

Current Nordic Research on the Malay World: A Bibliographical Sketch

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ABSTRAK

Minat terhadap Asia Tenggara telah meningkat selaras dengan pembangunan ekonomi rantau itu. Dalam masa mutakhir, akibat ketegangan sejagat, Islam sebagai faktor budaya dan politik telah menjadi sebegitu penting sehinggakan Asia Tenggara dibahagikan kepada dua kawasan: utara dan selatan, dari segi akademik. Kawasan utaranya mempunyai hubungan dengan dunia Muslim dan selanjutnya. Penyelidikan di negara Nordic dalam pengajian Alam Melayu telah meliputi kepelbagaian subjek. Selain itu, sifat keanekejenisan rantau itu telah juga memberi ilham kepada pembentukan banyak model teori di banyak disiplin ilmiah. Oleh sebab itu, pengajian Alam Melayu lebih daripada pembinaan ilmu tentang masyarakat Melayu.

Kata kunci: Alam Melayu, Asia Tenggara, Kesarjanaan antarabangsa, Penyelidikan Nordic

ABSTRACT

As interest in Southeast Asia increases in tandem with the region's economic development, and lately as a result of global tensions, Islam as cultural and political factor is now of such importance that the academic division of Southeast Asia into a northern and a southern part appears unavoidable. The latter is characterized by links to the Muslim world and beyond, while the former is not. Nordic research on the Malay World investigates a wide range of subjects, and the heterogeneity of the region has inspired theoretical models in many academic disciplines. Malay World studies are thus more than the mere construction of knowledge about Malay society.

Keywords: Malay World, Southeast Asia, International scholarship, Nordic research

INTRODUCTION

This article charts some contemporary trends in research based in the Nordic countries on the subject of the Malay World. It is a preliminary one that will need

regular updating. It is but a minor contribution towards realising the ambition of the Institute of the Malay World and Civilization (ATMA, Institut Alam dan Tamadun Melayu) at Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia (UKM) to create the world's most complete catalogue and collection of studies about the Malay World.

The Malay World more or less denotes *southern* Southeast Asia, including the countries of Indonesia, Malaysia, Singapore, Brunei and East Timor, plus the southern parts of Thailand and the Philippines. While it covers regions where Malay cultures dominate, it is advisable to understand "The Malay World" as a geographical term, for in so doing, we can continuously be aware of the complexity of the region's powerful historical, socio-political and inter-ethnic dynamics, and can then better avoid falling into the essentialist and nationalist trap of focussing only on the subject of Malayness.

I have tried to clarify major lines of research presently followed in academic faculties within and outside the Humanities and the Social Sciences. Examples of disciplines where interest in the Malay World exists include linguistics, political science, social anthropology, ecological studies and economics. Quite a few studies are about Southeast Asia, a term purportedly coined by the German scholar, Robert von Heine-Geldern, in 1923 (Marshall 2002), and may therefore fall outside of the narrower field of Malay World studies. In this article, these are mentioned only in passing, and only when some relevance can be noted.

The main sources used have been databases at universities, university libraries and online bookstores, websites of universities and other faculties of higher learning and research, conference documents, and information from helpful individuals on the NASEAS (Nordic Association for Southeast Asian Studies) mailing list. Much cross-checking has been necessary since the reliability of webpages is not high.

Such a cursory examination of Nordic research of the Malay World, which may as yet be considered to be in its embryonic stage, will undoubtedly overlook many important projects. This is hard to avoid at this initial stage, however, and I hope I will have an opportunity to remedy such shortcomings in the future.

A look at Nordic contributions at the Third International Convention of Asian Studies (ICAS3) being held at the National University of Singapore (on 19 – 22 August 2003) gives some indication of presently popular areas and approaches as regards the study of the Malay World. The organisers of this conference have obviously tried to be as inclusive and international as possible in their selection of subject matter and scholars, accepting over 1,000 scholars from 60 countries. This makes its list of papers interesting as far as recent research projects are concerned. No paper from Norway and Finland touches on the Malay World. From Sweden, only one Swedish researcher, Johan Lindquist from the Department of Social Anthropology, Stockholm University, specifically deals with the subject: Inefficiency due to the nationalised handling of HIV/AIDS in the transnational Growth Triangle constituting Johor, Singapore and Batam.

