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Editorial

Activism and Social Movements in South-East Asia

Dayana Parvanova & Melanie Pichler

Citation Parvanova, D. & Pichler, M. (2013). Editorial: Activism and social movements in South-East Asia. *ASEAS - Austrian Journal of South-East Asian Studies, 6*(1), 1-6.

South-East Asia has been characterized by rapid economic growth and enduring socio-political disruptions. After the Second World War, many independent movements in the region ended up in or were replaced by authoritarian regimes. Only in the past few decades, mass protests have led to the fall of some of these authoritarian regimes, including the Philippines and Indonesia. Social movements and collective activism have played a crucial role in these upheavals. The region has seen an emergence of various forms of collective action and social activism ranging from small-scale mobilization to mass movements concerned with social justice, political and democratic freedom, gender, minorities, and the environment as well as civic, ethnic, indigenous, and human rights.

The history of social movements is deeply connected with the struggle for social change. Forming a heterogeneous compound of collective actors with a variety of demands and strategies, social movements essentially represent the "conscious, concerted, and sustained efforts by ordinary people to change some aspect of their society by using extra-institutional means" (Goodwin & Jasper, 2009, p. 3). As a complex system of relations and networks, social movements transcend local, regional, and national borders and connect very different actors on various levels (Van Dyke & McCammon, 2010). The heterogeneous groups and networks demonstrate manifold processes of emergence, formation, organization, and transformation, which render any analysis of internal and external dynamics a significant challenge to the researcher.

In the past, research on collective action and social activism was mainly focused on issues of labor, class, and the nation, referring mainly to Marxist and structural-functionalist traditions (Della Porta & Diani, 2006). In South-East Asia, this overlap of the working class movement and emerging nationalism became obvious, for example, with the strong independent movements in Burma/Myanmar, French Indochina,

Indonesia (with the third largest Communist Party outside of the Soviet Union and China), or the Philippines (Anderson, 1998, pp. 7-8). The emergence of the so called "new social movements", which mobilized actors across class boundaries, including women, students, ethnic minorities, migrants, or peasants, prompted a quick and innovative response with regard to empirical and theoretical analysis and has led to the proliferation of a range of social movement theories (Della Porta & Diani, 2006). In this context, collective action and identity theory, for example, points to the social psychology of collective behavior (McCarthy & Zald, 2009, p. 193; cf. Calhoun, 1994; Cohen, 1985; Melucci, 1995), while resource mobilization theory addresses the more deliberate and strategic behavior and rational choices of conscious actors, notably in the early work of Mayer Zald and Charles Tilly (Freeman, 1979; Jenkins, 1983; McCarthy & Zald, 1977). The political process theory focuses on the political and institutional environment in which social actors operate (McAdam 1982; Tilly, 1978) and the new social movement theory highlights the structural origins of social conflict (Melucci, 1989, 1996; Touraine, 1981). Each of these approaches gives some proliferate answers to questions with regard to the structural conditions and pre-requisites for the emergence of collective action, the cultural and symbolic production of meaning and identity, the role of political and economic regimes, and the availability or non-availability of organizational and individual resources. These theoretical advances open a broad space for innovative analytical frameworks for the study of social activism and protest originating in the global South – a site rarely regarded as the place of production of social movements theory (Boudreau, 2004). Indeed, existing discrepancies between the geographical and historical roots of social movements theory and social movement activity today have been increasingly addressed by scholars from both social studies and area studies (Ford, 2013; Foweraker, 1995).

Historically, social movements have emerged as counterpart to the state and have challenged more institutionalized forms of political representation. Consequently, media and research alike have fostered a perceived dichotomy between politicized social movements – often equated with civil society – and an institutionalized state. However, in the face of an increasing interpenetration between civil society and the institutional system (Cohen & Arato, 1992; Keck & Sikkink, 1998; McAdam & Scott, 2005), questions with regard to both the concrete relation between social activists and other institutional actors, including the state, and the actual role of social move-

ments in social and political change become ever more pressing.

