

# RADICALLY ENVISIONING A DIFFERENT SOUTHEAST ASIA: FROM A NON-STATE PERSPECTIVE

January 18-19, 2011

Inamori Foundation Hall, Kyoto University

## Seminar Statement

This workshop addresses to what extent Southeast Asia can be reconceptualized, researched, and rewritten, from a non-state-centered perspective. The principal aim of the workshop will be to seek a radically different epistemological approach by taking the state out of Southeast Asia. Professor James C. Scott (Yale University), who recently published *The Art of Not Being Governed* (2009) will also participate.

The nation-state-centered perspective has long generated a center-periphery dichotomy in the territory of the state, presupposing the spatially uneven expansion of the nation. The geo-ecological juxtaposition between hills and plains, has for instance, laid the basis for a societal model reinforcing stark differences between these two niches in terms of their political and economic status, agricultural modes, social mobility, civilization's worldviews, religion, and kinship systems.

In this conventional binary view on Southeast Asia, the upland tends to be a fixed passive periphery vis-à-vis river-mouth state formations. This dichotomous model is an archetypal case of "lived essentialism" in Southeast Asian scholarship (Scott 1999) and is regarded as problematic, as this simplifying narrative neglects regional complementarity and dynamism constraining scholarly analysis.

What is the proto-typical social formation of Southeast Asia, where cultural plurality, ecological diversity, and economic development predominates beyond the confines of the state? Recent scholarship on Southeast Asia has suggested that a state-centered view often fails to investigate the dynamic responses emanating from the periphery and influencing the center as well as active agents on the ground. The understanding of upland-lowland interaction requires an alternative framework, which goes beyond a one-way diffusionist treatment of power.

The turn of the century has seen newly emergent scholarship in search of a radically different Southeast Asian social formation that emphasizes "non-state space", "border zone," "hill-plain continuum," "colonial arc," and "Southeast Asian massif." These concepts on the spatial configurations of Southeast Asia all pose fundamental questions on the ways in which ethnographies and historiographies of Southeast Asia have been produced and will be tackled in our workshop.

### *Organized by:*

Asian Connections: Southeast Asian Model for Co-Existence in the 21st Century Asian CORE Program,  
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## Program

January 18, 2011

- 13:00-13:10 Welcome Speech by Hiromu Shimizu  
(Center for Southeast Asian Studies, Kyoto University)
- 13:10-13:20 Introduction by Noboru Ishikawa  
(Center for Southeast Asian Studies, Kyoto University)
- 13:20-14:00 Keynote Speech by James C. Scott (Yale University)
- Session
- 14:00-14:25 Shu-Yuan Yang (Academia Sinica, Taiwan)  
“Decentering the State in the Upland: Boundary Dispute and Electoral  
Politics among the Bugkalot/Ilongot of Northern Luzon, Philippines.”
- 14:25-14:50 Renard Ron (Chiang Mai University)  
“States and Non-States in the Pre-Modern Lao-Tai World.”
- 14:50-15:15 Jayl Langub (University Malaysia Sarawak)  
“*Territory is space of belonging: engaging the State in Borneo.*”
- 15:15-15:40 Kwanchewan Buadaeng (Chiang Mai University)  
Religious Movements of the Karens in Thailand-Burma Borderlands.”
- 15:40-15:55 Coffee break
- 15:55-16:20 Yukti Mukdawijitra (Thammasat University)  
“Semi-Zomia Zone: highland states viewed from ethnic-minority-centered  
Vietnamese history.”
- 16:20-16:45 Daniel Chew (University Malaysia Sarawak)  
“The People of Central Highland Borneo: The Dynamics of Relationships,  
Linkages and Movements.”
- 16:45-17:10 Atsushi Ota (Academia Sinica, Taiwan)  
“Sea People and States in Karimata Sea, c. 1780-1830.”

Reception

January 19, 2011

- 09:00-09:25 Dave Lumenta (University of Indonesia)  
“Evading or Blackmailing the State? - Negotiating State Formation in a Central Borneo Frontier.”
- 09:25-09:50 Hjorleifur Jonsson (Arizona State University)  
“Southeast Asian Ethnology and the Ethics of Representation.”
- 09:50-10:15 Yoko Hayami (Kyoto University)  
“Between the Uplands and Lowlands in Mainland Southeast Asia from the Perspective of Religious Dynamism: Towards a Synthesis.”
- 10:15-10:40 Abdul Rashid Abdullah (University Malaysia Sarawak)  
“Engaging the State: Strategies and Actions of the Indigenous Peoples of Sarawak in Dealing with Authority”
- 10:40-11:05 Masao Imamura (National University of Singapore)  
“Missions and Conversions to Modernity in a State Frontier: Christianity and Kachin.”
- 11:05-11:20 Coffee break
- 11:20-11:45 Wen-Chin Chang (Academia Sinica, Taiwan)  
“The everyday politics of the underground trade by the migrant Yunnanese in Burma.”
- 11:45-12:10 Noboru Ishikawa (Kyoto University)  
“Searching Radically Different Southeast Asia: From Non-State-Centered Perspectives.”
- 12:10-13:10 Lunch
- 13:10-14:30 Discussion