63).
There is obviously more to democracy than the institutional framework of competitive elections, and liberal democracy may not sufficiently respond to people’s desires. Democracy must ‘widen and deepen’, which is another way of saying that formal democracy without a democratic political culture makes little sense.

This approach is actually also apparent in the report: ‘in all countries democracy is about much more than a single decision at hastily organized election. It requires a deeper process of political development to embed democratic values and culture in all parts of society – a process never formally completed’ (p. 4). The question is whether this ideal can be translated into everyday political practice.

The Korean way

Democracy as a way of living may have a special appeal in the Nordic countries, where decision-making should ideally be democratic from the family level to that of state affairs. But is it true to participate in decision-making

universal?

In other political cultures, the embedding of democratic values and norms as guidelines, not only for political institutions but also for daily life activities, may take other directions. In Korea, democracy replaced dictatorship in 1987 after holding the status of the wished-for political ideal for almost one hundred years. Under authoritarian rule, the struggle for democracy in Korea was similar to that experienced in the West: aims were free and fair elections, the right to organize and freedom of speech; all based on the urge of the people ‘to be free to determine their destinies, express their views and participate in the decisions that shape their lives’ (p. 1).

Under democratically elected leaders, however, popular participation seems to lose its magnitude in favour of more traditional ways. Although the cultural traits that inform the democratic processes of a country are not static and unchangeable, there are some generally acknowledged ways of characterizing social relations, including power relations. The perception of leadership is one such trait, as illustrated by the following example. In a national sample survey conducted in 2000, about 90 per cent of the Korean respondents agreed to the statement: ‘a leader should care for the people as parents care for their children’. This actually depicts the idea of leadership among Koreans, and it certainly affects governance in that country.

Korean democracy does not take the democratic family, but rather the hierarchical, paternalistic type of family, as its point of departure. Politics remain an unequal play between omnipotent leader(s) and seemingly alienated followers. This unequal relationship is often depicted as staged by

authoritarian leaders who manipulate the people. From a political culture perspective, it makes more sense to see this as the practical outcome of a mutual reinforcement of cultural values rooted in tradition and kept alive through socialization and education. These values hold a leader responsible for the welfare of the people. The strongest, wiser, most decisive, etc., the leader is, the better for his followers. A strong and caring leader is sought out and valued. In response to the benevolent leader, followers pay due respect by showing a strong sense of loyalty. Can this still be considered democratic? If faith in democracy depends on people’s interests in it, it may be difficult to distinguish popular ways in favour of ideologically more secure definitions.

To widen and deepen democracy should thus imply efforts to ground it in the varying political cultures which exist. Instead of trying to undermine cultures which fail to accommodate the liberal version of democracy, this would go against the tide in an increasingly globalized world.

Globalization and money politics

While globalization means greater interdependence, it seems simultaneously to cause increasing fragmentation of the world. In a chapter dealing with democracy and globalization the report states: ‘Economically and politically, friction in developing countries about the skewed distribution of global power has seldom been greater’ (p. 101). When it is as possible to state, as does the report, that the world has never been richer or more free, but at the same time has never been more unequal than it is today, the basic negative consequences of globalization stand out sharply: the rich get richer and the poor stay poor, the powerful remain in power and people at large have little, if any say over their own prospects. The ill of present-day societies are often blamed on the impersonal forces of globalization (p. 5), but what kind of forces are we dealing with and how impersonal are they? The report gives a clue: ‘where money plays a decisive role in politics, it turns unequal economic power into unequal political advantage and undermines the principle of “one person, one vote”’ (p. 67).