Only one paper from Denmark relates, and somewhat indirectly, to the Malay World: Cynthia Chou from the Asian Institute at the University of Copenhagen writes about the viability of received geographical divisions such as “Southeast Asia”.

In order to gain a further understanding of the trends of research on the Malay World in the Nordic countries, one could take a quick look at some doctoral theses publicly defended in 2001 and 2002. At Stockholm University, there were three such works. One was Paula Uimonen’s *Transnational: Dynamic@Development.net. Internet, Modernization and Globalization, a study of the development of the Internet in Southeast Asia*, where Mahathir’s Multimedia Super Corridor and Vision 2020 were given a central chapter (Uimonen 2001). Another was my own *The State and its Changdao. Sufficient Discursive Commonality in Nation Renewal, with Malaysia as Case Study*, that describes different aspects of Malaysian modernization with the help of ancient Chinese concepts (Ooi 2001). A third, *The Anxieties of Mobility: Development, Migration, and Tourism in the Indonesian Borderlands* (2002), by Johan Lindquist, focuses on migration and tourism in the Johor-Singapore-Batam region. He presently studies human trafficking across the Indonesian-Malaysian border. At Lund University, Anna-Greta Nilsson Hoadley defended her doctoral dissertation, *Indonesian Literature vs. New Order Orthodoxy: The Aftermath of 1965-1966* (2002), while Stefan Eklöf, did the same for his work *Power and Political Culture: The Indonesian Democratic Party (PDI) and the Decline of the New Order (1986-98)* (2002) at the Department of History at the same university. At the Institute of Social Anthropology at the University of Oslo, Benedicte Brøgger completed her doctoral thesis titled *Occasions and Connections: The Chinese Clan Associations as Part of Civil Society in Singapore* in 2001.

INSTITUTIONS AND RESEARCHERS STUDYING THE MALAY WORLD

To the extent that Nordic scholars have been interested in eastern Asia, they have traditionally focused on countries such as China, Korea and Japan. The reasons have been economic, religious and, in the case of Communist China, also ideological. Nordic institutions studying the traditional subject of “the Orient” reveal a past (and probably present) disinterest in Southeast Asia or the Malay World, showing a strong preference for studies of classics, language and literature. For example, the Department of Oriental Languages at Stockholm University, despite having seven distinct sections, has none that specifically deals with languages found east of India and south of China, while the Institute for Asian and African Studies at the University of Helsinki has nine departments, none of which studies Southeast Asia. The same holds for Uppsala University’s Department of Asian and African Languages, which offers six language courses. At the Institute of East European and Oriental Studies at the University of Oslo,

research projects cover practically the whole geographical expanse of the Euro-Asia land mass outside of western Europe, excepting Southeast Asia.

Where the Malay World is concerned, Nordic interest in general blossomed rather late and had been largely spurred by economic and social anthropological concerns, and human rights activism. The Swedish Lutheran Church has traditionally invested relatively little missionary effort in the Muslim Malay World. Academically, Nordic research about the Malay World may be said to have modestly started with two pupils of the Swedish botanist Carolus Linnaeus, who had in the second half of the 18th century travelled in the archipelago studying its flora (Svensson & Sørensen 1983: 1; Hoadley 2001). This tradition was carried on in the early 20th century by scholars such as the Norwegian anthropologist Carl Lumholtz (Smedal 2001), the Swedish zoologist Walter Kaudern (Lindberg 2001) and the Norwegian linguist Otto Christian Dahl (Nothofer 2001).

The term 'The Malay World' itself is still a fresh, if challenging, concept, and should not be considered synonymously with Southeast Asia or the Chinese 'Nanyang'. One may for a start roughly say that the Malay World is southern Southeast Asia. Some experts wish to include Madagascar at the expense of the eastern Indonesian islands, while others wish the term to coincide as much as possible with Malay culture, making Malay World studies a nationalistic project. Problems of delineation are difficult and are perhaps best judged from case to case, allowing borderline cases to contribute as much stimulus as possible.

