2007

In Search of Common Icons for the East Asian Union

Fernando N. Zialcita

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Towards an East Asia Community: Beyond Cross-Cultural Diversity

Inter-cultural, Inter-societal, Inter-faith Dialogue

December 10–18, 2007

Edited by Yasushi Kikuchi

The Japan Foundation
Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan
Waseda University Institute of Asia-Pacific Studies
Towards an East Asia Community: Beyond Cross-Cultural Diversity

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# Contents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Preface</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Overview</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

## Part 1: Public Symposium

### Profiles of Coordinators and Keynote Speaker

Profiles of Coordinators 12
Profile of Speaker 17

### Presentation Papers

**Trade, Community and Security in East Asia**

WANG, Gungwu

A Vision towards the East Asia Union: Possible or not?
—Social Anthropological Aspect—

Yasushi KIKUCHI

Harmonizing Strategic Interests and Cross-Cultural Diversity:
Requisite for Building an East Asian Community

Wilfrido V. VILLACORTA

In Search of Common Icons for the East Asian Union

Fernando Nakpil ZIALCITA

There will not be an East Asian Community Without Human Solidarity
—An Agenda for Inter- and Intra- Societal Dialogue—

Surichai WUNGAEO

Inter-faith Dialogue of East Asian Identities: Is It Possible?

Hanneman SAMUEL

### Report on the Public Symposium

81

## Part 2: Program and Participants

Program of Activities 102

### Position Papers from Participants

Moving towards and East Asia community – perspectives of a “true believer”

Patricia GIANNOTTO

Some Aspects of Popular and Consumer Cultures in Brunei

Nani Suryani Haji Abu Bakar

115
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The English Language as a Bridge To Realise Effective Tourism</td>
<td>118</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Mohd Nasroul Hizam Bin Souyono</em></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A rapid overview on ethnic “Kouy” in Indochina</td>
<td>121</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Kong VIREAK</em></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Media’s Role in Religious Harmony</td>
<td>124</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Nguon SERATH</em></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Regional Identity Building in East Asia</td>
<td>128</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>LU Ke</em></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bridge Cultural Divisions through Friendships</td>
<td>130</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>LI Fan</em></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Language of Inclusion</td>
<td>133</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Jhimli BASAK</em></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bridging the gaps from the past to the present: Creating a shared space</td>
<td>136</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Shikha MAKAN</em></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>East Asia: The Next Superpower</td>
<td>139</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Poempida Hidayatulloh</em></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Knowledge System and Human Future</td>
<td>143</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Nirwan Ahmad Arsuka</em></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The national development and Problems of Socio-Economic Divide</td>
<td>147</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>at South Korea</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Kaeunghun YOON</em></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Living Cultural Heritage Site in Southeast Asia</td>
<td>149</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Towards Integrated and Sustainable Development Approach</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Soukanh CHITHPANYA</em></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Country Paper</td>
<td>154</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Beeya CHIEBRIEKAO</em></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Understanding Islam, Bridging Inter-faith Dialogue</td>
<td>158</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Jacqueline Ann SURIN</em></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Culture, Commerce &amp; ‘Morality’ in Malaysia</td>
<td>162</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Azmyl Yunor</em></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inter-faith Dialogue</td>
<td>165</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Hnin Myat Thu</em></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inter-societal Dialogue</td>
<td>167</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Ni Ni Lwin</em></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inter-societal Dialogue and the Value of the Concept of “Universals”</td>
<td>171</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Charlotte BOYER</em></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inter-faith Dialogue: Across the Divide</td>
<td>174</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Rehanna Maria Yasina ALI</em></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>An artist at a time of war</td>
<td>177</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Gutierrez M. MANGANSAKAN II</em></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The Condition of Human Rights in the Philippines: Challenges and Prospects 181
Sarah Jane S. RAYMUNDO

Inter-societal Dialogue: Harmony Centre’s Perspective 185
Tengku Suhailah Binte Tengku Kamarudin

Globalizing the Struggle: Globalization from Below in Asian Context 188
Bencharat SAE CHUA

Integrating an East Asian Community – a point from cultural aspect 191
Chalongkwan TAVARAYUTH

Intercultural dialogue: A solid foundation of a brighter future 195
HOANG Huu Anh

Part 3: Discussions among Participants

Report on the Intensive Discussions 201

Review of Group Discussion by Coordinators 231

Cultural Linkages between East Asians: An Overview of the Workshop
(Group A) 232
Fernando Nakpil ZIALCITA

Observations and Comments of Group B: Inter-societal and
Intra-societal exchange 235
Surichai WUN’GAEO

Report of Group Discussion C: Inter-faith Dialogue 237
Hanneman SAMUEL
Preface

The Japan Foundation, in cooperation with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan and the Waseda University Institute of Asia-Pacific Studies, organized International Forum “Towards an East Asia Community: Beyond Cross-Cultural Diversity: Inter-cultural, Inter-societal, Inter-faith Dialogue” in Tokyo in December 2007.

Funded by the JENESYS (Japan-East Asia Network of Exchange for Students and Youths) Programme, this forum aims to deepen understanding of the different facets of the Japanese society including politics, diplomacy, economics and culture and to form the basis of future vision and construct firm solidarity among Asian countries which will promote mutual understanding of the future generation of the East Asia Community.

In the 10-day program, including seminars on Japan and intensive discussion, twenty nine young Asian intellectuals and professionals such as journalists, social workers, scholars, artists, NGO workers, administrative officers, and business people have been discussing common issues and concerns in East Asia from the inter-cultural, inter-societal and inter-faith viewpoints, with advices by the five coordinators from Japan and ASEAN countries.

To share the result of intensive discussions with general public, the public symposium was held in Waseda University on December 17, 2007.

This publication consists of three parts. The first part is the report of the public symposium including Keynote speech, presentations by coordinators, and summary of floor discussion. The second part comprises the program details and short papers from the participants along with their personal profiles, which is followed by the last part, the summary and reviews of two-day group discussions.

The organizers hope that the real cross-cultural dialogue among the participants would be handed on to the society through this proceeding, and believe that the forum contributes to create a sense of an East Asia Community in the future.

The Japan Foundation
Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan
Waseda University Institute of Asia-Pacific Studies
Overview

“Is the Creation of Sense of Identity Possible in East Asia?”

After the International Forum, “Towards an East Asia Community: Beyond Cross-Cultural Diversity, Inter-cultural, Inter-societal, Inter-faith Dialogue.”

Yasushi KIKUCHI
Professor, Graduate School of Asia-Pacific Studies, Waseda University

On December 17, 2007, the international symposium “Towards an East Asia Community”, in which about 200 audience attended, was conducted at Waseda Ono Auditorium, by the three organizers, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan, Waseda University Institute of Asia-Pacific Studies, and the Japan Foundation.

As a moderator of the symposium, my primary concern was how to set the theme. Although we have seen the increase of symposiums which are based on a concept of “East Asia Community” or conferences of the similar themes in the past 2-3 years, the content of these symposiums and conferences uniformly focuses on the regional integration in the sphere of the economic activity. This concept of economic integration does not only widely spread among specialists of political and business arena, but also has gained the attention from the academics in politics and economics, and has become a kind of fashionable theme.

Here, as a moderator, I thought this international symposium should be slightly different in content and become another driving force to forward the East Asian Community Building. That is to say, I wanted to use this opportunity to raise a question on how to share with the people from different regions, the different value and social principles which I have cultivated through the experiences of field survey as a social-anthropologist.

At the public symposium, held as apart of the JENESYS (Japan-East Asia Network of Exchange for Students and Youths) Programme, we have invited 29 young intellectuals from the total of 16 countries which participated in East Asian Summit (EAS), 10 from Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) plus China, Korea, India, New Zealand, Australia, and Japan. The participants spent 10 days together to discuss and deepen their thoughts about the possibility of creating common sense of identity in culturally and ethnically
diverse East Asian region. During the intensive discussion which lasted for 2 days in the middle of the program, we separated the participants into 3 different groups - focusing on either culture or society or faith - , to discuss the topic of their group and share each and unique problem participants’ representing countries have. The discussion took place not only among the participants themselves, but also with 4 other experts who represent ASEAN. In other words, all who participated the forum have experienced the sense of identity and the cultural diversity through their own skins. The biggest accomplishment, I felt, was to have created the common space where each participant shared the sense of identity beyond their attributes and value.

As the fruit of my 40-year experience of field research as a social-anthropologist, I have known that people can discover a tool for mutual understanding by extracting the differences rather than similarities in value and principles among different societies. Therefore, it was also a great progress to have proved it when each participant created the common field for their mutual understanding through the interaction with different culture while being conscious about the dignity toward their own culture.

After the forum, my sincere hope is that those young intellectuals who returned home, with the seeds of cross-cultural understanding and the hope for their future, will come to meet again sometime later.
Part 1: Public Symposium
## International Symposium:

**“Towards an East Asia Community: Beyond Cross-Cultural Diversity”**  
Inter-cultural, Inter-societal, Inter-faith Dialogue  

**December 17, 2007 / Ono Auditorium, Waseda University**

### Agenda

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Event</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>10:00</td>
<td>Opening Remarks by Organizers</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| 10:15  | Overview “Towards an East Asia Community: Beyond Cross-Cultural Diversity”  
        by Dr. Yasushi KIKUCHI, Professor of Waseda University Institute of Asia-Pacific Studies |
| 10:35  | Keynote Speech  
        by Dr. Wang Gungwu, Chairman of East Asian Institute, the National University of Singapore |
| 11:20  | Presentation 1  
        by Dr. Wilfrido Villacorta / Professor Emeritus at De La Salle University,  
        the former Deputy Secretary-General of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) |
| 11:40  | Presentation 2  
        by Dr. Fernando Zialcita / Professor at the Department of Sociology and Anthropology, Ateneo de Manila University |
| 12:00  | Q&A                                                                 |
| 12:15  | Lunch Break                                                          |
| 13:30  | Presentation 3  
        by Dr. Surichai Wun'gaeo/ Director of Social Research Institute,  
        Chulalongkorn University |
| 13:50  | Presentation 4  
        by Dr. Hanneman Samuel / Professor at the Department of Sociology,  
        University of Indonesia |
        Presentation 30 min. + Q&A 15 min.  
        Group Coordinator: Dr. Fernando Zialcita |
| 14:55  | Report of Group Discussion B: Inter-societal Dialogue  
        Group Coordinator: Dr. Surichai Wun'gaeo |
| 15:40  | Tea Break                                                            |
| 16:00  | Report of Group Discussion C: Inter-faith Dialogue  
        Group Coordinator: Dr. Hanneman Samuel |
| 16:45  | General Discussion, Q&A and Conclusion                               |
| 17:55  | Closing Remarks                                                      |
Profiles of Coordinators and Keynote Speaker
Profiles of Coordinators

[General Coordinator]
Yasushi KIKUCHI
Professor, Graduate School of Asia-Pacific Studies,
Waseda University

Prof. Kikuchi received his Ed.D. from De La Salle University. He has been Visiting Professor at University of Zurich and University of Montreal, Exchange Professor at De La Salle University and University of Chile, and in the years 1978-79 and 1987-88, Senior Researcher at the National Museum of the Philippines as a Japan Foundation Fellow. During the period June 2002 till June 2004, he served as a personal assistant official for President Toledo of Peru, social development specialist for JICA, Visiting Professor at ESAN Graduate School of Business, Peru and Advisor to Secretary of Peru Ministry of Development. He is currently Professor at Graduate School of Asia-Pacific Studies, Waseda University, Visiting Professor for Harvard Program in Refugee Trauma (HPRT) and Visiting Professor at St. John's University (New York). He is also currently a member of the advisory committee on ODA policy to Foreign Minister. He specializes in Social Anthropology.

Recent English publications are:
“Sustainable Development with Knowledge and Technology” presented for Annual conference of Waseda Cultural Anthropology, Jan 2007.
“Resettlement and Participatory Reconstruction- The case of the un-or natural disaster” No.9:50-55 Waseda Institute of Asia-Pacific Studies, Waseda University, Tokyo. 2007
Profiles of Coordinators

[Coordinator]

Wilfrido V. VILLACORTA

Professor Emeritus at De La Salle University, former Deputy Secretary-General of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations

Dr. Villacorta received his MA and PhD in Politics, Catholic University of America, Washington D.C. From 1976 to 1978 he was Senior Specialist of the SEAMEO (Southeast Asian Ministers of Education Organization) Center for Educational Innovation and Technology (INNOTECH), from 1978 to 1982 he was the Secretary-General of the Association of Christian Universities and Colleges in Asia (ACUCA). He was Dean of the College of Liberal Arts from 1983 to 1986. He established the Yuchengco Center of De La Salle University in 1994, and served as the founding president of the center until 2003, leading numbers of research activities related to the cooperation and development between the Philippines and Japan. From 2003 till 2006, he was the Deputy Secretary-General of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), which is an ambassador-level position. He is currently Professor Emeritus at De La Salle University.

Recent English publications are:
“ASEAN-Japan Relations: The China Factor.” In Diplomatic Relations between Japan and Southeast Asia: Progress and Challenges through Half-a-Century. Quezon City: Philippine Social Science Council and The Japan Foundation. 59-74. 2007
[Coordinator]

Fernando Nakpil ZIALCITA
Professor, Department of Sociology and Anthropology, Ateneo de Manila University

Graduated from Ateneo de Manila University (BA in Humanities and MA in Philosophy), University of Hawaii (MA and PhD in Cultural Anthropology). Assistant Professor at University of Hawaii from 1984 to 1987. He has been Professor at Department of Sociology and Anthropology, Ateneo de Manila University since 1987, and is now also Director of Cultural Heritage Studies Program at Ateneo de Manila University. His books Authentic though not exotic: Essays on Filipino Identity and Cuaresma were awarded the Outstanding Book in the Social Sciences Award for 2006 and 2001 respectively, by the Manila Critic's Circle.

Recent English Publications are:
“Epics and Ethnic Boundaries.” In Literature of Voice: Epics in the Philippines. Edited by Nicole Revel. Loyola Heights, Quezon City: Ateneo de Manila University Office of the President
Zialcita, Fernando, editor. Quiapo Heart of Manila. Manila: Department of Sociology and Anthropology, Ateneo de Manila University and Metropolitan Museum of Manila. 2006
[Coordinator]

Surichai WUN’GAEO
Director of Social Research Institute,
Chulalongkorn University

Graduated from Chulalongkorn University (BA) and University of Tokyo (MA and PhD). He was national representative to ASEAN-Japan Multinational Cultural Mission from 1997 to 1998. He has been Visiting Professor at Hosei University, Ritsumeikan University and Hitotsubashi University in Japan, and also University of Illinois in USA. He has also been member of National Legislative Assembly, Deputy Director for Research, Institute of Asian Studies, member of National Committee for UNESCO, Chairman for Bangkok Metropolitan Culture Research Committee. He is currently Director of Chulalongkorn University Social Research Institute and President of Asian Rural Sociology Association (ARSA).

Recent English publications are:
[Coordinator]

Hanneman SAMUEL
Professor, Department of Sociology,
University of Indonesia

Dr. Samuel graduated from University of Indonesia in 1984, University of Kent, UK (Master of Philosophy in Sociology) in 1990 and Swinburne University of Technology, Australia (Doctor of Philosophy in Sociology) in 2001. He has been commissioned researcher for various studies including programs for Ministry of Public Work, provincial planning board DKI, World Bank etc. He is currently Professor at the Department of Sociology, Faculty of Social and Political Sciences at University of Indonesia. His main interest is sociology of Indonesia and politics of knowledge.

Recent English publications are:
Megawati Sukarnoputri and Gloria Macapagai-Aroyo: a comparison. 2001. A paper presented on a forum organized by Asian Studies Centre & Dept. of Political Science (University of the Philippines)
Profile of Speaker

[Keynote Speaker for Public Symposium]

WANG, Gungwu
Chairman of the East Asian Institute,
National University of Singapore

Graduated from University of Malaya (BA Hons and MA in History) and University of London (PhD in History). He taught at University of Malaya (in Singapore and Malaysia) and was Vice-Chancellor of University of Hong Kong from 1986 to 1995. He is the former Director of East Asian Institute, National University of Singapore, and is now its chairperson. Areas of interest are Chinese history, Chinese overseas, nationalism and migrations.

Recent English publications are:
The Chinese Overseas: From Earthbound China to the Quest for Autonomy, Harvard University Press, 2000
Joining the Modern World: Inside and Outside China, Singapore University Press, 2000
Presentation Papers

Theses written by 6 experts, based on individual presentations, are published here in order of presentation.
Trade, Community and Security in East Asia*

WANG, Gungwu
Chairman of the East Asian Institute, National University of Singapore

The new Asia is changing fast and the consequences of change are not easy to understand. Many ideas about what Asia will be like in the future have been thrashed out in debate around the world, even about whether the century will be Asian or not. There are complex questions about whether Asia will really be able to catch up and imitate the West, whether Asia will instead return to older patterns of inter-state relationships, and whether the relations between new kinds of post-colonial states will be something altogether different from those of the past. The Indian historian and diplomat K.M. Panikkar wrote half a century ago that, when the Portuguese explorer Vasco da Gama rounded the Cape of Good Hope and arrived on the coast of India, he changed the course of Asian history. Pannikar went so far as to speak of the Vasco da Gama epoch of Asian history that lasted from 1498 to 1945. He suggested that the earlier patterns of relationships among peoples, states and civilizations in Asia were drastically changed by da Gama’s voyage. But he also asked what Asia was like before the coming of the Europeans and whether Asia could ever be the same again.

The various states in Asia today have had different kinds of relationships at different times. Will today’s relationships take Asia back to past structures or forward to evolve new patterns of inter-state relations? Let me explore some of the efforts to offer answers. First, there is a Eurocentric view that wonders if Asia will eventually assert itself against the West; then there is the historical approach that tries to find patterns in all past relationships that might still be meaningful in the future; and, thirdly, by assuming that most countries will follow the current models of interstate relations that originated in Western Europe, future developments will lead to new Asian regional structures that act according to universally accepted norms.

Since the 19th century, most polities east of Suez have experienced turmoil and confusion in the face of aggressive acts by Western powers competing for wealth and power. This led to the incorporation of the Asian port-cities into
Atlantic-centered mercantilist markets, and was followed by the dominance of industrialized modern economies. After the end of the Second World War, emerging superpowers like the United States and the Soviet Union fought a Cold War that treated Asia as one of the contested zones of a global economic order. The polities of Asia were hampered by their inability to develop a clear understanding of what they had to do to compete within that order, partly because many were still subordinated to post-colonial links and others were struggling with their agrarian and feudalistic heritages. However, from the start of Western expansion during the 19th century, Japan was the exception. It was privileged by being distant from the more aggressive powers and also relatively secure as a strong island kingdom free from the turmoil of unceasing continental conflicts. It responded quickly and boldly took the plunge to industrialize and militarize as the European Powers had done. Imitation and adaptation was their secret of survival and ultimately of the country’s resurgence on the edge of Asia.

But Japan could not escape its own heritage altogether. Its spirit of defiance led it along an ambivalent path that admired the material achievements of the West but resented its dominance in their region. Nevertheless, its success in gaining acceptance as a Great Power by the early 20th century was the envy of all other Asian elites. No one, perhaps not even the Japanese themselves, foresaw that this ambivalence would lead the country to the badly flawed idea of acting as the leader of an Asian revolt against the West. They miscalculated the role of China and failed to persuade the Chinese that their intentions to save Asia were honorable. In the end, that cost Japan dearly. But, despite its military defeat, Japan was given a second chance to rebuild their economy, this time on the side of the West and with a much better understanding of the post-war global system. The strengths in the system lay in the mercantile origins of Western expansion and the European search for a trading order that experimented with new ideas and institutions and projected superior military power to serve their interests.

Since 1945, the Japanese model of economic development has inspired the emerging economies in post-colonial Asia. Several of the new nation-states in Northeast and Southeast Asia have studied the model and followed it as much as they could. The Cold War division along ideological lines made the choice to follow Japan understandable. Japan was on the side of the market economies created by the Atlantic trading order while others, notably China, were drawn
to revolutionary methods to turn agrarian states into industrial powers. Using the Japanese model, other countries learnt to tap into the resources of the West and the results throughout the 1970s were very encouraging. Then, from 1978 onwards, to everyone’s surprise, China turned away from political slogans and rigid control systems and adapted East Asian market experiences to their needs. They did so with such dramatic success that new perspectives on the future of Asia have begun to surface. This transformation suggests that the Chinese leaders have revised their world view. They now realize that the trading order established by the West over the centuries has come to stay. For China to recover its place in the world, it has to master the secrets of that order and not fight it. It is still too early to say that the Chinese have totally embraced that order and that they will not want to modify it to make their position more secure. Whatever the outcome, China’s acceptance of that trading order is a decisive event in international affairs.

Understanding the Asian past afresh has only just begun, and Asian scholars are still grappling with concepts that depend on social science approaches developed in the West. The picture is that, without a holistic concept of Asia in the past, there could not have been any articulation of Asian experience. But was there nothing shared, no awareness at all of what the various kingdoms and port-cities had shared? From the fragments of the past that have been uncovered, we can discern patterns of relationships that may still be relevant. I offer an attempt to make sense of those relationships by focusing on the relative impact of continental powers on the China mainland and the Indian Ocean states on the multiple state systems of Southeast Asia. The following brief notes on each cluster of experiences will show that there are patterns that have had a lasting effect on the polity structures that eventually emerged. At the heart of the patterns is the importance of long-distance trade and the threats and opportunities that brought to all who were alert enough to respond.

**Indian impacts on Southeast Asia**

- China’s gradual and steady advances southwards
- The spread of Islamic trading networks
- Early Europeans and the choices before them

The Indian Ocean impact began with Indian traders working closely with local rulers in both island and mainland parts of Southeast Asia. With trade came
ideas and institutions that gave shape to the new polities that arose some two thousand years ago. But these traders, for reasons we do not need to elaborate here, pulled back from political commitments. Their cultural influences, however, remained among the elites and inspired the use of religion in all spheres of life, not least the ordering of state and society wherever the ideals took root. This has been characterized as a mandela effect by creating loosely organized clusters of polities that sought common ways to define some kind of earthly order. Even as trading lost its prominence and was replaced by ritual and symbols, the impact remained strong. Significantly, both Hindu and Buddhist ideas and institutions permeated the region, including in its later form as Theravada Buddhism on the mainland.

In comparison, China’s trading thrusts southwards were initially backed by military power. But Confucian agrarian ideals and realistic land-bound considerations stopped the push at the coast and the edge of Southeast Asia. The imperial polity turned to an elaborate tributary system to assure security, control the trading classes and, not least, to assert superiority. Even as large numbers of Chinese migrated to the southern provinces, the constraints imposed by the centre continued and, if anything, were further institutionalized. Thus, Chinese trade was conducted through a handful of intrepid merchants in collaboration with eager traders from Southeast Asia and beyond, including those from the Indian Ocean like the Indians, Persians and Arabs. By choosing not to develop an independent trading order and instead place the emphasis on majesty and defense, China’s presence was limited to commercial and technological skills that played little part in the evolution of economic and political order in the region. In relative terms, their influence was more in the hardware than in the infusion of penetrating software contributions.

There was, however, an exceptional experience of Japan. Its potential for engagement in a maritime trading order seems to have been constrained largely from within, encouraged initially also by a sense of awe in the face of China’s massive power. When new forces sought to break out of those bonds, a deliberate decision to pull back was made in the 17th century just as the Europeans arrived in strength in the neighbourhood. The delayed reaction to the new opportunities contributed to the swiftness of Japan’s response after 1868 and the amazing remaking of the country that I referred to earlier. It was this challenge that ultimately woke the Chinese up to the fallibility of their
tradition-bound policies towards trade and economic order.

The modest beginnings of Islamic trading methods and organisations as early as the 7th century attracted little notice from both India and China before the 12th century. By that time, the growing influence of the religious underpinnings of that trade was being felt among some of the Hindu-Buddhist polities of coastal states and Muslim merchants became increasingly important in the courts of local rulers. By the beginning of the 17th century, Islam had spread steadily inland and stiffened the capacity of the traditional rulers to compete with newly arrived Europeans like the Portuguese and the Spanish. At the other end, the religion provided support and fresh insights to the populace and helped to build trading networks that outflanked the hereditary upper classes. There was also the inspiration of wider international links with the Islamic heartland through the Haj and ideals of the ‘Umat and the universal claims of the caliphate. These overarching bonds offered an alternative vision to that brought by the West.

Into these conditions, the Europeans arrived waving the flag of “gold and Christians”, the latter as the extension of the Iberian struggle with the Moors into the Indian Ocean and the former representing the deeper trading spirit of new mercantilism. Until the coming of the Dutch and the English East India Companies during the 17th century, there was little sense of a new order in the trading practices of the Portuguese and Spanish who appeared equally concerned for a Christian destiny for their exploits. The East India Companies, too, were content to work within whatever system was available and compete as best they could. When they found that they had the naval strengths to assert themselves, they moved from conformity to a readiness to innovate and establish new conditions more favorable to their interests. That turning point came during the 18th century for reasons that are now well known: new wealth from the Americas, the scientific and industrial revolutions and the rise of united and purposeful nation-states. It became clear that their new power was far superior to anything that the states of Asia could muster, with the possible exception of China. And that empire they set out to force to accept their terms or ultimately capitulate. It was a long-drawn process and progress could not at first be taken for granted. But by the middle of the 19th century, with successive military defeats of China, the road was clear to project the Atlantic system of international trade to all of Asia.

I have outlined the stages of change to emphasize the coming of a new
economic order that is more fundamental than imperial conquest and colonization. The argument whether trade followed the flag or the flag followed trade is probably less important than the fact that flags come and go but trade is more likely to stay, especially when it is profitable to everyone concerned. This idea goes beyond Asian traditions of trade in significant ways. Compare it to the Indian Ocean pattern where trade and flag were normally separated and their respective impacts independent of each other. Or compare it with the China model where flag acts as a severe constraint on trade, where rulers fear trading wealth as a possible threat to their monopoly of power. Instead, the nature of a truly long-distance trade created completely new conditions for European traders and gave them opportunities to impact on the development of the polities they answered to. The advances they were able to support stimulated new financial and commercial organisations and practices, new economic and legal structures for growth, new industrial methods and the science they inspired, and also the new national spirit and the steady empowerment of the wealthy and organized working classes, the very roots of democratization of their human resources.

The results of such successes that led to the world order since 1945 are now widely recognized and accepted. The question that this order leads to is whether the polity structure that now underpins the international framework of nation-states has totally eclipsed anything that the states of Asia can draw from their respective heritages. In short, does the Asian past matter much now?

In the three parts of Asia called Northeast, Southeast and South, there have been calls since the end of the Second World War for a return to friendship and cooperation. It took many forms, some impractical and even contradictory, like neutralism during the Cold War period and Afro-Asian solidarity, but the hopes expressed common longings and have been echoed again and again over the decades. At the beginning, some of these organisations looked like partnerships of the poor that quailed in the face of pressures from superpowers like the United States and the Soviet Union. It became clear that, as long as it depended on mere ideals and goodwill, the chances of exerting any influence on events were slight. Eventually, the superstructures that fed the Cold War became outdated and military solutions had to pay more respect to the demands of the larger economic order. Power was now determined by the developed rich nations and, until recently, only Japan was represented in that
exclusive club. Today the rise of China and India have enlarged the base of that order and much thinking have been diverted to rethinking what that means to the economic order as a whole from now on. In that context, I suggest that we revisit the experiences of the countries of Asia that engaged in the shaping of trading orders in the past.

Reviewing what has been outlined above, the four sets of experiences have all contributed to the dilemma faced today, not only in Asia but also in the world in which a rising Asian economic order may seek to find its rightful place in the near future. Telescoped in the past century are all four experiences. We see the ebb and flow of the Indian trading experience nevertheless leaving deep marks of cultural values and institutions. We also see from the Chinese historical experience issues of control and governance that did not prevent trade from growing but directed it towards practical skills that minimized culture and people contacts. And in the Islamic trading networks, we see the strong threads of religion binding polities to an ideal world in which trade had to be ultimately subordinated. Not least, we see the beginnings of aggressive national competitions for markets that characterize the European experience being introduced into Asia and being learnt by various classes of Asians more or less successfully.

The common features found in these respective contributions to the Southeast Asian marketing systems and development models provide material for further thinking about the future state systems and economic growth. All four seem to have left residual ideas and institutions that will be relevant to that growth. They point to zones of mutual support as well as areas of potential conflict. Insofar as the past survives in the living cultures that determine how choices will be made in response to global changes, that past has to be taken into account in our expectations. I shall end by suggesting that the following features of that varied past can still influence what will emerge and must be factored in when the international system adjusts itself to new and challenging regional structures that follow.

1. The international framework brought in by the West was based on Atlantic experiences and structures. It needs revisiting to regulate the aggressive competition for markets and resources that had led to the wars that finally enfeebled the power framework itself. Its major contribution is to have helped develop new trading and professional classes to help the various countries of Asia respond to the global economic system and, in the long
run, enable the system to become more universally accepted.

2. Islam's success in moving eastwards with its trading classes did best when their agents advanced under the radar of conflict and confrontation. This feature has been endangered by explicit antagonisms that have linked its future with political causes and grievances that go against their earlier trading experiences. Its special challenge today is whether it can foster economic and professional elites that could engage directly their counterparts with different cultural and religious backgrounds.

3. The contrast in responses between island Japan and continental China since the 19th century carries many lessons for both countries. When Japanese traditional ideas turned maritime and global, the instant success was exhilarating. Now that others are following suit, with the China performance more spectacular than anyone expected, the equilibrium between maritime and continental interests are again threatened. Any attempt to understand China today in future regional structures must consider the enormous tensions that it is experiencing struggling with security traditions and market demands. China cannot be another Japan to be pushed to identifying with the West. Globalized coastal China is deeply at odds with the pull of the rest of the country and China is trying to get the international system to recognize that.

4. India's strength has never been in centralized power and military pursuits, but its trading activities have translated into some of the earliest examples of soft power success in Asia. Its recent emphasis on trading and professional skills and economic projection promise to replicate past experience by standing for loose informal approaches that are more easily acceptable for the regional structures the region needs. Its reluctance to be entangled in hard security matters that bolster the interests of other powers should be understood because it is rooted in its historical experience.

The conclusion I offer cannot but be tentative. Asia may have cropped up in many slogans calling for action and identity, but is in reality still not much more than a conceptual tool for political games and academic analysis. The new trading and professional classes have been inspired by Western business models and are better appreciated today by the power elites of Asia than any time in the past, but they are raw and still lack the political skills that their Western counterparts have acquired over the centuries in more favorable legal and political conditions. Many of them have accepted the global economic
order in ways that are still distant from the state-centered concerns of their national leaders. They thus have a tough task to win confidence from their own people even as they attain great business achievements through the prevailing international order. Their impact on the polity structures within their own countries has not reached a point when they can persuade their leaders to reshape the structures outside to match economic needs. Nevertheless, they are now factors in resurgent hopes in Asia and have the capacity to build older trading norms into the regional economic order to match the demands of the international system.

* In my lecture, I emphasized the context of the East Asian cooperative framework that many countries in the region are contemplating. The text here was provided as notes for further reading, although my presentation did follow its main arguments.
A Vision towards the East Asia Union: Possible or not? —Social Anthropological Aspect—

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I. Introduction.
The idea of [East Asia Community] was politically created in January 2002 when former Prime Minister Koizumi visited different ASEAN countries. Since then the Japanese government formally has been interested in creating the framework of an East Asia Community without a clear understanding of the meaning of “community”, “union”, “Pax” and so on. The framework of ASEAN + Three (China, Korea, Japan) emerged in 1996 initiated by China and officially the first ASEAN + Three leaders summit was held in 1997 in Malaysia. In this topic, the biggest and crucial question is which countries would have the leadership. In August 2005, The Network for East Asian Think-Tanks (NEAT) presented the Policy Recommendations on an East Asia Community which seems to be so abstract without showing the concrete policies in details. Especially, it is not clear about the promoting regional identity in East Asia. To creating such culturally complex regional Union, the matter on indigenous identity should be openly discussed and showed the cultural diversities among these regions. For materializing such an idea, it is important that we have to learn how much we are different each other and besides that we should be brave enough to open [Inter-faith Dialog].

For the past two to three years, there has been an explosion of symposia and conferences about the idea of an [East Asia Union]. The idea is popular with experts in the political and financial arenas, but also within academics. The academics are mainly in political science, economics as well as in Chinese Studies. In this short paper, I am going to analyze anthropologically the cultural diversities in such culturally, ethnically and religiously different countries. To show how and why different are we, the key point would be to understand each other more theoretically. Then we will be able to feel around in search of a method or expedient to accept and understand our differences.
II. Basic differences between EU and EAC formation.
When discussing the idea of East Asia Community, it is often compared with the establishment of NAFTA, MERCOSUR in South America, or even the EU. In order to understand the foundation of the EU in 1992, there is a need to analyze the historical background of Europe.

The cultural foundation of the EU is a combination of Christian irrational spirit and Greek rational spirit. From the 16th century on, the establishment of Christianity in Europe unified the continent’s social values and from the 4th century forward, economical trade demonstrated a foundation of a communal cultural. However, analyzing the idea of EAC (East Asia Community) culturally and socially as well as religiously, there is no history of an analogous unification in the Asian region. Moreover, historically there was no alliance or unification between China and Japan, and also there is nothing shared in the governmental structure until now.

ASEAN was established in 1967, with the common idea of geopolitical and economic benefit as the driving force for achieving unification of the economy within the ASEAN region. In fact, through ASEAN, the economic relationships with other regions and FTA can be formed, if the ASEAN economic group enters into agreements with other local economic groups and FTA. Therefore it is suggested to advance the scheme of East Asian Union with ASEAN as a core. In other words, as a strategy, Japan should minimize its governmental presence leaving the initiative to ASEAN. Instead, Japan should work to strengthen its cultural strategy as an effective governmental approach. Certainly, social and economic development corporations in the region and the economic commitment must be continued. On the other hand, within the East Asian region, to develop common identity, there is a need to establish an institute of advanced studies by experts from these regions to create a Theoretical scheme of East Asia Union which can be utilized to educate administrators, entrepreneurs and civilians over the long term.

There are scientists who emphasize the communal East Asia through the visible culture of Westernized housing, clothing and urbanization. However, invisible culture (e.g., ideas, values, and social activity) which is passed down from generation to generation cannot be changed overnight. This is why we must have an inter faith dialog among these countries to reveal the essence of every faith.

Therefore, the Advanced Institute, mentioned above, should research
the cultural characteristics of a region with the conjunction of local culture. Furthermore, the link between local culture in the region and transnational culture shows that regional culture is a supporting source of transnational culture. Japan should seek to create a cultural strategy which each country in the region can include in their primary school education curriculum. That is to say, the basis of this political philosophy contributes to the research to verify the coexistence of admitting heterogeneity in each other. Grasping the cultural diversity of any particular nation does not mean gaining understanding of some mixture of cultures but rather understanding each of the heterogeneous or similar cultural and social factors that each respective country has. This means, for example, [Recognition and self-confidence] of its own culture which would result in the creation of a national identity of [Ethnic Confidence]. Self-confidence results in mental generosity to which allows other cultures to exist and thrive and which results in the realization of the principal of cultural diversity.

Even though it is an excellent example of the structure of a Regional Union: the EU has several points of friction. With respect to the inclusion of Turkey in the EU, religious issues, which are culturally important social values, are only subject to unofficial anthropological research. This cannot be officially-sanctioned research because of the great sensitivity around the issue of how an Islamic society can integrate into the EU’s shared Christian-based values. The case of the Netherlands is still fresh in our memories where people voted against the new EU constitution in last year’s national poll because there was no inclusive anthropological, ethical, and cultural consideration of each EU nation-members. Anthropologists in the Netherlands unanimously explain that the culture and characteristics of each country was not considered in the creation which resulted in voters being unable to identify with the EU. In addition, some scientists criticizes that the idea of EU as being a group that solely creates benefits for politicians and bureaucrats. However, in fact the EU as a whole is stimulated through the economic activities and people’s movement following from cultural integration. However, in the national level, people’s national identity is getting stronger as well.

As can be seen above, even the EU having a fundamental commonality in culture, this states the importance of research in each culture, religion and social activities. Therefore, there is a pressing need of research in these cultural issues in the idea of East Asian Union. Especially, in history, religion
for Japanese is not individual, but a family religion. For this reason, we can become intolerant in our understating about societies or people with fundamental religious beliefs. The lack of understanding and interest towards religion can lead to a considerable social division.

III. Anthropological aspect of value diversities.
In assessing how social anthropology can contribute to development theory, the clearest example lies in analyzing the relationship between a community and its constituents in the social behavior. Using familiar social anthropology theory, I will analyze and explain the relationship between kinship structures and the ability to form corporate organizations. To analyze non-unilineal kinship systems, a comparative analysis with unilineal form can be used to illustrate simply a cognatic form of kinship system.

The basic kinship structure in most of ASEAN countries is ego-oriented and either bilateral or cognatic kinship form. In contrast, Japan’s traditional kinship structure is ancestor-centered or first son oriented kinship form.

From the point of view of principles of human relationships, I will explain these two kinship structures with reference to Japan’s traditional kinship structure for the latter type and to the Philippines’ kinship structure for the former type which is the typical bilateral kinship society among ASEAN.

The typical kinship structure in the Philippines is a bilateral extended kinship system, which is called as the cognatic form in kinship relations. Therefore, as shown in Chart I, in such a cognatic kinship system, an ego belongs to both the father’s kinship group and the mother’s. Or rather an individual is independent. The number of relationships between the individual and ascendant generations is theoretically explained by the coefficient $2^n$ (where $n$ is the number of generations). However, people's remembrances of ascendant generations are very shallow in practice, usually around two or three generations.

For example, it has been argued, very cogently, that in societies with a lineage structure the continuity of the society as a whole rests in the continuity of the system of lineages, each of which is a “corporation,” the span of which is independent of the individual lives of its individual members. But in societies which do not have unilineal descent groups, what kind of “corporation” takes the place of the lineage in providing the nexus of community between one generation and the next? It will be able found that in many areas like the
Philippines and Sri Lanka, it is locality rather than descent which forms the basis of corporate grouping (1971:6-7).