The contributions in this issue offer an insight into the heterogeneous struggles of social movements in South-East Asia and present case studies from Burma/Myanmar, Indonesia, Laos, the Philippines, Thailand, Timor-Leste, and Vietnam. Ranging from labor, ethnic, and women's rights to cultural expression and struggles for democracy, the examinations, however, exceed national boundaries and show the transnational character of present-day social activism.

In the first article of the present issue on social movements in South-East Asia, William Noseworthy analyzes the emergence of the *Unified Front for the Struggle of the Oppressed Races* (FULRO) in today's Vietnam and Cambodia from a historical perspective. With emphasis on the biography of the FULRO leader Les Kosem and the examination of original FULRO documents, which have not been referred to in any English language analysis to date, the author challenges a dominant narrative in the region that – based on James Scott's famous book – echoes a highland-lowland-dichotomy in the emergence of social movements. In his study of a more recent movement among highland minorities, Micah Morton focuses on the construction of identity and sense of belonging among Akha minorities residing in the borderlands of Burma/Myanmar, China, Laos, Thailand, and Vietnam. Drawing on ethnographic research in the region, the author shows how certain Akha elites promote their specific concept of culture and cultural citizenship across national borders by creating space for what can be perceived as a transnational movement. In a third article related to mainland South-East Asia, James Buchanan presents an insight of the Red Shirts movement in Thailand, based on participatory observation, field notes, and the translation of Thai language sources, such as banners, signs, songs, and speeches, during the demonstrations in Bangkok in 2010. Like the case of FULRO, the Red Shirts movement is intrinsically connected to the political structures and cultural context in which it emerged, and yet, both studies show that the analysis of these structures may not be enough to explain the actual rise, formation, and eventual transformation of collective action into a social movement (see also Goodwin, Jasper & Polletta, 2001).

In a similar manner, Kristina Großmann presents a more recent study on Muslim women activists in Aceh, Indonesia. Based on biographical interviews, the article highlights the subjective positioning within but also the reflective interpretation of the events after the tsunami in 2004. Muslim women activists in Aceh point at exist-

ing discrepancies between the aims of foreign donors in the region and those of local organizations, emphasizing a return to women's needs at the grassroots level. Offering a similar argument, Julia Scharinger examines some of the problematic aspects of participatory theater in Timor-Leste, which, placed in the hands of international donors and NGOs, was eventually transformed into a *tool* for development, losing its stimulating and emancipatory potential. The author clearly shows the existing tensions between the roots of participatory theater in a bottom-up social movement and the more institutionalized and top-down approach applied by NGOs and international donors.

In the study of social movements nowadays, global phenomena and local politics present two entities that cannot be separated from each other (Caouette, 2006; Caouette & Tadem, 2013; Smith, 2002). Steve Beers outlines some of the ways in which transnational labor activism affects labor organizing in Indonesia. By drawing upon the literature on discursive framing, the author shows "how local activists draw upon internationally circulation discourses of labor rights and adapt these discourses into the local political context". Also focusing on labor movements and unionism, Niklas Reese and Joefel Soco-Carreon challenge the idea of the eventual transformation of precarious working conditions into conscious behavior and collective action. Grounded in a comparative research project on the making of new social movements in South-East Asia, the authors attempt to explain the connection between precarity and (the lack of) collective action in Philippine call centers from a Foucauldian perspective.

In the final article of this issue, Oliver Pye and Longgena Ginting analyze the emerging resistance against a food and energy estate in West Papua, Indonesia, as an example for a new social movement that draws on different traditions of struggle. By analyzing the interests and strategies of local, national, and international actors engaged in the protests, the authors highlight three narratives of opposition that refer to indigenous rights to the forests, the Indonesian 'colonization' of Papua, and land reform.