Studying how one group or region (the Nordic states) studies another (the Malay World) involves problems of definition at both ends. On the one hand, who should be termed scholars, and who among these, and for what reasons, can be considered Nordic? On the other hand, what is the Malay World, and to what extent is the answer influenced by Nordic research, by institutions such as ATMA, or by articles such as this one?

With regards to the first problem, one may take, for example, the case of Astri Wright, a Norwegian-Australian who studied Chinese in Norway and China, Southeast Asian studies in the United States of America and now teaches ancient and contemporary Asian art (mainly Indonesian). Another case is Signe Howell, a British citizen who was born Norwegian, but who was trained in England, and who has been teaching at the University of Oslo since 1986. May students from Southeast Asia doing their research at Nordic institutions be called Nordic? And what about Southeast Asian scholars who have migrated permanently to the Nordic states?

One may polarise the question and either define Nordic research simply as research carried out at Nordic institutes, or as projects conducted by individuals born and/or educated in the Nordic countries, regardless of present domicile. Both have obvious weaknesses. In the first case, we have to face the question of Scandinavians working overseas, for example; and in the second case, how are

we to categorize a Malaysian (of Portuguese descent maybe) or an American (perhaps of Thai origin) based at some Nordic institute? Should the source of financing be decisive? Such questions are difficult, and have no final answer.

In this article, and for the time being, I judge it wiser to include rather than to exclude, and shall for the sake of simplicity, adopt affiliation to Nordic institutions as my main criterion. One must subsequently remain aware that one risks over-emphasising research as expressions of administrative and national agendas, while downplaying the importance of the individual researcher's propensity. Perhaps the very purpose of studying Nordic scholarship about the Malay World might be allowed to be the decisive factor. Given the ongoing project at ATMA to study the construction of knowledge by others about the Malay World, it seems logical that the major point of interest should be the *traditions of knowledge construction* about the Malay World which may be considered more or less unique to the Nordic countries. These may reside both in institutional conventions and in individual scholars whose works have become institutions in themselves.

In June 1977, a symposium held near Gothenburg in Sweden on Malaysia and Indonesia led to the publication of ten papers, all but two of which were about Indonesia. Of the two exceptions, one studied language policies in both countries and the second investigated the Malaysian state of Kelantan (Svensson & Sørensen 1977: v). This suggests that Nordic interest in the Malay World had already from the very start been more about Indonesia than any other country within the Malay World.

Given the active peacekeeping role that the Nordic states have played internationally after the Second World War, it is not surprising that many institutions exist outside the educational system which encourage research on specific aspects that sometimes involve the Malay World. Examples of these are the largely state-funded Swedish Institute of International Affairs (Utrikespolitiska institutet, UI) and the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI). Besides producing a popular pocket series in Swedish about most countries in the world, including all those in the Malay World, UI also publishes an international political analysis every week. This year so far, two of them, both by their researcher Pia Daleke, study the Aceh conflict and Indonesian Islamism (Daleke 2003a and 2003b): *Irakkriget kan gynna Indonesiens militanta islamister* (The Iraq war may favour Indonesia's militant Islamists) and *Långt till lösning på konflikten i Aceh* (A long way yet to go in solving the Aceh conflict). Statistically, it is apparent that the country most popularly studied by Nordic scholars of Southeast Asian is Indonesia.

SIPRI exemplifies research activities in Sweden by experts recruited from around the world. Their projects are usually of a very general nature, dealing with security questions. A project led by the American Bates Gill was active there between 1993 and 1997 called *Security and Arms Control in East Asia*, which studied Chinese and East Asian arms acquisitions, Japanese-European

security relations and Southeast Asian Security. The latter study is presented in the report *Arms, Transparency and Security in South-east Asia* (Gill & Mak 1997), where the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (Asean) is studied as an analytical whole. Asean and Southeast Asian regionalism (or the lack of it) are also rather popular among Nordic scholars.