And in the same way, Murry, Jr. presented his concept of “local kin group:”

...local kin groups are the superfamilial units within all important day-to-day, face to face interaction occurs. Moreover, since the children born to family households belonging to such a local kin group tend at marriage to remain in group, the local kin group persists over time. In this it is somewhat like a unilineal group (1973:29).

In general, most anthropologists view the existence of corporate groups to be negative in a cognatic society like the Philippines up to today. This is particularly true among anthropologists who are known to adhere to the functionalism found in the Radcliff-Brown theory (1952). His theory of “corporate group” is based on the concept of “lineage” developed by Leach and Murry, Jr., which emphasizes the importance of locality rather than descent. S. Muratake and I have asserted the view that “the formation of corporate group” does exist in the Philippines on the analytical basis of “group-oriented kin concept” (1968). Furthermore these two concepts support my theory that corporate group, through kinship, social behavior and the indigenous value system, can strength the solidarity of the group. Another anthropologist who studied ethnic bilateral descent group was Dozier in 1967. In his work, he associated the Kalinga bilateral descent group with rice fields and irrigation in Lubuagan, which has a high population density. Dozier replaced Eggan's concept (1960) of bilateral descent group with quasi-corporate groups which consist of the descendants of certain prominent ancestors, founding fathers and important living individuals. Unlike unilineal organization such as the clan, the bilateral descent group does not strictly prescribe affiliation or membership only through a single parent (1967:20) Furthermore, Dozier concretely discussed the pyramidal structure of the bilateral descent group, at the apex of which is the prominent person. Unlike unilineal organizations, bilateral descent groups do not form continuous discrete units especially with the emergence of new prestigious individuals who become the foci of new bilateral descent groups (1967:20-21)

In contrast, Japan’s kinship system has tended to be patrilineal, dominated
by the first son, and based on the principle of descent line. Actually, the ideal form is the lineal family of three generations traced through the first son. Under this form, the oldest son inherits and succeeds his father or father’s kinship group. This model familial unit is like a clannish group (Dozoku in Japanese) with a main or axial at the center and branch families of siblings at the periphery. Families share the identity of being the descendants of the same founding father or ancestor (Y. Kikuchi, 1991:20). Thus the relationship between father and first-born son as a successor of the axial family is depicted in the Chart II model of kinship structure. All members in a kinship group including branch families are ideally related through one blood or common ancestor. In reality there are cases where the axial family has no suitable or capable successor. In such a case, the head of the axial family can adopt a capable person as successor, most likely from outside his kinship group (branch family). When we observe this phenomenon, the existences of families consisting of those who are living together in the same house and all property, including agricultural land as well as honor, glory, as established by ascendants, are more important than the existence of people individually. This line is not solely based on consanguinity but also emphasizes the sociological “succession line,” i.e., the perpetuation of the family as an entity is more important than biological perpetuation; thus is created a bond to a candidate for succession (Y. Kikuchi, 1991:20). In another words, I would argue that for the continuation of the family line, individual capability is more important and appreciated than a group- oriented concept.

As mentioned above, even if the person designated to carry on the axial family line as a successor is not related consanguinely, a suitably qualified person could be chosen as an adopted son. Compared to this attitude, the bilateral perception of kinship relationships puts a very strong emphasis on blood relationships or consciousness. Therefore there is seldom the possibility of choosing to adopt a child who is not related consanguinely. For the individual in Japan’s axial family (head family), there is a very clearly delineated linear structural relationship between the head of the household (the father) and the successor, as can be seen in Chart II. However, as noted above, that single line does not necessarily mean only blood relationships. Rather, the emphasis is placed upon the sociological line. Second and third sons can separate from the head family to form their own family line as the branch family thus creating vertical relationships modeled on the parent-
child relationship between the main and branch families. This kind of cognate grouping serves to stabilize give-and-take relationships of mutual support among families in the same group like lineage or clan.

In the bilateral kinship societies, the order of authority among siblings depends solely on the birth order with no relation to gender. Rather than assigning authority according to gender, Filipino society treats both sexes equally.

The human relationships surrounding an individual form a cognate group founded on unilateral blood relationships, as shown in Chart II with the people within the solid line around the individual clearly being far more numerous and strongly rooted than in the kind of ego-oriented relatedness seen in Chart I. Thus in Chart II, the number of people in the group around the individual is broadly proportional to the number of generations considered. All these people in the same Dozoku are related not only consanguineously, but also sociologically and all can benefit from the assets built up by ascendants from generation to generation. In another words, they are really protected by the ancestral legacy.

Moreover, this group functions as an autonomous supra-generational community. Therefore the right of membership is innate (inborn) and the individual’s rights and obligations in respect to his group are clear. Therefore, the “family” (Ie in Japanese) plays an important role as a symbol of inheritance from ancestors, thereby strengthening the sense of solidarity and the bond among Dozoku members as well as making the succession line about more than the genetic relations. In other words, Ie is the corporate residential unit in the case of agriculture or other similar enterprises, which means that Ie is a managing body or a social group constructed on the basis of an established frame of residence and often of management organization. The existence of this family is superimposed with reverence for forefathers, leading to the formation of a group based on trust. In another words, branch families are protected under the supervision of an axial family in Dozoku. In that sense, a society with a Japanese-style kinship structure can be called “a society with a high level of mutual trust.”

On the other hand, the bilateral kinship societies cannot enjoy the supra-generational protection afforded in Japan by the assets and family name built up by ascendant generations. An individual in a bilateral society must look for people with whom they can build the mutual support relationships they
need to survive in their own generation. Therefore the first thing individuals must do is to solidify the fluid, rootless family relationships that surround them. These family relationships are called “personal kindred relationships” and are the only human relationships upon which the individual can depend. However, in life within a society, relationships with non-relatives are also necessary for social-beings. For example, the Compadrazgo system (ritual kinship system in the Philippines) of formal family relationships springs from the religious relationship between godparents and godchildren who are baptized into the Catholic Church. The relationships of interdependence between the godparents and the parents of the baptized children supplement social and economical reciprocal relationships, and form just like exclusive club organizations which increase the relationships among “club” members in another bilateral societies. This creates a social mechanism for broadening the network of interdependent relationships which exists around an individual. These quasi-kinship relationships could be called contractual human relationships.

IV. For understanding differences.
To put it another way, in a cognatic society such as most of ASEAN countries, it is quite difficult to have close trust relationships with non-blood relationship without a formal contractual relationship. In general, people in non-kinship relationships are looked on with suspicion. Kinship organizations in cognatic systems lack autonomy as groups and it is difficult for people in kinship relationships to form communities and create rigid membership rights. Therefore I refer to this kind of society as an “uncrystallized society.” Thus in kinship structures in bilateral societies, individuals build on the main axis of their ego-oriented relatedness with kindred as they seek to expand, as far as possible, their quasi-kinship relationships based on contracts or trust in response to an individual’s social ability. Furthermore, they would like to become leaders, if leadership is open to all. Conversely, it would be true to say that this shows a lack of leadership. Then this kind of society can be termed “a society of distrust.”

Human relationships in cognatic societies, as seen in the bilateral kinship societies like the Philippines and Thailand, are built on a foundation of person-to-person relationships working on the principle of interest relationships. Individuals use various methods to create pseudo-relatives, but this is clearly
done in order to create relationships of interdependence. As mentioned above, this kind of personal structural principle leads people in cognatic societies into relationships that value people as they really are and rationalize the theory of interest relationships between two parties. When we consider kinship relationships against the background of this kind of informal human relationship, people are protecting themselves for the future when they give priority to the family relationships. Looking at human relationships at the social level, the emphasis is always placed on face-to-face personal relationships. Personal structural principles, namely interest relationships between two parties, will always be given priority over public structural principles.

When one considers the modernization of bilateral society, it is highly important to have a grasp of this kind of cultural foundation. Based on the above comparison of kinship structures, I believe this comparison shows that the question of whether or not developing societies in developing countries can move forward depends on whether or not their members have the courage to move beyond blood ties in search of further progress. To put it another way, their level of awareness must extend beyond the level of bilateral extended family to reach the levels of community groupings incorporating with non-blood relationships, and beyond to the national level. This progress is one precondition for "modernization." In order to transcend blood relationships and reap the benefits of social dimensions they will have to become people within organizational structures and form a community. If that is to happen, society and the government will have to enable people to receive from others the kind of support and protection they could previously only count on from relatives. Therefore the government and other political and social groups must do more than they did in the past to serve as the protectors of the people. This will demand a greater level of maturity in the bureaucratic system.

Another important point regarding the most of developing countries in ASEAN, the range of options available the individual is large. The notion of individual giving up his life, identity and effort for the group and identifying with other fellow citizens within the national community has not yet been achieved. In other words, it has not yet reached the point where individual feels as one with the group – being loyal to and identifying with, and promoting the common good. It is not exaggeration to claim that an immature legal organization (bureaucratic framework) is to blame for this; the exercises of legal power are not functioning as it should, and an informal social structure
A Vision towards the East Asia Union: Possible or not?

(individual structuralism) takes place instead. To demonstrate the extent of social permissiveness was free from such informal actions as personal and emotional attachments in administering legal and political policy. For this reason, national official organizations are hard put to implement legal order.

In order to success in national building, people in cognatic kinship society must recognize and differentiate between their own indigenous culture based on cultural uniqueness and autonomy versus that of a foreign culture. They should address the concept and promotion of national solidarity; that is to understand the cultural immutability of “the people being themselves” and for that a cultural rediscovery through national studies and citizen’s action is needed.

National-ology(example: the case of the Philippines is called “Philippinology”) has two important functions. First, Filipinos must realize that it is natural for a country to have diverse language and culture – promoting unity under diversity – and the need to prevent cultural domination of one ethnic majority over ethnic minorities. Second, recognize the need to stop nepotism in the favor of greater organization, society and country.

Research for national identity has been done from a political, social linguistic and psychological. Research findings from the viewpoint of political anthropology and religious anthropology are not less important. Then people will have “moral generosity and lenient to other culture”. Such a social behavior at the same time shows the correct awareness of self cultural dignity.

V. The remaining issue: the idea of East Asian Union.

There is a definite difference between China and the composed countries in governmental structure and national security. In other words, it is clear that China’s non-democratic human rights and values are very different in social philosophy. In addition, the lack of a free media and the predominance of the military are also factors that hinder the creation of the Union as like the EU. Therefore, as mentioned above, it is desirable to in the, long-run to proceed thoughtfully in the creation of East Asian Union.

In the future stages of development, a council system must consider China’s restraint policy and include the EU, Russia, the United States, India, Australia, and New Zealand to fulfill the intellectual infrastructure in grasping the creation of the ES Union.

To settle the intellectual infrastructure, there need to choose a competent
person in the ASEAN +9 from each bureaucratic, academic and public sector to begin a preparatory commission where Japan can demonstrate their initiatives. With many people, there would be a difficulty in reaching a consensus on recommendations from the members. The ASEAN+3 must be the core in electing the constitute member.

With the private initiative, the ASEAN (10 countries) can be approved in the academic and private sectors. The broadmindedness among scientists will make things easier than at the government level. Therefore, it would be wise to apply the greatest use of the regional scientists.

In addition, the concept of Community is not clear. Sociologically, Union is desirable. The concept of a Union includes the equality of oneself within a group whereas, the concept of a Community places restrictions on oneself.

Therefore, rather than Community, Union has the capability to allow the inclusion of individual countries. For this reason, it would then be the East Asian Union. Appropriately, I would prefer to apply a new name: “Pax East Asia”. While avoiding political intention, this concept can be used to identify the peaceful, loosely organized, related region.

Chart I. The Genealogical Model of a bilateral Kinship System, multi-ancestor oriented kin concept

- ego centered concept
- gain membership
- distrusted
- gain and loss relationship
- ego blood consciousness
- personal kindred
- relatedness (ritual kinship)
- lack of leadership
- strong contract consciousness
- horizontal consciousness of relatedness
VI. Conclusion and Summary

As it is known, most of ASEAN countries are typically based on cognatic or bilateral kinship system that is ego centered-oriented form. I call such a cognatic kinship system as an “Uncrystallized form” rather than “Loosely structured”. I perceive that such bilateral kinship society mostly lacks the corporate organization in general. In other words, these people find it hard to form social organizations with non-kinsmen. On the other hand, cognatic kinship system such as the Filipino society and the most Latin societies can hardly establish a trust relationship with non-kinsmen, because the personal relationship is based on the strong blood consciousness. In this situation, it is very difficult for them to form the corporate organization with non-kinsmen. Only those who are related through consanguinity can trust each other. On the contrary, it means that they cannot trust non-kinsmen without ritual or fictive kinship relation. I call such a society as “distrust society” in the context of social anthropological analysis.

We cannot live alone because we are social beings. This is the reason why the people of ego-oriented society try to recruit intimate friends whom they are able to trust and protect each other for the social security. For instance, in China, one can find the strong blood consciousness, which has the male line bias. It might be able to call “patrilineal kinship system”. In other words, they have the clan system which is based on the strong consanguineal relationship or blood consciousness. The Chinese society employs the patrilineal clan system,
which is quite similar to the behavior of the strong blood consciousness and ego entered kin concept of the bilateral kinship societies. The Korean society is as well as Chinese one. But in terms of religious faith it is so different among East Asia areas and China, Korea and Japan. In this way we are so different among these countries. But as I mentioned before, such an idea of the regional solidarity is emerged. To understand our differences is quite important for us to recognize cultural diversities. It means that we should not force each other to accept our ideologies.

Then it is badly needed to establish “Advance Institute for Mutual Understanding”. From the outcomes of this joint research, it is possible for us to create the concept of regional solidarity which is based on the idea of the cultural conjunction.
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Harmonizing Strategic Interests and Cross-Cultural Diversity: Requisite for Building an East Asian Community

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In academic and policy communities in our part of the world, sentiments towards the formation of an East Asian community have intensified. This trend has been accelerated by the increase in regional free trade agreements and domestic market liberalization.¹

I am privileged to be invited by the Japan Foundation to participate as a coordinator of the first Japan - East Asia Network of Exchange for Students and Youths (JENESYS) symposium. I have learned much from brilliant young leaders who, over the past days, have had animated discussions on the future of their generation, using a cross-cultural perspective.

It is indeed time to take a hard look at the prospects of an East Asian regional community. It would facilitate our understanding of this issue if we don't dwell too much on the distinctions between “regionalism” and “regionalization”. Simply put, regionalism is the idea of committing a group of countries to the building of a regional community. Regionalization is the process of building such a community.²

The Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) recognizes that community-building is a multi-faceted process. The envisaged ASEAN

Community which is mandated to be achieved eight years from now – by 2015 – is supported by three pillars: the ASEAN Politico-Security Community, the ASEAN Economic Community, and the ASEAN Socio-Cultural Community.

The concept “East Asia” used to pertain to Northeast Asia – mainly Japan, China and Korea. A more recent definition of East Asia covers both Northeast Asia and Southeast Asia. ASEAN has its “ASEAN Plus Three” process which includes the ten Member Countries of ASEAN, plus China, Japan and the Republic of Korea.\(^3\)

In 2005, ASEAN convened in Kuala Lumpur the first East Asian Summit (EAS). It had the participation of the ASEAN Plus Three countries, as well as Australia, New Zealand and India. The addition of these last three counties, which, strictly speaking, are not geographically part of East Asia, was more due to strategic reasons. Most of the ASEAN Member Countries believed that regional integration would be expedited by the inclusion of these three Dialogue Partners of ASEAN, which are known for their dynamic economies.\(^4\)

As we can see in the Appendix of this article, the expanded concept of an East Asian community clearly increases the cultural diversity of the envisaged community. In terms of religions and ideologies, one finds a loose grouping of sixteen countries – three predominantly Muslim (Indonesia, Malaysia, Brunei Darussalam), four predominantly Buddhist (Thailand, Cambodia, Laos and Myanmar), one predominantly Hindu (India), three predominantly Christian (Philippines, Australia and New Zealand), two socialist (Viet Nam and China) and three with a heavy strain of Confucian-Buddhist influence (Singapore, Japan and Republic of Korea).\(^5\)

This reality puts to rest any hope for a so-called set of common East Asian values. But is cultural diversity necessarily an obstacle to regional community-

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building? I believe that such cultural diversity can be harnessed to transform it into an asset that could significantly contribute to regionalization.

Common strategic interests can override cultural diversity. These strategic interests include

- The need to maintain peace and stability in the region;
- The goal of attaining regional economic integration which would bring about free trade, free flow of capital, and free movement of professionals and skilled labor;
- The common fight against transnational crime and terrorism;
- The narrowing of development gaps among participating countries and the reduction of poverty; and
- Effective and close cooperation in functional areas such as combating diseases and drug addiction, protecting the environment, enhancing educational and scientific exchange, and promoting human rights and human security.

It is desirable and possible to harmonize these common strategic imperatives with the demands of cultural diversity, in order to realize an East Asian community. In fact, cultural diversity offers opportunities that would facilitate regional cooperation and integration.

The cultures and belief systems of the sixteen EAS countries are not irreconcilable. They could complement each other and constitute an added value in the pursuit of a regional community.

ASEAN plays the central, leading role in expediting the realization of an East Asian community. It has recently approved the ASEAN Charter which accords legal personality to its declarations and international agreements, institutionalizes the norms and procedures that it has evolved since its founding 40 years ago, and mandates the establishment of mechanisms for dispute settlement.

With the active involvement of young leaders of civil society like you, I have no doubt that our much vaunted cultural diversity will prove to be more an asset than an obstacle to the realization of the envisioned East Asian community.
## APPENDIX:

### COMPARATIVE CHART: CULTURAL AND STRATEGIC MAKE-UP

(Note: An “X” mark means the category is present.)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Countries</th>
<th>Membership Category</th>
<th>Buddhism</th>
<th>Confucianism</th>
<th>Christianity</th>
<th>Hinduism</th>
<th>Islam</th>
<th>Shinto</th>
<th>Socialism</th>
<th>Strategic Priority (Peace, Security)</th>
<th>Strat. Priority (Prosperity)</th>
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<td>X</td>
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<tr>
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<td>Large Minority</td>
<td>Signific. Minority</td>
<td>Majority</td>
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<td>Official Ideol.</td>
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**Dialogue Partners (DP)**

<table>
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<th>Christianity</th>
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<td>Australia</td>
<td>EAS, DP</td>
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DP: Dialogue Partners / EAS: East Asia Summit
In Search of Common Icons for the East Asian Union

Fernando Nakpil ZIALCITA
Professor, Department of Sociology and Anthropology,
Ateneo de Manila University

That “Europe” is a cultural unity is the theme of the euro bank notes issued by the European Union. Thus, 5 euro has a representation of a Roman arch; 10 euro a Romanesque church door with its characteristic series of receding arches decorated with carvings; 20 euro, a traceried pointed arch from a Gothic church; 50 euro, a Renaissance rounded arch topped with a triangular pediment; 100 euro, a theatrical Baroque doorway guarded by caryatids; 200 euro, windows and a hallway, both arched and of metal, that were popular in 19th century pavilions; and finally, 500 euro, a Contemporary high-rise of glass and metal.

If the East Asian Union does become a political and cultural reality and were to issue bank notes for a common currency, could it easily replicate this coherent and encompassing representation? I do not think so. The stages in the development of Imperial Chinese art – Han, the Three Kingdoms, Sui, Tang, the Five Dynasties, Song, Yuan, Ming, and the Qing might resonate among the Japanese, Koreans and Vietnamese, but not in the rest of what is termed “Asia”. ¹

In contrast “Europe” means more than a geographic area. It refers to many states, which despite violent conflicts with each other, share a common heritage. As is well known, this heritage is founded on Hellenic philosophy, Roman jurisprudence and Judaeo-Christianity. Thus while Gothic cathedrals were rising in the 12th, 13th, and 14th centuries, Scholastic philosophy was maturing in universities, such as Paris, which attracted students and teachers

¹ The classic critique of the concepts, “Asia” and “Europe” was made by Arnold Toynbee (1948, vol. 8: 708 ff.) who analyzed universal history using, not individual nation-states, but “civilizations” as the basic units. Note that he did not think either that there was a European civilization. He distinguished between Western civilization (originally Western Christendom) and Eastern Orthodox civilization which included Russia and the Orthodox Christian countries of Eastern Europe.
from all over Western Christendom. Scholasticism was born out of the desire to re-interpret Christian doctrines using Aristotelian categories. To take another example, while the Baroque was in bloom during the 17th century, Galileo, Descartes, and Newton were introducing a new knowledge that became known as “science”. Initially this was inspired by Hellenic and Roman empiricism, but eventually became totally distinct because of its emphasis on mathematical reasoning. Trans-country exchanges like this would be found in particular cultural clusters in Asia. Consider, for instance, the admiration for things Chinese expressed by pre-20th century Japanese, Koreans and Vietnamese. This involved the study and emulation of Chinese texts in art, technology, governance, and in other fields. During the Nara and Heian periods (8th-12th centuries CE), the Japanese court sent missions regularly to China to learn from the Chinese. Down to the 19th century, every year the Vietnamese court would do the same, despite its insistence on political independence (Woodside 1975). But all of these would have been meaningful only to Chinese-influenced societies, not to the rest of Asians, not to Hindus, Theravada Buddhists, or to Moslems.

In the workshop on cultural commonalities that I coordinated for the this conference on the East Asian Union on December 14-15, 2007, the participants from Laos, Vietnam, Cambodia, China, Japan, Malaysia, Singapore, India, Thailand pointed out the difficulties of looking for common icons and values. The more significant commonalities that they singled out were the following: 1) rice, 2) Chinatowns, and 3) Western influence such as Christmas. Mention of Western influence did not surprise me. In my own writings, I have pointed out that English, together with Western science and technology, has created a common discourse for Asians (Zialcita 2005: 247, 252). But what was significant was that, in the workshop, this insight came from them spontaneously rather than from me.

Despite these constraints, it matters still that we look for common icons and values that foster a sense of community in the proposed East Asian Union. But we should be realistic. While historical and cultural research is needed, we should be prepared to admit that we are doing so for pragmatic, that is political and economic, ends. Moreover, we should be careful about making a priori exclusions in the name of an idealized Asia. I say this because I come from a country, the Philippines, that is a priori excluded in many overviews of traditional “Asian” art because it is seen as Westernized and therefore “non-
Asian”. Outside the Islamic areas, stone architecture, monumental sculpture, paintings and books only begin in Philippines in the 1600s—and under Spanish auspices. Hence the invisibility of Philippine achievements in many discussions of “Asian” arts, for these seem “Spanish” or “Spanish American.” But in fact much of what seems “Spanish” in Filipino culture has been either transformed or fused with the indigenous resulting in an original style that even visiting Spanish and Mexican scholars recognize as different from theirs, being Filipino (Zialcita 2005: 190, 234).

It is important to distinguish different ways cultures can relate together.

Ways cultures have related to each other
Cultures do not exist in isolation. They interact with each other within a field, and may thus share commonalities. The field of interaction may be conceived of as taking several forms. This list is not exhaustive.

1. A common linguistic family. The various languages of the world cluster together according to their common ancestry. Thus we can speak of the Sino-Tibetan family of languages, the Austro-Asiatic, the Austronesian, the Tai-Kadai. More than a shared grammar and basic vocabulary is present here. Also shared may be a similar way of interpreting reality if we accept the proposition that language structures one’s view of reality. Thus the presence of prefixes, suffixes, infixes in Austronesian languages suggest that Filipinos, Indonesians, Malays, Upland Taiwanese, Micronesians, and Polynesians may share certain ways of experiencing time and space.

2. Membership in a “civilization” or “civil culture.” As used in American anthropology, especially archaeology, “civilization” is not the same as “culture.” It is rather a particular type of culture which has the following characteristics: 1) Full time division of labor with a distinction between mental and manual labor, 2) the formation of a State whose bureaucracy lays taxes, controls the use of violence, passes and interprets laws, 3) the emergence of true cities where most of the residents are no longer engaged directly in farm activities, even if they own one. A civilization is woven together by commonly shared symbols and aspirations. Such symbols can have a powerful impact on ordinary people. From an outsider’s perspective,

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2 For instance, Fahr Becker (1999) and Dumercay (1987)
3 This definition follows the reflections made on the question of “civilization” by various anthropologists such as Childe (1955), Adams (1966), and Baer (1986) – to cite but a few.
it would seem that, despite a long history of conflict with each other, China, Korea, Japan and Viet-Nam share commonalities. Confucianism, Taoism and Mahayana Buddhism, a calligraphy, houses with upturned roof eaves are symbols found throughout China and Sinicized East Asia. They create the feeling of belonging to a common cultural universe. A shared identity seems to be even stronger in the Islamic world which is linked together by the Koran, spoken and written Arabic, the annual pilgrimage to Mecca, a legal tradition based on Roman law, a philosophy inspired by Aristotle, and an architectural tradition distinguished by the dome, the minaret and arabesques. In between the Sinic and the Islamic worlds would be India and the Indianized states of South and Southeast Asia whose theology, statecraft and art reveal the profound influence of Brahmanism and Theravada Buddhism. Traditionally there have been at least three civilizations in Asia. Experts like Arnold Toynbee (1972: 72), would detect more. But this would take us afield.

3. Adaptation to a similar ecosystem. Every ecosystem requires a particular adaptive response. This response is manifest in the mode of subsistence, food, architecture, settlement patterns, dress. Thus the terrain is mountainous, flatlands are narrow river basins and coastal strips. There is an extensive tropical rain forest cover. Temperatures are high and the air humid. Off the coast of the Malay peninsula is a vast archipelago, with islands of varying sizes, that stretches from Sumatra to Taiwan. Common responses: Houses on stilts built over or beside the water, a diet focusing on fish and shellfish with flavorings derived from them, traditional dress that is light and covers only part of the body.

4. Participation in a “Corridor of cultural exchange.” This last concept is an invention of mine. Cultures may develop commonalities, not because of a shared linguistic ancestry, nor a common civilization-based set of icons and institutions, nor a similar response to a unique ecosystem. They develop certain commonalities because they have interacted with each other over the course of centuries. This interaction may be brought about by trade, by proximity, by the spread of some key ideas. There seems to be certain commonalities that link together Northeast Asia and Southeast Asia because over time a corridor linking the two has developed allowing for exchanges that continue to the present. These exchanges occur even if there is no common civilization (or civil culture) that link the two areas together, no
common language, and no shared ecosystem. The corridor would seem to be the result of geographical proximity and relative ease of communication using the sea lanes. Today, air travel has reduced distances immeasurably.

What exchanges are involved? One of this author’s specializations has been the nexus between architecture and culture. Let us look into the exchanges that have occurred in this corridor in the field of architecture over the course of several millennia down to the present. This could well be the product of a team effort, for aspects of it are controversial among scholars. The observations made here are drawn partly from reading other authors, partly from visits to structures throughout East Asia and Western Europe.

South and Southeast Asian contributions to the Northeast

The house-on-stilts. The house on stilts is found throughout Southeast Asia in multiple variations (Clément-Charpentier 1997; Encarnacion-Tan and Zialcita 1997; Stewart 1997; Warren 1989; Waterson 1997a; Waterson 1997b). This has an ancient ancestry, for the bronze drums of Dong-son in Vietnam, commonly held to have been made in the 5th century BCE, depict such houses. Some of them have saddle-back roofs similar to those found among the Toradja of Celebes today. There are two traditional building traditions in Japan: 1) the pit house and 2) the house on stilts. The former is an older type that appears to have originated in Central Asia and is a response to the severe winters. The other is associated with the cultivation of rice. It may originally have been introduced as a granary, and eventually became a granary-residence. The backside of a bronze mirror in Nara from the middle of the 5th century CE shows four types of houses: 1) the pit hut, 2) the single story hut at ground level, 3) a granary on piles, and 4) a building, possibly a palace, also on piles (Ogawa 1989: 990). Was the house on stilts developed independently in Japan or did it come in, along with the introduction of rice from China? There is disagreement on this. Ota (1966: 26), in his book on Japanese houses, says that “the elevated floor of Japanese architecture probably came from the tree dwelling or pile dwelling of the south seas in prehistoric times” -- but cites no evidence. Ogawa (1997: 990) mentions the debate about the origins of this type of house and merely says “but at present the archaeological facts are not
sufficiently persuasive, the problem remains unresolved.\footnote{Zgusta (1991), in his review of dwelling forms of Northeast and Southeast Asia, proposes going beyond this preoccupation with structural types and exploring in addition the internal division of space. He argues that clear commonalities emerge.}

What is certain is that rice cultivation came in from the mainland and was affecting the southern Japanese archipelago by 400-300 BCE during the Yayoi period (Crawford 2006: 90). Intensive rice cultivation in paddy fields enabled local lords to control large territories. One of these lordships eventually led to the founding of the Yamato state (Ohnuki-Tierney 1993: 30). The house on stilts has played a central role in Japanese consciousness, for the wooden temple at Ise was the shrine of the sun goddess Amaterasu and early became a royal ritual center (Piggott 1997: 143, 145). If we push aside the question of origin, it is clear there is an affinity between the post-Yayoi Japanese and Southeast Asian styles of construction. When I saw photos of the temple at Ise, I, as a Southeast Asian, felt a shock of recognition.

**The pagoda with extended eaves.** A defining feature of countries influenced by Chinese civilization is the roof with flaring eaves. Bézacier (1955) claims that this entered China from the south by sea together with the new religion of Buddhism. The latter brought together with it an Indian construction that became common throughout South and Southeast Asia. This was the pagoda. Though Buddhism did enter China overland via what is now Afghanistan, it entered with more ease from Southeast India by sea as late as the T’ang dynasty of the 8\textsuperscript{th} century (Ibid.: 83-84). In this process of transmission, Northeastern Vietnam, then under the Chinese, played a crucial role in sending Buddhism northwards in the 3\textsuperscript{rd} century AD (Taylor 1983: 80, 83). Bézacier (1955) argues that Vietnam left its architectural stamp by exporting, not only the pagoda, but the upturned eaves as well of its indigenous, pre-Sinic houses.\footnote{Though I read Bézacier avidly at the library of the University of Hawaii back in the 1980s in between coursework on anthropology, I was not able to secure a personal copy to bring back to Manila. I did take notes. But these are in storage because my office transferred buildings recently. I am thus relying on my memory.}

While this position may be controversial, what is certain is that the pagoda developed in India as a huge mound of stone over the remains of a revered holy figure, such as the Buddha. The accompanying illustrations of Fahr-Becker (1999: 107) suggest that the finial that stood over the stupa became increasingly elongated into a multi-story building that could be entered. This
was of stone, eventually of wood. The roofs rose in tiers. In the course of its development it became a structure with several roofs rising in tiers. This became popular in countries where Indian influence entered. Some wooden temples of Nepal, like Bahavani temple at Bhatgaon, dedicated only in 1703, have four-sided five story towers with sloping roofs supported by brackets. Their similarity to Chinese and Japanese pagodas may lie in the fact both “have common prototypes in now lost wooden architectural forms in India” (Rowland 1953: 157). How did these enter China: overland through Central Asia or by sea passing through Vietnam? Setting these questions aside, what is notable is that the pagoda form of construction with its pyramidal roof became popular throughout Island Southeast Asia. Thus the mosques in Java continue to have a pyramidal roof in series. Such likewise is the case with the mosques of Western Mindanao despite objections by Islamists who think the dome to be truer to the spirit of Islam. The pyramidal roof is a survival from the Indianized past of Java. Characteristic of Hindu Bali are the merus. These are wooden towers with roofs sloping on four sides, that taper off in size as they rise in series (Fahr-Becker 1999: 316). Their resemblance to the pagodas of China and Japan is striking.

**Northeast Asian contribution to the Southeast**

Chinese and Japanese architectural styles have particular characteristics which entered different Southeast Asian countries over the past two millenia. In the process they either introduced innovations or else harmonized with existing traditions. These characteristics are the following

A preference for wood. Though the pre-20th century Chinese had mastered stone construction over the course of four millenia, they preferred to use wood extensively even for temples and palaces. They deemed it a “natural” material (Liu 1989: 29-30). Either stone or tamped earth was used as the base for buildings. But the heavy roofwork that supported a ridged roof of ceramic tiles rested on wooden beams and pillars rather than on stone walls. In earlier centuries, wood was abundant in China, they were easier to transport than stone, they could span wider distances than stone, and they were flexible during earthquakes (Liu 1989: 29-30; Fu 2002: 7). An added advantage was that a wooden framework could be adapted to various climatic conditions by varying the height of the structure, the thickness of the walls, and the placement and size of the windows and doors (Fu 2002:7). In addition, adds
Liu (1989:30), “Wood is warm to the eye and touch, making it more acceptable to the occupants.”

In Japan, this feeling for wood's natural condition has been more intense. In China and Korea, temple and palace posts are painted in vermilion and the beams in additional colors such as greens and blues. In Japan, however, the beams and columns are not painted because the architect admired “the fine grain or beautiful texture of the unadorned wood” (Ota 1966: 31). It has also mattered that Japanese cypress (hinoki) was in earlier centuries easily obtainable (Ota 1966: 25). During the Nara Period (710-794), enthusiasm for all things Chinese was at its height. Yet in the domestic rooms of the imperial palace “buildings with cypress bark roofs, wooden floors and unpainted structural members were built from ancient times” (Ibid.: 22). This reverence for the qualities of uncolored wood appears again in other important structures, such as the Katsura Imperial Villa, built centuries later in the 17th century. A second manifestation of this reverence for wood is that, in the houses of even the rich and the titled in Japan, some wooden members are allowed to twist, particularly in the tokonoma, the ceremonial picture recess in the wall where a scroll and the season's flowers are artfully displayed (Yoshida 1955: 89, 100). It is as though the wooden member is still alive and full of energy.

**Interpenetration between outside and inside.** This is another manifestation of a deep feeling for nature. The Chinese courtyard house consists of a series of pavilions whose halls open out into enclosed courtyards. Here are parterres, fish ponds and trees that give “shade, scent and fruit” (Liu 1989: 164). The courtyard is a meaningful space shared by all. Since all the doors and windows of the halls open into courtyard “there was an interpenetration between inside and outside” (Ibid.: 164). In Japan, this interpenetration takes another form. Sliding panels (shoji), consisting of a wooden latticework in checkerboard pattern covered with thick rice paper, intervene between the room and the outside world. These can be pushed in grooves on the floor sill all the way to the wooden posts. These doors or panels between rooms are even removable, thus opening the interior completely to the garden outside. In turn the room extends into the garden through an open balcony that serves as a viewing deck (Yoshida 1955: 72; Ota 1966: 26) Though inspired by the Chinese garden, the Japanese garden has its own features. It replicates on a small, intimate scale, complex relations between mountains, hills and seas using rocks, vegetation and sand. The entire room can, at certain moments,
communicate directly with this micro-cosmos.

**Blending in with the land.** Japanese houses, even in palaces, have a third feature not shared with the Chinese and the Korean. The layout is informal; it is “neither fixed nor rigid” (Yoshida 1955: 72). Chinese and Korean palaces are laid out on a north-south axis, and consist of a symmetrically laid out series of pavilions and courtyards. This is not the case with the villa of Katsura. There the pavilions are laid out asymmetrically and seem to follow the course of the land (Ibid. 32, 33). This harmony with the surrounding environment is reinforced in many Japanese structures by the shape of the roof. Though like its Chinese and Korean counterparts, it is either gabled or hipped, unlike them it has a calmer and more horizontal silhouette because its eaves generously project outwards and only slightly curve upwards (Ota 1966: 25).

Chinese and Japanese influence entered Southeast Asia in historic times in stages.

**Vietnam.** The Han empire expanded southwards in the second century BCE and incorporated what is now northern Vietnam. The indigenous construction, as manifested in the bronze drums of Dong-son and by houses in the Non-Sinicized mountain peoples, centered on the longhouse on piles. But Chinese influence helped marginalize it by popularizing the one-story tile-and-brick house on platforms. The house on posts, according to the art historian Bézacier (1955), survives only in the ward or village house used for communal meetings, the *dinh*. On a more positive note, the Chinese feeling for nature seems to have awakened similar feelings among the Vietnamese. Important pagodas in Vietnam, for instance in Hanoi, are located beside a lake or within a garden. At Hue, the 19th– early 20th century mausoleums of the different Nguyen emperors, like those of Tu Duc and Thieu Tri, have, in addition to tombs, pavilions overlooking ponds and lakes with islands of lotus flowers.

**Philippines.** The indigenous construction, like that of pre-Sinic Vietnam, was a house on stilts. The Spaniards introduced stone construction and initially sought to build in the massive style they were used to in the Peninsula. But a series of severe earthquakes leveled these edifices, forcing them to reevaluate the merits of the indigenous wooden frame construction. What resulted was a fusion of building traditions (Zialcita and Tinio 1980; Zialcita 1998). The heavy roof work rested on thick wooden pillars that swayed with the tremors. Stone was confined to the ground story as a skirt either around or incorporating the wooden pillars. The walls in the upper story were of wood.
Here Chinese and Japanese influences entered. The galleon trade of 1565-1815 attracted prized goods from all over Asia to Manila where they were paid for with the highly valued Mexican silver pesos. The trade attracted Chinese and Japanese artisans as well. During the 19th century, the galleon trade ceased but was replaced by the opening of Philippine ports to foreign ships. This brought in, not only more Chinese, but a second wave of Japanese artisans, among them carpenters from the Fukushima prefecture (Dakudao 1993). My father recounts how, in Manila of the 1920s-1930s, his father admired Japanese carpenters for the completeness of their tools, their neatness and their punctuality.

The imprint of both Chinese and Japanese can be seen in aspects of these houses. Though the roof is of Mediterranean curved tiles, sometimes the roof ridge curves up at both ends. The wooden posts are not always painted and trimmed. They expose their natural grain while snaking upwards from the ground floor to the rooms and roof above. Chinese and Japanese practice may have converged with the native belief that trees were the habitat of spirits and that, long after they had been cut, spirits dwelt in them.6

But it is in the openings above all, where Northeast Asian influence is best seen. Transoms in the wooden partitions between rooms are traceried to allow light and air to circulate. This practice of using tracery in the transom is found in both China and Japan. Sometimes there are Chinese motifs, such as peonies, or Japanese motifs such as a series of intersecting diamonds. When I bring Japanese visitors to 19th and early 20th century Filipino houses, they say they feel at home because of the windows. For traditional Filipino windows are covered, not with push-out panels, as in the rest of Asia, but with latticework panels that slide in grooves on a sill, as in Japan. The latticework is in checkerboard patterns that carry, not thick rice paper (which have been expensive in the islands) but rather panes of flat shells, locally called capiz. The effect, as in Japan and China, is a sunlight that is soft and mellow. As in Japan, the windows slide from post to post allowing the surrounding, natural panorama to enter. Small windows (ventanillas) below these upper windows, bringing in more of the outside. They are protected either with wooden balusters or iron grills and are covered with wooden panels that once again

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6 In some rural areas, one is told not to sleep with the head pointing to the posts, lest the spirits within harm one's head at night.
slide from post to post.