Money has long played an important role in politics, but currently the size and strength of big businesses make their possibilities for influence decisive. This is clearly illustrated by the fact that ‘Presidental candidates in the 2000 election spent $343 million on television alone’ (p. 5), and in 2001 Michael Bloomberg spent a record $74 million, instead of using New York City’s mayor, the equivalent of $99 a vote’ (pp. 4–5). The practice of buying votes was noted as a problem in the early days of democratic transition in East Asia, but has seldom been seen as a “Western vice.” The effect of money on politics can be direct, as the above examples suggest, but also more indirect, as in the case with private ownership of the media. The media are indispensable for democracy, as formal media is often the only ‘informed debate is the lifeblood of democracies’ (p. 75). Democracy actually depends on factual and unbiased information provided by the press and electronic media. Possible corporate pressure and the increasing shift of media focus from public service (news and information) to entertainment or ‘infotainment’, undermines the

democratic efficacy of these institutions. While the report states that ‘the media must be free not only from state control but also from corporate and political pressures’ (p. 6), this is evidently not the case. On the contrary, private ownership of the media is highly concentrated in the West and in Asia, ownership is increasingly concentrated in the hands of a small number of wealthy families.

Money politics, power politics, or moral politics?

What kind of politics will be best suited to deal with the consequences of globalization? The liberal model currently seems to prevail, but individual freedom with too many rights and too few obligations favours the strong and wealthy at the expense of all kinds of communities. The results are growing poverty, growing disparity between the haves and the have-nots, mutual fear and hatred and in the last instance, terror and anti-terror measures as a part of normal procedure in an uncertain world.

An alternative is the social democratic (or communitarian) tradition. Here the balance between collective and individual freedom is an inherent part of the model, not something necessitated by hostile and violent actions. According to this line of thought, the human being is a social being, individual freedom is impossible in the absence of collective freedom, and income and property are immoral in a social environment marked by poverty and freedom of speech is an insult in an environment in which people can barely read and write. And, notably, the economic gases must carry their share of the burden, according to the precept that the strongest shoulders should carry the heaviest load. To ensure that

big business remembers this, a strong state is needed. A basic challenge in this globalized world is thus to choose the correct political tools to handle the present precarious situation. The choice seems to be between a liberal and a social or community approach to democracy. Individual freedom and rights will necessarily be restricted every way – in one scenario for the protection of the system against its enemies, in the other for the purpose of building a less exclusive social environment and thus greater safety for all its members. Our own recent survey research* shows that a majority in both East Asia and the Nordic countries actually shares common expectations towards the government. This East–West consensus shows a generally positive stance towards government intervention when necessary for the maintenance of social harmony. Engelberg society might still have a chance if only someone were brave enough to stand up for it.

Notes

1. UNDP’s the United Nations Development Programme, publishes a similar report each year, always with a special focus or theme. The focus of the 2002 report is democracy. When nothing else is specified, please refer to the text refer to the 2002 Human Development Report.

2. Statistical information on the state of the world is abundant in the report, and it is highly recommended reading.

3. Eurasia Political Culture Research Network (EPCRNet) Korea Survey. The European Research Centre has been visited at http://europea-nets.his.dk/.

In memoriam

Henry Henne

A long-time Board member of NIAS and Chairman of the Board 1975–1978, Henry Henne died in his home in Bergen on 29 June this year. He was 85 years old.

When Henne entered university as a young student in the early 1940s, it was in order to study European languages, in particular Russian. In 1946, however, he got a stipend from the Rockefeller Foundation to study Chinese under the great sinologist Bernhard Karlgren in Stockholm. Henne and his two fellow students, Göran Malmqvist and Sören Egerod, later became the pillars for the study of East Asian languages in Scandinavia.

In 1948, Henne travelled to war-torn China for fieldwork. But because of the war, he chose to do his main fieldwork in Hong Kong, where he made important studies of the Sxed time Hakka dialect. He also went to Japan for further studies, but completed his stipend period under the famous linguist Yuen Ren Chao at Berkeley, where he studied Chinese, Japanese, Korean, Thai, and Vietnamese. In the US, he met Sunshine, who became his wife and faithful companion for the rest of his life.

