

CONTINUITY AND CHANGE IN SOUTHEAST ASIAN DEVELOPMENT: THE CHALLENGES OF COMPLEXITY

INTRODUCTION TO JOURNAL OF SOUTHEAST ASIAN STUDIES (JATI 19)

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The latest edition of *JATI* addresses a number of issues that are of enduring significance to the study of South East Asia. Indeed, as the Association of Southeast Asian Nations has become more fragmented as China's growing influence in the Asia Pacific has asserted itself. It is salient to maintain the study of Southeast Asia as a distinctive cultural, historical and geographical grouping that shares distinctive commonalities despite long standing ethno-religious and political differences. As the region's politico-religious and cultural character grows more complex in the face of internal pressures to homogenise and external pressures to globalise it is increasingly important to grasp the continuities as well as the changes that impact both on the region and its study.

The current edition is consequently divided into four discrete sections that address: the maritime international relations of Southeast Asia; the evolution of Islamic self-understanding in Southeast Asia; socio-economic factors in Southeast Asian development; patterns of language, cultural and educational formation in Southeast Asia. Given the fact that maritime links have long dominated the pre and post-colonial history of Southeast Asia and the difficulties that Chinese claims to the South China Sea present to a number of littoral South East Asian states. The papers devoted to international relations draw attention to the contested maritime claims that perennially vex and trouble ASEAN's harmony and consensus. Thus Lowell Bautista examines the manner in which the Philippines and China have attempted to arbitrate their overlapping claims in the Spratley Islands, whilst Ahmad AlmaududyAmri examines the legal definitions of piracy as they impact on the South China Sea and Mohammad Rusli, Rahmat Mohamad and Roman Dremluga discuss the ongoing difficulty for Singapore-Malaysian bilateral relations posed by the Pulau Pisang lighthouse on a Malaysian island.

The following section examines the manner in which Islamic understanding has historically and contemporarily affected regional self-understanding. Sivachandralingam Raja interestingly explores how a precolonial discourse of free trade operated around the Malay Archipelago, the Java Sea and the South China Sea prior to the European colonisation of the region from the seventeenth century. Indeed, as Raja indicates the pre-colonial model of maritime trade was something

the Europeans found highly congenial. Somewhat differently, Badlihisyam Mohd Nasir and his colleagues from the Universiti Teknologi Malaysia and University of Malaya examine the impact of the Islamic scholars or *ulamak* movement on Malay Muslim self-understanding in the 1930s and on the *dakwah* movement in the 1970s, and how it continues to offer resources to the Malay Muslim world in the context of modernization, whilst Feirul Maliq Intajalle and Lukman Abdullah explore the manner in which Muslim estate's have been administered and distributed in Singapore prior to and post the independence of the city state.

Section three of these issues discusses a variety of socio-economic factors at play in South East Asia that affect contemporary social and economic practice. Linda Lumayag and Rahim Sail examine how Indonesian migrant workers in the Johore palm oil industry transmit ideas and practices to their homeland via social exchanges. Precious Oraya and Nobaya Ahmad and Hanina Hamsan discuss the impact of NGOs on homelessness in Kuala Lumpur.

The final section of this issue examines language, cultural and educational issues that impact on identity formation in Southeast Asia. Jem R. Javier offers an intriguing analysis of how the Tagalog language's grammatical structure affects material and psychological self-understanding. In a similar vein, Sara Beden and Indirawati Zahid examine how politeness patterns in literary texts impact upon the linguistic behaviour of secondary students in Johore, Sabah, Sarawak and Wilayah. Meanwhile, Semorlan A. Atendido and her colleagues explore the future aspirations of students at a Catholic elementary school in the Philippines. In a somewhat different vein, Rik Nakamura examines the installation works of the Vietnamese artist Nguyen Ngoc An and his role in preserving the culture of the catholic Bana community in Vietnam's Central highlands. Similarly, Sarena Abdullah and Chung Ah Kow examine the way in which Malaysian artists of the late 1960s New Scene sought both to develop and critique abstract expressionism to establish a culturally distinctive mystically real aesthetic through their art. Finally, Hanafi Hussin also examines how distinctive rituals associated with the consumption special foods and beverages invoke an unseen realm that links past and future amongst the Peranakan community of the Straits of Malacca. Ultimately *JATI 19* offers a compelling insight into the often elusive socio cultural and political practices of the Southeast Asian mind.