According to a study made by Sato Ken among Japanese laborers who resided in the Philippines in the 1930s, sixty percent preferred using Philippine style windows with shell panes because these, like the shoji, diffused the light (Dakudao 1993). Tolentino (2006) suggests that the shell panes evoked the esthetic ideal of wabi-sabi – a sense of the impermanence of things, a twilight mood that is at the same time a feeling of contentment.

**Thailand.** Though the Chinese have been present in Thailand since the 13th century, it was only in the second half of the 19th century that they migrated in large numbers (Formoso 1997). The indigenous house of the central Thai was heavily influenced by the Chinese courtyard house. There is a central courtyard with four buildings to each side. To enter the house, one passes through a verandah where people sit and meet informally (Bier 1997). Also significant is that all the structural parts are of polished teak that is polished, but not painted (Ibid.)

**The Straits Settlements and Indonesia.** The Chinese had been trading in the towns and cities of what are now Malaysia and Indonesia for centuries long before the Europeans came. But the expansion of commercial plantations in the British Straits Settlements and in the Dutch East Indies during the 19th and early 20th centuries attracted Chinese workers in large numbers. Many stayed on and built houses using plans they were familiar with. Others became wealthy and raised mansions.

The indigenous style of construction in both areas was the house on stilts. While it is true that in Java, during the Madjapahit empire, there was a move away from building on wooden stilts and using bricks instead as load-bearing walls for the towering tile roof, nonetheless in front is a wooden verandah with many columns, called the pendapa, where guests are received and where ceremonial rituals are performed (Prijtomo 1997: 1116; Schoppert and Damais 1998: 35-37). It is interesting that while maintaining continuity with the house on piles, this too fosters a dialogue between interior and exterior world, as in Japan and China. In the other islands, the traditional house on piles persists up to this day.

Chinese elements are visible throughout Malaysia and Singapore in various forms. It may take the form of a serpentine gable wall (Lim 1997), or in gorgeous ceramic friezes with fruits and flowers over the exteriors of stone houses in the Straits Settlements. These are mixed in with rounded
arches, jalousies, Corinthian-like columns and balusters of obvious European inspiration. As in China, mansions in Penang have enclosed courtyards into which surrounding halls open, especially during hot summer months. In Indonesia, Malaysia and Singapore, lace-like traceries pierce the transoms of the inner partitions to allow the air to flow.

**Modernism in East and South Asia.** The latter half of the 20th century in Asia, as in the rest of the world, witnessed a preoccupation with being “modern”. In addition to welcoming contemporary technology, this has meant an informal life-style, an emphasis on minimalism, and the exclusion of unnecessary surface ornamentation. The Japanese esthetic of *shibui* has been a major influence on the development of modernism in the West and has spread all over Asia, via modernism. In turn, this has encouraged contemporary architects to consciously look to Japan and apply lessons learnt to their own particular society.

As pointed above, the traditional Japanese house prefers to reveal its building materials as closely as possible to their natural condition instead of trimming them or masking them with paint. The layout of the rooms is asymmetrical and thus encourages informality. The rooms engage the surrounding world instead of shutting it out. The house as whole seeks to blend in with the environment. This became an inspiration to the young Western architects of the first half of the 20th century who were looking for alternatives to the formulaic and over-decorated houses inherited from the past. A major example is the American architect, Frank Lloyd Wright. He first visited Japan in 1905 and made subsequent visits. In one of them the purpose was to built the Imperial Hotel in Tokyo which became a landmark internationally. He collected Japanese art and liked to embellish his conversation with a Japanese word (Johnson 1990: 233). The influence upon his works such as Taliesin (1911-1914) in Wisconsin and Falling Waters (1936) in Philadelphia seems clear to this observer. He relates the structures to their surrounding environment by emphasizing their horizontal lines and by using local materials. The houses thus seem to emerge naturally from their physical context: a rocky landscape in the first, a woodland with a waterfall in the second. Moreover, the rooms are laid out in such a way that partitions are minimal and space flows easily from one room to the next, just like in a traditional Japanese house.

Asian architects who studied the modern architecture of the West were inevitably introduced to the Japanese tradition. In the process of adapting both
to their own particular context, they re-discovered their own native tradition as well as local materials. An example is Francisco Mañosa, who received the Philippine award of National Artist for Architecture. While at school in Manila, according to his biographer Eric Caruncho (2003: 2), Mañosa discovered Frank Lloyd Wright, “whose organic structures, harmonious environment and fluid spaces clearly owed not a little to Oriental concepts.” In the process of studying both Wright and traditional Japanese architecture, he rediscovered the wisdom of the indigenous tradition and applied its lessons to his own buildings. For instance, he experimented with using bamboo and coconut trunks, though not as support frames, and integrated coconut chips and other local materials into mosaics. Another example is this author’s own uncle, Juan F. Nakpil, also a National Artist for Architecture, and his firm. His son, the late Ariston Nakpil, spoke enthusiastically of their visit to Katsura in the 1960s and urged me, on the eve of my first trip to Japan in 1964, to visit it too. He loved minimalism and the use of local materials. In designs for their architectural firm, he had fine Philippine wood oil-finished to show off its grain, and experimented with using capiz shells, not only for window panes, but as accents on doors. He covered house walls with volcanic tuff, locally called “adobe” to show off their rough gray texture. Moreover, he liked to minimize partitions between rooms so that the space flowed almost unimpeded.

These Philippine cases would most likely have parallels elsewhere in the region. Photos of some of the best contemporary houses built in Malaysia, Singapore, Thailand (Inglis 1997) all manifest the implicit imprint of shibui. Designs are understated and minimalist; materials, especially wood, are shown off close to their pristine state. Geoffrey Bawa, the internationally renowned Sri Lankan architect, takes natural obstacles on a building site, such as a cliff with an overhanging rock, and incorporates these into his design of resorts.

There is one quality though of modern Filipino design which connects it in a special way to Japan. This is the continued use of capiz shells for windows, doors and dividers even in contemporary buildings. The special glow in angular grids evokes a mood of wabi sabi.

**Towards a Shared Value:**
**Harmony with Nature**
A value that can be cultivated to integrate East Asians together is “Harmony
with nature”. This would mean the following:
1. Live at peace with one's self in order to be at peace with others. Our most intimate experience of nature is none other than our bodies which, being physical, are subject to the laws of nature.
2. Be sensitive to the surrounding, exterior environment. Take only what is needed at any given time and foster its vitality.

There are two reasons for proposing this value. One of them is pragmatic. The notion has spread that the ecosystem is in crisis in the world as a whole and in our region in particular. Hence we should work together to heal its wounds. Let us start with our own particular region.

Another reason for advocating the value of harmony with nature is that this value is implicit in the architectural themes described above: a reverence for the grain and texture of cut wood, a minimal separation between indoors and outdoors, and a respect for the contour of the land. Moreover, during the 5th century BCE when the Confucian analects, Buddha's sayings, Greek philosophy and the Hebrew prophecies appeared, Taoism was unique in its reverence for the natural. In the classic attributed to Lao-tzu, *Tao Te Qing* (The way and the power), favorite images are raw silk and uncut wood. According to the commentary of Ursula Le Guin (1997: 26) both are associated with “the characters *su* (simple, plain) and *p’u* (natural honest)”. Thus chapter 19 says:

What works reliably is to know the raw silk,
Hold the uncut wood.
Need little,
Want less.
Forget the rules.
Be untroubled.
Chapter 22 praises twistedness as the sign of a negativity that is more whole and thus positive.
Be broken to be whole.
Twist to be straight.
Be empty to be full.
Wear out to be renewed.
Have little and gain much.
Historically, Taoists pioneered in encouraging people to live simply, flee the cities, and dwell in awe near a waterfall or in the middle of a forest.

Significant too is that landscape painting appeared in China, far ahead of the rest of the world during the period of the Northern Song during the 10th century CE. Under royal patronage, these paintings showed mountains towering over seas and forests where human beings became tiny figures. Landscape painting would appear in Western Europe only during the Renaissance during the 15th and 16th centuries—and initially as mere settings for human characters. Only during the 17th century, for instance in Claude Lorrain's paintings, would the human figures dwindle in size amid the splendor of the countryside. What about the rest of Asia? It would seem that there landscape painting appeared only in the 19th century under Western influence.

But the animist tradition, with its belief that nature is alive with spirits, may have fostered a salutary awe before nature. An example are the beliefs and practices surrounding Mt. Banahaw, a dormant volcano found south of Manila. Cults dwelling on its slopes foster the indigenous, pre-Christian belief that, after death, the spirit of each human being ascends up the mountain to enter into its crater. Therefore, according to them, each one of us, should, while alive, make a pilgrimage from the base of the volcano to its ridge and its crater. The pilgrim pauses and prays at each shrine (puwesto) which have Christian names (Jacob’s well, the cave of Sts. Peter and Paul, the cave of the Merciful Mother). But in fact each shrine is a natural formation: a waterfall where the pilgrim must bathe, a volcanic tunnel through which one must crawl, or a deep cavern. The problem today is how to keep devout Catholics from imposing Catholic statues at each of these wondrous natural formations.

**Discussion**

To sum up, possible icons that could resonate in East Asia, either as a whole or in particular areas would be the following:

1. The house on stilts in its countless variations
2. The wooden pagoda
3. Unpainted, untrimmed wooden members
4. Structures that allow maximum interchange between interiors and the outdoors
5. Translucent windows and doors using either paper or shell panes
6. Informally laid out dwelling places
7. Modern dwellings that are minimalist in conception

A possible value, because of its historical roots, would be “harmony with nature”.

Having said all these, we should nonetheless explore other icons that could link East Asians together. In the workshop on cultural commonalities, an icon all agreed on was the widespread love for rice. I would specify this by noting that rice in this region is not ordinarily cooked in oil or fat, as would be the case in Mediterranean Europe with its risottos and paellas. Animism pervades the region and is often invisible to those who only pay attention to the High Religions of Brahmanism, Buddhism, Islam and Christianity. The reverence for wondrous rock formations or waterfalls cuts across the boundaries of High Religions and could become another shared commonality.

What about Pop culture? Beginning in the 1970s, Japanese pop culture in various forms – robot films, samurai films, anime cartoons, manga comics, Cosplay costume competitions – became popular throughout East Asia. This was followed in the 1990s by the spread of Chinese kung fu films. Today Korean telenovelas are a hit throughout the region. Meanwhile Filipino telenovelas and songs have become popular in Malaysia and Indonesia. Horror movies from Thailand, Malaysia, Korea and Japan are box-office successes in the region. While all these suggest an emerging sense of shared identity, nonetheless I prefer that somebody with expertise in Pop culture analyze these in order to disclose possible icons. For my part, I prefer to highlight popular practices of another type. Building types and life-styles with centuries behind them have a different resonance.

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There will not be an East Asian Community Without Human Solidarity
—An Agenda for Inter- and Intra- Societal Dialogue—

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I. The “Culture” Problematic
It is undeniable that we are living in an age of conflict. Even if we wish it were not so, news about what many have come to accept as seemingly endless violent conflicts has become the norm rather than the exception. Whether the issue is the daily killings in various parts of the Middle East or, closer to home, the mounting unrest in southern Thailand, media consumers are unable to escape from the sad stories of human suffering.

Notable in much of the reporting and so-called professional commentary on the myriad conflicts besetting our world today is the attention paid to “culture” as a relevant, or even ostensibly causal factor. While many remain highly skeptical about attributing such conflicts to culture, it seems nonetheless apparent that in the 21st century, we are witnessing a rise of ethno-nationalism, a resurgence of religious fundamentalism and increasingly vocal assertions of cultural difference by various groups. In my view, these phenomena are best understood as a reaction against the process of economic globalization and the social dislocation and individual alienation caused thereby.

Nevertheless, the concept of culture has now been brought into connection with conflict, indeed, so much so that the notion of “cultural conflict” has become quite prominent. Influential political analysts have written about the inevitability of clashes of culture or civilization. Implicit in their interpretation of culture is the idea that every culture is anchored in a bedrock of irreducible differences that are manifested in distinct languages, histories, religions, traditions and values. According to this view, the inherent differences between different cultures give rise to cleavages separating the people in one culture from another. Furthermore, borrowing a geological metaphor, these cleavages are also said to form the fault lines along which collisions occur. In turn, the analysts from this school argue, these collisions constitute many of the violent
conflicts we see and hear about all around us in the world today.

Opposed to this primordialist understanding of culture is an alternative view of culture, which is proposed in the Constitution of UNESCO. According to this interpretation, conflicts are not born from friction between quasi-physical entities, but are rather the product of idea systems. In other words, wars begin in the minds of people. This view holds that conflicts are caused by “ignorance of each other’s ways and lives,” “denial of the democratic principles of the dignity, equality and mutual respect of men,” and “the propagation … through ignorance and prejudice, of the doctrine of the inequality of men and races.” In line with this conception, the antidote prescribed to conflict and war must be “the wide diffusion of culture, and the education of humanity for justice and liberty and peace.”

In UNESCO’s conception, culture is not a fixed or certain quantity. While all cultures have at their core a body of knowledge and values, they also evolve and grow in a process of organic and creative interchange. Consequently, culture should not be identified exclusively with the pattern it assumes at a given historical moment. Instead, culture, in all its forms, needs to be understood as embodying not only tradition, but also creation. For this reason, culture has a role to play in pre-empting conflict. Indeed, it is not only possible, but also essential, to speak about the role of education and culture in building positive inter-community relations.

II. Identity Politics

The title of our forum includes the words “East Asia Community.” It is important to understand that while East Asia as a region may be so named due to its perceived geographic certainty, the entity we understand to be “East Asia” nevertheless remains a social construct. What “East Asia” means to every individual is influenced by political intentions, economic interests, and historical experiences. As Foucault, among others, has pointed out, the process of collective identity forming is imbued from the outset with multiple dimensions of power. Especially for those living in the region, what “East Asia” means or is has for years been dominated primarily by understandings imposed from above and without. More recently, however, hegemonic understandings of what “East Asia” “is” have been challenged by voices from below and within. What has emerged is the perception of a multiplicity of identities contesting more static notions of official nation state-bound versions
of identity. A question requiring further attention involves the driving forces behind identity formation today. In short, how has globalization reconfigured the forces of state, market and civil society to alter existing spaces for the articulation of identity?

III. Between the “Inter” and the “Intra”
Without attempting to provide a direct answer, the preceding question, it should be noted, highlights the necessity of paying consideration to the dynamic within that which we generally perceive as static. Specifically, many international fora and numerous high level policy dialogues among leaders in this region have emphasized the issue of “inter.” This forum is no exception, calling itself an “inter-cultural, inter-societal, inter-faith dialogue.” It is completely understandable and, in fact, even essential, that we focus our efforts on creating linkages through mutual recognition and common understandings. The realities of the post-9/11 world, rife with the kind of violent conflict mentioned at the beginning of this paper, make it absolutely essential for us to build bridges between ourselves and others. Yet we must also be aware and avoid the danger of creating a kind of self-fulfilling prophecy that denies the diversity within while reinforcing more monolithic understandings of identity. In other words, even as we emphasize the “inter,” we must not take for granted the issue of boundaries and borders. Indeed, by adopting a more nuanced and accurate understanding of borders and boundaries as malleable and even permeable, we can avoid reinforcing the monolithic and take a step in the direction of liberating human diversity. Wherever the “inter” is mentioned, we should also, in parallel, focus efforts on understanding the “intra,” for only by opening our eyes and searching will we be able to see the dynamic and fluid processes of interaction that give rise to the formation of human identities.

IV. Understanding the Diversity of Identity as a Means to Solidarity: Towards an East Asia Community
Recognition of the diversity of human identities, together with acceptance of the fundamental principle that all human beings are equal, is in turn one of the primary prerequisites for the establishment of human solidarity. As Hector Gros Espiell has noted, solidarity is an ethically significant component that is necessarily part of, and enhances human life in society. It refers to
“the relationship subsisting among people who are aware of a community of interest which makes each person feel morally obliged not to harm others and to give them assistance.”

At the practical level, solidarity is absolutely indispensable in order achieve the degree of cooperation required to address the most pressing challenges facing humanity today. One significant step leading in the direction of the achievement of this solidarity would be embodied in a shift of paradigms for cultural exchange.

For quite some time, the dominant paradigm for cultural exchange involved focusing on nation states, conceived as static entities. According to this paradigm, cultural exchange took place primarily between peoples of different states, who necessarily had fundamentally different characteristics. Under the paradigm, often times national histories are used to help strengthening state-centric references. Also bitter historical experiences could be utilized instrumentally. An observer of East-Asian interaction has pointed out that specific type of “victim mentality” has become too much burdensome for meaningful exchange in the contemporary context”. This paradigm was partially supplanted by another, which emphasized economistic competition and highlighted value-based exchange. In this paradigm, cultural exchange was largely a function of different economic endowments and differing levels of economic development. Unlike the first paradigm, this economistic competition paradigm theoretically no longer viewed people in different states as being inherently different. Nevertheless, while all people are elevated to the common rank of *homo economus* in this paradigm, it cannot be denied that differences in economic status effectively translated within the paradigm to difference in worth. Hence people in less developed economies were not treated as equals in cultural exchanges with those in developed economies.

A third paradigm for cultural exchange that rejects the shortcomings of the first two while focusing instead on the commonalities of humankind is the human solidarity paradigm. In this paradigm, individuals or groups engage in cultural exchange based on the accepted principle that all human beings are equal and enjoy an inherent dignity stemming from their humanity. It rests on the recognition of cultural diversity and the diversity of human identities, while positing nonetheless the unity of all humankind.

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1 Fan Li. China, Japan should shuck victim mentality Asia Times. 23 April 2005.
If we are unable to make the transition to understanding cultural exchange in the terms of this third paradigm, we will most likely not be able to solve the world’s major problems. This holds true for global warming, which may prove to be the biggest challenge of our time, but it also applies to the many individual crises and local tragedies comparable to Minamata, Bhopal, or Pak Mun, which will continue to wreak destruction and inflict mass human suffering in locations around the world.

If we fail to achieve human solidarity and to recognize our obligations to others, not only will our East Asian Community be all the poorer, but we will also fall short of liberating ourselves as human beings. The challenge lies in particular with the young people of today, the generation that should be most flexible and adaptable to change. Who will take responsibility for pushing forward the shift to the human solidarity paradigm? Who will answer the call to express solidarity by intervening to alleviate human suffering, both at home and abroad? Who will rise to the challenge of empowering the weak, affirming the diversity of human identities and the universality of humankind?

These are questions that each of us must answer for ourselves.
Inter-faith Dialogue of East Asian Identities: Is It Possible?

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A. Some Contextual and Conceptual Issues
The 21st century has seen the making of East Asia as one of the fastest growing regions. This has unavoidably been due to the stability of Japan’s economy (see, e.g., Park and Vogel, 2007), the rise of China, and the ability of South Korea and Thailand to overcome the impacts of the Asian Crises of 1997 (Freedman, 2005). And this tendency seems to stay, amongst others due to: the ability of Indonesia to refocus its energy from fighting terrorism, overcoming the legacy of the New Order regime and economic recovery to economic development.

I have also noticed systematic attempts to develop East Asia in this highly competitive era. Firstly: As European Union and other regional entities alike, East Asian countries have been actively developing mechanism to implement neoliberal criteria of best practice. Most governments in the region have adopted – in varying degrees – new role of being regulator. Trade and finance liberation are taking place. This has been accompanied with the adoption of the significance of certification and accreditation. Secondly: There has been growing awareness among leaders of ASEAN countries to pursue global cooperation beyond the framework of ASEAN plus 3, such as, to fight terrorism and pursuing good governance.

However, there are obstacles that East Asian countries have to face. Revitalisation of the politics of religious identity in Indonesia remains observable and potentially be a source of regional instability. We are perhaps witnessing the emergence of neo radical groups, which is local and regional in character. And new mechanism is required to solve this problem of regional extremism and intolerance. In addition, both South- and North Korea still have to work harder for reunification. Secondly: political relations between Taiwan and People’s Republic of China are full of ups and downs. Thirdly: Myanmar is still far from being in tune with the 21st century political atmosphere.

Perhaps there is some truth in the claim that globalisation is ‘a powerful
force that has no driver and has no direction'. And the new ideology of governance, cooperation and partnership is on its way of becoming a mechanism to understand what globalisation is and, at the same time, to make globalisation useful for each country and nation in the 21st century.

Neoliberalism/globalisation does provide countries all over the world with opportunities for achieving better life. And yet it is a challenge -- unprecedented great challenge. According to globalisation literature, we have been witnessing how neoliberalism/globalisation has strengthened social, economic and cultural injustice in the past two decades or so. Many scholars, politicians and common people alike have even been thinking of the the negative impact of globalisation on the nation-state: So powerful neoliberalism/globalisation has been that the continuity of the nation-state is threatened (Stiglitz, 1999; Therbon, 2000).

Amongst the arenas, upon which the creation of East Asian identities is to be enacted, concerns with inter-faith relations.

One does not have to be expert on religions to know that East Asia has been fertile ground for the development of religions, such as, Islam, Christianity, Catholicism, Hinduism, Buddhism, Taoism, and Laoism. And due to the openness of the societies in East Asia for centuries, each of the religions is far from being monolithic -- due to the adaptation of the religions in local context. Furthermore, the influence of Western life style on inter-faith relations has also been facts of everyday life. As social phenomenon, then, no single religion is mutually exclusive!

Interestingly, development of religions in East Asia has been characterised by balance/imbalance between autonomy and interdependence. It appears to me that people in East Asia do realise that absolute autonomy and absolute interdependence upsets their societies. Absolute autonomy upsets social interdependence, absolute interdependence prohibit autonomy. Dynamic balance between the two social forces to Asians, then, is important.

However, creating the balance is easier to say than done – particularly in the 21st century. There are issues to handle, such as, exclusivism, inclusivism, and pluralism (Clarke, 1997).

It is within this context promoting inter-faith dialogue finds its purpose.

With the above in mind, I have been developing conceptual backbones for the making of “the 21st century as era of East Asia”. The concepts concern with:
(1) The salience of multi focal network;
(2) Strategic alliances among governments, corporations, civil society organizations and universities;
(3) Consensus building through continuous dialogue and consultancy; and
(4) Reengineering the spiritual capital of “Looking back, creating the future”.
To be more specific, I would like to invite us to think of inter-faith dialogue as cooperative between people of different religious convictions at various levels – from individual up to societal. The main objective of the dialogue is to form a common ground upon which differences can be managed and/or resolved. The common ground itself is not intended to create syncretism or alternative religion, but rather on developing, peace culture, mutual understanding and tolerance.

**The need for multi focal network in creating East Asian identities**
With their role in the 21st century as regulator, governments can no longer be the only representative in advancing global network. Those whose main concern is on promoting the interests of East Asian youths, accordingly, are expected to be creative in defining specific problems and proposing solutions. Furthermore, they need to manage their concerns to be compatible with the concerns of other groups. In short, East Asian network comprises of diverse focal points to the extent that having a single monolithic network of East Asian identities seems to be unrealistic in the present global era.

I have noticed that multi focal network is common in the present global era. One success story concerns with women's Rights movements. There is no single body to design, implement and/or supervise the movements. Each organisation has its own relative autonomy vis-à-vis other organisations. Their visions, missions, scope and targets of activities are different one from the other. Andrews (2002) has also found similar pattern in the civil rights movement.

In so far as inter-faith dialogue is concerned, various multi focal networks have been in existence in different part of East Asia long before the 9/11 incidence. To be more specific, the networks exist in the countries where politicization of religion has taken place. In Indonesia, for instance, several NGOs have been formed to handle the sensitive issue by activists of different religious convictions. Their specific scope of activities and implementation strategies are different one from the other. The message, however, is the same:
spreading the word of peace and mutual understanding between different religious groups as a way to prevent communal conflicts. It is only on special occasions Madya and other organizations on inter-faith dialogue sit together as a forum.

**Strategic alliance: governments, corporations, CSOs, and universities**

As the four major actors of the 21st century are strategic in the creation of East Asian common identities, collaboration among them are crucial. This is to ensure sustainable development of East Asian network.

Each of them has developed its own field of specialisation, and the 21st century has seen the attempts to refashion their roles and functions in society. It is unrealistic, for instance, for corporations either to take over the mandate and functions of the government or to maintain short-term profit oriented management. What the corporations – especially big business and trans-national corporations – are doing is to cultivate business ethics of social engagement, such as through Corporate Social Responsibility mechanism. At present, it is also unaccountable for university managers and academic intellectuals alike to retain their credo of universities being the sole knowledge producer. Gibbons et al (1994) has observed the emergence of other knowledge production sites around the end of the 20th century -- think-tanks, R&D division, NGOs, and other flexible small scale sites – to complement universities. What the universities have been doing in the 21st century: to update both their vision and mission in propagating scientific knowledge and their organisational capability under the new trend of globalisation.

Being different from corporations and universities, CSOs are relatively well-prepared for taking the roles as “intermediary structures” between the grass roots and policy makers. Being with the grass-roots, they are also familiar with the daily life of men in the street – sensitive towards their problems and capabilities – and have developed skills in proposing short-term oriented solutions to social problems. And globalisation has helped CSOs to expand their global network. Governments have also their share. They are no longer the dominant party in advancing order and progress. And yet, globalisation does not make them disappeared. Globalisation has only assigned new roles, that is, to be regulator.

Within this context, the 4 actors do aware about the problems of inter-faith
relations in East Asia. What they need is for a where they have the opportunity to cultivate their commitments to form strategic alliance in promoting East Asian common identities through inter-faith dialogues. As the creation of wealth would be meaningless without reference to social development, not only is knowledge – practical and agenda setting – required, the existence of accountable and transparent regulating body is inevitable.

Consensus building through continuous dialogue and consultancy.

Nonaka and Takeuci (1995) argue that Western style of knowledge production is contextual, with its distinctive philosophical roots and quality assurance mechanism. Western style emphasises the production of explicit knowledge, its quality is subject to scientific examination. They, then, have taken this into research on Japanese style of knowledge production. Their main findings: Japanese-ness has been used in producing knowledge – to create Western/ scientific knowledge.

Working on different topics, Gibbons et al (1994) have observed the emergence of a new mode of knowledge production in the late 20th century: User oriented knowledge is produced within social relations among a group of producers.

Both Nonaka and Takeuci (1995) dan Gibbons et al (1994) have provided us with information regarding the importance of dialogue and consultancy between stake holders of knowledge production. They believe that knowledge is a consensus building process, with dialogue and consultancy as main mechanism. And consensus itself is a continuous process.

With the above in mind, as no single actor can create East Asian common identities single-handedly, continuous dialogue and consultancy are necessary. As a matter of fact, the process itself might never stops – in so far as the commitment to create the identities is there. When a consensus is achieved, new problems arise. This requires higher level of and more detailed consensus.
The use of “Looking back, creating the future” as spiritual capital.
As people of East Asia have been in association with one another for centuries, shared identities actually has been built up. Most, however, has experiencing sedimentation process and turned into tacit knowledge. What we need in the 21st century is to reinvent the shared identities and transform them into explicit knowledge relevant to solve the problems of to the 21st century.

With the above concepts in mind, I was thinking of creating East Asian identities, which are plastic and unique in character and yet in accordance with the global atmosphere of the 21st century.

I do aware that each of us has different backgrounds. This is positive. We could exchange our experiences and views for the creation of East Asian identities. William Issac Thomas, a sociologist, claims: “if men define situations as real, they are real in their consequences”. Commitment, I sincerely believe, is the key. This key is as important as using our local wisdom of valuing consultancy and dialogue for creating the identities.

BIBLIOGRAPHY


Report on the Public Symposium

Presentations from the 3 International Symposium discussions along with minutes from a related open discussion between the participants and audience members are recorded here. Through lectures on and observations in Japan, the 29 participants learned about the purpose of the Forum and about each other. Divided into the following three groups, each led by a coordinator, the members conducted intensive debates for two days, December 14 and 15, 2007.

Group A: Inter-cultural Dialogue / Dr. Fernando N. Zialcita
Group B: Inter-societal Dialogue / Dr. Surichai Wun’Gaeo
Group C: Inter-faith Dialogue / Dr. Hanneman Samuel

For details on intensive discussions, refer to page 201.
The inter-cultural group discussed three broad topics: 1) Commonalities 2) Differences and 3) Ways to promote regional integration. Chalongkwan Tavarayuth from Thailand represented eight other members.

Commonalities highlighted were: 1) A diet centering on rice. 2) Living with nature. 3) The influence of colonization. 4) The spread of Chinese culture and the proliferation of Chinatowns. 4) Popular culture (Bruce Lee, manga). 5) Westernization (Christmas celebrations).

Differences cited were the following. 1) Diverse population – even age differences matter. 2) Wide differences within each country, such as a multiplicity of languages. 3) Notions of gender roles: of relations between men and women, or the status trans-genders. 4) Women’s rights – how much space do women leaders have in particular countries.

Several ways to promote integration were discussed. 1) Develop overall and specific principles for integration, like encouraging neighboring countries with similar cultures to integrate. Examples are Malaysia, Brunei and Indonesia. This will eventually lead to a larger and more solid integration of the whole region. 2) Promote different types of activities, like people-to-people contacts, university-to-university linkage, and farmer-to-farmer study tours. 3) Share cultural works among East Asian countries, such as organizing a Ramayana festival or collecting, translating and sharing Asian literature, whether classical or children's stories. 4) Promote Asian studies in schools. 5) Share knowledge about ideal practices that each country has on particular issues, especially at the grassroots level. 6) Fostering socio-cultural development at the grassroots level so that average citizens benefit. 7) Support conservation of cultural heritage, whether tangible or intangible. 8) Promote national cultures across borders.
Q and A

(1)

**Jacqueline Ann Surin:** I have a comment to make with regard to the point that female leaders in power have male characteristics, such as strength and resilience. That for me is very problematic, because these characteristics are not necessarily fixed to the male qualities.

**Dr. Fernando Zialcita:** This came up because in the workshop, the phenomenal rise of female leaders was raised. But I said this seemed to me problematic. Presidents Gloria Macapagal Arroyo and Corazon Aquino of the Philippines acquired their positions because they were either a daughter or widow of former Presidents. Gloria Arroyo tries hard to project a macho image, but this is wrong. Compassion is also a source of strength.

**Chalongkwan Tavarayuth:** Taking an exam, we get questions, like “Had it not been for male leaders, do you feel that wars could have been avoided?” To be socially accepted in the political arena, you have to be bold and strong. I can never expect any female leaders to be so calm and peaceful. It is only in beauty pageants. Female leaders are heavily influenced by the society they live in, which tells them to be bold. If they were to emphasize the “soft” side of women, they would not make it.

**Jhimli Basak:** I do agree with Jacqueline Ann Surin and differ from the other two opinions. Speaking of the third and fourth genders, our notions of masculinity and femininity must be questioned. So, we can no longer talk about compassion being a female characteristic.

**Dr. Fernando Zialcita:** What happens sometimes is that women leaders push aside their compassionate side in order to act tough. Hillary Clinton, who voted for the war in Iraq, is a good example.

**Shikha Makan:** We should not be confused. For instance, male dancers need to be feminine. Different professions require different traits. So, it is the demand of the political profession that leaders have to be more assertive. It is just one part of their individual characteristics.
(2)

**Audience:** Are there any common characteristics that you can find among Asian women leaders, vis-à-vis those from the West?

**Dr. Fernando Zialcita:** I feel uneasy about the ways that Philippine female leaders act.

**Jhimli Basak:** The reality is that women have to prove themselves ten times more than men. Other than the three female presenters today, those who are in greater authority are all men. I would like to ask, how many ASEAN leaders today, holding a position of authority, are women?

**Azmyl Yunor:** I am speaking as a man. Coming from a matrilineal society, Asian women are of great significance. The issue here is about strength, family duties and other complex things. Women have always played important roles in our society. Yet, in other patriarchal societies, they focus more on gender differences.

**Shikha Makan:** If we are trying to look at leadership around the gender constructs, then we are defeating our whole purpose of deconstructing them. I don't know why only female leaders become an issue, because nobody questions the existence of male leaders. Of course, we have to be careful about how women leaders act, but looking at them through their gender is not a priority.

(3)

**Audience:** I have a question on the university-to-university linkage that you mentioned. My research is on internationalizing higher education, with a focus on the national University of Vietnam in Hanoi. I have found that the leaders working to internationalize higher education in the university did not have any area of priority, but they do not plan to put Asia before other regions. Do you have any strategies to prioritize Asia in higher education?

**Dr. Fernando Zialcita:** One reason students may not be drawn to studying Asia is related to job opportunities. Students ask what they gain from taking a course in Asian Studies. What job opportunities does it open for them? Asian leaders have to think about this when they talk about integration.
Chalongkwan Tavarayuth: I myself had a lot of international exposure at the university I attended, but it is a rare case. There are hundreds of ASEAN meetings, but they seldom talk about education. It is more important to build interpersonal linkages among universities, like inter-university student unions. We must discuss how we can involve more people.
This eleven member inter-societal group was represented by Sarah Jane S. Raymundo. In the hopes that her summary would give justice to their fruitful discussions, she included collective endeavors and a testimony to recognize genuine similarities and differences. Inter-societal dialogue cannot be reduced to the convenient procedures of cultural exchange and almost vulgar strategies of cultural relativism. An East Asian community must form a new type of knowledge, linked to collective social subjects, the participants.

Their discussions concluded the following three themes: reflexive, symptomatic and programmatic approaches. These approaches indicate why the countries in East Asia need a regional cooperation body. The reflexive approach is related to the investigation of the social contexts of their ideas, while identifying each participant’s clear needs or problematique. Shared common concerns and geopolitical proximity make it inevitable for these East Asian countries to work together.

Moreover, in the symptomatic approach, an East Asian community has to differentiate itself from neo-liberalism and globalization, which have already been enforcing their ideologies on the peoples of the region. Markets and nation-states are both important parts of our life, but social forces are also essential. Trans-border identities, or the ability to associate oneself to others in the East Asian region, can contribute to the new awakening of social movements.

Beyond this, the programmatic approach contains three basic and unifying principles: solidarity based on the recognition of difference; critical engagement with globalization; and unifying issues. A human dimension of globalization includes social consequences of economic globalization, focus on social actors, and the structure of inequality. Integration should be based on social justice, such as the defense of human rights, and solidarity is to be based on historical perspective, anthropological sensitivity and critical insight. The power of inspiration can also be a basis for solidarity. Finally, we have to open our hearts and minds to situations across the region, new possibilities and new ways of dealing with citizenship.
Q and A

(1)

**Audience:** I work for an NGO in Japan, which dedicates itself to international development cooperation projects in Asia and Africa. Do you really see the value of a regional organization or cooperation, as opposed to a global one? What kind of meanings or roles could this regional cooperation have?

**Sarah Jane S. Raymundo:** We focused mainly on the human dimension of globalization, trying to create the atmosphere of equality. No concrete measures came up during our discussions, but we thought it was important for different nations to open up to others to share their best practices as well as problems. A regional institution to tackle problems of the marginalized population is a good place to start.

(2)

**Audience:** I am a graduate student here at Waseda University. You have been talking about transnational integration, referring to “nations” as nation-states. How about transnational integration for ethnicities? In Asia, many ethnicities live under centralized state control. How can you implement integration policies, regardless of ethnicities?

**Sarah Jane S. Raymundo:** I am glad that you raised the point. In our group, we were more focused on human empowerment rather than governmental policies. It might not be possible to give each ethnic group an absolute autonomy. Nevertheless, another type of regional integration, let alone technocrats or bureaucrats, might be possible. This will require different understandings of what “integration” means.

(3)

**Audience:** I am a visiting scholar at Keio University from the Philippines. Regarding the current presentation, I think the ideas of solidarity and social justice, human rights, empowerment are all very good though challenging. These are common aspirations of people in Asia. In reality, however, Asia contains some totalitarian regimes, like Myanmar, and other democratic countries. Have your discussions mentioned the discourse of democratization and promotion of human rights in the region?
Sarah Jane S. Raymundo: An institution of democracy is beyond our scope at this point. We wanted to focus more on forging solidarity of people outside the governments, and of those who are neglected or marginalized. Powerful international organizations, such as the IMF and World Bank, were not part of our discussions.

Dr. Surichai Wun’Gaeo: When talking about solidarity, it is not about power dynamics. Certainly, the world is full of power structure problems, but our notion of solidarity is different. Solidarity could become a world power or new unifying principle among people who live with differences. We want to start from the people-to-people level. Moreover, we need to strengthen the public sphere in the region, which needs to be seen and heard widely.

Dr. Wilfrido Villacorta: Civil society can indeed play a vital role. In one of the discussion groups, some participants mentioned that they do not have significant roles in decision-making at home and may just be engaged in futile discussions. But I told them, they are never sure about their future. Because of their intelligence and talents, they might become a member of their Parliament or be a highly placed and influential member of society.

Audience: I am a professor at De La Salle University, Manila, and a Japan Foundation fellow. Benedict Anderson coined the term, “imagined communities,” referring to contemporary nation-states. We are now in the process of imagining an East Asian community. Were you able to imagine it, and how did it look?

Sarah Jane S. Raymundo: Our discussion focused on the conditions and possibilities of creating such a community, not how it would actually look. We hope to anchor the community on the mentioned principles. Trying to envision an East Asian community, it is important that the community is based on an equal partnership among participating countries, respectable life, and opportunities for all to realize their potentials.

Patricia Giannotto: Up until now, we have been debating philosophical principles and values. They are important, but our inter-societal group also talked about more practical solutions and suggestions. Human rights are quite
important, but might not be the best topic if we want to start cooperating with each other right away. Issues concerning young people, education, and the maintenance of culture can be the first steps for opening up to others and building trust with one another.

**Jacqueline Ann Surin:** Listening to the raised questions, it sounds as if it is up to us to imagine something that does not exist. However, communities of people who cooperate within the East Asian region in fact already exist. They might not be in the form of a monolithic entity, but we do have networks of artists, leadership programs, press alliances, etc. They already flourish with or without government interventions. I do not really see the point of this endless academic exercise where we are imagining something gigantic.