After some years on fellowships in Oslo, Henne was appointed professor of general linguistics at the International Christian University in Japan and, later, at Cornell University. In July 1966, he became the first Norwegian professor of East Asian languages. At the University of Oslo, he established studies in Chinese and, a little later, Japanese. With two of his students he wrote a Chinese grammar that received much international attention and even had the honour of being pirated in Taiwan (H. Henne, O. B. Rongen, L. J. Hansen: A Handbook on Chinese Language Structure. Universitetsforlaget, Oslo 1977.) Henne also wrote more popular books and articles on East Asia. Although hardly an admirer of Chinese communism, he translated Mao’s little red book into Norwegian.

As the beginning, Henne’s professorship was the only position in the new department. Thanks to his untiring contribution, today’s environment for East Asian studies at the University of Oslo includes eight permanent positions and more than a hundred students within Chinese, Japanese, Korean and East Asian area studies.

In 1980, Henne moved back to his native town of Bergen and taught Japanese and Vietnamese at the University there. Henry Henne accomplished much in his life, and we all feel gratitude to this pioneer in East Asian studies in Norway.

Halvor Eftings, University of Oslo

John Dognbol-Martinussen

The member of the NIAS Board, and its Chairman 1991–1993, John Dognbol-Martinussen, passed away unexpectedly, at the age of only 54. With this sad, premature loss, the Danish and international development scene has lost one of its most visionary and profound thinkers and practitioners. John was also an educator in a league of his own. His contribution to the establishment and development of international development studies at Roskilde University testified to his qualities in that respect.

Still more, John was a highly respected networker and facilitator, and he did not shy away from difficult tasks when he could see the strategic perspective. Around 1990, when NIAS was challenged with the need to restructure and change its course of development, John played a crucial role in shaping the new strategy which during the 1990s contributed to making NIAS a vibrant institute for Asian studies. Present-day NIAS owes a lot to his efforts at that time.

Since then, there have been opportunities for further collaboration, and there is no doubt that John will be missed in our network. In a sense, he was an institution in himself. We shall honour his memory.

Jørgen Delman, NIAS

Staff News

Stefan Eklöf from the Department of History, Lund University, Sweden, is research associate at NIAS between October 2002–July 2003. He recently defended his PhD thesis Power and Political Culture: The Indonesian Democratic Party (PDI) and the Decline of the New Order (1980–98), due to be published by NIAS Press in 2003. While at NIAS, Stefan will be initiating a research project on piracy in modern Southeast Asia.

Karen Louise Erikson rejoined the NIAS Library on 23 September. Karen Louise will be working here until the end of the year.

Recent Visitors

Jaan Borup, University of Aarhus, held a Guest Fellowship 26–30 August. Jaan Borup is preparing a new research project within the field of Japanese religious studies.

Bia Wei from the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences (CASS) worked at NIAS on 17–30 September, together with Chan Mingxia (also from CASS) and Ge Yidui (Global Alliance for Workers and Communities, Guangzhou), who were NIAS’s guests on 16–20 September. Together with Cecilia Mölter (NIAS) the three scholars participated in the NGO Forum workshop.
The Bali Bombings: A Postmodern Approach to History?
by Peter Gammeltoft, NIAS

The bombing of two nightclubs on Bali on Sunday, 13 October immediately led to a peculiar interpretation not only of contemporary events in Indonesia but also, and more remarkably, to a reinterpretation of events in the past. All of a sudden an Indonesian terrorist network, Jemaah Islamiyyah, supposedly linked to al-Qaeda, may be behind the attacks. On top of that, the network is claimed to have been behind a range of other attacks, even though no such connections were suggested when they occurred, including the bombing of Indonesia’s largest mosque, Al-Islam, in 1999 and a series of church bombings at Christmas 2000. Immediately after the Bali incident, the cleric Abu Bakar Bashir was arrested on suspicion of being involved in those bombings.

By relying heavily on a discourse involving infiltration by foreign militant networks, this ‘post-modernist’ approach to the present and the past is not sufficiently sensitive towards the local context in which the bombings took place. This article is an attempt to at least some way towards remedying this.