SWEDISH RESEARCHERS

In Sweden, major research centres for Southeast Asia include at the Institute of East Asian Languages, the Centre for East and Southeast Asian Studies at Lund University, the Southeast Asia Programme at Uppsala University, and the Centre for Asian Studies (CEAS) at Gothenburg University. Stockholm University's Department of Oriental Languages, housing the Center for Pacific Asia Studies, has only one associate researcher studying the Malay World, namely myself, whose latest completed works with relevance to the Malay World are: *The Political Origins of Ethnicity: An Asian Perspective* (2002), "Three-tiered Social Darwinism in Malaysian Ethnographic History" (2003).

At the Department of East Asian Languages at Lund University, considerable research on Indonesia is conducted under Mason Hoadley, whose works include *The Archive of Yogyakarta, vol. II* (with Peter Carey, 2000), *Selective Judicial Competence. The Cirebon-Priangan Legal Administration, 1680-1792* (1994a), and *Towards a Feudal Mode of Production; West Java's Socio-economic Structure, 1680-1800* (1994b). A doctoral project at the department about the Malay World is being carried out by Stefan Danerek titled "Literature, society and politics in Indonesia – The young generation, Generation 2000 in Indonesian literature". Projects at the university's Centre for East and Southeast Asian Studies include "Managing Violence in Southeast Asia" under Michael Tivayanond. At the same university's Department of Social and Economic Geography, Southeast Asian projects include "Effects of the Recent Financial Crisis on the Rural Economy in Southeast Asia", which is a joint effort with the International Rice Research Institute and Lund University's Department of Economics. Researchers involved are Franz-Michael Rundquist, Magnus Jirström and Alia Ahmad. Jirström has Malaysia as one of his fields of interest, and his publications include *In the Wake of the Green Revolution: Environmental and Socio-economic Consequences of Intensive Rice Agriculture: the Problems of Weeds in Muda, Malaysia* (1996). The Department of Economics, run by Gunnar Christersson, an expert on East Asian economic growth, has projects covering the Pacific region, and which relate strongly to nation-building in the Malay World. Christersson's publications include *Institutional Change and Economic Performance in Malaysia: The Case of the Rubber Smallholder Industry* (1995). One doctoral project presently conducted at the department, which has bearing on the Malay World is Kamaruding Abdulsomad's "Building technological

capability of local subcontracting firms under contrasting industrial policies: Development blocks in the Malaysian and Thai automobile industries”.

At least three doctoral theses were defended at Lund University in 1997 that were about the Malay World. These were Arne Wangel's *Safety Politics and Risk Perceptions in Malaysian Industry*, about relations between management and labour, Gudmund Jannisa's *The Crocodile's Tears: East Timor in the Making* on East Timorese history (both at the Department of Sociology) and Malaysian Mohamed Nor bin Mohamed Desa's *Characterisation of Urban Rainfall in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia* (Department of Water Resources Engineering) on water resources engineering.

The Centre for Asian Studies (CEAS), tied to the Department of Social Anthropology at Gothenburg University, is currently directed by the Indonesian expert Wil Burghoorn. Its research programmes include “Discourses and Practices of Democracy in Southeast Asia”, started in 1996, in co-operation with the Research and Education for Peace Unit (REPUSM) in Penang, the Institute for Malaysian and International Studies (IKMAS) in Kuala Lumpur, the Cambodian Researchers for Development (CRD) in Phnom Penh and the Indonesian Institute of the Sciences (LIPI), Jakarta; “Perceptions of Democracy in Indonesia and Malaysia”; and “Democracy Hits the Ground. Resource Management and Local Politics in Southeast Asia”. A new research proposal will study “New Forms of Power in Southeast Asia: Local Formulations of Religious Authority”. Also attached to CEAS is Sven Cederroth who is studying “Patterns of Modern Islamic Fundamentalism: The Case of Malaysia and Indonesia” where the socio-political role played by Islam in the two countries are compared to explain differences in the growth of religious fundamentalism. His past works include *Patterns of Modern Islamic Fundamentalism: The Case of Lombok* (2000), *Survival and Profit in Rural Java. The Case of an East Javanese Village* (1996) about the rural middle class in Java, and *The Power of Mekkah and the Spell of the Ancestors: A Sasak Community on Lombok* (1981). Other projects about the Malay World at Gothenburg include Sylva Frisk's “Islamic revivalism and gender in Peninsular Malaysia: Urban Malay women and the construction of identity” and Jörgen Hellman's “Ritual fasting in Java, Indonesia: Politics, Control and Empowerment”.