**Dr. Yasushi Kikuchi:** Relating to solidarity, my idea is that we have to know about ourselves, or our national identities, first. For this purpose, we have to create our “nation-ology.” Then we will have cultural confidence among ourselves, and respect and accept others.
Executive of the Harmony Centre, Tengku Suhailah Binte Tengku Kamarudin, was the presenter from this inter-faith group. One of the main rationales for interfaith dialogue is the clear need for a common and safe space to talk about religious issues. Instead of name-calling, one has to start sharing common values, love, social justice, and respect with others. Through interfaith dialogue, people also have to heal the wounds of our past conflicts. The issues and challenges people face today are: politicization of religion; resistance to engagement; marginalization of minorities; lack of dialogue skills; and roles of the media and arts.

Regarding a path forward, people need to establish a forum where people can have interfaith dialogue. Creation of a mechanism for developing skills in interfaith dialogue, reconciliation, and awareness of existing models are of great significance.

Lastly, in the example of the Harmony Centre in Singapore, the three thrusts of interfaith dialogue come into attention. They are: learning to build bridges, engaging to deepen understanding, and training to build capacity. We need to recognize and understand the differences that exist among us. That is why we also need to learn and respect them. In Tengku Suhailah Binte Tengku Kamarudin’s exact words, “we need to seek peace, harmony and security to work together as a community of East Asians.”

Q and A

(1)

Dr. Hanneman Samuel: One way or another, we have all been actors and observers of interfaith dialogue. We would like you to share your opinions.

Poempida Hidayatulloh: I have a question regarding “tolerance.” Taking tolerance one step further to the trust level is quite difficult from my experience. There are elements in every faith that are never compromised. This sometimes leads to extremism. Do you not need to talk about the codes of tolerance before discussing trust building?
**Tengku Suhailah Binte Tengku Kamarudin:** I would not consider tolerance at all, because it is superficial. In dialogues, instead of tolerating, you can agree to disagree. Not everything is agreeable, of course, but we do not have to compromise our religion, either. Tolerance is a very vague term. Letting it be and keeping it quiet is not good enough.

**Rehanna M. Y. Ali:** It is an important subject that you raise. Interfaith dialogue is not universalizing faith, but establishing a platform. In spite of the fact that we disagree, we still talk to each other. Tolerance is the basic minimum. You need tolerance just to function in the pluralistic society. Interfaith is not a problem, but we need to see it as an asset. Interfaith dialogue is a mechanism to extract the benefits of pluralism for our society.

**Jacqueline Ann Surin:** From my experience in Malaysia, tolerance is not sufficient enough for interfaith dialogue. The authorities tolerate minorities until they demand equal rights and opportunities. Mutual respect is more adequate.

**Dr. Hanneman Samuel:** The code of conduct is very important, yet who defines them is more important. In fact, our conduct is based on trust. It already exists among us.

**Patricia Giannotto:** The “war on terror” has placed a strain on religious tolerance and trust. In Sydney, some people from different religious groups support each other publicly, showing their goodwill. For example, in preparation for Pope Benedict XVI’s visit to Australia in 2008, Muslim and Jewish families have offered to accommodate Christian visitors from all over the globe. Positive actions like this build trust and therefore should be promoted.

**Jhimli Basak:** The student exchange program between Israel and Palestine is one example that shows the possibility of building trust. The trust that they can build through their experience lasts for a lifetime.

**Azmyl Yunor:** It is not only minorities who are discriminated, but some majority as well. There is a strong underlining politicization of religion and constant institutionalization of religion in Malaysia. We do not have a choice of being Muslim. People are always policed by the authorities. Commercialization, despite the fact that the products they sell are not healthy, is allowed. However, there is no ground for musicians of different background, for example, to interact. Culture, society and religion are all inter-connected, so we cannot separate them.
Gutierrez M. Mangansakan II: I am from Mindanao, the Philippines. Minoritization of the Muslims there is a problem. Today, new Christian settlers have taken over the majority of lands of Mindanao. It is a systematic policy of the government that makes use of religion to fund violence. Nonetheless, I have seen a trust building process taking place in Mindanao, where different religious leaders have started speaking up to discuss religious issues in public.

Audience: What is your opinion on the acceptable extent of politicization of religion?

Tengku Suhailah Binte Tengku Kamarudin: I am being idealistic, but a country should practice fairness for every religion. Secularism is important.

Audience: There are only two states in the world that are without a state religion: namely Russia and France. In either case, the absence of a state religion did not solve their religious problems at all.

Tengku Suhailah Binte Tengku Kamarudin: Singapore practices secularism.

Dr. Hanneman Samuel: Many countries in East Asia, including Indonesia, do not have a state religion, as is the case with many other nations around the world. I have done a research on theocracy, and interviewed a number of leaders. They had no idea of a model of theocracy.

Jacqueline Ann Surin: Declaring one's country an Islamic state, for instance, is problematic. If the government is not secular, then it is governed by God's laws, which in turn become unquestionable. Which results in democracy being undermined.

Rehanna M. Y. Ali: Extremism is a problem, but even democracy is a reflection of how the country is operated by those in power. Therefore, dogmatism seems to be more of a problem.

Jhimli Basak: We have been arguing too much about Islam, but Hinduism can equally be fanatic. It is not religion as a whole that is a problem; instead, it is individual wrong-doers.


General Discussion

Dr. Wang Gungwu:
I really appreciate the views of the speakers and those in the audience who have asked important questions. Many of them have given concrete examples of some of the problems that the East Asian region faces. In particular, they have pointed to the gap between rhetoric and high ideals that avoid facing up to real difficulties and the practical measures the region needs for people to solve basic problems. In trying to follow through some of the ideals expressed, it is easy to become impatient with gradual progress and call for drastic actions to achieve quick results.

Modern history has shown that any kind of extremism can have very dangerous consequences. In the discussion about the inadequacy of mere tolerance among peoples of different cultural backgrounds, there could have been more attention paid to its opposite, intolerance. As I see it, even though tolerance may not be enough, intolerance is totally unacceptable. We have seen that even positive actions could attract negative reactions and counter-actions. Interactions that are based on dialogue, on the other hand, invite reciprocity. Some of the examples suggest that there are interacting groups that are exceptionally tolerant and open, but, in many societies, that simply is not the case. We really need to be reminded that the ability to agree to disagree is a minimum requirement when people are trying to have a dialogue, and that dialogue is a positive thing.

However, most modern societies are complex and the process of social integration has to be gradual. For example, efforts to encourage the formation of an East Asian community have to be predicated on the principle that it would take time. These efforts have to be planned well beforehand to progress phase by phase. With sensitive matters, attempts to do things too quickly invite counter actions. I recognize that the temptation to take revolutionary action to enable things to happen quickly surfaces whenever people become dissatisfied with the slow pace of progress. Indeed, those who started revolutions are known to have been idealistic and brave, people who were willing to sacrifice their lives for great causes whose time they believed had come. Yet, we also know how violent revolutions have ended in counter-violence where not many people benefited in the end. There are enough historical examples of hasty efforts to solve problems ending up with disastrous results. It would seem that,
unless absolutely unavoidable because conditions have become completely intolerable, it is better to plan things patiently, logically and rationally for the goals and visions you want. In the long run, that works better.

Q and A

(1) **Chalongkwan Tavarayuth:** Regarding Dr. Wang Gungwu’s speech from this morning, there were some parts that I felt questionable. The latter part of his speech was encouraging, but I have a question about the first half where he argued (1) that people in the maritime area from Southeast to East Asia started trade and had security; and (2) that before the arrival of the Westerners, there was no major war in East Asia. I think it does not necessarily mean that these people were in peace at that time. Exploitation and inequality still existed in the mentioned areas. Some countries possessed a lot of resources and power, and others without. Like Thailand used to pay tributes to Imperial China, inequality always existed in the region. Even now, Iraq and Afghanistan are not the only ones with problems. Inequality and exploitation also exist in democratic countries.

(2) **Hoang Huu Anh:** I have a question for Dr. Wilfrido Villacorta. In your presentation, you mentioned the events of 9/11, and that Samuel P. Huntington’s “The Clash of Civilizations” has gained popularity since then. Yet, today we still see the “clash of development.” In the East Asian region, newly developing countries like China have economic tensions with the United States and the EU. Where do you think this idea of the “clash of development” falls into the picture of an East Asian community? What do you feel the “ASEAN plus 10” countries can do to accommodate this problem?

**Dr. Wilfrido Villacorta:** The clash of development is not an issue. An East Asian community must include both developing and developed countries. There are economic blocs in North America, Europe, South America and Africa and we need our own. ASEAN Plus Six has tremendous potential.

(3) **Fan Li:** I would like to reflect on two points. Firstly, when I was a student back
in 1999, “East Asia” referred to China, Korea and Japan. Nonetheless, today we are sitting here with people from so many other countries in “East Asia.” More often than not, the notion of integration is about political propaganda and economic merits. I realize, from the discussions I had with others, how little I know about my own neighbors, such as Brunei, Laos, and so forth. Secondly, finding out our differences itself is a process of integration. There are a number of differences among us. Are we actually listening to each other? Are we using terms, such as extreme, human rights, democracy, etc, knowing what they actually mean? I hope this is not the end, and that we can start exploring more commonalities and differences among each other.

Dr. Surichai Wun’Gaeo: I am struck by Fan Li’s comments. I believe her comments are not of the Chinese, but of a human being as she is. Patricia Giannotto mentioned that some problems related to the aboriginals in Australia are a “national disgrace.” The sense of disgrace and shame is quite human. Some problems indeed are out of the boundaries of nation-states, and they need to be amplified. Our interactions and problem-solving activities have to go beyond our national membership.

Dr. Yasushi Kikuchi: I mentioned that whether integration is possible or not is not our priority. You just have to see the facts and what they really are. You do not have to agree. Instead, you need to know, understand, respect and recognize our differences. This is an anthropological aspect.

Dr. Fernando N. Zialcita: As a matter of dialogue, there are always different and competing perspectives, or another angle. We always have to be careful about terms, such as democracy. Tengku Suhailah Binte Tengku Kamarudin taught me something important. That is, how we can promote interfaith dialogue. My country, the Philippines, has conflicts between Christians and Muslims. I have been concerned about what I can actually do to ease the tensions between the two sides. In the heart of Manila, there is a Christian church and Muslim Mosque situated close to each other. I have been working to integrate the different places of worship, so that Christians, for the first time, can visit the Muslim Mosque.

Tengku Suhailah Binte Tengku Kamarudin: Sometimes the process of visiting each other does not solve the problem of interfaith. There are still prejudices. Getting rid of these prejudices takes time. Disagreements always
remain, but that is how interfaith dialogue is. You might not be able to achieve what you want to, but you still have to keep on talking to people of different religious backgrounds. You have to learn how to agree to disagree.

(4)

**Shikha Makan:** One thing that I learned from my group discussions was that each of us has issues deriving from our specific contexts. We face challenges and difficulties in our own countries that need to be shared. The passion and intensity that we shared in this forum is not something we get in our daily life. I was moved by the fact that no rules, policies or structures can address the problems we have, but human agencies. I agree with Dr. Surichai Wun’Gaeo’s idea of the human factor in the process of integration and this sentiment has been overwhelmingly shared by everyone here.

**Dr. Surichai Wun’Gaeo:** We had a serious problem in Thailand during our Constitutional drafting, regarding the national religion issue. Thailand consists of 92-95% Buddhists, including myself, so many people want to see Buddhism as a national religion. They are concerned about moral and value systems falling apart with the influence of globalization. The way all the participants of this forum have been discussing is very healthy. I enjoy listening to the stories from all participants’ countries, but there are more than just religious issues. Humanity and spirituality have to go beyond national borders. We need diversified interactions. Religious issues within one country are not the only problem, but inequality and injustice do exist outside the national borders. That is precisely why we have to talk to each other.

(5)

**Audience:** I work in the banking industry. There are two social and economic systems in East Asia: capitalism and socialism, or communism. Have you found any obvious differences between the two?

**Sarah Jane S. Raymundo:** Our discussion focused on the impact of globalization, looking at issues from a capitalistic point of view. In other words, we did not talk about socialism at all. In our two-day discussion, not enough information on socialism was provided to us. However, what I have learnt was how we have to be careful about making hasty decisions on oppressive or exploitative situations. Some revolutions ended up in a failure because of
this. At the same time, a capitalistic economic system itself is a product of revolutionary changes. In my personal opinion, we should find an alternative to capitalism, because it is difficult to find human and common values while considering a global axis.

**Yoon Kaegahun:** We did not discuss socialism, since most of the political values in East Asia are shifted towards capitalism. It was important for us to recognize and respect that different social systems exist. We can understand each other by sharing information and understanding others’ social systems.

**Audience:** With regard to interfaith dialogue, have you discussed power dimensions or majority versus minority issues? When exchanging opinions on human rights and inequality, as in any country, interfaith dialogue inevitably involves inter-class dimensions and minority issues.

**Dr. Hanneman Samuel:** Yes, we have discussed majority-minority issues. I am a Chinese Indonesian, so there are many issues related to what I am. We also talked about the criminalization of religion.

**Nguon Serath:** Since I am a Cambodian journalist, I would like to tell you about the relationship between the Cambodian media and religion. We consider reporting religion in our newspaper an extremely sensitive matter. Every action we make becomes important. If some individual commits a crime, we, the editor group, have no need for identifying his or her religion. Doing so will lead to the criminalization of a certain religion. Buddhists or Muslims, if not both, start blaming the other side.

**Shikha Makan:** Majority-minority issues are an essential point in inter-religious discussions. If the government propagates religion, it usually involves rights and privileges of the majority. As a consequence, minority groups become oppressed while their rights are taken away. The class matter is crucial, but it is not the only factor that explains the stratification of religions. Majority-minority issues are also closely related to the criminalization of religion. Also, how the media portrays the news is quite important. The events of 9/11, for instance, were often broadcasted as a religious or Islamic affair, not paying enough attention to the fact that these criminals were a handful of radicals. We should differentiate religious extremism from terrorism.
Audience: I have questions for the interfaith group. Ordinary Japanese people, including myself, tend to separate religion from our practical life. Under this circumstance, do you think reconciliation or toleration will happen after interfaith dialogue? Do you feel interfaith dialogue will lead to an integration of East Asia?

Tengku Suhailah Binte Tengku Kamarudin: Religion is separated from daily life in Japan, and it is similar in Singapore. Religion is indeed a personal matter, so it has to be a living practice. Even though religion is not always discussed openly, one needs to realize that there are people with religious beliefs. That is why interfaith dialogue is necessary for everyone, including those with no faith.

Jacqueline Ann Surin: Within the context of many of our countries, we see the need for interfaith dialogue. The reason for this is that religion has entered into our public life, and is no longer personal. In Malaysia, Islam is regulated by the government through “moral policing,” often violating human rights. Furthermore, interfaith dialogue can be a motivation for conflict resolution, because no religion should have to keep their silence when faced with human rights violations.

Nani Suryani Haji Abu Bakar: Regarding the East Asian integration, we are facing extreme globalization. The most powerful force is the West, or especially the United States. We simply cannot ignore the influence of the West. Where do we, an East Asian community, stand, facing the West?

Dr. Wilfrido Villacorta: When I was working for ASEAN, we had a number of discussions related to this topic. ASEAN, or an East Asian community, does not have common foreign policies. Instead, each country takes its individual approaches. With globalization in mind, the name of the game we are playing is “competition.” Therefore, we have to collectively cooperate with one another against the rest of the world. Cross-cultural diversity can become an asset to us, rather than liability. ASEAN is 40 years old now, but with our dialogue partners, we can benefit even more in the years to come.
Dr. Yasushi Kikuchi: We have found how different we are, and we need to appreciate that. Personal attachment is the best way to understand our differences.
Part 2: Program and Participants
Program of Activities

December 9 (Sunday)
Participants' Arrival

December 10 (Monday)
14:00-16:00 Introduction Session
18:30-20:30 Welcome Reception

December 11 (Tuesday)
9:30-11:30 Seminar I: Japanese Kinship and Society
Yasushi Kikuchi, Waseda University
14:30-16:00 Visit to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan
16:30-21:30 December Grand Kabuki (Kabuki-za Theater, Ginza)

December 12 (Wednesday)
9:30-11:30 Seminar II: Japanese Economy in East Asia
Hideo Kobayashi, Waseda University
13:30-15:30 Seminar III: Intellectual Exchanges between Japan and Asian Neighbors: A Personal View of an Area Specialist on Southeast Asia
Masaya Shiraishi, Waseda University

December 13 (Thursday)
One-day Field Trip to Kamakura
December 14 (Friday)
9:00-12:00  Intensive Discussion
    General Coordinators:
    Dr. Yasushi Kikuchi, Waseda University
    Dr. Wilfrido Villacorta, De La Salle University
    Group A: Inter-cultural Dialogue
    Coordinator: Dr. Fernando Zialcita, Ateneo de Manila University
    Group B: Inter-societal Dialogue
    Coordinator: Dr. Surichai Wun’Gaeo, Chulalongkorn University
    Group C: Inter-faith Dialogue
    Coordinator: Dr. Hanneman Samuel, University of Indonesia
13:30-16:00  Intensive Discussion (continued)

December 15 (Saturday)
9:00-12:00  Intensive Discussion (continued)
13:30-17:00  Intensive Discussion (continued)
Presentations by groups

December 16 (Sunday)
    Individual Research Day

December 17 (Monday)
10:00-18:00  Public Symposium (Ono Auditorium, Waseda University)
19:00-21:00  Reception

December 18 (Tuesday)
    Individual Research Day
18:30-20:30  Farewell Dinner

December 19 (Wednesday)
    Participants’ Departure
Impressed with the color of Ginkgo tree leaves

Experiencing Japanese tea
Atmosphere was quite comfortable even in the middle of the intensive discussion.

Dr. Samuel, coordinating his group by giving the participants the direction to which their discussion is supposed to go.

Photo after the Intensive Discussion (group discussion). Everyone shared a sense of accomplishment.
Reading through the documents at the public symposium

Dr. Wang Gungwu at the public symposium

Three presenters reporting on behalf of their discussion groups
Group photo taken after the public symposium

After all of the programs were over, the sign of relief shown on everyone’s face

Sometimes, participants went into an active discussion even during the party
## List of Participants

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Affiliation</th>
<th>Discussion Group</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Australia</td>
<td>Patricia GIANNOTTO</td>
<td>Executive Officer, Community Relations Commission for a Multicultural NSW</td>
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<tr>
<td>Brunei</td>
<td>Nani Suryani Haji Abu Bakar</td>
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<tr>
<td>Cambodia</td>
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<td>Nguon SERATH</td>
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<tr>
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<tr>
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<tr>
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<tr>
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<tr>
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<td>Regional Representative, Islamic Women's Council of New Zealand and Council Member, International Muslim Association of New Zealand</td>
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<tr>
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<td>Japan</td>
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Before their arrival in Japan, the participants were asked to submit short papers on the topic “Towards an East Asia Community: Beyond Cross-Cultural Diversity,” based on their personal occupations and experiences. This is a collection of their essays, in alphabetical order of their country of origin.
New South Wales (NSW) is the most populous and culturally diverse state in Australia. People from 209 countries have made NSW their home and just over a quarter of our residents speak a language other than English at home.

The approach in NSW has been to view our society as a ‘community of communities’, in a way that emphasises inclusiveness over the singling out of particular groups of people. We have also emphasised that our cultural diversity is productive by its nature, and therefore should be harnessed to maximise its economic and cultural benefits.

In spite of pressure from conflicts overseas and incidents such as the 2005 Cronulla unrest, we have in NSW, maintained a cohesive and harmonious society. This is largely due to the support offered by strong legislative and policy frameworks, and well developed, active community networks that are prepared to engage with Government to support and promote the benefits of cultural diversity.

My experience has been very much at the practical level of making multiculturalism work in my home state – and I have seen it work in day to day life.

I have seen Muslim and Jewish families in Sydney open their homes to Catholic pilgrims for the up-coming 2008 World Youth Day. I have seen Sydney-siders of English, European and Middle Eastern descent join members of our Chinese and Vietnamese communities to welcome the Year of the Rat. Most recently, I have seen thousands of Australians, young and old, from many cultural backgrounds stand together in Sydney’s Martin Place, in solidarity with Aboriginal Australians, as the Australian Government officially said “sorry” for the injustices done to our indigenous peoples.

It is natural then for me to have arrived at this conference as a “true believer” - with a clear sense that creating an East Asia community was both
plausible and possible.

When I consider the NSW experience and the lessons that it might provide for an inter-societal dialogue across our region, there are a few factors that stand out. We must find common ground and shared values, but at the same time accept and respect our differences. We must make a commitment to address inequalities and create “a level playing field” across the region. Finally, we must create civic structures that are adequately resourced and supported to engage in dialogue in a meaningful way.

East Asia is a very diverse region. In the context of an East Asia community it is essential that we identify areas where co-operation is possible. This must take place in an atmosphere that is non-threatening and non-combative, and where trust and co-operation are actively fostered.

To progress towards a sense of community it is also essential that all the countries involved take an approach which is non-judgemental. Areas such as the establishment of democracy, human rights and even multiculturalism, are defined very differently by governments across the region and present challenges. It is also unlikely to find these concepts applying universally across any country in the region.

For example, Australia is regarded as a successful democratic, multicultural nation which respects human rights. Across the nation, we have in place a range of policies and programs designed to promote the social, economic and political participation of everyone in the community – regardless of their cultural, ethnic or religious background.

Indeed, in NSW we have successfully developed a sophisticated set of policies and programs which aim to ensure that people from immigrant communities can access the same opportunities as everyone else.

However, the situation of many members of our indigenous communities in Australia would appear quite different to the view mentioned above. Similarly, the Australian Government has received strong criticisms for their treatment of refugees and asylum seekers from some international human rights organisations.

Despite the many differences between the countries of East Asia, it was clear from listening to other participants at this conference that there are problems we share – and there is an opportunity to work together towards solutions.
For example many conference participants expressed concern that traditional practices were disappearing in their countries, along with the traditional values that had been the very essence of society. Another area of common concern was the issues faced by young people, such as cultural and inter-generational alienation. Many countries in East Asia have indigenous and non-indigenous peoples and this is another area, where knowledge and experience could be shared.

During the course of this conference, I observed that one of the key barriers to achieving an East Asia community was a strong sense of inequality between “developed” and “developing” nations in the East Asia Region. One of the aims of multicultural policies in NSW has been to create “a level playing field” by addressing forms of disadvantage commonly experienced by immigrant communities. It would have been impossible, in my view, to achieve the level of community harmony we enjoy in NSW today without taking this approach. Applying such an approach across the region may seem a great challenge, but it is one that must be addressed if an East Asia community is to become a reality.

It is clear that to create an East Asia community there is much work to be done by a variety of players. Research institutes such as that proposed by Professor Kikuchi at this conference will help us to develop theoretical tools to better understand our task. Trans-national community networks and organisations will play an essential role in building understanding and trust across the region. The support of governments will also greatly facilitate the process.

My experiences in multicultural NSW have led me to understand that there is strength in unity. I believe the creation of an East Asia community has the potential to bring great and long lasting benefits to our region.

Ms. GIANNOTTO received her BA majoring in Political Science, Sociology and Industrial Relations, University of New South Wales. She is currently Executive Officer for Community Relations Commission for a Multi-cultural NSW. She specializes in development and implementation of multicultural policies. Also an active volunteer for environmental organizations.
Some Aspects of Popular and Consumer Cultures in Brunei

Nani Suryani Haji Abu Bakar (Brunei)
Lecturer, Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences,
University Brunei Darussalam

The traditional Malay culture of Brunei Darussalam is based on pre-Islamic animistic and Indic culture. However, the arrival of Islam in the fourteenth century A.D. gradually replaced many of the animistic and Indic elements. When Brunei was under British protection from 1906 to 1984, the British system of secular administration and education significantly affected our traditional culture. The British introduced capitalism which influenced our society, slowly replacing our traditional subsistence economy by a commercial one. The banking and wage systems were introduced and became the main feature of a profit and service oriented economy. Consequently, western education and a money-based economy have created a new social class in our society, namely the middle-class society.

The popular culture and the consumer culture which became prevalent after the Second World War further changed our society as well as that of other Asian countries. Both these cultures which are strongly associated with the west have affected our country’s cultural values in almost every aspect of our lives. Western knowledge and culture are spread mainly through mass media such as television, radio, newspapers, magazines and the internet. Many of these cultural trends whether we realize it or not have been assimilated and adopted in our society and have become part of our culture. For example, our society has absorbed and espoused western dress, fast food, language (in our case the English language) and music. The most dangerous development resulting from the influence of popular and consumer cultures is that our society has become more materialistic and indulgent in over-consumption of things material, hedonistic and individualistic than ever before.

As we know, the difference between western and Asian values lies in the concept of individualism in the former and the acceptance of family values in the latter. It is not that we oppose individualism totally but there are many
aspects of individualism which can undermine our social and cultural values such as disrespect of elders, family and authority. Furthermore, since our society has become more materialistic the system of co-operative activities or the system of memuncang-muncang in our society is eroding as goods and services can be immediately procured in exchange for cash. Our society tends to buy goods that are neither worthwhile nor normally necessary, consuming foods and drinks wastefully, eroding our spiritual or ethical values. Our society which has become more hedonistic than before is indulging in physical pleasures such as unlimited social freedom and the abuse of narcotics which many people in the east refer to as influences from western culture derived from the popular and consumer cultures. These alarming trends make the government and the non-government sectors continuously devise ways to prevent these social ills from spreading widely in our society.

But to curb such problems is not easy. We cannot simply take steps to stop television screening in order to cease the flow of unwanted foreign cultural colonization. Although in this case the government can be selective in airing programmes on national television, what about the screening of programmes via satellite dish? Neither can we stop people’s desire to spend the money that they earn every month from their work. A collision of western culture and the indigenous ones cannot be avoided. And as our country’s economy develops, people bring in yet more money to their homes and subsequently their desire to purchase and consume material goods becomes ever greater. Numerous steps are taken by the government and the non-government sectors in order to safeguard our society from being infected by harmful cultures. One such step is to make clear to the public our state’s cultural policy. The ‘Brunei National Cultural Policy’ which was formalized in 1988 clearly states that: National Culture must be the Brunei Malay Culture that is based, founded on and inspired by the national concept of ‘Melayu Islam Beraja’ (Malay Islamic Monarchy). This however does not imply that elements outside the Brunei Malay Culture or beyond the traditional culture are totally disregarded. Through this policy, our system of education is significantly channeled towards its provision. The national policy is also documented in order to give guidelines to our society.

Another step is through the teaching of religious values. In Brunei the teaching of Islam and its values is strongly advocated as one of the solutions to overcoming the growing erosion of our cultural identity. Various methodologies
and approaches have been made through the educational system, through Islamic religious seminars, conferences, symposiums, workshops and festivals in order to inculcate and enhance not only the spiritual beliefs but also the social awareness of Muslims towards society at large. The social values that are always emphasized are respect for the leader or the elderly; love for the young; an attitude that is hospitable, caring, disciplined, courteous, helpful and considerate. These values are in fact universal values of Asian cultures. Bruneians are encouraged to base their lifestyles on the beliefs, concepts and doctrines of their respective religions, and to strive to balance spiritual and material needs. In addition, steps which involve the promotion of traditional cultural values through planned programmes and activities are also implemented.

In conclusion, the contact between western culture and our local culture cannot be ceased and we cannot completely block television screening in order to stop the flow of undesirable foreign cultural expansion. Neither can we control people's appetites to spend their money. Consequently, our society has become more materialistic, sensuous and self-interested than before. And if there is no strong social and cultural bulwark, the negative elements of foreign cultures will easily penetrate and be adopted by our society, and then will totally replace our traditional culture. Therefore, some serious measures are being implemented by both the government and non-government sectors in order to ensure that the improvement in material aspects of people's lives generated by economic growth is paralleled by the cultural development of our society. It is hoped that the implementation of the policy and programmes mentioned above will ensure that popular culture where aspects such as intellectualism, rationalism, love for knowledge and beneficial technology are cherished by our society will enhance our lives and deter adverse cultural influences that could diminish our traditional values.

Dr. Nani Suryani acquired her BA in Education, University Brunei Darussalam in 1997 and MA in Modern History, Leeds University in 2001. She was awarded her PhD in East Asian Studies, Leeds University, UK in 2006. She is currently a lecturer of Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences, University Brunei Darussalam and teaches local, regional and international history.
Asia has always been perceived as a mysterious and mystical place of wonder, drawing interest from valiant explorers from all corners of the world. But in this day and age, a new brand of explorer walks the Earth in search of adventure and new experiences.

People visit other countries for numerous reasons and one of them is to learn more about cultures foreign to them. Shopping and relaxation aside, there is a class of tourists who are not afraid to go the extra mile and push themselves just so that with every stop they make, they go through a fresh experience that they’ve never had before. Upon returning home, they would then have a wonderfully unique story to tell at gatherings.

With time, management of funds and support from the government and various non-governmental agencies, undoubtedly anybody has the potential to build amazing parks, fantasy lands, fabulous resorts or massive casinos to draw customers from within and outside the country. But tradition and culture is a ‘product’ that cannot be bought or built. A particular culture with its particular rituals and set traditions are unique to themselves and have been around for generations, practiced and respected as integral pieces of their identity.

Today’s nation is a result of thousands of years of history, shaping its philosophy and way of life. Centuries of life, trade, festivities and war contributed to producing the priceless piece of art that makes a particular nation stand out as an ‘individual’. Though at first glance, ASEAN countries such as Malaysia, Brunei, Singapore and Indonesia appear to be similar, it is certain that there are obvious qualities that differentiate one from the other.

A rich and diverse part of Earth, South-east Asia is a veritable melting pot of cultures and traditions. It also houses a multitude of languages, which is an asset but at the same time poses a liability.

In many cases, English is the second, third or even fourth language and
mastery is often seen as a Herculean task. Students leaving O-levels and A-levels can still be observed struggling with constructing sentences. Seniors can be seen shying away from attempting to use the language in fear of making mistakes. Others refrain themselves from speaking English because they are immediately labeled as not pertaining to their cultural identity.

English, often spoken of as the ‘invading language’, is typically associated in Asia with everything that is negative. The connotation of its use in everyday life is at times frowned upon. Government officials in Brunei would raise an eyebrow to locals who speak to them in English. They would then be quick to remind them of their roots and the need to speak their national language, Malay.

But in a country such as Brunei, we cannot expect only Malay-speaking tourists. A majority of our clientele are in fact backpackers and the elderly from the UK and US. Once in a while, we do get tour groups from China and Taiwan. But English, as the most common language between countries break down barriers caused by the differences in languages spoken.

There would be very little to be proud of if we desperately hang on to preserve but cannot share our culture, traditions and identity with others to understand. Furthermore, to avoid miscommunication or misunderstanding, countries should invest time and energy towards deciphering their traditions so that others may also enjoy them.

The English language, in many areas within South-east Asia is almost constantly attacked and on some occasions even blamed for the deteriorating moral value of its youth. Schools have highlighted the importance of mastering the English language but the perception of it being a bearer of evil burns brightly in their hearts. Children echo the media, what they see and what they hear on television and radio. But being able to mimic and behave like a parrot barely counts as obtaining the language.

Brunei is proud of its high literacy rate, but the ability to read and write is not quite the same as the ability to communicate ideas effectively. It requires full knowledge of those ideas before they can be materialized in another language.

In the day, poets and singers told tales about their magnificent kingdoms and glorious kings in their own tongues. But wouldn't it be wonderful if those stories could be shared with the rest of the world with just as much passion and love? There has to be a way for that devotion to traverse the boundaries
and be just as meaningful and effective in a more common language such as English.

Writers of New Literature have had their pieces cross the seven seas and touched the hearts of people regardless of their age, gender and race in a language that is not traditionally theirs. They’ve succeeded in giving not just a shy glimpse but rather opened the doors into the very culture that surrounds them. The all-mystical and all-mysterious has since then been lifted of its blurry shroud and the interest in visiting such rich and diverse locales continues to grow.

And with the growing number of visitors, countries receive boosts in their economy as well as their reputation. Efforts in improving overall infrastructure and facilities can then be increased. In turn, that would attract even more visitors and the cycle continues. With prosperous tourism industries within the East Asia area, it can then be packaged and marketed more effectively.

Mr. Nasroul graduated University Brunei Darussalam in 2005. He is currently a reporter for Brunei Times. He previously taught English at secondary school.
A rapid overview on ethnic “Kouy” in Indochina

Kong VIREAK (Cambodia)
Lecturer, Faculty of Archaeology,
Royal University of Fine Arts

I. Generality
The following briefly deals with cross-cultural diversity as experienced by the Kuy ethnic minority living in different countries of Indochina. What made the Kuy one of the most prominent among numerous ethnic group minorities is that they have been very close to Khmer court and to Khmer people in general since ancient period. Researchers think they may have contributed to the brilliant civilization of Angkor by supplying the Khmer court with elephants, weapons, and also iron tools indispensable to erect Angkor monuments as well as to build infrastructures such as huge reservoirs called Baray, etc.

Existing research on Kuy are still poor and sparse. Literature on Kuy in the colonial time focused mainly on the importance of the iron smelting. Later some scholars began to focus their interest on Kuy language. As for Thailand, this aspect has been fairly well studied. But in Cambodia, political turmoil of these recent decades has inhibited such a research. Thus, most of the studies on the Kuy in Cambodia, except one, date at the latest up to 1970 only, and concern mainly general descriptions, sometime accompanied by a French-Kuy lexicon.

II. Geographic distribution
The Kuy are scattered in three countries as stated above: northeast Thailand, southern Laos and several areas of Cambodia. Compared to other indigenous ethnic minority groups, the uy are certainly the most numerous.

Although the difficulties to establish reliable statistics, the assessment for the global Kuy population would be approximately 380,000, of which the majority would live in Thailand (about 300,000), in particular between the Mun River and the Dangrek mountains, i.e. border of Cambodia with Thailand and Laos. In Laos, southern provinces, Kuy population vary from 50,000 to 64,000 following estimations. Until recently, access to areas where
Kuys live in Cambodia was limited, situation which explains the difficulty to obtain accurate estimation: 15,495 for the government, 23,000 or more for other sources. The main core of Kuy in Cambodia is found in the north provinces, particularly Preah Vihear, Kampong Thom. But we also know some other locations in the provinces of Stung Treng, Kratie, Siem Reap and Uddar Meancheay. In these latter provinces they mainly migrated from Thailand in a relatively recent past.

**III. Cross-Cultural Diversity of Kouy in Indochina**

Of course different Kuy groups share in common the dominant culture with the nation-state within which they live. Needless to say they practice Theravada Buddhism, as this is the official religion of Cambodia, Laos and Thailand. But they also firmly keep their cultural specificities, as we can notice below. But one thing has to be said: in the course of time the Kuy received a very strong cultural influence from Khmer. One example could be enough: the use of lunar calendar, of which months have Sanskrit name, borrowed to Indian through Khmer.

**III.1 Language**

Kuy language relates to the Mon-Khmer linguistic family, Katuic branch. In Cambodia Kuys are bilingual, i.e. Kuy (the mother tongue) and Khmer, which is absolutely normal. In Thailand, they are often totally fluent in three languages, beside their mother tongue: Thai, Khmer and Lao, because the region where they live, called Isan (North-East), is populated with Thai, Khmer and Lao, and historically belonged to Cambodia and Laos. As for Kuy living in Laos, we still know quite little.

**III.2 Activities, resources**

*Rice cultivation*

Kuys today live predominantly on irrigated rice cultivation, while few groups still keep practicing slash-and-burnt agriculture. Linked to this main activity are raising livestock such as pigs and chickens, and limited hunting. However, up to a period relatively recent, rice cultivation was only one of their resources, as Kuy people had two prominent skills and activities: production of iron for some groups, elephants hunting for others.

*Iron smelting*
The Kuy living in Cambodia, and possibly also in Thailand were well known as iron smelting specialists. If this fame is nowadays forgotten in Thailand, they still remain famous as blacksmiths in this country. In Cambodia they only definitely ceased to produce iron from the mine of the Phnom Dek region at the end of the decade 1940, and this, not because of the quality of the iron they produce (on the contrary this iron is known as of an excellent quality), but because of the price competition from industrial production from the West. Khmer people still praise the quality of the Kuy iron in a ritual song and iron sword dance performed in marriage ceremony. It is no doubt that this skill, Kuy people had since ancient time. No doubt that Kuy produced at least part of the weapons and metallic tools used in Ancient Cambodia. Today, in the region of Phnom Dek (in particular in the village of Veal Veng) once a year, in any household, Kuy people perform a libation on every iron tools. This ritual clearly shows their deep historic connection with metal work, although iron extraction from mine is no longer practiced.

Elephant capturing and training
Kouys in Thailand and in Cambodia are known for their special skill in elephant capturing and domestication. The activity of elephant hunting just came to an end with the recent decades of war in Cambodia. Today, the village of Ban Taklang (Thailand), populated with Kuy, is the world largest elephant domestication and shows. Kuys of this group went down to Cambodia provinces of Preah Vihear, Kampong Thom and Siemreap to capture wild elephant.

Mr. VIREAK received his BA in Archaeology, Royal University of Fine Arts, Phnom Penh in 1995 and MA in Anthropology, Ecoles des Hautes Etudes en Sciences Sociales (EHESS), Paris in 1998. He has taken part in Japanese Government Team for Safeguarding Angkor, and is currently lecturing at the Faculty of Archaeology, Royal University of Fine Arts.
Media’s Role in Religious Harmony

Nguon SERATH (Cambodia)
Editor of Rasmei Kampuchea Newspaper

We are gathering here to discuss the inter-faith dialogue in order for us to find ways to promote the regional and global peace through better cultural understanding among ourselves. It is no doubt that the discussion is very crucial as we are now living in a globalized world where countries are increasingly interdependent. Because of globalization, all of us can not live in isolation and we need a strong cooperation for the mutual development and the prevention of common threats and issues. It will be a big mistake if any country decides to isolate itself from other countries in the world. In the globalized world, what happens in one country can affects other countries. It reminds us of the economic crisis in Thailand a decade ago when we discuss the impact of the globalization. No doubt, the economic crisis in Thailand was not the suffering of the Thai people but the people in other countries especially in Asia.