Radical Islam in Indonesia

Indonesian Islam is known for its diversity and tolerance and Indonesia is not a haven for militant Muslims. After Bali, leaders of Indonesia’s two large Muslim organisations, Nahdlatul Ulama (NU) and Muhamadinah, claiming 35 and 28 million members respectively, have condemned the bombings and urged the government to crack down on militant groups. It is a longstanding debate in Indonesia whether a passage obligeing Muslims to follow Islamic law, sharia, should be included in the constitution. During a complex process of amending the 1945 constitution in August this year, neither of the two organisations pressed for inclusion of this passage.

But of course the fact that most Muslims are moderate does not preclude the existence of radical groups. Radical Muslim groups have indeed sprung up after Soeharto’s downfall in 1998 and it is claimed that they have received money, men and arms from bin Laden although no evidence has been presented. Perhaps the best-known group is Lasker Jihad (LJ), which was founded in early 2000 when Muslims were under Christian attacks in parts of the Moluccan Islands. Backed by elements in the Indonesian army, several thousand fighters were sent to and fought in the Moluccas.

Another radical organisation, the Front to Defend Islam, was founded in 1998 and has mainly been occupied with launching raids on bars, massage parlours, karaoke lounges and gambling dens in Jakarta.

Thirdly, and most interesting in this context, the Indonesian Mujahedin Council (Majelis Mujahedin Indonesia, MMI) was established in Yogyakarta in August 2000 with Ba’asry as the chief religious authority. Starting from the war against the Dutch and onwards through to the 1960s, a movement, Darul Islam (DI), tried to establish an Islamic state in Indonesia. The movement was eventually put down but groups and individuals involved in DI appear to have remained active and maintained regular contact since. MMI has been portrayed as a front for various groups that all have some relation with the DI underground.

The Jemaah Islamiyyah

Ba’asry was arrested in 1978 for his association with another Muslim militant group, the Komando Jihad (KJ). KJ is widely believed to have been set up by the renowned and powerful then chief of intelligence, Ali Murkoto. The members were allowed to keep a network among themselves so that they could be released at convenient moments against ‘communists’ and other perceived enemies. In the 1970s and early 1980s there were repeated eruptions of ‘Islamic’ terrorism that were attributed to KJ, such as arson and bombing of churches, nightclubs and cinema. These violent events occurred with greater frequency in the years prior to elections and had the convenient effect of dissuading people from voting for the one remaining Muslim opposition party, PPP.

KJ became increasingly daring and eventually grew into an embarrassment and was cracked down on. The leaders, including Ba’asry were arrested and tried on subversion charges in the late 1970s. From the beginning of the 1980s terms Komando Jihad and what the prosecutors called Jemaah Islamiyyah (JI), which simply means ‘Islamic community’, were often used interchangeably.

However, government prosecutors offered limited hard evidence that JI was in fact an organisation with an identifiable leadership. Rather, the various incarnations of Darul Islam during the 1970s and 1980s appear to have seen the setting up of small communities, jemaah, committed to living according to Islamic law, as an essential element in the overall strategy towards an Islamic state. Following the trials, it remained unclear whether JI was a construct of the government, an amorphous gathering of like-minded Muslims, or a structured organisation led by Ba’asry and his associates. It may have been all of the above and meant different things to different people. Confessions by some ‘members of JI’ may simply have meant that suspects lived in such communities.

Ba’asry was sentenced to a prison term and was released in late 1982. He fled to Malaysia in 1985 when his arrest was again imminent. In Malaysia he and his associates worked to set up a new network of jemaahs and soon drew in a lot of followers. The period in Malaysia led to a radicalisation of the group.

Ba’asry was detained in Jakarta in January and was arrested again following the Bali bombings. When questioned about his association with al-Qaeda and the existence of an organisation called JI, he has persistently denied both.