Each of the articles in this issue deals with one or several specific aspects of social activism in South-East Asia. Although far from any attempt to cover the whole range or reflect the complexity of social movements and collective action in the region, they add knowledge to existing assumptions on the formation, or-

ganization (or institutionalization), characteristics, strategies, and eventual impact of social movements. In subsequent sections of this issue, Wolfram Schaffar and Ralph Guth address critical questions with regard to research and analysis of democratization processes along liberal constitutional ideas by focusing on the participation in and negotiation of political processes in Thailand based on three different movements. In dialogues with Kinari Webb and Phra Maha Narong Chaiyatha, Bethany Kois and Carina Pichler respectively present inspiring insights in new forms of social activism deeply rooted in the social and cultural context of the region.

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Lowland Participation in the Irredentist 'Highlands Liberation Movement' in Vietnam, 1955-1975

William B. Noseworthy[1]

Citation Noseworthy, W. B. (2013). Lowland participation in the irredentist 'highlands liberation movement' in Vietnam, 1955-1975. *ASEAS – Austrian Journal of South-East Asian Studies, 6*(1), 7-28.

In the field of mainland South-East Asian history, particular attention has been granted to highland-lowland relations following the central argument James Scott presented in The Art of Not Being Governed: An Anarchist History of Upland South-East Asia. Scott's analytical perspective echoes a long-term trend of scholarly examinations in the region. In a similar fashion, historical examinations of the Vietnam War period view the so-called 'highlands liberation movement' or the Unified Front for the Struggle of the Oppressed Races (FULRO) through the lens of a highland-lowland dichotomy. However, based on an examination of the biography of the Cham Muslim leader Les Kosem and various FULRO documents, this article challenges dominant assumptions based on Scott's argument and argues that a focus on minority-majority relations is essential for understanding the origins of irredentist claims of indigenous peoples in the region.

Keywords: *FULRO; Highland-Lowland Relations; Irredentism; Mainland South-East Asia; Vietnam War*

Der Beziehung zwischen Hochland und Tiefland kommt in der Geschichte Festland-Südostasiens in Anlehnung an das zentrale Argument von James Scott in The Art of Not Being Governed: An Anarchist History of Upland South-East Asia besondere Aufmerksamkeit zu. Scotts analytische Perspektive spiegelt einen langfristigen Trend der wissenschaftlichen Auseinandersetzung mit der Region wider. In ähnlicher Weise zeigen historische Abhandlungen der Zeit des Vietnamkrieges das sogenannte „highlands liberation movement" oder die „Vereinigte Front für den Kampf der unterdrückten Völker" (FULRO) durch die Brille einer Hochland-Tiefland-Dichotomie. Basierend auf einer Analyse der Biografie des Cham Muslim Führers Les Kosem und anderer FULRO-Dokumente stellt dieser Artikel dominante und auf Scotts Argumenten basierende Annahmen in Frage und argumentiert, dass ein Fokus auf die Beziehung zwischen Minderheiten und Mehrheiten zentral für das Verständnis der Ursprünge irredentistischer Ansprüche von Indigenen in der Region ist.

Schlagworte: *FULRO; Hochland-Tiefland-Beziehungen; Irredentismus; Festland-Südostasien; Vietnamkrieg*