Because of the diversity of cultures and religions, the cooperation does not always go smoothly as we wish. This gives a reason why we shall promote the understanding on cultures and religions from each other.

In this essay, I would share with you the situation of Cambodian religions and what we have done in order to promote harmony among different religions and the mistake we learnt from our past experience.

According to Article 43 of the Cambodian constitution, Buddhism is the state religion with more than 90 percent of the 14 million Cambodian population are Buddhist. However, the constitution also guarantees the freedom of religious belief in the country. As a result, the Cambodian people can choose the religion by themselves. The Islamic faith is the second biggest religion in Cambodia, which is followed by Christianity. To my observation, the Christianity is increasingly popular among the poor people during the last few years.

Even though Cambodia has a diversity of religions, the people can live peacefully in religious harmony, shelving their differences. There are three
main reasons why Cambodian people can get along well with different faiths they belong to. These are the Buddhist teachings, the Cambodian laws and last but not least the role of the media in the country.

Buddhism teaches tolerance of others, acceptance of life (non-attachment), and lays out a strong moral code. The Cambodian Buddhists believe in Karma, which is the principle of Buddhism. We believe that if you do good, you will receive good. Based on the Karma Principle, we learn to be tolerant and accept the differences of skin color, races and religions. That is why the Cambodian Buddhists can get along well with other faith followers.

Cambodian Laws which guarantee the freedom of faiths is another factor which promotes harmony among the Cambodian followers of different faiths. While the laws guarantee freedom of faiths, this freedom shall not affect other religious beliefs or violate public order and security. Seeing the important role played by the media, the Cambodian law on Press Regime warns the Cambodian journalists to be cautious in reporting races and religions. Article 7 of the Cambodian Press Law which was adopted by the National Assembly in 1995, says that the media shall avoid publishing any information that can incite discrimination against any race, religion or belief. The purpose of this article is to prevent racial or religious conflict caused by the media reports in order to make sure that the people with different faiths can live together with religious harmony free from conflict and discrimination.

Last but not least, the role of the Cambodian media in promoting harmony among Buddhist, Islamic and Christianity followers. The Cambodian media play an important role in preventing racial and religious conflict. The experience shows that media is like a two-edged knife. A responsible media can help the people with different faiths live in peace, while an irresponsible media can provoke hatred, discrimination and more seriously conflict between the people with different belief, skin color and race.

In Rasmei Kampuchea newspaper which is the leading Cambodian newspaper, we have a very strict rule in covering races and religions to make sure that any hatred, discrimination or conflict shall be caused by our reports. Our reporter are told to be sensitive to the religious reports. They are required to double-check this kind of report and make sure that the negative impact can not be caused by the reports. However, the Cambodian media do not play perfect role and our past mistake give a strong argument that the media practitioners who cover religions, shall have sufficient knowledge about the
religion they cover if they are to avoid misinterpretation which can provoke anger from the religious followers or conflict between the different religions of the country. It reminds me of a Cambodian movie which was broadcast in a Cambodian Television Channel a few years ago. Because of inappropriate depiction of Cambodian Muslims and their tradition, the movie sparked anger among the Muslim or Cham community of the country and the producer of the film was given a death threat through telephone calls from the Islamic Cambodian followers. For the safety of the film producer, the Television station decided to stop broadcasting the movie. This experience reflected the need for the media people to be equipped with sufficient knowledge if they are assigned to cover religions.

Even though religious harmony has been seen in Cambodia, the religious conflict or war is still a possibility if we look at the global situation. Now the world is facing war against terror. The terrorism has become a global threat which requires international cooperation and effort to fight against if we are to maintain our world as place where the human-being can live peacefully. This war sparked another concern when the terrorists are trying to turn it into a religious conflict. To this point, I am concerned that a religious war can be ignited and put our world in danger. When I think about our fragile world and religious war, it also reminded me of what happened with Danish Cartoons which sparked Muslim outrage and violence around the world in 2006. In the journalistic context, the Danish cartoons raised a debate over the relation between the press freedom and the freedom of religious faith. As we want to have a peaceful world, even though I fully support the press freedom and want to see it prevail in our world, It shall not step on the respect of different religions and cultures. In addition, the cartoon case shall be an example for us to be committed to the respect of different religions and cultures and to promote global tolerance and harmony. The world is in our hand. We can turn it into a place where we can live together with harmony and peace or a place where we are making war to kill each other. If the latter is the case, we will be the prisoner of history. So why don’t we join hands to build a better world for the young generation?
Mr. SERATH graduated from Faculty of Medicine, University of Medical Science. He is currently editor of Rasmei Kampuchea Newspaper, in charge of political issues. He is also Office Manager of Club of Cambodian Journalists and a part-time reporter of the Japanese Newspaper, Nikkei Shimbun. He is undertaking his Master course in Journalism in the Philippines.
Regional Identity Building in East Asia

LU Ke (China)
CEO, Marry10.com Technology Inc.

The International Forum “Towards an East Asia Community: Beyond Cross-Cultural Diversity” has finished successfully. Although it is hard to draw a clear road map to achieve EAC at this stage, the forum is still enlightening and meaningful to every one of us, young Asian intellectuals and potential leaders. Among all the challenges we discussed in the forum, I believe that identity building is an essential element of community building in East Asia because of great diversities among countries in the region.

People from different countries have different degrees of attachment and loyalty to their culture, to their value, and to their country. However, East Asia Community will be impossible if we do not have a regional identity. Nurturing a sense of community requires different peoples to go beyond from “I” to “We”. That means we care for each other’s goodness and work together for “ourselves” rather than “myself”. The best example was Asian financial crisis of 1997 and 1998 when East Asian helped East Asia. China played a crucial role, Japan extended a big helping hand, and even crisis-hit Malaysia pledged USD 1 billion to Thailand and Indonesia. I believe East Asian people should learn from that historical undertaking for the community building. Increasing mutual exchanges and understanding like what we did in this forum will further foster the feelings of empathy and identity among countries, and encourage peoples to share problems, prospects and destinies of each other.

East Asia has great political, economic, social, cultural and religious diversities because the region has inherited various world great civilizations ranging from Confucian, Buddhist, Islamic, Hindu and Christian traditions. Diversities form the greatness and richness of the Asian civilization, and should not be regarded as an obstacle but a foundation for identity building. There are many ways to improve mutual understanding and appreciation among each other. Joint research activities on culture, society and religion should be encouraged and academic curriculums for East Asian studies in schools should be created. Events and affairs in East Asia region should be
promoted more widely in mass media such as TV, Internet, radio, newspapers and magazines.

Another challenge we are facing when building a sense of regional identity is the development gaps widely existing in the region. It is hard to image how we can build regional identity between the developed countries such as Japan and Korea and the developing countries such as Cambodia, Laos, Myanmar and Vietnam. Therefore, narrowing the development gaps is essential, and the economic and trade cooperation should be taken as the focal point in the initial stage of identity building. In addition to trade, other regional cooperative projects should also be enhanced in the fields of finance, human resources, energy, environment, technology and scientific research. Narrowing development gaps should begins with specific and practical projects. And with more new contents continuously added in the course, the institutional building should be gradually developed as well.

The proposal for establishing East Asia community sometimes leads to some doubts and misunderstandings. I think one major reason is when people talk about a regional community, they automatically relate it to high-degree integration in economy, politics and security. I believe there should be many forms of community and EU model won’t fit all. With great diversities in East Asia, it is obviously impossible to establish the community like EU. The East Asian Community should have its own characteristics. As an old Chinese saying going “A road of a thousand miles begins with one step.” The first step, in my point of view, should aim at building up a regional identity by developing a sense of “We”, promoting cultural and social exchanges, establishing cooperation mechanisms for development, and resolving common issues for the region. Only by achieving this, can we proceed to talk about other deep and substantive cooperation and collaboration in the region.

Mr. LU received his BA in Economics in 1998 at Beijing International Studies University and his MS in Direct and Interactive Marketing in 2003 at New York University. He later acquired his MA in Public Policy at Harvard University in 2005. He is currently the founder and CEO of Marry10.com Technology Inc., which provides online wedding services.
Bridge Cultural Divisions through Friendships

LI Fan (China)
Executive Director, Global Links Initiative

In Oct 2003, I started my own organization, Global Links Initiative (GLI), with few friends in the U.K., Japan and China. Now GLI have over 800 networkers from 61 countries. Our aim is to explore new ways of tackling problems of social exclusion by making practical links among social entrepreneurs around the world.

I remember when I first talked to people around about our new initiative four years ago. Some of them have doubted how far we could go: so many big structures have been trying to make the world a better place.

In Chinese, the word peace (He-ping) is always mentioned together with friendship (Youyi). The value of personal connections has long been considered the “magic touch” in creating a positive and open relationship between countries and regions. Members of GLI come from very different perspectives: many speak different languages; some are from the same country but would never vote for the same political party. So what brings us together?

Through our own experiences we have each found that friendship between people from different backgrounds is one kind of antidote to dislocation and apathy. In every age there have been people with spirit and faith, emotion and the will to do something of an unusual and dramatic kind.

One example within our network is a retired businessman in England who started his second career working with NGOs ten years ago. In 2001, Robin met Cucu, a 27 year old disabled Indonesian woman at a reception at the British Embassy in Tokyo. Cucu was on a one-year leadership course for young disabled people from developing Asian countries. When she met Robin she asked for help: She wanted to create a new NGO to help mentally and physically disabled people, especially children, in her country. And most importantly, she wants to change the attitude of her fellow 200 million Indonesians toward people with disabilities.

Robin hardly knew anything about Indonesia, but he was inspired by
Cucu’s aspirations and openness. They exchanged email addresses. He came back to Japan twice to give seminars on NGO management, and Cucu traveled across Japan in her wheelchair to meet and listen to him. Robin realized that what Cucu most needed was not money, but the ability to share experiences with other people. So he sent messages to members of the Community Action Network in U.K. and to his friends around the world asking if any of them would be interested in exchanging with her and providing friendship.

Immediately three members of Community Action Network offered to email Cucu. Also, a disabled woman in New Zealand who had won two consecutive gold medals at the Paraplegic Olympic Games said she would like to help. Then Cucu received a surprising email from a 46 year-old Australian called Ron who was the World Blind Golf Champion. After several mail contacts, Ron visited Cucu in Indonesia with an offer of funding. Cucu has now succeeded in setting up her own NGO.

Robin always says that he is inspired and encouraged by meeting and becoming friends with people like Cucu. All our members have a lot to say about what they have learned from personal friendship.

My recent wonderful experience, meeting with young ‘Asian’ fellows in Tokyo through Jenesys Program, is another great story. This ten-days program has provided a very unique platform for bright and energetic young people with all sorts of different background that you can ever imagine. Despite the fact that we are all categorized as ‘Asian’, we soon notice that how less we know about each other, and how much ‘common sense’ we have been holding towards each other are not necessary true.

In my group discussion, group members fought for two days trying to name just one commonality among us that everybody would agree! Nevertheless, as soon as we realize how different we are, we are so eager to learn everything about each other. It’s amazing how smooth the communication can be when everybody is participating with an open heart.

Children begin to form biases about other people almost as early as they begin to speak. I wonder how many of us are still carrying vestiges of the biases? Friendship, personally and globally, is all about learning and accepting that people are different and respecting that difference. I believe by creating people-to-people links, we can play an important role in helping individuals of all ages to learn about diversity. As Mother Teresa said: “If you judge people, you have no time to love them.”
Ms. LI graduated with a BA in Japanese Literature, Suzhou University in 1994. She received her MA in International Relations, Waseda University Institute of Asia Pacific in 2001. She is co-founder and Executive Director of Global Links Initiative, a non-profit organization that aims to foster practical links among social entrepreneurial people around the world.
The Language of Inclusion

Jhimli BASAK (India)
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The Constitution of India declares India comprising 29 states and 22 different official languages. The 1991 Census of India, however, states to have a total of 114 languages and almost 2000 dialects. Adding to this, the many political invasions of the country during the colonial era left behind significant influential factors that has further made the Indian cultural panorama a complex study leading towards a perspective signifying the ‘the Indian culture in flux’. Starting from language to food habit to clothing to physical structures, cultural rites and rituals and values – the 29 different states of India all speak a unique language of their own!

Thus, even to define the “traditional culture” of India is a challenging task, if treated in a singular linear construct. Interestingly, India with its complex historical and geographical graph has implicitly always demanded a treatment of multiculturalism embedded in its “Unity in Diversity”. If we take a look at the linguistic origins predominant in India, which is perhaps one of the strongest cultural symbols of any country, we find the same element of diversity operating in it. For example 75% of India’s population belongs to the Indo-Aryan linguistic family, 25% belongs to the Dravidian. Other languages spoken come mainly from the Austro-Asiatic and the Tibeto-Burman linguistic family. In this situation, when referring to “traditional culture” one returns to the strongest and oldest cultural symbol – language – and once again a multicultural panorama emerges. It comprises Sanskrit (from the Old Indo-Aryan), Prakrit (from the Middle Indo-Aryan), Apabhramsha (of the Middle Ages); while from the Dravidian sphere there is the oldest Tamil, and Telegu, Kannada, Malayalam as the other most important Dravidian languages. Other cultural symbols like the Arts – Miniature Paintings, Madhubani Paintings, Rajput Paintings, Mughal Paintings, Mysore Paintings, Tanjore Paintings, and the Bengal School of Paintings – all this surely compels one to look beyond the singular linear narrative while defining the “traditional culture” of India,
and gradually engages one’s search for a non-linear, pluralistic discourse.

Looking at the pop-culture and middle-class consumer culture today in India, the immediate phenomenon that takes over full attention is its absolute engagement within the urban site. India which has always been an agricultural country - as stated in the 2001 census 72.2% of the rural population live in 550,000 villages and the remainder in more than 2000 towns and cities. Once upon a time India comprised a ‘popular culture’ that dwelt in the rural sites as well, voicing the folk tradition of its region. However, with the advent of globalization and liberalization in market economy, pop-culture in India has become almost synonymous to middle-class ‘consumer’ culture. On one hand it has helped to wipe off class distinction due to increasing disposable income (cash) flow into every house-hold, thus making consumer products readily accessible by simply pressing the key of the internet button in one’s home. While on the other hand the rural folk culture perhaps may suffer a point of extinction unless it is given its own specific, independent identity and space for existence. One believes that it is possible to provide a common cultural platform in the region through the development of popular culture and middle-class consumer culture by simultaneously highlighting its universality (at par with the entire globalization) as well as its unique specificity.

One needs to remember that culture gets formed by people, and the human agent is in a constant state of ‘becoming’. It is in motion, a progressive movement. Similarly culture too goes through a process of kinesthetic motion, and thus is in flux. Hence it demands a constant re-definition of its parameters, influences and impacts. Perhaps this is the greatest symbol of the modern era – a constant state of motion. But this motion can only find its relevance when it is in reference to a stable cultural phenomenon within a certain time frame. This takes us further to treat ‘time’ within these specific frameworks and not as an eternal absolute concept. A micro time, a micro culture, in reference to a macro time and a macro culture.

A common regional identity is possible only when a language of inclusion compliments a language of diversity. Hence India’s project has always been “Unity in Diversity” – a cultural philosophy that was possibly initiated by the Indian Nobel Laureate and Poet, Rabindranath Tagore, in the 1930s when he was extensively traveling across the world spreading the word of pluralism of cultural unity in India as ‘national identity’, - a possible angst in reaction to the internal turmoil experienced by India through its colonial subjugation,
and pockets of fragmentation. One man alone trying to bring about a cultural revolution, at least in his work and philosophy!

As a Psychoanalyst and Artist one would like to share that in terms of an international spectrum, today Psychoanalysis all across the world, as well as in India, is voicing this similar pluralistic perspective in its understanding of the different cultural nuances and the practice of Psychoanalysis in a country. Similarly, the artists of the world are in quest of this similar note of harmony amidst their different concerns and creations. The artist, who has symbolically been a rebel-of-all-time of boundaries created by convention, wishes to have the freedom to speak the language of the world as well as pronounce the words of his land-of-origin through their works of creation.

Ms. BASAK received her MA in Comparative Literature, Jadavpur University, Kolkata. She is undertaking her PhD at Kyushu University, Fukuoka. She is currently a psychoanalyst – member of the 'Indian Psychoanalytical Society' (Calcutta); member of the 'International Psychoanalytical Association' (London); and member of the 'Japan Psychoanalytical Association' (Tokyo). Having been a dancer and choreographer, she has widely traveled overseas on cultural programs.
Bridging the gaps from the past to the present: Creating a shared space

Shikha MAKAN (India)
Independent filmmaker and researcher

An experience

“It was in the year 2002 that I was on a research trip to Rajasthan, the desert state of India, when a communal riot broke out. The news spread that a train carrying Hindu pilgrims and Karsevaks (members of a Right wing Hindu group) was set ablaze by a mob of Muslims, killing 83 people. Apparently at that time I was visiting a Muslim locality, interviewing the survivors of one of the worst cases of genocide in south East Asia, the Partition of India. In wake of present crises, my Hindu identity had suddenly crystallized. I became the ‘other’, belonging to the majority community, an intruder or perhaps a probable victim! I was advised to leave, let alone talk about partition which was a reminder of a communal bloodbath. I realized how my religious identity had taken over my neutral professional identify. I was apprehensive, displeased by this sudden exclusion. Days later, media covered reports of indiscriminate killings of Muslims as a backlash to the train attack. Years later, the real cause of the fire in the train remains ambiguous and questions aloud, if it really was triggered by the Muslim community.

Repeatedly during my interviews at that time, people, from either communities (Hindu, Muslim & Sikh), addressed this carnage as a replica of the partition violence. They remembered their old wounds. Wounds, that even after 6 decades, were ready to bleed at the slightest communal instigation. Wounds that have continued to link our past to the present, colouring our reality! They have been kept alive by political rhetoric and misnomers, drawing deeper boundaries between “us” and “them”. One notices how the prejudices, biases and beliefs are entrenched into our psyches and are being forwarded obliviously to the forthcoming generations. Yet the human stories of pain and suffering amongst victims of religious bigotry are the same everywhere. I wonder why has there been such a silence around a human dialogue on responsibility, possibilities and resolution at the people’s level. Why does Knowledge and History not include the
Human voice?

The conflicts of religion emerge not only out of socio-political uprisings but from the invisible ambivalence seated in the inner world as well. This ambivalence stems out of our composite past. For years multiple communities in India have lived together as neighbours, but with the unresolved pain of being betrayed at communal times. How does one then account for ‘emotionality’ in the war of faith? Where do we place individuals who finally become victims and perpetrators in a communal fight? How do we review the psychological motivations and impacts within the ambit of social and political realities? Perhaps a dialogue on faith has to be looked through an individual-society interface that brings forth both ideologies and personhoods in the complex web of human relations.”

Reflections

In the modern world “faith” has always been more than an individual belief but a system which establishes a unique relation between society, politics and religion. While we are born to a certain religion, faith is what shapes our way of life in thought and practice. Hence at the onset of a dialogue on faith and religion one must understand the nuances that define and differentiate these two interdependent terms; wherein the former is more psycho-social and the latter more socio-political. (Though they may be used interchangeably)

In East Asian cultures religion has been a matter of history, with its development in epics and mythology. However faith can not be understood in absolute terms. It can only be understood through a dialogue between the forces that consolidate and influence it. Colonization, migration, conversions have defined and redefined religions time and again and have led to the birth of multiple communities in Asia. This has further created notions of insiders vs. outsiders and purity vs. impurity amongst people following different faiths; thus pointing to the importance of identity that one derives out of one’s faith.

In a world that is in a continuous state of flux, at a psychological level a religious identity consolidates the notion of self. At a socio-political level, it brews a need for its protection and propagation. Therefore in pluralistic societies, religion becomes another way of social stratification, implicating the role of power in a social arrangement designed around it. In any set up, factors such as demographic majority, cultural dominance or a threat to religious identity may often lead to extremist ideologies. Therefore, to understand the growth of extremism one must place it in the context in which it has originated
in lieu of its regional history, politics of state and psychological motivations of its people.

An ever shrinking global world today has opened networks for similar ideologies to exchange and execute themselves. If it is an opportunity for growing extremism in the world it is also a moment for an inter faith dialogue to nurture peace and tolerance.

A dialogue such as this must base itself on the celebration of cultural diversity in East Asia where many religions, for decades, have continued to co-exist. Understanding the distinctiveness of each faith is achievable through acceptance of its various forms, including dominant practices, sects and syncretic groups. In wake of such a multiplicity one must then reflect on the processes of the global world, such as mobility and migration, communication and expansion by which the notion of faith has evolved from ancient to modern times.

Such an exploration would encourage a shared space of a sort that allows for a complex unity of thought.

Ms. MAKAN received a BA in Psychology, Jesus and Mary College, Delhi University in 1999 and MA in Psychology, Delhi University in 2001. She is an independent filmmaker and researcher in psycho-social issues. Her ongoing work includes “Many Lives Many Partitions (working title)”, which explores India’s partition through people’s memories, stories and art.
East Asia: The Next Superpower

Poempida Hidayatulloh (Indonesia)
Deputy Treasurer, Golkar Party & Vice Chairman of Standing Committee of KADIN (Indonesia Chamber of Commerce)

The Undiscovered Unity
The East Asia region has shown distinctive economic growth characteristics in recent years. The countries in the regions have shown fast growing recovery in the beginning of this new millennium, even though they were suffered due to the infamous economic crisis awhile back.

There is none to argue that with China's awakening economic power, the world has seen another gigantic potential power, which may become a determining factor to the global livelihood.

Japan has always been considered as one of the strongest economy leaders.

The fact that other countries in the region namely South Korea, North Korea, Taiwan, Malaysia, Indonesia, Thailand, Philippines, Singapore, Vietnam, Brunei, Laos, Myanmar, and others (apologies for those not mentioned) have also reflected massive potentials in the economic sector.

These countries in the regions have enjoyed shares in good economic relationships. However, such relationships have not progressed further into firmer stages. Differences and turbulence in the regional Geopolitics have highlighted most of the recent regional affairs.

Some would say that the vested interests of the “West” in the region have become of an Importance, more than ever. Especially, after the fall down of the Soviet Union just before the new millennium commenced. Surely, the West will never allow a bunch of economic potentials to exceed their proclaimed hegemony. Thus, they will do anything to protect these potentials to become united.

This is why that the East Asia region needs to find a way of reconciliation towards unity in order to rediscover further tremendous potentials not only in economy but also in political power and cultures.
The World of No Racism
One would still wonder what happened to Hiroshima and Nagasaki. Did Japan really deserve to be the target of the “Fat Man” and the “Little Boy”? Why did not Hitler’s NAZI get the same treatment? Just to remind readers that the NAZI also did significant damages during World War II.

Historically and culturally, the East Asia Region never recognized the concept of racism. Surely, there have been wars and differences among regional ethnics in the past. However, they were not driven by skin colours and ethnicity issues. They were mostly related to the fight for resources. Economic strength has always been the most valued element in this regional culture. They respect most the one that controls economy. Most of the regional ethnics also show they bear significant hungers towards economic certainties. This is one of the key elements of the recent regional economic revival.

If such element is combined with greater political endeavour, it will result in an unimaginable supremacy. The West very well understands this fact, and unquestionably they will prevent such combination to co-exist.

Racism is a western artefact, which infiltrates the eastern norms for eradictions.

No wonder the eastern point of view towards the Hiroshima-Nagasaki bombing is solely based on racial-prejudice and not as a “pearl harbour” pay back.

The East Asian Dream
The regional economy, as one of the most sought-after element in the east, still needs to be repositioned. Multi-lateral economic relationships are required to be encouraged towards healthier competitions and partnerships. One way to achieve it is by establishing an independent exclusive regional economic boundary.

Abundant natural resources, great human capital, gigantic market and strong currencies would be the potential foundations towards an independent regional economic zone, which can be very exclusive for the East Asian people to enjoy. This hypothetical state would be difficult to realise in this current regional environment. We have witnessed unnecessary hurdles in the past few years among East Asian countries. These definitely become drawbacks of what would be the writer would call the “East Asian Dream”. The East Asian Dream is about harmony among the nations within, which shares common
Poempida Hidayatulloh

economic privileges to realize prosperity, welfare, economic justice and improved social security. The region has still mountains to climb to get rid of such drawbacks.

**Towards The World’s Superpower**

Wikipedia states that Superpower means a country that has the capacity to project dominating power and influence anywhere in the world, and sometimes, in more than one region of the globe at a time, and so may plausibly attain the status of global hegemony.

China has always been predicted to be the next world’s superpower and jointly sharing such exclusive title with the United States.

The writer sees that China on its own will face steep hills in order to attain such title. Japan-China saga, China-Taiwan differences and including North Korea affairs are summed up into more complex situation towards China’s title pursuit. The sleeping giant has yet a lot to prove that it can spread its influences in the region especially in sorting out the mentioned issues. In addition, even though China’s position is well supported by the overseas Chinese, still it has some barriers in terms of global linguistic communications.

The East Asian people should take European Union as a good example.

Having a massive common economic boundary, which consists of various economic potentials, has proven to be advantageous in strengthening its regional economy. As a reminder, Europe never has the luxury of exploiting abundant natural resources. However, they successfully structure their economy with a strong regional market, strong capital resources, technology product oriented, stable fiscal policy, low credit interest and low inflation. This proves further by the fact that EURO has beaten US Dollar in terms of Foreign Exchange.

Imagine if there is another Regional Union, The East Asian Union (EAU). This would definitely result in an unbelievable impact in the World’s economy. With one Currency of EAU, the Union will be lead by its economic champions, China and Japan. The rest of the countries of course must support them and together work hand in hand in establishing stronger independent regional market, improving value added technology products, exploiting sustainable natural resources efficiently, and expanding capital network. These can only be done in harmony socially and politically. Then, The East Asian Dream will become a reality.
Conclusion
In conclusion, the super-potential East Asia region is undoubtedly to be unchallenged by others, should the region become united economically, politically, socially and culturally. However the Undiscovered Union must focus on consolidation efforts to overcome differences, dis-integrity, disparity, and destabilisation among the countries within. On the other hand, simultaneously, the region must promote more beneficial partnerships and cooperations in many sectors in order to realize the East Asian Dream.

Mr. Poempida graduated with BEng. from University of Bristol, Aerospace Engineering Department in 1995. He was awarded his PhD in Mechanical Engineering from Imperial College of Science, Technology and Medicine in 1999. He is currently the President and CEO of 8 companies and the Director of 4 companies. He is the Deputy Treasurer of Central Board of The Functional Group Party (Golkar Party) and the Vice Chairman of the Standing Committee of Telecommunication Affairs of Indonesian Chamber of Commerce and Industry (KADIN).
One of the most important lessons at the turn of the millennium is that alongside all kinds of differences that strike our senses, people — West or East, white or brown — truly have many similarities. Human differences are caused by their radical similarities: the thorns and flowers of that difference blossom because the basic roots of similarity — the urge to live and thrive, to sense and make sense of the world — must respond to different contexts. Once these diverse contexts are altered and made the same, then the similarities that lie in the anthropological bases of human communities become clearly visible.

On June 26, 2000, the completion of the first phase of human genetic mapping was announced simultaneously at six points on the planet Earth hemisphere: Washington DC, London, Berlin, Paris, Tokyo and Beijing. The Genetic map clearly shed some light on interconnections of the whole living beings: brotherhood between human species with the rest of creatures on Earth. From the map we know that humans have 51% in common with the genetic makeup of yeast, and 98% in common with chimps. As for the color difference in skin, hair, eye and other physical attributes used to distinguish human and taken as essentials in human history, they are caused by minute genomic differences of only 0.2 per cent. It is indeed too many natural likenesses among human compared to their differences. Nature contributes only a tiny drop to the ocean of human external skin-thinned differences which in history so often become excuses for many ethnic cleansing and holy wars.

All forms of life on Earth, including human being are descendants of simple primitive cells boiled in ancient ocean, and incessantly struggle to survive employing all means possible in the infernal primordial world. In that extremely harsh condition and brutal process to survive and reproduce, conflict become permanent because all creature, including human, contains in itself an uncontrollable force to replicate and expand itself: an explosive spark which is remnants of immense force previously had given birth.
to the universe. All of our cells are derivatives of the Big Bang. Due to the underdeveloped knowledge and limited cognitive power, the collision and volatile violence—amid the scarcity of live support sources and the eternal urge of other people to survive and reproduce — would be an inevitable part of human past history.

The disclosure of human being commonalities, his radical similarities — the eternal and universal drive to survive and thrive — and the revelation of universe nature and law which give human power to eventually overcome all form of scarcity and limitation would make violence become a unnecessary and even savage option. Some even vision that the revelation of cosmos secret nature would give humanity a new power to nurture and herd the great force the gave birth to the universe; the force that took million years and complicated process to see the formation of intelligent and self-conscious life. Our developing science and technology is helping us to discover a loftier spiritual vision of life in the universe, so lofty that all conservative religions and faiths seem so not prepared to comprehend it.

All religions and belief systems are powerful forces that had fashioned human history. They were and are the spiritual foundation of societies, of civilizations, and in many part of the world they are the only knowledge system known by people that guide them to sense and make sense the world. Apart from fashioning human history, all religions and believe systems are product of history. They were fashioned, formed and constructed from knowledge, prejudice and interest evolved in their own time. A great part of that knowledge had been proven old fashioned and inadequate to help its follower to understand and enliven the contemporary world much better. The more new information and facts amassed and unable to be processed creatively by a knowledge system, the more instable that system. An open knowledge system has in it self capacity to digest and process new information, enables the system to change, grow and advancing itself. A closed and incontestable system refuses to change itself yet stubbornly struggles to survive has only one option: ignoring even suppressing and destroying the information it can not control and process.

All religions and isms refuse to be criticized, to open itself and evolve, are fertile breeding ground for violence, which always begins as cognitive violence. Terrorism is an extreme realization of closed knowledge system desperately solves its survival problem. Because violence and corruption is inherent
in all closed knowledge systems, their existence would permanently create disturbance even serious parasitism to their surrounding. Certain parties which attempt to perpetuate and strengthen their hegemony over society often systematically preserve and fortify the closed knowledge system because the system gives them lots of unquestionable privilege. The community usually accepts the hegemonic and closed knowledge system because they have no reliable power to oppose it and because the system gives a simple world view they can easily fathom no matter how abusive it is.

The systematic and careful cultivation of open knowledge system and its ever increasing power is the only potent way to help the hegemonized and oppressed society liberate it self from all forms of dependence and domination. Scientific knowledge together with liberal education has been proven to be powerful to prevent community from committing terrorism and all form of violence to solve problems. It also helps people gain confidence to refuse any method threatens human life. While assisting people to integrate their self more effectively into the contemporary world, open knowledge system also help them to recreate their diverse cultural heritage and enthusiastically participate in the merry making of the new world.

The integration of East Asian Community, even the integration of the whole human being in the world, is something no one can stop. Those who attempt to hamper the natural process are the ones whose narrow minded and selfish interest is threatened by the integration; those who have ill-gained edge and false sense of security from the artificial partition separated human being from another. The people whose life is dedicated to the creation of great artistic works, the advancement of science and technology, and the development of better human life condition, are people who conceive that the integration is something imperative and should be systematically realized as soon as possible; the carefully planned integration is prerequisite to solve many problems in the world. Their work and dedication have made them for long the active participants in the making of a new era, a new enriched world where every body is free from the unnecessary burden of history, from any illegitimate pain inflicted by powerful party, and has a chance to fully realize all of her potential.***
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The national development and Problems of Socio-Economic Divide at South Korea

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South Korea is one of the so-called “Four Tigers” in terms of the high economic growth. Most scholars agree that economic developmental achievement of South Korea since 1960s was a miracle. Actually, fueled by high economic growth in the country, in particular the 1980s represented a time of betterment of life for many South Koreans. Behind like this economic development, there were a state's efforts to catch up the developed countries.

However the socio-economic divide is stated as serious social problems at the society of South Korea in these days. In particular, some economic inequalities such as the sector of income-division at labor activity and education.

Firstly, in terms of educational inequality, during the past few decades South Korea has experienced a remarkable expansion in its educational system, distinctive that there has been an extraordinary increase in both quantity and quality of education. Educational policies have emphasized equality of educational opportunity rather than competition and growth at the point of view of meritocracy. But the recent research of Inequality Study in Korea shows trends in the influence of social background at social class. In other words, as the market education has been expanded since economic crisis at 1997, parents invested a lot of money to private schools for pass of university admission examination. On the other hand, as the result of inequality of income-divide, poor parents could not afford to send their children at private schools. The difference of income at social class made educational inequality at the aspect of quality of education

Secondly, there is the problem of industrial relation which is related to income-division at labor activity. Confrontations between labor and management in South Korea became particularly keener in 1987, which was a
turning point in employer-employee relations in the country. These disputes, in a society where employer-centered labor policies have traditionally been conspicuous, are considered as a significant obstacle of further socio-economic development of South Korea. Solving the confrontations between labor and management is the role of South Korea’s national government.

In order to restrain the expansion of socio-economic divide, above two problems are the most significant thesis of social policy research. After considering the socio-economic situation at present, I am noticing three theses below.

1. Education and Human Resource Development
2. Labor Policy and reform of economy structure
3. Realizing Civil Society

As I think three subjects are useful theme to understand the present and future of South Korea, I would like to discuss about those theses in Forum.

Mr. YOON graduated Inje University in 1998. After studying at East Asia Institute, Cambridge University, UK, he acquired his MA in Education at Tokyo University Graduate School in 2002 and credits for his doctorate course in 2006. He is currently enrolled in PhD program in International Relations at Graduate School of Asia-Pacific Studies, Waseda University. He is also teaching at Rissho University as a lecturer.
Introduction

This paper discusses on conservation issues of the built and socio-cultural environment historic towns of Luang Prabang in Laos and Hoi An in Vietnam. Both towns are living heritage and UNESCO World Heritage Sites (see photo 1-3 on the next page). These two towns are water based settlements, but hold different social and economic function. Luang Prabang use to be ancient capital of ancient Lanxang Kingdom of Laos. Hoi An, on the other hand, was commercial and agricultural center in central Vietnam.

What does conservation means to human development?

Conservation of cultural heritage has thin and thick meaning. The former deals with physical appearance of built environment. The later places emphasis on underneath knowledge, concept and philosophy, which may be interpreted through physical character of cultural heritage itself and story or memory attached to them (Figure 1).

The aim of conservation work is not to freeze physical appearance, but to record the knowledge and success of civilization in the past and present hand on the following generations. Furthermore, the cultural heritage conservation should be integrated to other aspect of development of well-being of mankind. In Laos, the Government of Laos adopts the Triangular Model of development, in which balance is made from economic, socio-cultural development and conservation of environment and natural resource (Lao PDR NGPRS).
How can careful planning help balancing development and conservation?

Tourism is normally considered as economic driving force for cultural heritage site. This is a case both in Luang Prabang and Hoi An. Observation made in Fall 2005 and Spring 2006 in investigate impact of tourism on conservation of tangible and intangible heritage in both World Heritage sites of Luang Prabang and Hoi An respectively. The observation found that conservation of physical appearance in both cases is considerably success. Indeed, tourism helps to generate income for local community. In Hoi An, it seems tourism matches well with commercial-oriented community. It helps to enhance commercial activity and development local product. In Luang Prabang, on the other hand, mass tourism considerably has negative impact to the spirit of the religious-oriented community.

Characteristics of conservation work and tourism development in both cases are summarized as followed:

In Luang Prabang:
- Community facilities and public/common space tend to be replaced by tourist-oriented activities;
- Local residents tend to replaced by new comer with gentrification phenomena;
- New coming residents less participate in traditional practice. Therefore, local intangible heritage, Buddhist tradition for instance, tend to be change.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Thin conservation</th>
<th>Thick conservation</th>
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<tr>
<td>Appearance</td>
<td>Meaning</td>
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<td>Material</td>
<td>Underneath concept, philosophy</td>
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<td>Building ornament</td>
<td>Undiscovered knowledge</td>
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<td>Building form and space</td>
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<td>Content</td>
<td>Environmental composition that creates “Sense of Place”</td>
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<td>Activities</td>
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<td>Memory attached to place</td>
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Figure 1 Meaning of conservation
Hoi An:
- Tourism has enhanced economic activity and livable atmosphere of the town,
- Living museum program may cause unsatisfying for local residents who needs their living privacy

Lessons can be learned from the two cases of study. First, community based tourism should takes privacy and benefit of local residents as priority. This may encourage local residents not to move out and continuously develop their community. Second, mix land use zoning may help various activities possible, and help cultural diversity exist. Third, finding economic function that fit heritage site is of importance. Harmony of people living in architecture in enclosed natural is seed for sustainable development of cultural heritage site.
Toward integrated framework for studying on development and conservation of historic site
Conservation of historic town should be an integral part of coherent policies of economic and social development and of urban and regional planning at every level. The historic character of the town or urban area, not only physical element but also spiritual ones that express the character should be preserved (ICOMOS). In other word, conservation should not limited on appearance or physical environment, but need to enhance interpretation of underneath meaning of a single cultural heritage and environment. Taking this into account, a comprehensive framework to study of heritage site should be proposed (Figure 2). Rather than multi-discipline, the framework should be considered in trans-discipline manner to aims to fill the knowledge gap in between different disciplines.

![Figure 2: Framework for study of place](image)

Conclusion
Observing conservation work and tourism development in two case studies of living cultural heritage site in Southeast Asia, this paper conclude that:

Harmony of people living in architecture in enclosed natural environment is only way toward a sustainable development. Balancing economic globalization and cultural localization is way of harmonization that will assist diverse culture coexist.

Comprehensive framework of trans-discipline approach should be adopt in study of cultural heritage site.
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Dr. CHITHPANYA acquired his BA in Architecture, Ecole Superieur du Batiment et de l'Architecture in 1991 and MA in Architectural Engineering, Osaka University in 2001. He was awarded his PhD in Architectural Engineering, Osaka University in 2004. He is currently Head of the Division of Research and Post Graduate and a lecturer of the Faculty of Architecture, National University of Laos. Focus of research is on historical architecture and integrated conservation of cultural heritage.
Country Paper

Beeya CHIEBRIEKAO (Laos)
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Human being around the world have learnt the process of Human society for many million years through history, social relation started from outdated economy to modern economy with technological science and culture especially the 21st Century which is the Century of Human related achievement. These achievements are Creative ideas and intellect of young people across the world because young people are national future and leading group who would like to know, to see, to touch, and to try on new things. Besides they would like to have freedom and to coexist peacefully with real love regardless national, race, culture, spoken language and residential location.