Peccularities of the bombing

When trying to account not only for the bombs in Bali but for violent conflicts in Indonesia in general, it is tempting to invoke religion. But at closer inspection, the violence often turns out to have specific economic, social or political underpinnings the conflicts in Arakan are related to a gradual change in the political power balance between indigenous Christians and migrant Muslims. Some outbreaks of violence in West Kalimantan were related to the ongoing government decentralisation programme and the rivalry between the army and the police has, in several instances, led them to take active and opposite sides in armed conflicts.

The hypothesis that the attacks should serve to destabilise the Indonesian government to pave the way for an Islamic state is rather unlikely. Why would al-Qaeda target Indonesia, which as opposed to its neighbours has never been asked to crack down on radical Muslims? Furthermore, if the Indonesian government was seriously weakened by the incident, the only organisation strong and organised enough to step in would be the armed forces, TNI, which has historically had a predominantly secular outlook.

Throughout modern Indonesian history foreigners have generally not been the target of violence. In the few and widely publicised incidents where foreigners have been killed, the armed forces have usually been involved. In a very recent incident in August, fourteen employees of a US mining company were shot in West Papua. Even though the Free Papua Organisation (OPM) is officially blamed, the military is widely believed to be behind the shootings.

When following the church bombings at Christmas 2000, which are now attributed to JI, no reference was made to JI or al-Qaeda. At the time, rumours circulated that TNI might be involved either due to an imminent trial of officers over human rights abuses in East Timor or as an act of support to Soeharto. Eventually a court stipulated that the bombings had been ordered by the Free Aceh Movement (GAM). Over the last 30 years, most bombings appear to have served specific political or economic purposes, especially related to ‘security business’ in which the army and the police are often involved.

Consequences in Indonesia

There have already been a few important consequences of the incident in Bali and further repercussions are likely to follow. Less than a week after the bombing, President Megawati Sukarnoputri signed a new anti-terror decree that authorises a life sentence or death for committing an act of terror. Suspects may be held for up to six months for questioning without being charged. Human rights organisations have expressed concern that the decree could be misused.

In terms of scenarios for the future, US military aid to the Indonesian armed forces (TNI) was terminated in 1999 after the TNI-backed atrocities associated with East Timor’s vote for independence. The Bush administration has been lobbying hard to have the funding restored. With Bali, TNI is one step closer to re-establishing full military ties with the US. The TNI could regain some of its lost political influence and increase its role in internal security.

Where radical Islamic groups are concerned, they are likely to exercise self-restraint for some time to come and the authorities will pursue them vigorously. But those hoping that Bali will serve to contain the political influence of Islam in Indonesia will surely be disappointed. Islam will necessarily become a more explicit subject in the political discourse and be debated more openly. Megawati’s vice-president, Hamzah Haz, has been appealing to the Muslim constituency. He has openly run with Ba’asry and the jailed leader of Lasker Jihad and warned against making unsubstaniated accusations against Muslim organisations.

He is likely to run for president in 2004 with a more explicit Muslim agenda than any previous presidential candidate.

Note

The present article is based on a variety of sources including articles in Time Magazine, The Jakarta Post, The Christian Science Monitor, Financial Times, and Sinister Times; reports from the International Crisis Group and other organisations, and the academic literature.
Recent Visitors

On 27 August, Walter K. Andersen, U.S. State Department and Johns Hopkins University, gave a presentation on 11th September and the Political Impact on South Asia.

Oddvar Smukkestad, Oslo University College, had a Contact Scholarship 9–20 September. He is working on a book project on development theory.

Lisa Stelm, Director of the China Program at the Norwegian Institute of Human Rights (NIHRI) in Oslo held a Guest Researcher Scholarship on 7–20 October. Lisa Stelmis is working on a research project on Ethnic Minorities and Chinese Local People’s Congress: Legislator with Potential to Accommodate Difference?

Gard Hopadal Hansen, University of Bergen, held a Contact Scholarship on 23 September–4 October. He is working on his MA-thesis on ‘Pirouze Fish and ‘Love broker’ a Study of Norwegian Salmon Exit into the Chinese Market.