A joint research programme between the Department of Peace and Conflict Research at Uppsala University (which also houses the Southeast Asia Programme, SEAP) and Universiti Sains Malaysia in Penang during the early 1990s was titled “Conflict Resolution, Human Rights and Development”. It studied, among broader Southeast Asian issues, ethnic conflict and conflict resolution in Sabah and Sarawak, and the Chinese populations in Vietnam and Malaysia. Present SEAP projects have security issues on a regional basis as their main focus. Peter Wallensteen studies the role of armed conflicts and their solutions in Southeast Asian state formation, while Ramses Amer analyses conflicts in the

South China Sea in an attempt to perceive durable solutions. Göran Lindgren compares social conflicts in Thailand and the Philippines.

At the Institution for the Humanities at Växjö University, research on the Malay World is being carried out by Hans Hägerdal, whose current projects are “The development of ethnic and religious relations in Indonesia in the wake of the Asia crisis” and “The reconstruction of Indonesian local history: the cases from Bali and Nusa Tenggara”. His publications include *Hanky-panky Chinese doing hanky-panky business; De etniska kinesernas situation i dagens Indonesien* (The situation of the ethnic Chinese in today’s Indonesia), and *Periphery and Bridgehead: a Synthesis of West Balinese History*.

Anders Uhlin, based at University College in Södertörn, is an Indonesia expert with a strong interest in questions of globalisation, democracy and human rights. His important works include *Indonesia and the ‘Third Wave of Democratization’: the Indonesian Pro-Democracy Movement in a Changing World* (1997) and *Globalization, Regime Transition and the Indonesian State* (2002).

Much Swedish research with relevance to Malay World studies is subsumed under the larger context of Asia research, a tendency enhanced by an apparent official preference for large projects in Sweden. The Swedish School of Advanced Asia Pacific Studies, founded in 2002, is a major attempt to coordinate Asia research throughout the country. Its area of research covers China, Korea, Japan and the ten Asean nations, and under Thommy Svensson, it has adopted “Transitions in Asia Pacific” as its theme. Malay World studies there are represented by the aforementioned Johan Lindquist.

One could say that the social anthropological tradition in Nordic interest in the Malay World is countered to some extent by this wider Asia approach. A number of anthologies compiled and edited by the Indonesianist Hans Antlöv, Stein Tønnesson, Sven Cederroth and Tak-Wing Ngo, such as *Asian Forms of the Nation* (1996) and *The Cultural Construction of Politics (Democracy in Asia)* (1999), encourage the comparative approach in studying Asian questions. These scholars, besides doing exemplary research, do the larger academic community the favour of making diversified reports accessible. This development has apparently been encouraged to a large extent by the very structure of the Nordic Institute of Asian Studies (NIAS) in Copenhagen, and its relationship to Curzon Press (now RoutledgeCurzon). Compilations of scholarly work, even when the individual authors are not based in the Nordic states, undeniably help in defining Nordic Asia research. Some of these anthologies are clearly only about the Malay World, such as *Elections in Indonesia: The New Order and Beyond (Democracy in Asia)* (2002), *The Cultural Construction of Politics in Asia (Democracy in Asia)* (2000), *Exemplary Centre, Administrative Periphery: Rural Leadership and the New Order in Java* (1995), and *Imperial Policy and Southeast Asian Nationalism* (1996).

FINNISH RESEARCHERS

Finland has at least two conventional institutions for the study of Southeast Asia, and a developing virtual university network. The first is the Center for Southeast Asian Studies (CESS) at Åbo Akademi's Department of Economic Geography and International Marketing where courses in minority culture, political culture and economics are offered. It was founded in 1993 as a multi-disciplinary unit in co-operation with the University of Turku and the Turku School of Economics and Business Administration. The other, the Graduate School of East and Southeast Asian Studies, is based at the Department of Contemporary History at University of Turku, where the National University Network for East and Southeast Asian Studies is also situated. Together with AsiaNet, which provides services to all of Finland's 20 universities, the latter provides an important part of what the Finnish Virtual University has to offer to scholars interested in Southeast Asia. In this Internet project, there are three growing databases with relevance to Malay World studies: *Asia Specialist Database*, *Material Bank*, and *Paradigm Bank*. At the Institute of Development Studies at the University of Helsinki, Timo Kortteinen, is presently studying how ethnic identity is constructed in the two radically different socio-economic environments of East Malaysia on the one hand and West Malaysia on the other.