Location and terrain
The Lao P D R is located in the heart of Indochina Peninsula in Southeast Asia. It is only Southeast Asian country without direct access to the sea. Laos encompasses a total of 236 800 square kilometers, shares border with China to the north, with Vietnam to the east, with Cambodia to the south, with Thailand to the west and with Myanmar to the northwest.

People and Population
There are 5 609 997 people in Lao, the population consists of 49 ethnic groups, in 4 main linguistic families : the Lao-Tai Family, the Mone-Khmer Family, the Tibeto-Buremese Family and the Hmong-Loumien Family.

These multi-ethnic people are scattered across the country each with their own unique traditions, culture and language, but Lao language is the national language.

Religion
Buddhism and Animism are the oldest religions in Lao. Buddhism first appeared in Laos during the eighth century, it is the professed religion of about 80% of Lao
people. Buddhism is an inherent feature of daily life and casts a strong influence on Lao society. Furthermore there are also some religions in Laos.

**Art and Culture**

Lao has rich cultural heritage with religious art and architecture forming the cornerstone of artistic traditions. The exists across the country a plethora of distinctive monuments and architectural styles. One of the most notable structures is That Luang, the great Sacred stupa, in Vientiane.

Religious influences are also pervasive in classical Lao literature. Another excellent example of the richness of Lao culture is the folk music which is extremely popular with the people throughout the whole country the principle instrument is the khaen a wind instrument which comprises a double row of Bamboo-like reeds fitted in a hardwood sound box. The Khean is often accompanied by a bowed string instrument or saw. The national folk dance is the lamvong a circle dance in which people dance circles around each other so that ultimately there are three circles a circle dance by the individual, another one by the couple and a third one dance by the whole party.

**Common Courtesies**

Lao people are frank open and friendly they possess a strongly developed sense of courtesy and respect. The generally accepted from the greeting among Lao people is the nop. It is performed by placing one’s palm together in position of praying at chest level, but not touching the body. The higher the hands the greater the sign of respect. Nonetheless the hand should not be held above the level of the nose. The nop is accompanied by the slight bow to show respect to persons of higher status and age. It is also used as an expression of thank, regret or saying good-bye. But with western people it is acceptable to share hands.

**Event and Festival**

Lao people cerebrate many annual festivals called Boun. Most festivals are connected with religion and the yearly rice farming cycle. The timing of the festivals is calculates according to the Buddhist lunar calendar.

Example: Pi Mai Lao’s new year. Pi Mai is cerebrated at the same time each year (April 13- 15). On the 13th Buddha images are taken out of the temples to be cleansed with scented water by devotees, and placed on special
temporarily altars within the the compounds of wats (temples). Devotees to take home and use it to pour on friends and relatives as an act of cleansing and purification before entering the new year. On the evening of the 15th the images are returned to their proper shriners within the temples.

In traditional homes one sits on low seats or cushions on the floor. Men usually sit with their legs crossed or folded to one side, women prefer solely the latter. Upon entering guests may be served fruit or tea. These gestures of hospitality should not be refused.

Since the head is considered the most sacred part of the body and the siles of feet the least one should not touch a person head not use one's foot to poit at a person or any object. Moreover men and women rarely show affection in public. It is also forbidden for a woman to touch a Buddhist monk.

- Hmong New Year: The Hmong new year cerebration features colorful displays of traditional costumes made from green, red and white silk and ornate silver jewelry. Music from traditional Hmong instruments such as the teun-flute, Hmong style knene pipe and leave blowing is enjoyed. Other festivities include the Makkhon (cotton-ball) throwing ceremony, ox fighting, spinning-top races and crossbow demonstrations.

**Conclusion**

Society is a relation between people and people, so the relationship of people for a long time culture could occur from each group of people, because culture is fair of mind and fair of matter.

Lao people have right to believe in religion or do not believe in religion, but disallow any one disdains other religion and advertises religion and persuade another one to leaf his or her own religion then believe in another religion.

The Lao government always educate and encourage Lao people especially Young people for conservation national culture and each ethnic group's culture with Laotians forever, because Lao People think that disappear culture disappear mother's land or nation.
Mr. CHIEBRIEKAO holds a BA in Administrative Law. He is currently the Director of Personnel Division, Lao Revolutionary Youth Union. He has made efforts to encourage young people to contribute to national development and conservation of Lao culture.
GROWING up a non-Muslim in Malaysia from the 1970s onwards, it was not difficult to be prejudiced against Islam.

There were enough examples of polygamous Muslim men to ensure that no non-Muslim parent wanted their daughters to date or marry a Muslim. At the same time, my own experiences of Islam as a young adult was of a religion that forced women to cover up, and in several instances while in university, even I was told I had to cover up.

Today, significant sections of Malay Muslims in Malaysia, including those in UMNO – the dominant Malay-based party in the ruling coalition – are using Islam as a way to enforce difference with non-Muslim Malaysians and emphasise the right to special privileges.

For example, while Islam is the federation’s official religion for ceremonial purposes, Malaysia is constitutionally a secular state. However, since former premier Dr Mahathir Mohamad declared in 2001 that Malaysia was an “Islamic state” – as part of a political strategy to gain an upper-hand over his opponents in the Islamist party PAS – increasing attempts have been made by the state, the judiciary, politicians and Muslim interest groups to redefine our constitution more aggressively.

As a result, we’ve experienced over the past two to three years situations where non-Muslim women have been asked to refer the breakup of their civil marriage with a newly-converted Muslim husband to the syariah court. Families have also had to battle with the Islamic authorities to bury a loved one because a conversion purportedly occurred before the person’s demise even though no attempt was made to alert family members.

At the same time, Muslims who freely choose to leave the religion are threatened with detention without trial at faith rehabilitation centres and have their children taken away from them. In the high-profile case of Lina Joy, a born-Muslim who was told she could not leave Islam without the syariah court’s permission, Joy not only failed to get justice through the Federal
Court, she was also so vilified by Muslim groups, she left the country for her own safety.

Meanwhile, Muslims last year were told not to wish their Hindu friends a “Happy Deepavali”; non-Muslim school children are directed not to bring pork in their lunch boxes; and some Muslims actually lobbied for the animated movie *Babe* (about a piglet) to be banned.

In the face of injustice in the name of Islam, Malaysians – progressive Muslims and concerned non-Muslims – are continuously told they cannot talk about these “sensitive” issues or challenge the state because we are not experts in Islam and can even be accused of insulting the religion. Death threats have even been issued against Muslims intellectuals who speak up against unjust practices perpetuated in the name of Islam.

**Writing about a just Islam**

As a non-Muslim journalist writing on Islam, I have been guided by the principle that Islam is, in fact, a religion that upholds justice, peace and fairness. It is a religion that historically gave birth to and nurtured great civilisations because of its ability to accept and respect difference – not just in other religions but also within the different schools of Islamic thought.

It has been my privilege to learn about a just and richly diverse Islam because of my exposure to groups like Sisters in Islam in Malaysia, and to Muslim intellectuals from Malaysia and abroad. It is also a privilege to write about a just Islam in a country where the normative practices enforced by the state and Muslims themselves, in the name of Islam, only breed further misunderstanding and prejudice about the religion.

A non-Muslim who writes about a just and fair Islam does several things, in my experience. It creates non-proselytising discourse, and hence opportunities for other non-Muslims to learn about Islam without suspicion. It demonstrates that a non-Muslim is just as qualified as a Muslim to ask questions about the religion without threatening the peace between different communities. And perhaps, most importantly, when relationships are frayed between Muslims and non-Muslims because of contentious high-profile cases, it provides an example of how non-Muslims are not ever ready to vilify Islam.

Obviously, several challenges, as listed below, exist for anyone who wants to write about Islam in a country where the religion is increasingly being politicised by the state, political parties and conservative, sometimes even
fascist, interests.

>> Who speaks for a particular religion? Who decides who is qualified?
Non-Muslims are deemed “unqualified” to speak or write about Islam even if one is an Islamic scholar. In comparison, as an environmental journalist for the most part of my career, nobody ever questioned my abilities even though I was not an environmentalist.

>> How do we put out the views of different groups if, for example, the views are bigoted and seditious?
How do we balance, on one hand, between the need for people to know what these groups are about and how they use religion for a hateful purpose and on the other hand, the need to not inflame a public debate further?

>> Which groups represent legitimate voices?
Does an anti-interfaith commission group in Malaysia called BADAI represent a valid voice for Muslims? How do we decide if we should engage in dialogue with them? Because they can rally hundreds of protestors to the streets and break up a peaceful Article 11 forum on Constitutional rights for all Malaysians?

>> Which groups are influencing government or political parties with their advocacy?
Can we question and hold accountable these relationships? For example, a group called Mothers in Iman was reported to have made a representation to the Home Minister, after which the Prime Minister bans all Article 11 forums following a supreme council meeting of UMNO, which both ministers belong to. How can progressive groups also hold these kinds of dialogue with the state?
Creating safe spaces for dialogue

When the state fails to engage in or initiate meaningful interfaith dialogue to resolve issues arising from the politicisation of Islam, it is citizens, both Muslim and non-Muslims, who need to show in very ordinary ways that they are willing to be fair, just and compassionate in their treatment of each other. In many ways, it is the initiative and conviction of non-state individuals and organisations which are creating safe spaces for interfaith dialogue to happen.

For example, in September this year, despite being vilified by some Muslims, Marina Mahathir held a public multi-faith thanksgiving to pray for the recovery and good health of her father, the former premier, following bypass surgery. And to mark International Human Rights Day, the Malaysian Bar Council organised on Dec 9 the Festival of Rights, which among others, featured a multi-religious panel discussion, “When Faith Meets Law”, on the freedom of conscience.

Supporting these initiatives must be the responsibility of all faith communities because they form the platform for which peaceful and meaningful dialogue can happen.

Ms. SURIN acquired her BA in Media Studies, University of Malaya in 1994 and MA in Media Studies, University of Sussex in 1996. She also studied journalism at the University of Maryland, College Park as a Hubert Humphrey Fellow from 2001 to 2002. In 2007, she received the Excellence in Opinion Writing Award from the Society of Publishers in Asia for her Shape of a Pocket column in theSun. Interests include Islam, human rights, civil liberties and current issues.
To begin to define “Malaysian culture” is an exercise in futility as to define a particular “Malaysian-ness” will inevitably exclude certain groups or minorities that make up the rich cultural make-up of the country. At the official level, the cultural and economic policies that define such terms are outdated.

And this is where the official definitions of what constitutes what cultural practices are “Malaysian” or not is often at odds with what is popularly experienced and defined by the average Malaysian. In many ways, Malaysia's official cultural ‘guardians’ are still grappling with post-colonial cultural identity crisis akin to that of a youth who is experiencing their first whiff of independence from the safe confines of home.

Capitalism has played a major role in defining what is acceptable or not in the Malaysian public sphere. For example, traditional cultural practices like dances and performances have been mostly disembodied and removed from their original contexts and displaced in spaces of commerce such as shopping malls and tourism cultural shows.

Ironically, there is a high chance that it is at these sites where the average Malaysian citizen/consumer would have experienced such performances first hand. Certain aspects of traditional Malays traditions such as the wayang kulit (shadow play) and mak yong have been deemed ‘un-Islamic’ because they refer to the Malay’s pre-Islamic past and have been subjected to modification or bans.

The problem in defining ‘acceptable’ cultural practices in Malaysia is made more difficult by the outdated and undemocratic policies that govern and give power to the ruling majority Malays elites to define what is ‘acceptable’ or not. An example would be the Natinal Cultural Policy that has never been amended or updated since 1972 and was tabled without the presence of all ethnic groups. And in a country where one’s religious belonging and identity is pre-determined by what ethnic groups you belong to (notably the Malay
majority, who are automatically Muslim at birth), recognition of one's own diversity, complex and dynamic cultural make-up and history is embroiled in bureaucratic rhetoric and restrictions. The very fact that civil and syariah (Islamic law) exists at odds with each other illustrates the ‘control freak’ nature of the dominant hegemony that often interferes with dialogue and platforms to discuss and embrace differences and diversity.

Youths are often at the brunt of such undemocratic practices. Often scapegoats for the nation’s ‘social ills’, ‘acceptable’ youth cultures tend to be ones that are marketable and commercial and nature, sidelining the real concerns and expressions. The narratives written about ‘youth problems’ in Malaysia have often been driven by the subtext of economic utility (e.g.: youths ‘hanging out’ in shopping malls are counter productive because they are not participating in an economic endeavor such as shopping). What is missing, I feel, is the need to engage in what youths generally have to say about their own challenges in growing up in a rapidly changing society that is grappling with the rigors of post-colonialism, industrialization and rapid urbanization. These can effectively condition them ideologically and politically to particular leanings that may or may not alienate them in the long run.

A trend has emerged in regard to issues concerning music subcultures. Unfounded and overblown charges of associating music subcultures with ‘immoral’ activities have been etched into the popular Malaysian psyche. Various models have been adopted by the state through the media to put a face on these so-called moral panics by appropriating the fashion and styles of music subcultures. Western popular culture has often had a volatile relationship notably with the conservative hegemony and the controversy surrounding the introduction new popular forms are frequently represented as a form of moral panic. From the mid to the late 1990s, music genres such as rap, hip-hop, heavy metal and punk have taken the center stage of personifying the rhetoric concerning ‘social problems regarding the nation’s youth’.

Such forms of cultural expressions and practices need to be accepted at the official level as part and parcel of the dynamic cultural landscape (and defined beyond the West vs. East dialectic) as more basic and pressing issues such as religious freedom are intrinsically linked to a democratic shaping of national and regional cultural identities.
Full name: Mohd. Azmyl Bin Md Yusof. Obtained a diploma from Taylor’s College, Malaysia in 1999. He acquired his BA in Mass Communication, Curtin University, Australia in 1999 and MA in Communication, RMIT University, Australia, in 2002. He is currently a solo singer-songwriter (under the name Azmyl Yunor) and a lecturer at Taylor’s University College, Malaysia.
Religion, a cultural universe, consists of belief and behavior concerned with supernatural beings, powers and forces. Cross-cultural studies have revealed many functions of religion. The most primitive form of religion is belief in souls. Thus religion evolved from animism through polytheism to monotheism. Religions offer comfort and psychological security at time of crisis.

In East Asia traditional animism, ancestor-worship and Buddhism had been accepted since ancient time. After the World Wars and modernization, western culture and religion were introduced and practiced among the so-called modernized members of East Asian society. Since that time the conventional people were not able to bear with alien culture and new religion. After sometime the secular-stress pushed to be born the regional extremism. There may be one of the reasons when the innovation or modernization of society can not achieve intellectual desire, regional extremism turn to the development of traditional ways.

There are taking place positive and negative impacts of globalization on inter-religious relations. It is understandable via by creating of examples.

One positive impact is people come to know and understand about each religious statement and communicate with each other. It is easy to know what are the differences each other, how regarding people behave in their religious society then people can learn from the one's personal behavior to the whole religious world.

For negative impact of view, it depends on individual evaluation. If one person is extremely believed in one religion then he will contrive and think for weakness of other. Another negative impact is transition to another religion. If one person has got to understand and pleased about another religion, then he may transmit what he wanted to believe. So he will discard his traditional
Inter-faith Dialogue

religion easily.

Whatever it is saying in different religions each of them has similar common ground facts which based upon tolerance and compassion for weak. Every society or any religions have specific duties and responsibilities of tolerance and compassion for ignorance. And peaceful society made up of peaceful families continuing to exist for long by performing these duties and responsibilities. As there are specific duties and responsibilities between parents and children towards each other so also are there between teachers and pupils.

On attaining maturity and compassion towards each other, man and wife need tolerance and compassion towards each other. They try to build up a good family by discharging the respective duties in all seriousness.

In the field of social relations, every religion has their respect for elder, regard for the persons of the same age and sympathy for young ones.

So these duties and responsibilities of tolerance and compassion for weak are kept on by successive generations and then upheld and handed down to the succeeding generation in every religion.

Many non-industrial states have had a state religion managed by specialized religious officials. State religion has often been used to maintain social order and stratification. But some state-organized societies never developed a state religion.

For one nation, the importance of relationship between state and religion is not essentially necessary to lay down a national religion but to allow freely belief. For example, in Myanmar the Buddhism is convinced of almost populations like national attribute but the state allows other religions to be believed. It would be egalitarian patronage to all the citizens and avoiding religious conflict.

Ms. Hnin Myat Thu received her BA in Public Administration and post graduate diploma in Applied Archaeology. She is currently Assistant Lecturer at the Field School of Archaeology in Pyay and also at the Department of Archaeology, National Museum and Library of the Ministry of Culture, while doing her research on the Pagan Kingdom.
Inter-societal Dialogue

Ni Ni Lwin (Myanmar)
Assistant Director, Department of Social Welfare,
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Myanmar is a country with high cultural standards and a long history. It has sustained its tradition and culture. In Myanmar, there are seven states and seven divisions, all enjoying equal status. The major ethnic groups are Kachin, Kayah, Kayin, Chin, Bamar, Mon, Rakhine and Shan. There are about 135 minority ethnic groups. They have cultures of their own that progressively emerge through ages.

As culture is essential for the stability of any society and nation, it is significant that indeed cultural conditions greatly influence man's environment. Culture provides the norms that unite people in the present and in the generations that follow. Culture also gives peace and stability. So, any governing bodies should identify all its ethnic groups in terms of ethnicity, race or religion.

In Myanmar society, as social practices: tradition of close family ties, tradition of respect for the elders, reverence for Buddhism, extended family type and simple native dress can be seen. The head of household is usually “father” but “mother” plays a major role in rearing children and expected by the custom and tradition to control the purse, prepare food and look after children. Myanmar family pattern is a close relationship with uncles, aunts and cousins. Parental obligations to the children continue until they come of age and get married or else secured and promising employment is one of the basic factors of why they enjoy the extended family type.

Though the dominant race is Bamar, and the Language of Myanmar as an official Language and medium of instruction in schools, the literature and culture committee of each major groups of nationalities are formed to sustain their ways and traditions, culture and language is a significance practice in Myanmar.

Duties of each party is guided: duties of parents, duties of sons and daughters, duties of teachers, duties of pupils, duties of superiors, duties of
husband and duties of wife. They are the social laws morally binding upon the parties concerned. They contribute to the advancement of a stable family life and help to prevent social evils. Social obligations prescribed by Buddhism to be observed in relations among family members, teachers, elders, students, superiors, etc, are respected and practiced by Myanmar in their every day life is one of the significances.

Moreover, loving kindness, compassion, rejoicing over other's success, indifference between poverty and richness are four noble states of mind which people try to precise and follow. One of the customary teachings, which says: be humble to those senior in age, pay respect to those of the same age and have sympathy on those junior in age can prove how Myanmar has mutual respect in accordance with the moral conduct. These kinds of social duties have been taken into account among the youths since they were very young.

Social practices, rituals and festive events are habitual activities that structure the lives of communities and groups and that are shared by an relevant for large parts of them. They take their meaning from the fact that they reaffirm the identity of practitioners as a group or community. Performed in public or private, these social, ritual and festive practices may be linked to the life cycle of individuals and groups.

Due to the high and speedy advance of science and technology, a super-highway has come into being creating a borderless world. National barriers and man-made boundaries are rendered futile in this Age of Information Technology. The world has been reduced technologically to a village. It has become a global village. In such a global village, the process of globalization is bringing in opportunities as well as challenges. The most endangered challenge is cultural implications. Youths are the main target that cultural implications will hit hard. Under such circumstances, the strategy to respond to this challenge of globalization is preserving and strengthening of its own cultural heritage.

Generally speaking, there is a basic spirit in every culture. The basic spirit of Eastern culture is harmony with nature. In a country like Myanmar where Theravada Buddhism flourishes, not only that there is harmony with nature but also that there is inner harmony which is harmony within the mind of the people. To gain that inner harmony, the people are observing their morals in their daily life.

Culture can be viewed as ways of living together harmoniously. Therefore,
all of the countries have to be concerned of economic growth of the region, and national growth which are important for promoting and sustaining not only cultural values but also the development of own national cultures.

In doing so, among different nations and different cultures, the way of peacefully coexisting in harmony living is the most fitting way indeed for human society and will be beneficial for long. Holding the view that culture is the common platform to walk on together for peaceful coexistence among different nations, all countries share the common outlook to strengthening cultural exchange, reciprocal understanding and enhancement among different cultures on the basis of equal status and mutual regard.

The world today has the 21st century designated “the century of cultural peace.” For the emergence of a cultural world where peace prevails, there should be culture and peace in the mind of individual man. In Myanmar culture, Myanmar fine arts and performing arts, there are fine traditions, customs, morals, and education that contribute to culture and peace in the mind of individual man.

In conclusion, though globalization in Myanmar, the perception is not a deniable process but it should be fully aware to promote the patriotism and the value of human being. The genuine culture which calls for the essence of human being is in accordance with the teachings of Buddha. Every citizen is then expected to become the essence of their existence. That is why it is clearly pointed out that the essence of life is Sila (moral), the essence of wealth is Dana (donation), the essence of possessing the body isavana (meditation). They are the fundamental of Myanmar culture and it is always in the mind of Myanmar people to be culture with your behaviour, your speaking and your mind.

So, to be the whole world peaceful and prosperous, we need to have many respectable and noble minded persons. If each member of the family can mentally, verbally and physically behave well, the family and its relations will be well-behaved. When the relatives of many families are well-behaved and then we can make our environment to be blessed. The blessings we share among our superiors and elders can make the whole world blessed and bind with loving kindness. This can lead to the whole universe peaceful and non interference and free of terrorism.
Ms. Ni Ni Lwin holds an MA in Science (Physics) and has also received a Diploma in Applied Psychology in 2005 and Diploma in Social Work in 2007. She currently works as Assistant Director of the Department of Social Welfare and is involved in social and cultural training activities of youth.
Inter-societal Dialogue and the Value of the Concept of “Universals”

Charlotte BOYER (New Zealand)
Researcher, Security Monitor Research Unit,
Victoria University of Wellington

In an increasingly globalised world, societies are becoming more diverse, and individual societies and communities are having to interact with each other like never before. In the modern world, where encountering societal differences can scarcely be avoided, the ability to enter into respectful, constructive, and tolerant dialogue between societies and their members is an essential task. Inter-societal dialogue would prosper with the appropriate platforms, frameworks, and context to support it. However, the hard question is how do we facilitate these factors to create dialogue that is mutually productive for all those involved and sensitive to our region’s needs?

With such a diverse range of people, cultures and religions living in our region, it is deducible to seek “similarities” or “universals” to use as a common ground for dialogue and interaction. State and global multi agency initiatives promote “universals” as defined by values like “democracy”, “human rights” and the “rule of law”. The conceptual consistency these values may imply does not correlate to the concepts’ complexities. The idea of “universal values” is a controversial topic, and their very existence is highly debated. However, debating the existence of “universal values” is counter-productive for inter-societal dialogue. The inclusion of some sort of “values” within a framework for supporting dialogue has beneficial pragmatic outcomes. The positive implications of their inclusion warrant temporarily suspending philosophical debates on their existence.

Pursuing dialogue with a common commitment towards a set of “values” provides security and protection to the communities and people involved. It makes available a position for fostering mutual trust and respect. However, with accepting that “universal values” have a place within the framework for inter-societal dialogue, it is vital that we are aware of the limitations and risks of operating within such a framework.
If we propose certain “values” as “universals” for an operative purpose, we should be aware that they are nonetheless intricately and inseparably linked to various symbols distinctive to each society. Thus, some key issues need to be addressed within any proposed system based on “universal values”. Questions such as:

- What are the limits on “cultural relativism”, are these two concepts contradictory?
- How do we celebrate difference when operating within a system of similarities, does this limit our ability to make the most of the richness of cultural diversity?
- How do we maintain a commitment to inclusive dialogue with the clear limitations of tolerance that universal values impose, in that, are those who operate outside the “values” automatically excluded from participating in dialogue? This question is particularly important when inter-societal dialogue is used as a tool for conflict resolution.

Perhaps the most pivotal question is who defines what “values” are “universal”? For the context of this forum, one of the purposed discussion questions was; Can universal values such as democracy, the rule of law and human rights be a common platform in the region? Meaning, are these “values” compatible to our region’s needs? Is there discrepancy between Western and Asian values, are these “universal values” mentioned above an expression of “Western dominance”? If so, how do we construct a meaningful set of “values” to use as a platform in our region, but which maintains their compatibility to values outside our region?

For example, if we take the notion of “Human Rights” advocated by institutions such as the UN, which do provide people with benefits, we need to question whether the values of the traditional cultures in our region are adequately recognised and respected. The notion of “Human Rights” emerged in a particular social, economic, cultural, and political context; does this notion integrate with diverse traditional moral and ethical values? One argument suggests that the circumstances that promoted the institutionalization of “Human Rights” in the West do not necessarily exist everywhere. For example, the importance of the “community” in Asian cultures is incompatible with the primacy of the “individual”, upon which “Human Rights” are constructed. On the other hand, some would argue that the protection and freedom of the
“individual” does not translate to the destruction of the “community”. Such issues cannot be reconciled hastily.

The only way to approach the debates on how to define values to use as an operative ideal and to expand their potential is to approach and understand “universal values” as concepts that are not immutable or absolute. They are rather; evolving outcomes of negotiations based as much on complementarities as they are commonalities. Their complementarities allow us to utilize cultural diversity, and the commonalities provide a platform for mutual trust and respect.

Developing the effectiveness of inter-societal dialogue in our region opens up our framework to institutions beyond our region and will eventually allow for greater integration of our region's perspectives, and would lead to a more comprehensive view of the above “values”.

Ms. BOYER received her BA with a double major in Religious Studies and Media Studies in 2003 and BA Hons in Religious Studies in 2004. She received her MA in Religious Studies in 2006. She is currently a researcher at Security Monitor Research Unit, Victoria University of Wellington. Her main interest is in diverse cultures and religions and is actively involved in interfaith activities.
Inter-faith Dialogue: Across the Divide

Rehanna Maria Yasina ALI (New Zealand)
Regional Representative, Islamic Women’s Council of New Zealand and Council Member, International Muslim Association of New Zealand

Lying at the edge of the Pacific Rim of Fire, Aotearoa New Zealand is a country of meeting places. The great Pacific and Australia tectonic plates met here, slowly pushing up against one another for thousands of years creating a series of geological faultlines that run throughout the land.

The indigenous Maori and settler European peoples met here and formed a nation state under the auspices of the Treaty of Waitangi designed to incorporate ideas of ethnic, cultural and religious pluralism. At times we have been true to these principles and at times we have failed, and this too has created its own set of faultlines running through the social fabric of our nation.

And in the last three decades New Zealand has become the meeting place of an increasingly diverse population through birth, migration and refugee intake, transforming Auckland city into the most diverse metropolis in the Pacific Australasian region. However the demographic reality of diversity does not necessarily imply a corresponding attitudinal shift in the way we perceive ourselves, our communities and our sense of national self. Once again faultlines appear as we, one of the youngest nations represented at this Forum, take this next step in our evolution as a society.

This dichotomy between an objective actuality and a subjective comprehension is also reflected in the international arena where increasing globalisation is often met with a responding retreat into tribalism. The personal and collective totems which represent this tribalism can often be nationalistic, ethnic, cultural, linguistic, gender or religious based.

Inter-faith dialogue is increasingly recognised within the local, national and international context as a highly effective means of traversing these faultlines. Interfaith dialogue establishes a framework within which a discussion may take place, it sets up parameters which ensure the discussion is a constructive one.
and not merely a platform for reiterating prejudice and fears. As individuals and communities so often we come to the process of dialogue prepared only to define our position but through the act of discourse we are lead to greater levels of discernment enabling us to refine those perspectives.

In the development of New Zealand’s Statement of Religious Diversity, a paper intended as a starting point for Government policy formulation and as a focal point for community discussion, the initial catalyst was the desecration of Jewish graves and an assault on Muslim youth.

At a regional level the tragedy of the Bali bombings lead to the establishment of the Asia-Pacific Interfaith Dialogue meetings. Similarly at an international level we see the Alliance of Civilisations initiative forged in an attempt to counter the growing disintegration of the international community.

Interfaith has become a means of reconciliation, a response to discord with an invitation to engage. Too often the public discourse on religion is monopolised by the competing goliaths of apathy and extremism. Interfaith dialogue in this context becomes a path of mediation, a recognition of the interconnected nature of our common human tribe. The Swedish based intellectual Dr Tariq Ramadan refers this as moving beyond the “us and them” and conceiving of a revised perception of “we”.

Interfaith dialogue is also very much a work in progress. It is the human geography which challenges us in the balances we seek to achieve.

How to engage those who profess no belief, in a faith-based conversation (this category constituted the fastest growing religious grouping in New Zealand’s last census)? How to move from a functional religious tolerance to an empathic religious tolerance or even beyond tolerance? Where do we begin to distinguish between religious pluralism and religious universalism? To what extent can inter-faith dialogue be utilised in conflict resolution? Can religious groups work to a common purpose in the light of their respective absolutisms? What of contrasting models of western and eastern secularism? How to navigate between religious paradigms of assimilation, isolation and integration?

Interfaith dialogue does not necessarily provide the answers to these challenges but it does establish the rules of engagement which in turn creates the space in which we can posit such questions.

During a recent visit to the region the American Muslim woman journalist Tayyaba Taylor commented that our unity is not contingent upon
our conformity. Interfaith dialogue enables us to reach out across the divide that we sometimes perceive diversity to be, and to realise that the distances between us are not as great as the issues which require our common passion.

Ms. ALI obtained her LLB in British Common Law and Islamic Shariah. She is Regional Representative for Islamic Women's Council of New Zealand and Council Member of International Muslim Association of New Zealand. She is also Project Manager for TTT Ltd., a New Zealand based organization specializing in management of development programs.
An artist at a time of war

Gutierrez M. MANGANSAKAN II (Philippines)
Independent journalist and filmmaker

I am an accidental filmmaker.

Intent on becoming a neurosurgeon, I was already halfway through a preparatory course for medicine in a university in Davao—a city an hour and a half away by airplane, south of Manila—when fate introduced me to Fellini and Ozu at a film festival in the capital in 1995. I was so enthralled by their films that by the time I returned to Davao, I shifted courses and became a Communication Arts major.

After college I went to Manila to study filmmaking in 1997, but it took me three more years to make my first film.

While my classmates ventured into commercial movie-making, I found myself traveling back to Mindanao to work as a freelance writer. In 2000—a period which I initially planned to be a sabbatical—I returned to my hometown in Pagalungan, Maguindanao, right at the heart of the Moro homeland. I wanted to rediscover my roots after living more than sixteen years in the city.

In college I learned that the Moro (Muslim Filipinos) people had been waging a war to reclaim their homeland. I also discovered that it was actually my grandfather, Datu Udtog Matalam, who founded the Muslim Independence Movement in 1968, which was the precursor of the modern Moro liberation movements.

I grew up in a red house in Pagalungan. It was an imposing structure not only because of its size but because it seemed out of place in an agricultural town that had witnessed more than its share of armed conflict in the last forty years.

I moved to the city to attend school in 1981. The following year, my grandfather suffered a stroke that left him bedridden for the rest of his life. We would come home every now and then to visit him. It was actually during those long afternoons that I kept watch over him that my dream of becoming a doctor took shape. By December that year, my grandfather passed away.

In April 2000, barely a month since my arrival in my hometown, President
Joseph Estrada declared an “all-out war” against the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF), a separatist organization fighting for an independent Muslim state in Mindanao. While recurrent conflict between the Philippine government and Moro groups, including the MILF, has displaced millions of people, nothing could surpass the destructive effects of the war in 2000 when an estimated 900,000 people were forced to leave their homes. The refugees settled in over-crowded evacuation centers, oftentimes in unsanitary conditions. Aside from bullets and bombs, they also had to contend with the threats of disease and famine.

It seemed that the most natural thing for the family to do was open my grandfather’s house to all refugees. It took only a few hours for the number of refugees to swell, reaching tens of thousands. Armed with a borrowed video camera, I took footages of the daily lives of the refugees in my grandfather’s house. This I did religiously for three months, with no idea what to do with the tapes, only to preserve the digital images as memory.

It was at the height of the war that I shot my first film *House Under the Crescent Moon*.

*House Under the Crescent Moon* is a personal reflection on the Moro people’s struggle for their homeland, using my grandfather’s house as metaphor. I juxtaposed my personal experience in the house with historical events to weave a lyrical portrait of our collective dream for lasting peace. Made in a very crude fashion, the film contrasted my childhood memories in the house with its state as an evacuation center.

My hometown has since become fertile ground for inspiration in coming up with ideas for my succeeding films, work which I believe transcend the personal and acquire a universal resonance.

Looking back, I could see a pattern of change in my films and writings. *House Under the Crescent Moon* had an innocence, perhaps, a questioning of my Moro identity. It was an honest contemplation of my roots which had acquired a different character altogether in my virtual exile. On the other hand, my succeeding works were imbued with a deeper understanding of my identity which I accepted as a vital factor in achieving our people’s dreams.

In her article “Idol, Bestiary and Revolutionary: Images of the Filipino Woman in Film (1976-1986)”, Benilda Santos writes that “Cinema is a very powerful medium. It has been vested with the task of amplifying, flattening, lengthening, deepening, coloring or even blackening out or eclipsing a piece
or portion of reality being acted out before it”.

I remember seeing a 1964 movie poster featuring a burly, shirtless man wielding a machete, his head shaven, and his eyes full of terror. At his feet were dead people soaked in their own blood, a product of his murderous rampage. Splashed across the poster was the title: Moro Witch Doctor. That image left an indelible mark in people’s imagination, constructing a representative reality of the Moro through its creator’s seeming ignorance and bias.

Santos’s opinion is not only applicable to the representation of women in film but also of the Moro people. For years, cinema and media in general have painted and reinforced a negative image of the Moro people.

Painfully, while the conflict in Mindanao has its economic and historical roots, it is being reduced into a war between Muslims and Christians. Because of this, there is an apparent distrust between the two peoples. I remember in 2000, when I was filming in an evacuation center, the refugees were polarized. Muslims to the left side; Christians to the right side. When I asked, why the situation was like this, respondents told me that the media has portrayed the ‘other’ as the cause of the conflict and displacement. The other could not be trusted, they would all say.

In filmmaking and writing, they afford me the chance to create an honest representation of my people, infused with the right sensibility and character. It is an opportunity to correct the wrong ideas that my people hold that prevent them from making peace with others.

As a filmmaker and a writer, I fulfill my role to preserve the progress of events in our lives by being one with the people, whether they are Muslims or Christians. I use my craft to bridge the gap, bringing them closer to the achievement of our collective aspiration for lasting peace and development.

In the end, I hope that my films and writings become the bittersweet pill that will heal the unreasonable hatred, fear, and prejudice in the hearts of my people. If I can achieve this, my filmmaking will cease to become a product of accident. I will become the healer that I once dreamt of in my childhood.
Mr. MANGANSAKAN entered University of Southern Mindanao majoring in Journalism. He is currently an independent journalist and a filmmaker, specializing in the areas related to Mindanao, such as ethnic relations, regional and religious conflicts, and terrorism. Additionally, he is active in bridging Mindanao to Tagalog and international societies, taking part in publishing an anthology of young Muslim writers in Mindanao.
The Condition of Human Rights in the Philippines: Challenges and Prospects

Sarah Jane S. RAYMUNDO (Philippines)
Assistant Professor, Department of Sociology, University of the Philippines

The reflexive turn in the social sciences, particularly, in the discipline of Sociology has paved the way for a more relevant and committed social scientific practice. Reflexivity comes from the Latin word reflectere which means to bend backwards. The act of bending backwards is used as a metaphor for looking into the conditions of possibility of knowledge-production. This entails a thorough investigation of the social context of ideas.

Reflexivity as a working method therefore posits a vital question: What on the basis of Social Science research can be said about the human condition? Amidst widespread poverty, wars of aggression, dictatorial regimes and massive human rights violations, a return to the world of everyday existence armed with scientific thought that is sufficiently aware of its limits is very much needed from scholars and cultural workers.

One alarming feature of the human condition in the Philippines that has caught the attention of the international community is the current spate of extrajudicial killings and enforced disappearance under the Macapagal-Arroyo regime.

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo sworn herself to office after EDSA People Power II in 2001.¹ Since 2001, the victims of extrajudicial killings as of November 2007 has reached an alarming number of 887. The victims were civilian non-combatants and were all unarmed at the time of their killing. Of the 887 victims, 395 are human rights defenders, and 97 of whom are

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¹ “People Power” is the popular term used by Filipinos to refer to their collective action to oust an erring president. The first People Power uprising happened in 1986 when the Filipino people gathered together along EDSA (a major thoroughfare in Manila’s metropolitan center) in what was to be known as the Philippine’s “bloodless revolution” that toppled down the dictatorial regime of Ferdinand Marcos. In 2001, another movement for the ouster of Joseph Estrada took place at the EDSA shrine, the same place where the filipino people ousted Marcos in 1986.
women. 492 of the victims of extrajudicial killings are ordinary citizens with no affiliation to any kind of progressive or activist organization. Furthermore, 185 people since 2001 have been victims of enforced disappearance. Sixty two (62) of them are human rights defenders and 21 of these are women.²

Extrajudicial killings and enforced disappearance, however, are not something new to the Macapagal-Arroyo regime. These human rights violations committed against citizens are reminiscent of the torture, summary executions and abductions carried out during the dark years of Marcos’ Martial Law.

The present spate of political repression is an outcome of the Arroyo regime’s anti-insurgency program dubbed as Oplan Bantay Laya (OBL) (Operation Freedom Watch). Its implementation began in January 2002. Its primary targets were the suspected members of the Communist Party of the Philippines-New People’s Army-National Democratic Front (CPP-NPA-NDF). The OBL is supposed to be a comprehensive plan that was to put an end to the “people’s protracted war of the CPP-NPA within five years or more. The “end-game strategy” that is the OBL is considered by the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) as a “simple straightforward plan that is within [their] capacity and resolve to implement and sustain “(Conclusion, AFP Briefing, OBL-ISO).