Professor Syarif Ibrahim Alqadrie from Universitas Tanjungpura (UNTAN) in Pontianak, (Kalimantam, Indonesia) was NIAS Guest Scholar at the end of October. He works with Timo Kivistä within the Indonesian Conflict Studies Network.

Anne Kjerstin Hartz, University of Oslo, held a Contact Scholarship on 4–15 November. Anne Kjerstin Hartz is working on a MA-thesis on Implementation of Human Rights in China with Special Focus on the Labour Right.

Tollef As, University of Oslo, held a Contact Scholarship on 23 September–4 October. He is working on an MA-thesis on Trade Unions’ New Roles in China: Reflections of Central Authority and Local Adaptations.

Sara Ranta-Tykkä, University of Tampere, held a Contact Scholarship on 21 October–1 November. She is carrying out a PhD-project on Theatre as a Process for Social Work and Social Change in Orissa, India: The Theatre for Awareness of Naxa Chetana.

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Geir Erichsen, University of Oslo, held a Contact Scholarship on 26 August–6 September. He is working on his MA-thesis on Strategies for Utilisation of Natural Resources, and Their Clarification, by Malay Villagers in the Buffer Zone of the Recently Established Bukit Daudau National Park, Jambi, Sumatra, Indonesia.

Heidi Østho Haugen, University of Oslo, held a Contact Scholarship on 4–15 November. Heidi Østho Haugen is working on an MA-thesis on The Construction of Beijing as an Olympic City.

Samuel Farmanyan, Center for East and Southeast Asian Studies, Lund University, held an EUround Scholarship on 2–9 September. Samuel Farmanyan is working on his MA-thesis on Japan’s ethnic identity.

Mikko Ruoppa, University of Helsinki, held a contact scholarship on 7–18 October. He was working on his MA-thesis on Aspects of Chinese Corruption.

Lena Giuffrida, Stockholm School of Economics, had a Contact Scholarship on 21 October–1 November. She is working on her MA-thesis on Labour Mobility and Employment Remuneration in Vietnam: A Comparison of Wage Employment in Public and Private Firms.

Stefan Danek, Lund University, held a Oresund Scholarship 1–15 November. Stefan Danek is working on a PhD-project on Literature, Society and Politics in Indonesia.
Disputed Waters of the South China Sea
by Timo Kivimäki, NIAS

The South China Sea area is often portrayed as a theatre of military tension with a dangerous conflict potential. A recent survey of the territorial disputes there could trigger conflict could be witnessed in April 2001, when a US Navy EP-3 Aries intelligence aircraft collided with a Chinese F-8 fighter plane over waters that the Peoples' Republic of China (PRC) was claiming, but which the United States considered international. While the resulting diplomatic confrontation actually dealt with the safety of aviation and military technology, the disagreement over the sovereignty of the waters played an important part in the conflict argumentation.

The South China Sea disputes are, however, a much more complex matter involving environmental values, economic security and political developments, and thus cannot be reduced to traditional military security alone. For the ordinary people in the countries that take part in the disputes, the South China Sea area is first and foremost a source of seafood and a sea-lane of transportation. Both the safety of sea lines and the management of fisheries are fundamentally affected by the disputes of sovereignty over territories in the South China Sea.

The interest of the disputant nations in the territorial disputes in the South China Sea is tied to their political, economic, environmental and military concerns. In terms of military security, there are reasons to claim that for many of these nations the disputes over territories in the area constitute the 'least unlikely' trigger for interest war. In general, territorial disputes have been the most prominent motives for interstate warfare. More specifically, a look at the statistics of militarized inter-state disputes also proves that the South China Sea area is no exception to this general rule.

For the external, involved powers, such as the United States and Japan, the South China Sea is a problem of economic, diplomatic, environmental and military stability. With the exception of direct military threats, many of the same worries that the disputants experience are felt, perhaps on a smaller scale, by the United States and Japan. This was clearly expressed in the military and diplomatic tension, as well as by the qualified nervousness, of the markets dependent on the South China Sea.