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Introduction

In the wake of the Second World War (WWII) major political changes occurred on the global arena as a direct result of the process of decolonization. Minahan (2002) has referred to this process as the "second wave" of modern nationalism (pp. XX-XXI).[2] During this second wave of nationalism, the French fought a punctuated conflict against Ho Chi Minh's Viet Minh to regain control of their former colony in the light of the Japanese retreat from the region. In an ill-advised turn against American ideals of democratic rights and self-determination, the United States sided with the French colonialists, as they fought to maintain control over Indochina until the decisive battle of Dien Bien Phu in May 1954, which led to the Geneva Conference later that year and the promise of elections for the reunification of North and South Vietnam. In the South, after Ngo Dinh Diem removed Bao Dai from power in a gradual process from 1955 to 1956, culminating in fraudulent elections, minority communities became the target of Diem's assimilationist policies, as the Republic of Vietnam (RVN) (VN: *Viet Nam Cong Hoa* also "South Vietnam")[3] explicitly supported the migration of predominantly Viet-Kinh[4] Catholics into regions populated by highland and Austronesian Cham minorities in 1957, as well as during the *strategic hamlet* program in 1959. In this period, all peoples in the South who were not Viet-Kinh were reclassified as *Dong Bao Thuong* or "ethnic minorities" that, in the words of Diem, "needed to assimilate" (Scupin, 1995, p. 315). The study of the Cham language was banned and Cham language books were burned while in the north, Ho Chi Minh promised to create "autonomous zones" for ethnic minorities, following both the Chinese and Soviet state models (Scupin, 1995, p. 315). For the Khmer Krom in the Mekong Delta, the Cham along the coast in Cambodia and along the Vietnamese-Khmer[5] frontier,

2 Minahan (2002) divides the history of nationalism into three waves: The first wave relates to the period between the two World Wars; the second wave follows the post-WWII period, which is also described as the period of decolonization; and the third wave occurs more recently after the end of the Cold War in 1989.

3 The language of the original documents has been considered where felt as appropriate and indicated as follows: (F) for French, (C) for Cham, and (VN) for Vietnamese language. Due to formatting requirements the diacritics have been removed from this publication.

4 The definition "Vietnamese" indicating Vietnamese nationality, in opposition to "Vietnamese" as an ethnic identity, is rather inappropriate, due to the reluctance of many minority groups to be referred to as Vietnamese nationals during the period in question. Technically, the formal term for Vietnamese ethnicity is *Kinh*, while the informal term in many sources is *Viet*. Thus, to avoid additional confusion for individuals who may not be familiar with either the usage of *Viet* or *Kinh*, the hyphenated *Viet-Kinh* is used for ethnic Vietnamese throughout this article.

5 This refers to the contemporary border of Vietnam and Cambodia which was formalized as the border between the protectorate of Cambodia and the colony of Cochinchina during the high period of French colonialism in the early twentieth century.

and the highland minorities living in the Western Highlands region (VN: *Tay Nguyen*)[6], tension mounted slowly throughout the 1950s and the early 1960s. Thus, the *Unified Front for the Struggle of the Oppressed Races* (F: *le Front Unifie de Lutte des Races Opprimees* or FULRO)[7] emerged in 1964 as a merger of the disparate guerrilla movements to unite indigenous minority peoples along the borderlands of what is now Vietnam and Cambodia (FULRO, 1965, pp. 13-18).

The history of FULRO has remained problematic for contemporary Vietnam, as the nation continues to struggle with the healing process of conflicts invoked by the process of decolonization. Although FULRO was initially an extra-governmental organization, they did strive to form a legitimate government recognized by the international community. They claimed sovereignty over the Western Highlands region with the formation of the *Provisional Government of Champa* in 1965, with the Rhade leader Y Bham Enuol serving as Prime Minister (FULRO, 1965, p. 1; Garfour, 1991, pp. 8-9; LaBrie, 1971, pp. 80-82). Y Bham Enuol's position at the head of the Provisional Government of Champa reflected internal shifts in FULRO leadership, with highlanders eventually taking a greater part in the front's organization. This shift led to the contemporary conflation of *The Degar Foundation* and FULRO, particularly in the Vietnamese press in 2004, in the wake of widely publicized comments by then Vietnamese ambassador to the United Nations in New York, Le Luong Minh.[8] However, the contemporary Degar Foundation is not a military organization, nor do they advocate any form of separatism, as FULRO did. Rather, they are an advocacy organization promoting the rights of highland minority peoples in Vietnam by non-violent means (Ksor Kok, 2012).