Yet the killings have targeted leaders and members of above ground or legal organizations and officials of Left government parties. This new development shows how the OBL goes beyond its goal to counter insurgency. It, in fact, “highlights the anti-dissent (and not simply counter-insurgency) policy of the Philippine state.”³ The anti-dissent policy, as the scholar Neferti Tadiar explains,

“is in fact part of the pre-emptive strategy of the [state] to eliminate not only the actual efforts to seize state power, but additionally alternative representations of national and local interests, which challenge those proffered by the national elite and which might lead or contribute to those revolutionary efforts. In other words, the military objective is

² Figures from the Documentation Committee of KARAPATAN (Alliance for the Advancement of People’s Rights), as of October 2007.

not merely the elimination of counter insurgency but more broadly the elimination of any counter-hegemonic mode of political representation of the people and its implications for the practical interpretation and organization of “democracy”.

More and more, the state of human rights in the Philippines is believed to be a consequence of an undeclared Martial Law implemented by the Arroyo government. The term undeclared Martial Law is significant to our understanding of the two contradictory modes of governmentality that shape political life in the Philippines, that of dictatorship and democracy. The political survival of the Arroyo regime through its maintenance of the status quo, one that is constituted by state graft and corruption, severe poverty and social inequality and militarization, is underpinned in the continued implementation of the OBL. And thus, the continued killings and abductions of progressive citizens.

The military, however, has come up with an explanation for the current spate of extrajudicial killings and enforced disappearance. This is called the “purge theory” which identifies the CPP-NPA as the perpetrators. The latter, of course, denies this. Philip Alston, the United Nations Special Rapporteur on extrajudicial, summary or arbitrary executions in the Philippines released a comprehensive report on his mission to the Philippines entitled PROMOTION AND PROTECTION OF ALL HUMAN RIGHTS, CIVIL, POLITICAL, ECONOMIC, SOCIAL AND CULTURAL RIGHTS, INCLUDING THE RIGHT TO DEVELOPMENT. An excerpt from the summary this report states:

“The military is in a state of denial concerning the numerous extrajudicial executions in which its soldiers are implicated. Military officers argue that many or all of the extrajudicial executions have actually been committed by the communist insurgents as part of an internal purge. The NPA does commit extrajudicial executions, sometimes dressing them up as “revolutionary justice”, but the evidence that it is currently engaged in a large-scale purge is strikingly unconvincing. The military’s insistence that the “purge theory” is correct can only be viewed as a cynical attempt to displace responsibility.”

Meanwhile, the measures that government have taken have not succeeded.

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4 Ibid., 180-181.
5 Ibid, 181.
As the Chief of Staff of the Armed Forces of the Philippines, President Arroyo has done nothing to stop the military’s public vilification of ordinary citizens whom they suspect and tag as “enemies of the state.” Furthermore, it has not hindered the OBL from its fascistic operations. This reluctance on the part of the government may be attributed to its pledge of allegiance to the U.S. War on Terror which has instructed its allied nations like the Philippines to “crush terrorism” in its own territory. What is being crushed, however, are people’s civil liberties and their fundamental right to live.

Two students from my very own university, the University of the Philippines were abducted in Hagonoy, Bulacan on July 26, 2006. Sherlyn Cadapan and Karen Empeño did volunteer work for the Alliance of Farmers in Bulacan. In the course of their integration, the two were abducted and to this day, remain missing. A recent report from the Manalo brothers reveal that Karen and Sherlyn were kept in various military camps. In the hands of the military, the two young women live through torture, rape and sexual abuses. And it is largely for them, whom I have known and admired on a very personal basis, that I continue to seek for peace that is based on justice.

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6 An agricultural province in Central Luzon that was the target of militarization from 2006 to the present.
7 They are themselves victims of enforced disappearance and were detained and tortured in several military camps. They, however, managed to escape in July 2007.

Ms. RAYMUNDO acquired her BA in Sociology in 1998 and MA in Sociology in 2005. She is currently an Assistant Professor at the Department of Sociology, University of the Philippines. Her latest publication is “The Symptom Called Marketization” (2007). She is an associate of KARAPATAN (a nationwide alliance of human rights advocates in the Philippines) and the Secretary-General of Congress of Teachers/Educators for Nationalism and Democracy (CONTEND-UP).
Inter-societal Dialogue: Harmony Centre’s Perspective

*Tengku Suhailah Binte Tengku Kamarudin* (Singapore)
Executive, Harmony Centre, Islamic Religious Council of Singapore

Engaging people in dialogues across all levels of societies are important. Since my theme is inter-societal, let me first of all define what society is and what makes up of the society and then I will share what we have done here in Singapore.

Society can be defined as “an extended social group having a distinctive cultural and economic organization”. This shows that races, religion, educational institutions, governmental and non governmental agencies are without doubt, part of society.

I am currently serving at The Harmony Centre. This centre symbolises one of the Islamic Religious Council of Singapore’s (Muis) efforts to engender a greater understanding of Islam and Muslims amongst the multi-faith population of Singapore whilst promoting inter-faith dialogue and engagement at all levels of society towards stronger social cohesion.

The 2-storey Centre housed within An-Nahdhah Mosque invites its visitors to experience the essence, images, civilisation and lifestyle of Islam as they walk through its gallery. The Centre presents the universal message of Islam and the Islamic way of life. It also demonstrates how Muslims interact with other communities and contribute to human civilisation.

The Centre thrives to enliven interfaith understanding and embodies the spirit of how Muslims promote harmonious living with people of all creeds. This is done not only among people of faiths. We engage the Singapore community regardless of where they come from; government agencies, non-governmental organizations and educational institutions. This is done through programmes based the Centre’s 3 Thrusts Approach; Training, Learning and Engagement. Let me first of all share with you the objective of Harmony Centre and how do we achieve through our programmes.
Objectives of the Harmony Centre
The Main Aims of the Centre can be broadly categorised into:
- To promote a greater understanding of the true teachings of Islam;
- To promote inter-faith dialogue and engagement at all levels: leadership, community, grassroots, youths and students; through seminars, workshops, experiential learning journeys, visits etc.
- To strengthen the social bonding amongst the different faith communities so as to build a more cohesive and resilient society.

Programmes in the Harmony Centre
The programmes at Harmony Centre are clustered into three main thrusts. The Training cluster has the focus of building capacity in interfaith work whereas the Learning cluster aims to provide the initial platform for understanding practices of different faiths. The objective of deepening understanding and relationships amongst other faiths is encapsulated under the Engagement cluster.

Training Programmes Cluster – “Build Capacity”
- Hartford Seminary Interfaith Training for Religious, Community & Youth Leaders
  - 8th-13th January 2007
  - Methods and Philosophy of Interfaith Dialogue
  - Christian-Muslim Relations in the Modern World Spirituality

Learning Programmes Cluster – “Building Bridges”
- Learning Journey Programme
  Visits to Harmony Centre by local and foreign dignitaries and diplomats as well as various groups such as schools, community, grassroots and youth organisations

Since its opening on 7 October 2006, the Harmony Centre has hosted more than 8000 visitors from both organizations and as individuals. (as of Nov 2007)
- Understanding Practices Across Faiths Sessions
  - Interfaith introductory and sharing sessions on common issues in smaller groups
Engagement Programmes Cluster – “Deepen Understanding”

- Goodwill Meetings with Religious Leaders
  President Muis and Management meet key religious leaders of other faith communities as part of their engagement and to forge closer bonds. Issues that are discussed during the meetings include exploration of joint community projects, setting dialogue on common issues of interest and setting up good will committees.

- Friends of Harmony Centre
  Development and continual engagement with a core group of individuals who are actively involved in Interfaith work in Singapore. These individuals will collectively front the Singapore United Agenda and speak in united resilience especially in times of crisis.

- Homestay Across Communities Programme
  Done in collaboration with MOE Language Centre, 20 students were invited to stay with 10 Muslim host families where both parties get to learn and appreciate the culture and lifestyle of the other in real everyday situations.

- Participation in Community Engagement Events
  The Harmony Centre participated in
  - 4th Racial Harmony Soccer Tournament By Young Sikh Association
  - Interfaith Games Soccer 2007 by Darul Arqam
  - Harmony through Soccer (Aug 2007) in collaboration with Home United Football Club and Kong Meng San Phor Kark See Monastery

These events all aim to promote greater social cohesion through casual and fun interaction.

Ms. Tengku Suhailah acquired her Bachelor degree in Usuluddin (Islamic Theology) and Comparative Religion in 2006. She is currently an executive of Harmony Center, Islamic Religious Council of Singapore. She is passionate and active in interfaith work in Singapore.
Globalizing the Struggle
Globalization from Below in Asian Context

Bencharat SAE CHUA (Thailand)
Acting Director and Lecturer, Office of Human Rights Studies and Social Development, Faculty of Graduate Studies, Mahidol University

In response to the impacts of neo-liberal economic globalization, grassroot people, affected the most by globalized economy dominated by neo-liberal ideology, take up spaces to launch their fight back. As economic and politics become more and more borderless in nature, the grassroot social movements from around the world have connected their struggle across the borders, the theme and sectors. While many discussion on this so-called “globalization from below” were given to international movements against key actors of economic globalization like World Trade Organisation (WTO), International Monetary Fund (IMF) or World Bank, it is also interesting to see how the network is actually taking its shape in the region. This is of particular interest in South East Asia where economic integration is taking its salient manifestation and where social movements are operating in different socio-political context.

With the trans-border/trans-national nature of economic globalization, its impacts on rights and livelihoods of the people are also borderless in nature. In addition to the impacts from global/international globalization actors and projects, i.e. IMF, WTO, World Bank, bilateral free trade agreements and multi-national corporations (MNCs), economic globalization is also manifesting itself in the national and regional arena. At national level, for example, privitisation of basic services is taking place almost everywhere. At the regional level, several economic integration schemes, both bilateral and multi-lateral levels are going on. ASEAN Free Trade Area or AFTA, bi-lateral free trade agreement between countries and economic corridors as promoted by the Asian Development Bank (ADB) are of good example here. These impacts are no longer limited to certain sector in a country and thus forced the social movements to find a new strategy and new form of struggle. Former sector-or-issue-based movements are no longer effective in this borderless
context.

While many reading or intellectual discussion always attribute the growth of globalization from below to the movements against WTO in Seattle in 1998 and many academic works focus on Zapatista or MST landless movements in Latin America, we cannot deny that Asia is also a rich forum of movements. Narmada Bachao Andolan or the movement against Narmada dam project supported by the World Bank in India or the movement against Pak Mun dam project, also supported by the World Bank, in Thailand for example, are inspiration for other grassroot struggles and provide a basis for learning and sharing among various movements. Other more formal networks are also operating within Asia or with Asia as a strong part. Via Campesina or the world farmers organization, FTA Watch and Our World is Not for Sale network are vocal in rasing their voice against corporate globalization and promotion of alternative globalization. The anti-WTO movement in Hong Kong in December 2005 was perhaps the biggest international struggle happened in Asia. The farmers from Korea and Thailand were part of the stronghold with support from international groups.

All this, though, is not to say that strong and effecting international grassroot movements exist to counter balance the encroachment of globalization. Considering the problems in Mekong river basin for example, there now exist a wide impacts from the attempts to integrate economy in the region. Mekong navigation project led by China as part of economic corridor is causing tremendous impacts on the ecology system of Mekong river basin. In addition, Thai-China Free Trade Agreement is posing threat to the lives of farmers in Thailand. While there are relatively strong movements in Thailand against the two projects, it is very important to mobilize the support all the affected communities and the public of every related countries for effective movements. It is difficult in reality, though, with different political and economic systems and context and different development of civil society and social movements in each country.

The challenge ahead of us, therefore, is how to transcend these barriers. In addition to build up sense of common ownership, certain strategies need to be identified to address the gap between countries. It is, of course, not possible to adopt a one-fit-all strategy for every context.

Taking the three main alternative approaches against economic globalization into consideration, we may be able to apply different strategies
to different context in order to make a comprehensive approach. The reformist approach which does not aim to restructure or demolish neoliberal globalization but just to alter it to be more just and deglobalization approach which aims to cut down the power of globalization actors might be more applicable in the countries with relatively stronger civil society and relatively more open state. The delinking approach aiming at strengthening localism to restore health to economies and communities might be easily applied to the countries with rigid political control.

However, this is not to simply say that there is a fixed limitation and thus fixed strategy for each context. No such formula exists. The on-going exchange and learning between different groups of people must continue. While the extent of economic globalization’s penetration is expanding, the growth of social movements against it is also enlarging and so as the idea of human rights. The struggle will continue and only with a strong network that it would last.

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Integrating an East Asian Community – a point from cultural aspect

**Chalongkwan TAVARAYUTH** (Thailand)
Project Officer, Global Intelligence Unit Project with special focus on CIS and the Balkan Area, Department of European Affairs, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Kingdom of Thailand

A globalized world has placed countries into a more interdependence regime whereas integration is no longer a question of whether we should do it or not – but rather, a matter of how. Asian countries do realize the importance of cooperation as we can see the creation of ASEAN since 40 years ago and further developed platforms such as ASEAN+3, ASEAN+6, AFTA and many other FTAs. Cooperation at political and economic levels does exist but to some extent, it helps an East Asian integration only at a macro level. To be fully integrated, there needs to be willingness from individuals at micro level as well. In this case I mean people should have an awareness about being “Asian” or “Asian-ness” which will ensure the success of integration at all levels.

Besides, the experience from 40 years of ASEAN is political and economic integrations alone do not help foster relations among ASEAN countries as expected. Instead, it ends up with the rise of nationalism and patriotism which eventually brings more competitions than cooperations among Asian countries in order to protect national interests. Thailand and Vietnam compete against each other fiercely on economic terms. While politically, we also tend to marginalize those who do not share the same political ideologies. Consequently, integration will not occur if we cannot overcome this mindset because at the end of the day, diversity still exists under political and economic contexts. Nevertheless, if we look differently from cultural point of view, there can be things in common that tie the region together. At this point, culture then comes into play and will help us go beyond diversities. Through cultural approach, we learn to appreciate the differences and try to compromise by identifying a common identity or value to create cooperation. That is to say, there can be diversity while having integrity in the sense of culture.

As globalization has blurred boundaries of each country, we are no longer
obstructed to learn other countries’ cultures owing to an advancement of IT and communications. By a simple click on the computer, we can search for more information online instantly without needing to appear physically in those countries. As a consequence, cultures flow freely through borders and create an exchange among one another.

In Thailand, the flood of Japanese, Korean and Chinese dramas and music into the country nowadays is as much as those from Hollywood. More and more Thai youths are learning Japanese, Korean and Chinese languages apart from taking English at school. Many do it because they appreciate some pop idols, music, dramas while many are guided by parents who perceive these countries as dominant and/or uprising economic powers in the region and by learning these languages will facilitate business connections in the future. In addition, after the series “Dae Jung Keum” (or Jewel in the Palace) was broadcasted in a national free TV in Thailand, Korean food has been incredibly popular – not having to mention an already popular Japanese food or Thai-Chinese fusion food which is embedded in almost every household. Tourism industries in those countries also gain a lot of benefits from this cultural promotion.

What we can draw out of this phenomenon is that the interchange between cultures in the globalization era makes the perception of other Asian nations’ cultures no longer “foreign”. Instead, we feel familiar with this trend and are able to accept this visiting Asian wave as we find some similarities to our own cultures and traditions. To be more precise, we feel that these Asian genres are “friendlier” than western ones according to the notion of “us” against “them”. As a result, there are some grounds available for a closer and deeper integration. For Asian people, it is easier and more sustainable to integrate at individual level using cultural approach. This is because culture can reach every citizen in every class of the society better than economic or political sectors as it has bonded with people and society for a long time and become a way of life.

However, integration in this case does not mean a homogenized culture as no single country would be willing to give up their traditional cultures for other foreign cultures. Instead, the arrival of foreign cultures sometimes helps strengthen national identity. The Thai Ministry of Culture tries to emphasize and impose Thai culture after fearing that foreign cultures will dominate Thai society. As a result, it creates a two-way relationship in cultural interaction – a
force from a more dominant culture and a reaction from a less powerful one. Will the attempt to preserve one’s own culture prevent an accomplishment of East Asian integration?

From my point of view, though diversity remains, the idea of integration is possible. Taking into account of the European Union as example, their motto “unity in diversity” can best explain that despite many European countries are diversified in terms of cultures, traditions, languages (but not ideology or value such as championing in human rights and democracy etc.), they can still unite and appear as one of the most dominant player in international arena. Therefore, this can also be the same for East Asia. Asian countries should come together to settle disagreements and find a shared value instead of trying to assimilate all cultures which is impossible.

At another level, what should we rely on to create this common platform? Though pop-culture phenomenon is obvious and can be seen as a power force that can reach almost every heart of young generation; however, it is not everlasting and tends to be very superficial. It comes and goes and changes over a period of time. Therefore, it would be unwise to rely on what is not solid enough. We should look for something more profound, something that already exists and is well established in Asian societies for a long time and unique enough to represent “Asian-ness” and to help foster a sense of common regional identity.

Without depending on pop-culture, Asian countries have many profound characteristics in common which can be highlighted as “Asian-ness” and an East Asian Community can be built from that ground. Family values, calmness, compromise are examples of more profound values and philosophies underlying firmly in Asian societies but are evidently neglected by the new generation. Globalization does not only bring in benefits of a smaller world but sometimes, overwhelming information and faster pace of life can easily lure us to a wrong direction and make us overlook the value of what we possess. In order to successfully build an East Asian Community in a more sustainable direction, Asian countries need to promote the values behind these profound philosophies which help uphold the society together rather than promoting an individualistic approach offered by a westernization wave. This will make Asian people aware of the importance of having a common identity and make them proud of being “Asian” which will end up in having cooperative and harmonious relations. This can also be counted as an effort towards a socio-
cultural community that ASEAN aims to achieve.

Learning from cultural approach can be a first step towards an achievement of a bigger goal such as a vision of having an East Asian Community. Cultural interchange under globalization context teaches us to learn to compromise and accept the goodness of others while still preserving our own from extinction. Additionally, examining through cultural perspective helps us identify common and shared values existing in our diversified cultures in the region. These shared values make more sense of “Asian-ness” for citizens of East Asia to be proud of and move on towards an East Asian Community. Lessons learned from cultural view can even be applied in political and economic contexts – i.e. learning to appreciate differences and cooperate instead of competition because this is the ultimate way to achieve the best interest for the region as well as for individual country.

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Intercultural dialogue
A solid foundation of a brighter future

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Can we save the future of humankind from being determined by clash of civilizations? – Yes, by promoting the intercultural dialogues. Sometimes in the history, humankind has undergone horrible wars or seemed to be on the brink of complete self-destruction, but the long-term dominant direction is still cooperation for brighter future. Intercultural dialogue is the magician that rendered to humankind the most proper solutions to overcome up-down times in the past and be the prerequisite condition for cooperation, peace and mutual prosperity. Concisely, intercultural dialogues create better understanding, promote deeper integration, and lead to common actions.

“The entire world is one family, and that a common humanity unites all cultures”\(^1\); therefore, dialogue is only way to guarantee the long-lasting peaceful co-existence of this diversified family. The evolution of human proved that human is the most eminent species in the planet thanks to the wonderful ability in developing language, or put it in other way, the much greater possibilities of dialogues. There is no doubt that misunderstanding will lead to improper actions, disrespect and conflict. Clearly recognized the great significant role of intercultural dialogue and understanding, all participants of the ministerial regional conference in 2004 (Hanoi, Vietnam) strongly emphasized, “People everywhere need to acquire a basis level of knowledge and understanding of other civilizations, cultures and religions as the best way to overcome lingering ignorance…”\(^2\)

The beauty of the dialogue among cultures is that the deeper a nation

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1 Ancient Indian concept of Vasudeva Kutumbakkam.
participating in exchanging and integration, the greater advantages it enjoys in protecting and preserving their own national identities. Dialogue among cultures has existed since the earliest stages of history and blurred the frontiers of different civilizations, cultures and lead to multitude of overlapping cultures, which are rich in diversity while preserving the uniqueness of identities. “Silk Road” is one of the greatest wonder that intercultural dialogue rendered to humankind. The wealth of each “Junctures” of the chain of “Silk Road” is just a handful of sand in the immense desert of blooming cultural development and exchange, recognition and accommodation of different values, and great integration of related nations. Through intercultural dialogue, people develop greater sense of respect to others and are more proud of their own identities. Solidarity is indivisible from dialogue; therefore, a culture of dialogue is instrumental in working to dissolve disputes among countries of the region and tackle shared problems.

Intercultural dialogues generate attractive foundation for peoples voluntarily come up with collective action with a view to handle common issues. At national level, people take all possibilities to protect and promote their cultures. National identities become the most important tool for countries to consolidate and further promote its image/prestige in the international arenas. Regional Ministerial Conferences³ lays down a series of specific approaches, innovative concepts and new perspectives to guild future activities. At the global level, all state-members of United Nations unanimously approved the “Global Agenda for Dialogue among Cultures and Civilization”⁴. In a context of accelerating globalization, peoples are well aware of the urgent need to substantially step up its multi-dimensioned endeavor for promoting dialogue while making it more relevant to contemporary changes, especially that relating global peace, security and development.

In conclusion, Intercultural dialogue is the natural demand that exists along with the evolution all peoples in the planet. It leads nations to a better understanding of each other; generates the definite need and incentives for a better care of national identities; thereby, promotes collective actions/movements for the sake of peace and cooperation. Since intercultural dialogue is the dominant trend in the world today, peoples will have no choice other

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³ Regional Ministerial Conference on dialogue among cultures and civilizations organized in India, Vietnam, Albania.
⁴ United Nations General Assembly Resolution 56/6 of 21 November 2001
than be active agent of dialogue. Consequently, intercultural dialogue not only can save humankind from tragedy of clashes of cultures and civilizations but also lays down a solid foundation for the long lasting brighter future.

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Part 3: Discussions among Participants
Report on the Intensive Discussions

For two days, December 14 and 15, 29 participants divided into 3 groups (Inter-cultural, Inter-societal and Inter-faith), conducted intensive discussions. These are the summaries of each group’s discussions.
Intensive Discussions

Group A / Inter-cultural Dialogue

Coordinator: Dr. Fernando Zialcita, Ateneo de Manila University

Ms. Nani Suryani Haji Abu Bakar (Brunei)
Mr. Kong Vireak (Cambodia)
Ms. Fan Li (China)
Ms. Jhimli Basak (India)
Ms. Erenrisa Kaneko (Japan)
Mr. Soukanh Chitpanya (Laos)
Mr. Azmyl Yunor (Malaysia)
Ms. Chalongkwan Tavarayuth (Thailand)
Mr. Hoang Huu Anh (Vietnam)

Intensive Discussion / December 14, 2007
Group A (AM)

This session explored commonalities linking East Asians together. As a warm-up, Dr. Zialcita opened the discussion by asking every participant to share recent experiences relating to culture. Most of the participants mentioned their memories while outside their home countries and a few spoke of matters within their countries. They witnessed cultural differences and similarities between societies and within a society.

Azmyl Yunor has played at live concerts in Singapore and feels that the audience’s reactions were not the same as those of Malaysian audiences. Hoang Huu Anh pointed out how people in Vietnam and China act differently, even though both countries base their moral values on Confucianism. For Nani Suryani Haji Abu Bakar, her stay in England gave her a troubled feeling, because she lived close to the bombers responsible for the 7 July London bomb attacks. The crime committed by these suspects who were seen by their neighbors as being “typically British” led to the debate: “What really is British
culture and who belong to it?" Working in New Delhi, which she describes as the “city of money,” Jhimli Basak recounted how hard it was for her to find connections among people. Sometimes, arts, like the poetry sessions in New Delhi that she mentions, are the only thing that gives people a sense of connectedness in big cities.

On the contrary, talking about a conference she had once attended, Chalongkwan Tavarayuth believed that participants could develop a bond with each other in a short period of time. Both Fan Li and Erenrisa Kaneko told the group about their connections to Hawaii. Fan Li spends a considerable amount of time in Hawaii each year, where she finds people to be of mixed origins. Half American and half Japanese herself, Erenrisa Kaneko was born in Hawaii, and has done field work in Papua New Guinea. Speaking from a Cambodian’s perspective, Kong Vireak recognized the co-existence of different religions and languages in his country since the civil war. He showed that while Vietnam has traditionally influenced Cambodian culture, the Republic of Korea is now also influential due to its increasing investments in Cambodia.

Political traditions vary widely across Asia, making it difficult to articulate a common identity. Imperial China, as Dr. Zialcita pointed out, used to regard itself as the very center of power and culture in the known world. This is dramatized by the very layout of Beijing which consists of a series of concentric ring roads at whose core is the palace where the Son of Heaven dwelt. On the other hand in Thailand, the King presents himself as the protector of Buddhism. Malaysia differs in that fourteen sultans take turns in ruling the country. In the rest of Asia, democratic republics are the norm. Which political tradition therefore is most Asian?

The first important question is: what is “commonality”? Nani Suryani Haji Abu Bakar’s answer was that it is based on religion and history. She feels closer to Malaysia the Islamic state and the previous protector, the United Kingdom, than she does to Japan for instance. Azmyl Yunor said that one commonality in Asia is the experience of colonization by Western powers. Jhimli Basak agreed by saying that Indian people, despite their diversity, share a common heritage because of their experience under British rule. Nonetheless, Chalongkwan Tavarayuth argued that the supposed common identity that Asians feel is based largely on geography. They happen to live close to each other as neighbors.
One of the discussants pointed out that Western influence in thought, in fashion, and in customs is ironically a common feature throughout East Asia. A salient example is the celebration of Christmas as a period for merry-making and shopping. True, many countries do not recognize it as a public holiday yet its external features are celebrated.

Outside Asia, there is a tendency for people to generalize about “East Asia” by referring to Asian residential areas as “Chinatown” and by imagining that all Asians are somehow similar to each other. To non-Asians, Chinatown seems to be “rice town”, as suggested by Dr. Zialcita. Rice, always available in a wide variety in Chinatowns in Asia and in other continents, is indeed a common food throughout Asia. Participants took note of the fact that rice is a main staple throughout.

The discussion shifted to another commonality, pop culture. But the flow of pop culture is not balanced. Some countries export their films and fashions more than others, who are on the receiving end. Dr. Zialcita suggested asking why some cultural products are more widely exported than others. Azmyl Yunor said that in Malaysia, the government does not support traditional arts as much as they should, because they do not see the arts as being cost effective or politically useful. Indeed, street culture is restricted by the authority and as a result, there is no space for popular culture to expand. On the other hand Jhimli Basak argued that different cultures value “private access,” where people have the right to choose which film to watch, for example.

Chalongkwan Tavarayuth lamented that Thai culture is being swept to the side by foreign cultures for the following two reasons: (1) Thai businesses do not invest in “Thai” culture if it does not make money, and (2) Thai people do not appreciate their own culture unless reminded by others, such as foreign tourists. There is a strong tendency to prioritize economic development over other sectors of human activities. Consequently, the influx of Hollywood films cannot be stopped.

Erenrisa Kaneko mentioned that Japan has had its way of protecting its culture, represented by “Japanology.” Yet even the notion of a “traditional culture” is problematic in a sense, since the term can be defined in so many different ways. For Malaysians, the Constitution plays a major role in regulating Malaysian culture. It is often elites who decide what is acceptable for the general public.

High and low cultures are also not balanced. Export goods like films
shown in international film festivals are usually not for the entire population. Clearly, there is a wide gap in each participant’s country between people who practice high culture and those who spend their time on low culture, or pop culture. In India there has been a constant struggle among its people in defining “Indian-ness.” Who has the power to define it, or who should be included? That remains a tough question to answer.

True, one can find commonality in the exchange of pop culture across the region. Yet although Japanese manga has been popular worldwide, Korean teledramas, like “Jewel in the Palace” are not widely accepted, especially outside Asia. Fan Li thinks that perhaps Confucianism and its values are only well understood within Asia, and this is why Korean teledramas have never become as popular outside Asian countries. Jhimli Basak points out that even in Asia there are limits on the popularity of Korean and Japanese cultural products. They are not popular in India. Could this be because the characters look too different from Indians? Pop culture may be a product of both geographic connections and facial similarities.

The so-called Plus Three countries, namely New Zealand, Australia and India, complicate the picture of an East Asian community. Yet, it is important to highlight shared themes, says Dr. Zialcita. The division between these three countries and other East Asian countries is a persistent one. But how should we bridge this division? Jhimli Basak contended that it is crucial for each government to start introducing more “Eastern” components into the educational system, such as Eastern literature classes at schools. One helpful method for a deeper understanding of Eastern culture is to introduce children’s stories from the East at early ages. Growing up with Malaysian or Laotian fairy tales instead of Cinderella could make it easier for younger generations to feel familiar with East Asia.

The notion of “Asia” itself is a construct, created by “non-Asians.” Thus, in order to find a common cultural basis for establishing an Eastern Asian community, one needs to go beyond what many people in the West see as “Asia.” This community cannot be based merely on economics the way ASEAN is, nor on physical characteristics.

Eight short conclusions can be drawn from the first session:
(1) Except for Thailand and Japan, Asian countries all experienced Western colonization.
(2) Asian people are not readily aware of their identities, unless reminded by foreigners.
(3) Chinatowns around the world represent what the Westerners understand to be “Asia.”
(4) Obvious divisions between high culture and low culture in exist each country.
(5) It might be more effective to focus on lifestyle than on mere architectural icons.
(6) No country is truly multicultural or diverse, because the government controls expressions of diversity.
(7) Regional community building should encourage more regional networking in the field of literature and art.
(8) One question remains: What motifs do we have on which to build an East Asian community? Be it history, religions, architectural icons or costumes, it is difficult to have one thing that everyone can share.

**Intensive Discussion / December 14, 2007**

**Group A (PM)**

In this session, the group focused on differences cutting across East Asia. Before that however, the group continued a topic from the morning session. The members were asked what common ground for an East Asian community is possible. It was suggested that one common value that they could work on together would be that of “harmony with nature.” True, East Asian countries, such as Cambodia and Thailand now suffer from catastrophic situations, where human behavior has resulted in the destruction of their environment. In Cambodia, there are landmines still buried all over the territory, which have inflicted pain and suffering. In Thailand, mangrove forests are disappearing due to human activities. These unfortunate circumstances can motivate East Asians from every walk of life to work together to resolve environmental issues.

Still, because Zen Buddhism philosophy emphasizes the importance of balance in all aspects of life, people in East Asia might be more willing to reduce their energy consumption. That may lead to a peaceful and balanced exchange with nature. The region can share new energy-saving technologies.
Hoang Huu Anh cautions that it is not fair though, to put too much stress on developing countries such as Vietnam, in discouraging energy consumption. It is the developed countries that consume more energy. Also, one might ask; what is the point of discussing environmental issues solely in the East Asian region? In other words, environmental issues are supposed to be a global concern.

Without a doubt, all realize the importance of their environment. Many East Asian countries are now witnessing new phenomena, such as the “Slow Food Movement” and eco-tourism. People nevertheless, are not yet ready to sacrifice their current standard of living just for the sake of protecting the environment. In addition, it is obvious that people’s living environments differ by class, and not just by national borders. Even within one country, different regions have their own attributes, and there is no perfect solution that makes everyone’s lifestyle wholly harmless to the environment.

Having discussed possible common values, the group then discussed differences that divide the region. One topic of concern was the impact of globalization on small local communities. It is not officially admitted, but no country in East Asia is completely homogeneous. They all contain more than one language or religion. Globalization, over the years, has entered local communities around the region. These now face crises in preserving their indigenous cultures in the face of a fast spreading pop culture. In addition, globalization and even region integration, such as precisely the East Asian Union, does not necessarily work to the benefit of all. It may help the rich and the powerful but not the commoner who may lose his job in the face of sharpening competition.

Then the group dwelt on cultural differences between Asian societies. Most of the participants experienced culture shock during their stay in Japan. Several members were astonished at the proliferation of announcements and direction signs at public transport. In fact, signs telling people how to behave are everywhere. Others were amazed at how buses and trains come exactly on time. The train accident in Hyogo Prefecture a few years ago killing many, was triggered by a driver who speeded up the train to make it to the next stop on schedule. Social ills like this are absolutely senseless and very strange for non-Japanese. And yet Erenrisa Kaneko, who has lived in Japan for half of her life, admits that even non-Japanese can get used to the regulations and the quiet of the streets.
The discussion then shifted to differences within each Asian society, within a nation-state. In response to “What different attitudes do people in Asia have towards gender?” the group discussed attitudes towards the third and fourth genders. According to Chalongkwan Tavarayuth, because most Thai people tend to be quite conservative, gays and lesbians in the country have a tough time expressing their identities. For instance, homosexuals in Thailand are forced to get married to have children. There are exceptions to the case, however. When homosexuals are relatively well-to-do, they can have a gay marriage, which is socially accepted in bigger cities these days. In Vietnam, where society is tough on gays and lesbians, the case is different. Laotian people feel the same way, but as Soukanh Chithpanya described, tourists from the West have a huge impact on the traditional values of Laos. In the case of Brunei, Nani Suryani Haji Abu Bakar said that being homosexual is condemned as being against Islam.

Next, the role of women in each country was discussed. Chalongkwan Tavarayuth commented that even though Thailand today faces all kinds of social problems, the country deals with them in a somewhat positive manner. Women, for example, have the opportunity to pursue education, just like their male counterparts. As a result, about 70% of one university faculty is female. Even better, both Cambodia and Malaysia have Ministries of Women’s Affairs to make sure gender egalitarianism is observed. Gender role in Southeast Asia is different from other parts of Asia, because these societies are based on a kinship system that is bilateral. Both sons and daughters can inherit and transmit property to their heirs.

However, Vietnam and India provide a different look at women’s positions in society. Hoang Huu Anh stated that the ratio of women in both academe and government is around 35% because of Confucian influence on people’s attitudes. Vietnamese males retire at the age of 60, whereas females are expected to retire at 55. Jhimli Basak told the group that contemporary India is still largely dominated by men. Although dowries and infanticide (of female children) are of course, officially banned by law, they have never ceased to be practiced throughout India. Women in India are always in fear of the authorities, including the police. There are women’s movements in India, but they are never powerful enough to appeal directly to the central government.

In China it can be seen that a Communist regime does guarantee basic equal rights for both males and females. However, one contributing factor
is that Chinese people have no choice but to work hard to make a living, regardless of their gender. Therefore, in Chinese society, it is common for both parents to have a job, noted Fan Li. Erenrisa Kaneko contended that in Japan the balance between work and marriage is hard to achieve given the existing social norms that underlie gender roles. For instance, it is quite rare for men to take maternity leave even though they are allowed to do so.

To sum it up, the following statements can be made: (1) harmony with nature is one common theme that runs throughout East Asia, and (2) there will always be a cultural divide because everyone belongs to a certain group. In regards to the first, actualizing a harmony with nature could be a shared undertaking. Realistically, however, there are obstacles in people’s attitudes. Regarding the second, even within the same nation-state people are divided from each other because they belong to groups that others do not. In some nation-states there is greater tolerance towards behavior that deviates the norm of one’s group. Others, however, discourage such behavior and even persecute them. Moreover, there are also divisions caused by an ongoing conflict between “traditional values” and “new ideas.” In countries like China, India and Laos, poverty is seen as the more basic problem to deal with, before opening borders to foreign ideas that promote even more differences. This enables traditional values to hold sway and to exclude the new. Finally, there are divisions caused by globalization, or even possible East Asian integration. This may only benefit the rich in each country, leaving the rest in poverty thus creating greater divisions.

**Intensive Discussion / December 15, 2007**

**Group A (AM)**

This discussion centered on what can be done to create a sense of community among East Asians. The opening question was: “What would the integration of East Asia mean for the poor”? The EU has dealt with this problem quite effectively. How about Asia, where most of the world’s poor are? ASEAN has given priority attention to narrowing the gap among and within its member states, says Dr. Villacorta. Although the majority of countries are still economically developing, they are working towards improving the plight of the less privileged through capacity building –both among themselves and with
the assistance of Dialogue Partners. Because most of East Asia is agricultural, there is need to build industries that will provide more jobs and living income for the people. Regional integration will facilitate a better quality of life.

Regional integration also poses another problem -- the exploitation of foreign workers. Nani Suryani Haji Abu Bakar argues that in Brunei, the presence of large numbers of foreign workers has caused many social problems to the country. Others feel that foreign workers in Brunei from Malaysia and the Philippines are underpaid. Similar cases can be observed in other Asian countries. Dr. Kikuchi argues that people in power tend to ignore the fact that nation building cannot be done at the expense of the poor. Leaders in each nation should be more engaged in discussing the real cost of economic development. At the same time, it would be wrong for developing countries to wait for help from the developed ones. The developed too, have a sector of their citizenry which is poor. Since safety nets should be kept to protect the poor from falling into an even worse situation, there is only so much that developed countries can do, to help the developing ones. The developed need to spend on the poor in their own countries. The developing must also exert more effort in helping the poor within their borders.

Trade is better than aid. That is to say, free trade should be made available to every country. The UNCTAD (United Nations Conference on Trade and Development) is the voice of the developing countries, whereas the WTO speaks from rich countries’ standpoints. The UNCTAD pushes for fair trade, and that is what ASEAN aims for. Chalongkwan Tavarayuth states that having the ASEAN Charter might be helpful in putting international pressure on governments and their financial policies.

The preservation of lifestyles in rural areas is necessary, although hard. Urbanization causes the educated to migrate to the cities and makes rural areas even less attractive and vibrant. Investing heavily in rural areas, particularly on infrastructure, might be a key to preventing further economic disparities. The Vietnamese government, taking advantages of its fast annual economic growth of 7.0-7.5%, has indeed started investing in rural areas by developing two major projects to help those areas. Hospitals and schools are what they need before anything else. Still, rural areas lack in opportunities.

Turning then to the issue of promoting a country’s culture to others: Here government bureaucracy usually stands in the way. Fan Li mentioned that there is a large British Council in China that promotes British culture among
the Chinese. Even though many Chinese people these days travel to Thailand, there is no visible cultural center in China that enthusiastically promotes Thai culture. It may be more effective to hire more people from each country, especially from the arts, for effective cross-cultural interaction. Catch phrases like “Malaysia, truly Asia” are merely propaganda, and do not reflect what Malay people are all about. Doubtless it is essential to bypass bureaucracy in order to have genuine cross-cultural exchanges.