A considerable amount of scholarly work on economic development in Asia Pacific and Asean is done at the Swedish School of Economics and Business Administration in Vaasa, Finland, under the guidance of Hans C. Blomqvist. Most are indirectly of interest to a scholar of the Malay World. However, two major projects have immediate relevance to our subject. One studies trends of regional integration under the heading "The Internationalisation of the Singapore Economy: Globalisation versus Regionalisation", while the other, "The Political Economy and Development Strategy of Brunei Darussalam", seeks answers to the intriguing question of how economic diversification, a necessary development in an oil-based economy, can occur without undermining Malay predominance. Blomqvist's works include titles such as *Extending the Second Wing: The Outward Direct Investment of Singapore* (2002), *The Endogenous State of Brunei Darussalam* (1998), *Assessing Market Potential: the Case of Asean as a Market for Finnish Exporters* (1995), *Dynamic Comparative Advantage and the Changing Export Structure of Malaysia* (with Jerker Johnson) (1995), and *Asean as a Model for Third World Regional Economic Co-operation* (1993).

Timo Kaartinen, lecturer at the Department of Cultural and Social Anthropology at the University of Helsinki, is also engaged in Malay World studies and has written "Moments of Recognition: Truth, Evidence and the Visiting Stranger in Kei (East Indonesia)".

NORWEGIAN RESEARCHERS

In Norway, long-term research on Malaysia has been carried out at the University of Oslo. Ingrid Rudie, who is based there, does comparative work between Norway and Malaysia on questions of gender, feminism, household and family, and nature-culture dichotomies. Her works include *The Significance of 'Eating'. Cooperation, Support and Reputation in Kelantan Malay Households* (1995), *Visible Women in East Coast Malay Society* (1994), *A Hall of Mirrors: Translating Gender over Time in Malaysia* (1993) and *The Symbolism of Gender Politics: A Case of Malay Female Leadership* (1991). Her major work, *Visible Women*, is a sustained study of conditions of Kelantan women in times of overwhelming change. Olle Törnqvist at the same university's Institute of Political Science is a specialist in Asian development. His recent works include *Popular Development and Democracy: Case Studies with Rural Dimensions in the Philippines, Indonesia and Kerala* (2002) and *On the Legacy of the 1965-1966 Massacre in Indonesia* (2000).

Signe Howell at the University of Oslo's Institute of Social Anthropology is known for her continuing work on the Chewong people in Malaysia and their ontological categories (1989), and the Lio on Flores in Indonesia. One of her present projects involves the study of social changes among aboriginal peoples in the Malaysian rain forest. Unni Wikan, also based at the same institute, is the author of *Managing Turbulent Hearts: a Balinese Formula for Living* (1990). The famous Norwegian anthropologist Fredrik Barth should of course be mentioned here. In his influential study of northern Bali, *Balinese World* (1994), he presents an innovative method of analysis for studying complex societies.

Major social anthropologists from the University of Oslo (Rudie & Howell) and the Institute of Social Anthropology at the University of Bergen (Eldar Bråten, Leif Manger, Olaf H. Smedal & Kari G. Telle) now form an umbrella project called "Migrants and Entrepreneurs in Insular Southeast Asia" (MEISA) "to document and analyse how several distinct groups in the region [...] confront, manage and negotiate the overall conditions of development and crisis" (MEISA homepage).

Eldar Bråten, the co-ordinator, investigates aspects of entrepreneurship among minorities such as the Arabs and Chinese. His latest articles include *Against Community, Beyond Humanity: Grasping 'Violence' in Java* (2002a), and *'Kampung' Revenge: Crime, State, and Neighborhood Retaliation in Java* (2002b). Olaf Smedal concentrates on the fate of the repatriated minority of Catholic Florenese in Indonesia. His works include *Ngadha Relationship Terms in Context: Description, Analysis, and Implications* (2002). *Sociality on Display: The Aesthetics of Ngadha Houses* (2000) and *Order and Difference: an Ethnographic Study of Orang Lom of Bangka, West Indonesia* (1989). Kari Telle studies migration from Lombok to Malaysia and the Middle East.