The South China Sea has also become meaningful for non-involved nations such as those in the European Union. This interest is often based on the considerations of global security policies: concerns of the economic, ecological and social threats caused by prospects of war or ecological disaster in the South China Sea.

On the one hand, new global security policy issues are based on national security considerations. Political economic and indeed also military interests are intertwined with global security interests; this is why even faraway countries have to follow developments in places like the South China Sea. The national security policies of most nations are today more than ever based on a broad, comprehensive and global concept of security. National security policies are consequently influenced by the development of global international tension. International tension in turn has been seen to reflect both on regional tensions and global threats of war. In addition, questions of the dominance of a uncontrolled migration, refugee problems, international criminality, the spread of drugs and small arms, epidemics and religious fundamentalism are today seen as factors that have an influence on national security and which often have been created by global insecurity and wars. Furthermore, national economic security might easily be affected by conflicts at the choke points of international trade routes, such as the South China Sea.

Comprehensive global security policy issues such as global environmental challenges directly affect the national security of all countries. While global environmental challenges as such may threaten security, the disputes in the South China Sea also prove how they might very well be connected with more traditional security threats: while the sovereignty of the area is disputed, this unclear situation is rapidly giving rise to environmental challenges.

On the other hand, global security policies have faraway countries have to follow developments in places like the South China Sea. The national security policy context in the framework of a perception of peace with the instruments offered by development cooperation. By supporting democracy, human rights and economic development as well as helping developing countries build institutions for dispute settlement and conflict transformation, aid donor countries have attempted to contribute to global security. Many countries and agencies with a serious commitment to development cooperation have already started forming their conflict prevention strategies within this cooperation.

NIAS Press launched a book in August 2002 looking at the various dimensions of the South China Sea disputes. War or Peace in the South China Sea (edited by Timo Kivimäki) makes a conscious effort to try to go beyond the tendency of media reports and many scholarly works to reduce all the dimensions of the disputes to strategic issues. In may situations a common reinforcement of the common perception of the setting as a zero-sum game with regard to sovereignty and energy resources are emphasised. In addition to elucidating the many nuances of the disputes, emphasis is also put upon producing a strategic understanding that can serve diplomacy for peace in the area.

Following the argument of the NIAS book, one could claim that the most disturbing aspects of the South China Sea disputes are their potential for creating environmental catastrophes and intensive conflicts. The latter are mainly related to the degradation of resources, pollution, destruction of coral reefs and a lack of traditional fish stocks (due to the disputes) with regard to the protection of the environment. The latter are mainly due to loss of sovereignty in critical stability in the area, the military doctrines and military capabilities of the involved nations, and to ensure any long-lasting guarantee of stability. The fact that great powers are involved and that the institutional setting and arms control are still underdeveloped makes the disputes potentially dangerous - the more so because arms acquisition and evolving military doctrines may place the parties involved on a collision course.

The consolidation of a stable structure of deterrence conducive to regional peace and stability could be disrupted by four developments. First, any departure by the US from its position of non-involvement in local disputes could produce a military response from the PRC. Second, violent conflict in the Taiwan Strait could spill over into the South China Sea. Third, implementation of plans for a theatre missile defence covering Japan, South Korea and Taiwan would threaten to skew the balance of power to the disadvantage of the PRC, thus creating the risk of a military response from the PRC. Fourth, increased Japanese responsibility for security in Asia might lead to a greater willingness to defend the region, thus provoking the PRC to take military action.

One of the main pillars of stability which holds potential for common reactions to the environmental threats is the rapidly developing institutionalization of ASEAN and PRC-ASEAN cooperation and dialogue. This development potentially strengthens some aspects of cooperation regional identity, a feeling of common interest and a reliance on common mechanisms of conflict management. It can thus be seen as essential social/ political capital in containing violence, involving disputes and transforming conflict structures in the area.

Notes
1 This article is based on Timo Kivimaki (ed), 2002. War or Peace in the South China Sea? NIAS Press: Copenhagen.

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