Threats to the preservation of cultural heritage occur throughout the region. In each country, the extinction of indigenous cultures, usually in the more marginal areas, is an imminent problem. On the other hand, in Thailand for instance, there are culturally and economically rich areas where national heritage is easier to preserve. In spite of this, preserving one’s culture can never be separated from the constructed idea of “tourist attractions.” Tourism can destroy cultural heritage, but it can also help to preserve it. Still we should be on guard. Globalization, relentless urbanization, the market economy, and the spread of McDonaldization and Coca Colonization pose a threat to all cultures.

Dealing with different cultures is another challenge. How do we find a way to accept differences between cultures? Globalization throws cultures and peoples together. This is inevitable. So then we have to be flexible enough to accept differences between us.

Intra-regional solidarity in the region is important. In order for East Asian countries to have solidarity, both locals and foreigners must work together. Environmental issues, for example, are common regional concerns. Addressing these bring East Asian countries together. Examples are disaster relief after tsunamis and earthquakes, or responses to epidemics like HIV. Another emerging common concern is elevating the position of women throughout East Asia. Activists for women’s rights are now working across borders, fighting for similar causes.

True, it is important to think globally and act locally, but local actions must go beyond the existing national borders. It does not necessarily mean that people should be physically present together in addressing every problem. They can very well publicize their local experiences and accumulated know-how at the regional or even global level.

On the question of cross-cultural studies: Fan Li explained a trend in academe regarding so-called “East Asian Studies.” There are, in actual fact,
many institutions that today focus on China, India, Korea and Japan, but not enough on other East Asian countries. Even in Japan, there are not as many Japanese scholars interested in Southeast Asian cultures as those interested in other regions of Asia. Thus the challenge lies in how to get East Asian scholars interested in wanting to know more about each other’s culture.

In conclusion, the three sessions can be summed up as follows. The themes were: (1) communalities among East Asians, (2) differences between them, and (3) ways to draw them together. After articulating common themes, it was proposed that a possible value that can draw East Asians together is that of harmony with nature. Differences both between countries and within countries are wide. Nonetheless there are ways to bridge these. More inter-continental trade will improve conditions as well as create partnerships. Working jointly on common social problems, studying each other’s culture, or promoting cultural products across borders are also other ways.

Note:
Results of group discussions were reported at the International Symposium. Please see P.82 for details.
Group B / Inter-societal Dialogue

Coordinator: Dr. Surichai Wun’Gaeo, Chulalongkorn University

Ms. Patricia Giannotto (Australia)
Mr. Nasroul Hizam Souyono (Brunei)
Mr. Lu Ke (China)
Mr. Poempida Hidayatulloh (Indonesia)
Ms. Emi Masumi (Japan)
Mr. Kaeunghun YOON (Republic of Korea)
Mr. Beeya Chiebriekao (Laos)
Ms. Ni Ni Lwin (Myanmar)
Ms. Charlotte Boyer (New Zealand)
Ms. Sarah Jane S. Raymundo (Philippines)
Ms. Bencharat Sae Chua (Thailand)

Intensive Discussion / December 14, 2007
Group B (AM)

Dr. Surichai opened up the intensive discussion by indicating two goals of this meeting. One is to share common concerns and the other, to propose ways to link the new generations of East Asians to establish an East Asian cooperation framework. Most of the participants had previously thought about these issues, and offered their own initial impressions on the idea of an East Asian community, in their personal introductions to the group. Some of them were very critical and even skeptical about the idea, since the cultural and social diversities among East Asian countries are enormous. They confessed that it is nearly impossible to integrate them into a unified whole.

Dr. Surichai suggested that all participants speak of their standpoints on inter-societal issues not in an academic manner, but rather in a candid and compelling manner. Mohd Nasroul Hizan Bin Souyono told of how traditional culture in his country has been slowly diminishing. He strongly feels it is crucial for Bruneians to realize what their country is facing today. What to pass down to young generations is something that people usually think little of. The same concern, of course, can be applied to any East Asian country.
Currently studying rural development issues, Emi Masumi pointed out the importance of grassroots level development. The micro level development of local and rural populations or minority groups is often neglected in the grand scheme of East Asian integration. Beeya Chiebriekao talked about the negative impacts of globalization on his home country of Laos. By bringing up the example of expanding exporting businesses from China to Thailand, Bencharat Sae Chua argued that the rapid expansion of exports shipping by river resulted in a mass destruction of the environment.

Ni Ni Lwin’s concern was the problems that minority people residing near national borders are facing. These people always have to deal with political differences at the international level and at times need to fight against regional superpowers such as China, to save their own lives. She critically pointed out that this type of conference fails to achieve what really needs to be done, without a concrete platform for discussions. Additionally, Ni Ni Lwin felt that modernization and globalization have negative impacts on traditional Asian cultures. In her opinion, apathy shown by young people towards their own culture is evident.

Yoon Kaeughun said that identity should be included in inter-societal talks. Giving changing identity in his native Republic of Korea as an example, Kaeughun contended that it is virtually impossible to cover all cultures in the region under one entity called “East Asia.” Likewise, Lu Ke shared his doubts in the creation of an imagined community called “East Asia,” from a different perspective. He noted that there are no cogent reasons for China, Korea and Japan to join an East Asian union, because these big powers are likely to survive on their own. For example, China insists on an independent foreign policy of peace and does not align itself with any big country or country block. Lu Ke argued that the integration of extremely diverse cultures does not provide solutions to shared problems. Differently put, these “shared problems” in the region are not genuinely shared by all. Poempida Hidayatulloh agreed by saying that he could not see the clear need for the goals of this East Asian union or even attempts to seek for them.

Patricia Giannotto described the multicultural policies in New South Wales, Australia. Although there are always tensions and problems when people of different backgrounds live next to each other, harmonious ways to coexist can somehow be achieved in order to share their diverse cultures. Adding to this, she revealed that it is difficult for Australia to find its new “East Asian” identity.
Similarly, Charlotte Boyer shared the story of the peacemaking process taking place in New Zealand, between the Maori population and the settlers.

Sarah Jane S. Raymundo told other members about the episode of an urban middle-class hippie movement at the University of the Philippines. As a professor of sociology and feminist study, she deals with concerns such as the basis of human organization and human rights. Concerning past massacres in the Philippines, she claims that the structural problem of academics lies vis-a-vis political pressures.

Talking about ties that hold East Asia together, Dr. Surichai mentioned Japan’s view on the world at the time of the Meiji Restoration. As Yukichi Fukuzawa’s words go, Japan wanted to “leave Asia and join Europe.” Today, Australia and New Zealand might find themselves economically close to ASEAN, and its countries that also have a sense of community among each other for the same reason. Nevertheless, it seems that there are not enough cultural exchanges, and this lack of psychological ties will be a problem.

It is clear that each East Asian country has its own economic problems, such as economic gaps between the rich and poor, economic disparities, and so forth. Japanese “free- ters (freelance part-timers)” are one example of people who are left behind in the country’s prosperity. Economic activities are indeed a large part of social and cultural matters. Then one question arises: On what should one base his or her sense of equality? There is no community without human value, says Dr. Surichai. Economic activities always take place at the international level, so it is crucial for people to have agreements somewhere beyond political leadership. Trade is only secondary. One answer to the question above might be that people can have the sense of solidarity, as witnessed at the time of the tsunami in Indonesia.

For the first time in its history, ASEAN now has a charter. Surprisingly, “human rights” is stated in it. Bencharat Sae Chua stated that Asia has no human rights mechanism in place to be adequately effective, because it is tough for Asian countries to agree on one principle of human rights. Sarah Jane S. Raymundo’s question was why East Asia needs a community in the first place. Poempida Hidayatulloh’s idea was that the ultimate goal is to make the world borderless where everyone is tolerant to others. No doubt, economic globalization is changing the way people live their life and their values, regardless of their nationality. However, the global trend to prioritize efficiency before efficacy is simply wrong.
Intensive Discussion / December 14, 2007
Group B (PM)

What do individuals get out of an East Asian community? What are the conditions of such formation? What kinds of obstacles are there?

Inter-societal dialogue among nations used to be the important element of building an East Asian community, yet intra-societal dialogue has emerged to be equally important. Whether it is visible or not, there are different societies within a country, as indicated by their ethnicity, language, employment status, etc. One cannot neglect the fact that there are different groups within one “society.”

Patricia Giannotto stated that working as a whole in the framework of multiculturalism in Sydney is effective, and that the same can be applied at the national level. Bencharat Sae Chua was skeptical about the need for establishing a large politically oriented East Asian community, because some people are already working at the grassroots level. Lu Ke replied that as long as the end result is a win-win situation, it should work. However, in reality, economic development sometimes creates imbalances and conflicts, and ends up in a win-lose situation among individuals or societies. Yoon Kaeughun added by saying that people’s emotions play a crucial role in cooperating with other member countries.

Additionally, Patricia Giannotto introduced the idea of a “level playing field,” which she explained as one of the basic premises of multiculturalism in Australia. Immigrants from different countries might have different opportunities, due to the Australian economic situations at the time of their arrival. The goal of multiculturalism is to provide each and every one of them with the structure of a level playing field. Bencharat Sae Chua spoke of her concerns that it is now extremely hard to have a level playing field when terrorism casts shadows on people’s minds.

For Poempida Hidayatulloh, an East Asian community is a desirable goal, if each country’s interests are to be accommodated by others. Hidayatulloh is from Indonesia, where there are a number of ethnic groups in more than 17,000 islands across the nation, and says that diversity is what makes Indonesia an attractive country. Still, the concept of a level playing field must apply at the international level as well. For instance, the unemployment rate in Indonesia has not come down even in the time of rapid economic growth. Undeniably,
the force of economic globalization exists, so an East Asian community can play a vital role in creating an economic level playing field.

Social forces beyond national economies or markets are perceptible, said Dr. Surichai. One should not to leave everything to the governments. There is a clear need for creating new social forces to stand against economic globalization.

Sarah Jane S. Raymundo suggested that building a community might be problematic, because “community” is socially constructed. What one believes to be a “community” is based on many assumptions. For example, a Filipino woman can share her thoughts with people from other countries, but not with the President of the Philippines. Strong social stratification, which leads to crisis of representation, cannot be ignored. No one can fairly represent the “Philippines” because there are competing perspectives and interests.

A wide range of problems come to the surface when local cultures encounter the force of globalization. Dr. Villacorta stated that many East Asian societies suffer the loss or diminution of their indigenous or traditional cultures as they adapt to globalization. An East Asian community will help to strengthen the identities of local and national cultures because it is mainly Asians themselves who would better appreciate and could help to protect each other's traditions and values.

What is solidarity? This term might mean differently, depending on individuals, but we first have to make sure that we understand the word in the same way. Solidarity, so to speak, is about caring for others.

What does the state of solidarity look like? Ideally, the balance of “giving and taking” or sense of fairness should exist among each and every country. Above all, securing humanistic life for everyone in the context of globalization is the first and foremost concern. Justice is a synonym for this idea.

In the last 20 years, as mentioned by Patricia Giannotto, the Australian community gradually shifted its identity as Euro-American to a more East Asian one, implementing multicultural policies and adopting multi-language programs.

Often times, people take for granted the fundamental notion of the “we.” Emi Masumi raises this question. “Who benefit in the name of “common goals?” This is no longer a matter of micro-level discourse. Instead, the key players here are, more often than not, the rich or elites who enjoy higher status in their countries. As a result, it becomes difficult to spread a sense of
solidarity and the need for East Asian cooperation among local populations.

There are hierarchies or different levels of living standards even in a single country or community. One example is the fact that people in rural areas and metropolitan areas live quite differently. Japan, for instance, is home to the working poor and “MacDonald refugees,” while the rich are accumulating their wealth more than ever before.

On the contrary, Yoon Kaughun asked the group about economic and educational opportunities for the disadvantaged. In the case of the Republic of Korea, only a small portion of the entire population can enjoy cultural and intellectual life. Apparently, the opportunity to speak out and participate in the creation of an East Asian union is not yielded equally.

In spite of economic disparity portrayed by the examples above, there must be ways that we can all benefit by a transnational unification. By building a structure, Patricia Giannotto feels that local populations, including grassroots movements, can gain something valuable.

What can an East Asian community offer, be it tangible or intangible? Suggested answers are as follow:
1. Something good within the community itself: the participants can feel proud to take part and have mutual respect
2. Human rights or something humanistic
3. Democracy
4. Restoration of one’s own culture
5. Issues of young people and generation gap
6. Concerns of globalization
7. Experiencing other cultures

Intensive Discussion / December 15, 2007
Group B (AM)

On the positive side of the regional integration is an increase in economic opportunities for participating countries, whereas on the negative side there is an unavoidable win-lose-situation. As often said, globalization contributes to the loss of human connections. This appears to be contradictory, since globalization in theory should connect people around the globe. In actuality, something intangible like cultural heritage has been lost in many parts of East Asia.
Obviously, it is hard to set specific goals or to share the same values among East Asian countries, for they have a wide variety of religions, languages, ethnicities, and so on. For that reason, the potential candidates for an East Asian community must actively seek shared values, because as Dr. Surichai states, solidarity does not fall from the sky. Beeya Chiebriekao mentions a possible problem of some countries not interested in taking part in this constructed community of East Asia. In his opinion, international youth communities can be one option in solving the above-mentioned dilemma. Dr. Kikuchi adds that education can only be guided at the governmental level, because in order for both adults and youths to have same values, there has to be a national effort.

The Indonesian experience tells that ideology is never idealistic. To run a country like Indonesia for years, some elements of the society had to be controlled by the authority. Basing itself on the notion, “we are different, but we are one,” Indonesian leaders have managed the country well, despite corruptions and social inequality. When there are some external forces that all the participating countries have to face together, (the US as an international superpower for example), there might be enough motivation to cooperate. Patricia Giannotto comments that one country’s issue is always a regional one. In other words, the serious unemployment problem in Myanmar mentioned by Ni Ni Lwin, needs to be taken into consideration by all ASEAN members.

What are the short-term goals? Charlotte Boyer argues that feasible goals like mutual trust, a common horizon, and common justice are what East Asia needs first, for building an EU-like community takes decades. Launching an official statement together is important, in the hopes that community education and people’s awareness will follow. Campaigning, of course, has both negative and positive sides to it. The former is that campaigning costs too much money and benefits mainly event organizers, the latter is that it acts as a generator of eventual social change.

Opening up one’s society can be the first step in integration. Peaceful and non-threatening ways are useful to start sharing something in common among communities. The student movement that Sarah Jane S. Raymundo had been involved in is one example of initiating a slow change. New movement needs to be peaceful enough so that governments do not react, but at the same time, it has to be open and engaging. By engaging as many people as possible in the movement, social forces can be everlasting and inter-generational. Social
actors or activists must include people other than corporations, elites and bureaucrats. The “fight” should start with purely the force of solidarity, not anti-something.

Note:
Results of group discussions were reported at the International Symposium. Please see P.86 for details.
Group C / Inter-faith Dialogue

Coordinator: Dr. Hanneman Samuel

Mr. Nguon Serath (Cambodia)
Ms. Shikha Makan (India)
Mr. Nirwan Ahmd Arsuka (Indonesia)
Ms. Yuko Ema (Japan)
Ms. Jacqueline Ann Surin (Malaysia)
Ms. Hnin Myat Thu (Myanmar)
Ms. Rehanna M. Y. Ali (New Zealand)
Mr. Gutierrez M. Mangansakan II (Philippines)
Ms. Tengku Suhailah Binte Tengku Kamarudin (Singapore)

Intensive Discussion / December 14, 2007
Group C (AM)

Group C’s first session opened with each member’s introduction. Dr. Hanneman specializes in sociology of knowledge. According to him, there are two components to the sociology of knowledge: politics of knowledge and knowledge management. Members of the Group C members varied from journalists, independent filmmakers to religious activists. Dr. Hanneman suggested first, to discuss what kinds of problems exist in the realm of inter-faith dialogue.

Rehanna M. Y. Ali started with the comment that interfaith dialogue really depends on contexts. In the West, people usually talk about marginalization in a highly secularized context. People are more concerned about their everyday life, such as security, than politicization or radicalization of religion. In Cambodia, as the country opened itself up to the world, voices from the two minority religions other than Buddhism, namely Islam and Christianity, became more apparent. Nguon Serath feels that Buddhists, who consist of 90% of the Cambodian population, do not care enough about the two. However, the Cambodian government tries to practice secularism, as religious minorities are also represented in the parliament. The newspaper he works for is very sensitive in treating religious issues, says Nguon Serath.
In Mindanao, in Gutierrez M. Mangansakan II’s words, the situation is out of hand. For 40 years, people there fought for their religious rights and land claims, but nothing much has been settled. Today, in the Philippines, religious stereotypes do persist. The Philippine government is quite non-secular, and its policies always reflect the views of the majority Catholic population. From reproduction health bills to terrorism, Catholicism is exceedingly influential in the country, despite the fact that the Constitution of the Philippines promises the separation of religion and the state.

With regard to Myanmar, Hnin Myat Thu stated that the monks who demonstrated against the military regime were not real monks. Nguon Serath said that similar things have taken place in the past in Cambodia. From time to time, religion tends to get abused by those who need excuses to start their movements. Unfortunately, religion sometimes can be a way out when people have problems in their daily life. By the same token, people in power use religion to gain support.

The case of Singapore is different. Although advocating secularism, Singapore’s emphasis on the importance of maintaining racial and religious harmony of its citizens has been in place in their constitution and government policy since Day One of Singapore’s independence in 1965. Engagement activities between one another are very important, and institutions like the Harmony Centre, administered by the Islamic Religious Council of Singapore, for which Tengku Suhailah Binte Tengku Kamarudin works, is a good example of a means of interfaith-based engagement. After the events of 9/11 in the US, there have been arrests of local terrorists who planned to bomb public areas such as the train station. The Singaporean sense of security was challenged but no major hate crimes have taken place, because of the government’s policy of maintaining racial and religious harmony.

For Muslims in New Zealand, 9/11 dramatically changed their life. 38,000 Muslims live in New Zealand as a considerably small visible minority group, and their hardship had been worsened since the terrorist attacks in the US in 2001. Hate crimes have increased, mosques fire-bombed and women attacked. According to Rehanna M.Y., offensive letters to radio programs and provocative media coverage have revealed what non-Muslims were actually thinking. At the same time, 9/11 gave Muslims in New Zealand a chance to contemplate what needed to be done. Moreover, mentioning the long history of religious violence between Hindus and Muslims in India since
1947, Shikha Makan argued that even the average person lives with religion-specific prejudices. Small biases against other religions are often stimulated by the politicization of religion. Contemporary India has increasingly been Hinduized and religions communalized, while over ten million people have died in religious bloodbaths. Shikha Makan commented that there is no stringent international human right mechanism to stop this chain of violence. In fact, the idea of inclusion and exclusion is communalized.

Similarly, for the Malays in Malaysia, there is no choice but to be Muslim, according to Jacqueline Ann Surin. Leaving Islam is considered a crime in many states in Malaysia, and the country’s policies on religion do not yield to minorities. Since Islam informs so much of public policy in Malaysia and is conflated with the privileges of the Malay race, some people have started to take advantages of the system. For instance, a number of Chinese business people have converted to Islam to have more financial benefits from the state. Hence, Islam plays a crucial role in Malaysia. Gutierrez M. Mangansakan II adds that some Muslim groups in the Philippines use the force of arms to get their messages across. In Mindanao, there is no freedom of religion, because people fear violent reactions.

Dr. Kikuchi argued that Japan has economically advanced at a very fast pace because it was relatively free of the constraints of religion. Whether it is good or bad is another question, but religions can be considered as one of the most powerful forces in many of the participants’ countries. Therefore, said Nirwan Ahmad Arsuka, religions need to be understood deeply, especially in internal order, in epistemological operations, which supply positive and negative forces. On the positive side, religions provide identities and world views, structure everyday life and guide communal action. For creators, like Gutierrez M. Mangansakan II, having many layers of personal identity can be a source of imagination. However, at the same time, being Muslim could limit thoughts and actions.

Group C then discussed the problem of religion in relation to power. Religion becomes a problem when it is taken over by political power. In fact, history has seen many examples of political authorities misusing people’s faith. Here, the faith of people, which should not be forced upon by others, is no longer a personal matter. Just as the communist regime of the USSR could not easily be challenged from within, the mainstream political dogma, when tied with religion, starts claiming itself absolute and leaves no room or liberty
Especially when the dogma of religion is used in political propaganda of a totalitarian regime, “marginal” population is segregated from the rest of the “common” population. Under such circumstance, it is not religious dogma that creates problems, but the political wills of a handful of people in power.

Religion in the globalizing era is the next subject on the table. With globalization spreading throughout the East Asian region, tribalization emerged as a unique phenomenon. Globalization has revealed that there are in fact uncountable numbers of tribes around the world. Visiting other religions’ rituals or experiencing their peculiar holidays became widely accepted in the post-1980’s. In other words, globalization, to some extent, contributed to the introduction of different religious practices to others.

To add, when discussing the integration of East Asian countries, Group C sought for the possibility of multiple and flexible identities. The variety in identities is not something negative; it is rather a privilege that East Asia is entitled to.

Returning to the question of what they could achieve during these intensive discussion sessions, Group C decided to narrow their focus to the following areas: (1) problems of identity, (2) roots of the existing problems, and (3) proposals for the future.

What are the commonalities that future leaders of East Asia can share? As of this very moment, it is still difficult to imagine what an East Asian community will be like. Yet, one thing clear is that engaging in any problems should be in the form of dialogue. To do so, one must be ready to share his or her experiences with others. During interfaith dialogues, people can learn lessons, solutions as well as problems from other countries’ past experiences. The first step is to actualize a dialogue, and then learn the skills to interact with one another.

Moreover, it is equally important to let others learn and share religion-specific problems. Only when people recognize the characters and issues of other religious groups, do they truly understand that problems are not situated in the difference of religious dogmas. No doubt, defining religion is extremely tough to do. Even Islam has an extensive network and literature, which might differentiate one group from another, for example.

Needless to say, misunderstanding other religions can be a critical problem. The ultimate goals of religions, to live together in peace, can easily be
forgotten. From time to time, certain social conflicts are mistakenly perceived as religious when they are not. Extremism is to be criticized and discarded. A world with more than one religion is complex, and people can start their interfaith dialogue by accepting this complexity.

**Intensive Discussion / December 14, 2007**

**Group C (PM)**

Is it right to exclude religion from the public policy forming process? Can religion become an ideology? These are the questions that came up at the beginning of the afternoon session. In Rehanna M. Y. Ali’s opinion, interfaith dialogue between Jewish and Muslim youths in New Zealand was effective enough to reach the public discourse. Nirwan Ahmad Arsuka feels that as long as religion is an incontestable, dogmatic closed system, it can be easily corrupted and politicized. The claim that ideologicalization of religion can be dangerous really depends on the contexts in which the term is used. At least, people should have the right to choose their religion, which must be the most personal part of their life. When the state supports a certain religion, like Myanmar does Buddhism, the silent majority is unable to speak out.

However, one needs to keep in mind that religion surely is a source of inspiration and knowledge for many. If there is a religious vacuum in a country, it can easily be filled with radical voices and thoughts. That is to say, some individuals take advantages of the fact that people rely on religion to have solutions for the problems they face. Extremism too, emerges here. Surprisingly, many extremists in Indonesia are highly educated. This happens especially to those educated in exact sciences and techniques, and learn Islam sporadically from second resources. They usually end up creating an “imaginary” Islam, the “purified” yet ossified version, says Nirwan Ahmad Arsuka. Those who learn Islam systematically in Islamic Studies State Universities and find many kinds of contingencies in the history and the teaching, and have good exposure to the world culture and the advancement of rational knowledge, generally become more tolerant and more open-minded.

Describing her activities at the Harmony Centre in Singapore, Tengku Suhailah Binte Tengku Kamarudin thinks that government involvement in interfaith dialogue is a key to knowing and understanding one’s neighbors.
The Harmony Centre engaged 9 other religious leaders from various organizations and institutions at both grassroots and leadership levels, where representatives meet and discuss a wide range of issues. On the other hand, in India there is no interfaith dialogue of noticeable size in the public sphere. No collective body, network or forum exists to have different religions speak for their positions. No matter what comes out of an interfaith forum, it is necessary first to open up a dialogue space for all. Providing each religion with an international platform where they can freely express their opinions gives them credibility not only internationally but also domestically. A body, which puts together the best practices, trust and reconciliation programs in the region through archiving materials and researching alternatives, is valuable as well. People from all East Asian countries will have access to these archives and accumulated knowledge, while continuing to talk to each other face-to-face, just like they are doing today.

Jacqueline Ann Surin pointed out that sometimes it is the media that creates the notion of a battle between “us” and “them.” When something terrible happens, be it terrorism, harassment, corruption, etc., people should speak up for other religions. For instance, Christians should have raised their voices for Muslims after the 9/11 incidents, not to defend the Muslim terrorists but to speak about the universal values of peace, compassion and justice in Islam. This can be a powerful way to build trust among different faith adherents, she said, citing the example of how in Syria, the Mufti has been known to say that to be a good Muslim, one needs to be a good Christian.

Reconciliation is also crucial in interfaith dialogue. For example, even though Malaysians have lived in peace for many years, Malaysians still focus on the one-week clashes between Malays and Chinese which happened in 1969. People do not talk about the fact that while the riot took place, some Malays actually helped the Chinese, and vice versa. And often times, race-based politicians will harp on the 1969 clashes, instead of focusing on these heroic stories, in order to consolidate their power base.

There must be a gray zone, or an alternative world view, in people's minds. Dualism only pressures people into choosing between good and evil. Ideas of who is the winner and who is the loser; light and darkness; right and wrong, and so forth, are too simple in understanding the world. In religious conflicts, people need to look back in their history and resolve all past spites before moving on.
The group then talked about the roots of problems that are related to interfaith dialogue. State stability is ideal, but does not prevent problems from occurring. Further, it is how the state uses religion to hang onto power that is troublesome. Economic deprivation is one of the causes of extremism in developing countries such as Indonesia, but in developed countries like New Zealand, it is the fear of difference that causes people to lean towards extreme ideas. In either case, one can find the root of the problem in exclusion in society. In fact, exclusion from national policies and minoritization makes the Muslims in Mindanao rebel against the government. The Philippine national government has been oppressing the Muslims. The Muslim population there has over the years become the minority, because their ancestors’ lands are now occupied by the new settlers. Even fundamentalism is a call for attention.

To make the current situation better, each country should have a judicial system in which all populations can have trust. Of course, it is virtually impossible to have a system that caters to every individual, but there should be fairness in the mechanism. At the moment, the lack of mutual trust among the silent majority is one cause of the problem. Seeing Jews and Muslims sitting on the same stage talking about conflict resolution, for instance, is itself a very powerful statement. Although building trust is a long-term process, it has proven effective all around the globe. Involving religious leaders to engage is also indispensable.

Having the fear of “not knowing” is a natural reaction when people mix with each other. Nonetheless, the first step to be free from this fear is trying to know one’s neighbors. Mutual understanding and agreement will eventually follow, once people are not afraid of accepting others.

**Intensive Discussion / December 15, 2007**

**Group C (AM)**

At the beginning of the morning session, Group C summarized the discussion that took place the day before;
- that they still have to engage in problems shared by other East Asian countries
- that each country faces different challenges
- that some interfaith dialogue models are useful
that religious problems are mainly caused by negative connotations attached to religion.

One of the difficulties in setting up an interfaith platform to discuss a wide range of issues is that it is a very unique process. Looking at regional issues, like the Bali bombing, intra-religious discussions have become taboo. Surely, the bombing incident raised all kinds of concerns and problems in some religious communities, but more than ever, people need to talk to each other to find out what they can do to better the status quo.

In order to create a platform, all participants in an East Asian community require a common and safe space where they can talk about religion. Crises happen when there is no dialogue between the people of different religions. Time after time, in religious conflicts, people on both sides speak from highly polarized positions. To build peace among different religious beliefs, there must be a “space between” them, where they can talk face-to-face. This notion can also be applied to other issues, including education, human rights, minorities, women’s rights, etc.

Notes from the coordinator:
- Religion as political ideology
- Issues regarding minorities
- Malaysia’s national policy: problem of marginalization
- Causes of poverty and deprivation
- Solutions: talk among the leaders of different religions
- Trust-building program in Singapore
- Rationale for promoting interfaith dialogue:
  (1) Engaging in interfaith dialogue
  (2) Issues and challenges
  (3) Sharing experiences
  (4) Path forward
  (5) Problems and functions of Media/Education
  (6) International human laws

Two topics are left to discuss for this final session: human rights and arts & media.

Speaking of human rights in the context of interfaith dialogue, Shikha Makan argued that fundamentalism and extremism are problematic in India. There is no international body to protect human rights that is proactive in times of crises, partly because no one can challenge the state, which at times
has been brutal against members of certain religions. Jacqueline Ann Surin added that at the end it is the people who need to be mobilized to change the status quo. Social pressures can sometimes shift government policies on human rights, or force the state to agree to implement existing human right mechanisms. At the same time, unless the head of the state is like Slobodan Milošević or Adolf Hitler, prospective changes will be rather slow. Ultimately, no religion should harm human life. It might be fair to say that human values are more important than human rights. As Dr. Kikuchi notes, the term “human rights” has too many variations.

How can different religious groups settle their issues? Often times, every religion considers itself more superior than others. Religious violence spreads like fire, as evident in “mob psychology.” In Indonesia, as Dr. Hanneman tells, there are NGOs that mediate religious conflicts with official aid from the central government. In the Philippines, religious leaders sometimes speak up to discuss issues, when conflict resolution is in need. People listen to religious leaders because their words are the “truth.” Thus, education becomes quite important for the future of now the religious-torn countries. Blind faith is, without a doubt, to blame.

Moving on to the topic of arts & media, many agreed that balancing freedom of expression with freedom of religion is difficult. Apparently, the cartoon in the Danish newspaper showed how little people understand each other. Media coverage plays an essential role in public opinions. Although arts & media are only spaces for expressing critical voices, they are frequently used for provoking and are often offensive ways of expression. Moderate voice of the media, in a sense, is lost, because it does not make an interesting headline. A higher standard of journalistic ethics is increasingly in demand, in order to get rid of “tags” and “labels” attached to criminals and terrorists.

Note:
Results of group discussions were reported at the International Symposium. Please see P.90 for details.
Review of Group Discussion by Coordinators

Here you will find a collection of comprehensive evaluations of group discussions submitted by each coordinator.
Cultural Linkages between East Asians: An Overview of the Workshop (Group A)

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I feel honored to have been asked to coordinate this workshop. As an anthropologist, I supposedly I have more experience discussing culture-related topics. But in fact I often found myself in the role of a student, listening to the ideas of the participants who came, not only from different parts, of the continent, but also from a diversity of backgrounds: literature, psychology, pop music, architecture, heritage preservation and so forth.

The fact that they came from different perspectives, both professionally and nationally, gives their insights more weight. A phenomenon is always more real, that is better connected to the world, when examined from multiple perspectives.

We agreed, among ourselves, at the start of the one day and a half workshop, to divide the discussions into three parts: 1) differences between Asians, 2) commonalities and 3) activities that could foster greater sympathy and understanding.

The discussions were pretty straightforward as can be gleaned from the minutes. Personally, the participants’ insights that excited me the most were the following four.

First, rice is the staff of life that links East Asia together. A day without rice seems incomplete. Of course, other cereals are grown in the region, such as wheat and millet. So likewise, tubers. We also know that in many countries, rice has in fact been scarce down to the middle of the 20th century and that tubers and corn had to fill in the gap. Yet, somehow, it was rice that became associated with fullness. Why this happened should be looked into. It might disclose more underlying commonalities. Consider the fact that in Western Europe, potato, which was introduced from the New World during the 18th century, has managed to compete with wheat in popularity. But corn, taro and sweet potato, both as vital in the diets of poorly irrigated parts of Asia,
continue to be regarded as poor substitutes for rice. Why is this the case?

Second, Chinese migration, has created commonalities in the region. Products from different parts of the continent, are often sold together in Chinatowns. In effect, Chinatowns are “Asia towns”! They are microcosms of the continent as a whole. Not only that. I would like to add that Asians of Chinese descent in Southeast Asia are often the entrepreneurs who enter into intensive international, commercial exchanges.

Third, Western influences are paradoxically a commonality. Personally, it was interesting to observe how the Japanese celebrated the Christmas season with enthusiasm. There was a brilliant Christmas tree in the hotel, as well as in many stores. The nearby Tokyo Tower had evening concerts of Christmas songs in English, many of these were religious (Silent night, O come all ye faithful). Dancing lights accompanied the songs. Every night they attracted thousands of Japanese. In building a sense of solidarity in East Asia, it is better to use all the available building blocks instead of rejecting some a priori. Besides even these Western influences have been indigenized. I suspect that, for many Japanese, Christmas as a season of merry-making serves as a fitting prelude to the culturally more important festival of New Year. But this transformation of meaning is not surprising. After all, within the Western Christian world, December 25 as the day of the birth of Christ, was superimposed by the Christian church upon the earlier Roman festival of the Solar solstice, celebrated in the midst of winter. Practices may be imported but their meanings change in the process. It would be interesting to know what new meanings Christmas has acquired in other non-Christian Asian countries. Even as Christmas binds, it differentiates.

Fourth, the diversity within each country is paradoxically a commonly shared feature. While Asian countries are divided from each other by history and culture, each country has wide differences created by differences in ethnicity and social class. I have experienced this traveling around the region. Striking is the case of Thailand which, on the surface, seems more homogenous than Indonesia, Malaysia and the Philippines. I have traveled various times to the Northeast of Thailand because of the fieldwork of my Thai students. Aside from the gap in income level between the Northeast and the National Capital Region, there was the question of ethnicity. The locals differed markedly in their diet and housing. The ones I spoke with did not identify with the Monarchy. Despite trips to Bangkok, some of these educated Northeasterners
had never even been to the Palace which outsiders like me imagine to be one of the key icons of Thai-ness. They valued speaking Lao, as a sign of their apartness, even though this is a sibling of Thai. Clearly, when we talk of building a sense of East Asian community, we must consider diversity, not only between, but within countries as well. While generalizations regarding identity are unavoidable, we must always be cautious and ready to revise our notions, for reality is complex.
Observations and Comments of Group B: Inter-societal and Intra-societal exchange

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Dialogue for status quo (of international economic competition) or for human empowerment and social justice? If dialogue is aimed for the former, then it is supposed to be among young people consciously representing his or her own national positioning under globalization. In the case, then we only need to emphasize the national framework including the national sense of history, belonging, language, religion etc. Many existing forums in the East and Asia-Pacific region promoted under formal structures are aiming for the same objective.

My submission is that if we seek dialogues for transformations, then we need to reflect more of the methodology and the process including the products expected. My humble position is that while recognize the existing national framework as one reality, we would like to enhance joint human transformative power in the face of more powerful economic and material processes of globalization. The following are some of my reflections:

1. The size, the composition of the group and the quality of its members are very helpful conditions for this discussions group.
2. Community is much more than economic relationships. Without a sense of community, without a sense of place for a member, it would be difficult to make a community. The fact that in the present globalization context, there is one main stream topic of international competitiveness principle of national economic power. Consequently, the way people look at other people from other country tend to be unavoidably economic-based. Other dimension, for example, political, social, cultural, or others are subsumed under this economic one-dimensionality.
3. The recognition of others beyond “national” categories to recognize a broader human person is a crucial condition.
4. The importance of experienced based-sharing of the dialogue is decisive way not the lecture or academic context based one. Feeling and sharing
individual human concern could open up sincere discussion.

5. In Asia pacific region, there is diversity of countries: size, ethnic composition, language. If we allow national or narrowly economic identification to dominate the discussion, people from countries of smaller scales would unavoidably feel smaller and not open the true feelings.

6. Differences between levels of interaction are important. Recognition of elite-people may be a good starting and entry point for meaningful self-identification and awareness of open possibilities in dialogue with others.

7. Inclusion “others” in our familiar community interaction is very strategic. Two persons from New Zealand and Australia have helped the discussion both in deepening and broadening the collective identifications and identities framing.

8. Inter-societal and intra-societal balance. If we want to create or strengthen new dimension of changes already happening both within national and sub-national borders, and also in international arena, including create or broaden public sphere across the countries that could accommodate responses to human suffering, then we need to pay attention to strike the balance. Give room for differences of identities beyond the national or the society that a person belongs to. And also confronting human sufferings together would help.

9. The importance of national or ethnic history is clear, as Prof. Kikuchi proposes. Often times, though, these histories are products of specific political projects, not a few were responses to “external” invasions. The “national” or “ethnic” could then be taken for granted. To strike the balance, a healthy sense of critical and creative reconsideration of this sense of memory especially from multi-level and collective identity formation among the new generation is needed.
Report of Group Discussion C: Inter-faith Dialogue

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Inter-faith relation represents sensitive issue. It is amongst the issues that people have the tendency to avoid speaking in public. And yet, the Media is full of reportage about religious conflicts, the use of religious symbols in propagating social movement, religion based discrimination as well as attempts to promote inter-faith dialogue, and the promotion and protection of freedom of religion.

This is the context within which group C discussed interfaith-dialogue. Each member of the group belongs to a religious conviction. And Group C comprised of future leaders of East Asia with different religious affiliations. It is hardly surprising that discussion was intense. The more the members of group C exchanges ideas and hopes, the less the tensions are. The more they interacted with each other, the more the group identity developed. This is a normal process of consensus building through dialogue and consultancy in a democratic atmosphere.

Amongst consensus with magnitude concerns with the following:
1. They are words of peace. Religions taught people to love peace and live in harmony. However, effects of politicization of religion can be severe. When left without intervention, we could see civil wars in East Asia and elsewhere.
2. Religious conflict and religious harmony are two variants of the same phenomenon, that is, the salience of religion. Religion is a source of personal identity and of solidarity making. This is particularly true in most East Asian countries.
3. There is no strong ground to establish the claim that a religion has a stronger tendency to create disharmony in East Asia. Media fabrication, however, had helped created marginalization of a religion and mainstreaming the other. This is possible due to the fact that the media was important source of information and disinformation.
4. In the open era of the 21st century, inter-faith dialogue is crucial. Not
only would the dialogue help maintained cultural harmony in East Asia, but also to create a sense of East Asian-ness. Social development of East Asia, thus, would be meaningless without reference to good inter-faith relation.

5. In promoting inter-faith harmony, Group C agreed that promotion of mutual understanding was complicated. It needed creative interventions and commitment of people of different paths of life. As such, continuous dialogue and consultancy is unavoidable.