Anne Kathrine Larsen, another Malay World specialist, is based at the Norwegian University of Science and Technology, working for the Development Studies and Co-operation Initiative. Among her publications are *Discourses on Development in Malaysia* (1998), *Belief and Contradiction within the Malay World View: a Study of the Fishermen of Pulau Tuba, Langkawi, Malaysia* (1993), and *The Impact of the Islamic Resurgence on the Belief System of the Rural Malays* (1996).

Among the doctoral dissertations on the Malay World completed in Norway are Malaysian Long Litt Woon's "Alone with my Halal Chicken: The Chinese Muslim Converts and Ethnic Bipolarisation in Malaysia" (1988), Kirsten Sandborg's "Malay Women: Suffering, Struggle and Strategies" (1994), Kristin Hestflått's "Ethnicity as Defence for the Continuous Self: a Study of Identity among Babas and Nyonyas in Malacca, Malaysia" (*in Norwegian*, 1999), and the aforementioned Benedicte Brøgger's *Occasions and Connections* (2001).

Students doing work connected to the Malay World in Norway at the University of Bergen include Anette Fagertun, who studies women entrepreneurs in Java; Lars Gjelstad, whose work on the relation between ideology and education in Indonesia is titled "Bringing the 'Reformation era' into the Classroom: Modern schooling and the formation of new subjectivities in Java, Indonesia"; Marthe K. Nordnes, who writes on the improving situation of women in Penang; Arild Spissøy, who has been comparing differences in Malaysia between western financed and locally financed corporations; and Sissel Torgriksen, whose project is titled "Arisan – a rotating savings and credit association (ROSCA) in Indonesia: An effective mechanism for accumulating money". At the Institute of Political Science at the University of Oslo, Torkil Saxebøl is analysing the central role played by religious leaders (*ulama*) among the Madurese in Indonesia, while Ingvild Solvang has been doing research on street children in Yogyakarta.

DANISH RESEARCHERS

In Denmark, institutes where research on Asia is carried out include the Asia Institute at University of Copenhagen, and the Department of Political Science, Århus University, where research on security issues in the South China Sea is conducted by Liselotte Odgaard. Her works include *Deterrence and Co-operation in the South China Sea* (2001). The Asian Institute provides language courses in Indonesian and Thai, including history and cultural knowledge about Indonesia, Thailand and Southeast Asia as a whole.

Arguably the most prestigious body for Nordic research on Asia is the Nordic Institute of Asian Studies (NIAS). Established in 1967 by the Nordic Board of Ministers, it is headed by a board comprising one member from each of the Nordic countries: Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway and Sweden. Although the express research strategy is to cover all Asia apart from the Middle East, in

practice, studies of East and Southeast Asia have been predominant there. Since 1997, however, state funds have been provided to enhance this organisation's role in European Asia research. Thus, the Asia Alliance (The European Alliance for Asian Studies) was formed, consisting of NIAS, the International Institute for Asian Studies (IIAS) in Leiden/Amsterdam, the Institute of Asian Affairs (IFA) in Hamburg, the European Institute for Asian Studies (EIAS) in Brussels, the Asia Europe Centre (AEC) in Paris and the Centro de Estudios de Asia Oriental (CEAO, Centre for East Asian Studies) in Madrid.

Due to its structure, NIAS researchers come and go, remaining affiliated to differing degrees. At present, of the 11 attached to it, only a couple are actively engaged in Malay World studies. These include Timo Kivimäki, who is involved in at least two projects with relevance to the Malay World. One studies conflicts in Indonesia through the so-called Conflict Transformation Approach, and offers policy recommendations relating to European Union foreign and security policies, and also expertise to the Danish Foreign Ministry (Danida Training Center) and Defence Forces (Defence Academy). It is part of the Indonesian Conflict Studies Network (ICSN). Recent project publications include *Saarivaltio veitsen terällä; Analyysi Indonesian ja Itä-Timorin konflikteista* (An Analysis of Indonesian and East Timorese Conflicts, 2001a), and *Territorial Disputes in the South China Sea* (2001b). The second project makes comparisons between border problems in Southeast Asia with those in the Baltic Sea area and in the Northern Calotte, and is part of a co-operation between NIAS, the Turku School of Economics and Business Administration at the University of Helsinki, the Institute of Development Studies in Sabah, Malaysia, and the University of Riau in Indonesia). Another researcher studying the Malay World at NIAS is Stefan Eklöf, (doctoral dissertation from 2002, *Power and Political Culture: The Indonesian Democratic Party (PDI) and the Decline of the New Order (1986-98)*), who has just initiated a study on historical piracy in Southeast Asia.

NIAS finances the Nordic Association of Southeast Asian Studies (NASEAS), which runs an email list and electronic bulletin.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

In the landmark compilation from 1983, *Indonesia and Malaysia: Scandinavia Studies in Contemporary Studies*, the editors noted that Scandinavian research on Indonesia and Malaysia had been gaining impetus throughout the 1970s, although an institutionalisation of such research had as yet not taken place (Svensson & Sørensen 1983: 3). A statistical estimate made at that time showed that for each project on Malaysia, there were two on Indonesia. Throughout Scandinavia, most of these were within the discipline of social anthropology (ibid: 5).

Today, two decades later, a number of institutes have been founded with Southeast Asia as their field of interest. To an extent, the general scholarship trends of Nordic scholarship seem to have continued. As regards the Malay World, Indonesia remains the most popular country of study, a fact easily explained by the country's size, its fascinating political structure, its potential to become a powerful international player, and by the ethnological abundance. East Timor and ethnic killings in Kalimantan and Aceh have all fascinated many Nordic scholars and activists. The role of Islam is of course a factor that has drawn a lot of attention lately, partly as an element in nation-building and partly because of the rise of fundamentalism. It is after all the world's largest Muslim country.

Nordic research on the Malay World touches on all the countries in the Malay World, and investigates a surprisingly wide range of subjects, from history to business management, from nation-building to social anthropology, and from security issues to intra-regional migration. On Sept. 23 – 24, 2002, the Fourth Asia-Europe Meeting (ASEM4) was held in Copenhagen. Undoubtedly, this stimulates Asia research in the Nordic countries further. Since terrorism was a major topic declared in the programme at this gathering of representatives from 10 Asian and 15 European nations, one may expect research on the socio-political and religious background of violent anti-western activism to be encouraged further in the near future.

Questions of regional security, regional trade, Asean and Asean+3 seem better analysed under a Southeast Asian, and not merely Malay World context. What is important to keep in mind is that Malay World studies are far from being the mere construction of knowledge about Malay cultures. Briefly put, such studies are about socio-political problems and solutions found within territories where Malay cultures hold a central position. The borders are of course uncertain, and any attempt to define them clearly is bound to restrict and deform our knowledge of the region's complex human phenomena. The Chinese diaspora falls very much within the sphere of Malay World studies, largely because of the important role played by the Chinese in Malaysia, Singapore, Indonesia, the Philippines and Thailand. Many major inter-ethnic questions concern the relationship between them on one hand, and indigenous peoples and the state on the other. China research also tends to overflow into the study of overseas Chinese in Southeast Asia, just as much as it involves business studies and security issues.

The contents of the many interesting projects mentioned in this article are not analysed in any way. Such has not been the objective of my undertaking. Instead, it is hoped that by merely presenting institutions, individuals and titles, readers can easily attain a fair idea of the current trends of Malay World studies in the Nordic countries. The subjects that interest Nordic researchers do reflect to an extent what is considered important in Nordic countries at large, and it is

reasonable to say that this in turn plays a significant role in the financing strategies of future research.

An observation one can make at this point is that the heterogeneity of the Malay World has over the years inspired many theoretical models in a large variety of academic disciplines throughout the world. This will no doubt continue as new and strong responses to globalisation and modern nation-building occur in the region where the winds meet.

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