The perceived continuity between FULRO and The Degar Foundation is one of two major misconceptions of the movement. Even in the most well-rounded examinations of FULRO, the organization is most commonly referred to through a permutation of the terms *montagnard autonomy movement*, using the French colonial term for

6 *Tay Nguyen* is frequently mistranslated as "Central Highlands". Meanwhile "Central Highlands" would be more properly defined as *Trung Nguyen* in Vietnamese language. However, the meaning of *Trung Nguyen* is flexible in that it can also refer to the classification "midlands" by terms of elevation, rather than region. Finally, for the same region as the western highlands, the term *Cao Nguyen* meaning "plateau" is also used. Also cf. "Ban Bien Soan Chuyen Tu Dien New Era", 2011.

7 FULRO is sometimes erroneously translated as the Unified Font for the *Liberation* of Oppressed Races.

8 For more details, cf. "Day manh thong", 2004; "Nguyen, T. D. TRP", 2004; "Nung hanh dong", 2004; "Quoc te phan", 2004; Viet Cuong, 2004.

highlanders: *montagnards*.[9] This analysis of FULRO correlates with certain fundamental elements of James Scott's (2009) thesis on highland-lowland relations, particularly with his depiction of the highlands as a "region of refuge" (p. 130) and extra-governmental authority. However, this framework obscures the significant participation of lowland minorities in FULRO and prevents scholars from seeing the initial origins and aspirations of FULRO as an organization.

When FULRO was founded it was in fact not a *montagnard* organization, but rather an attempt to form a trinity of minority peoples that had been repressed by the Vietnamese, particularly during the rise of Ngo Dinh Diem. While Austronesian Chams and Austroasiatic Khmers had their conflicts historically, both of them had been conquered in the process of the expansion of the Viet-Kinh Nguyen Dynasty from the mid-seventeenth to the nineteenth century. When, in the event of decolonization, certain members of the Cham and Khmer community came to view not the French but the Viet-Kinh as their true colonizers, irredentist sentiments arose.

Highland-Lowland Relations in Theory

The widely discussed work of James Scott (2009) argues that there is a distinct, unified, highland culture that exists in mainland South-East Asia. By maintaining this perspective, many scholars have been able to gain significant understanding with regard to this region. Based on Scott's argument, highland-lowland relations pose a critical element in understanding the resistance of highland populations to be incorporated into what is today Vietnam. Scholars have also noted the relatively friendly relations between the Cham and highland peoples. The epigraphic record suggests that Cham used military force to incorporate highlanders into their polities as early as the twelfth century, while later trade-tribute relations and a change in the composition of the Cham monarchy led Po Rome (1627-1651), a highland Churu, to become the sovereign of the Cham territories. Subsequently, 14 Cham sovereigns (C: *Po*) were

9 While LaBrie (1971) refers to FULRO as the "montagnard movement for autonomy" (p. 3), Salemink (2003) and Hickey (1982-2003) present more balanced analyses; although their focus is almost entirely placed on the highlands. Eventually, the role of the lowlanders in FULRO becomes, in Hickey's (1982/2003) words, "blunted" (p. 146) or overwritten in favor of the portrayal of the noble highlander resisting the inevitable machines of lowland civilization. Only Po and Phoeum (2006) highlight the nature of FULRO as a united highland-lowland minority movement.

Churu people, and from the seventeenth century onwards, Austronesian peoples in the highlands held Cham royal titles. Thus, irredentist claims of the Cham, Khmer, and highlanders in their opposition to the Vietnamese during the twentieth century were not only contiguous, they were overlapping. If considered at their greatest extent, the Cham could claim all of the territory from Hoanh Son to Mui Ke Ga (half of the contemporary coastline), while the highland peoples could claim the majority of the Annamite chain, and the Khmer Krom the entirety of the Mekong Delta, limiting the Viet-Kinh population to the territory north of Ha Tinh.[10] These claims highlight the fact that FULRO cannot be analyzed by a mere application of Scott's theory, considering that the organization claimed a relatively small portion of territory in the Western Highlands.

Contemporary highland elements of the Degar movement, which include some former members of FULRO, have received much attention since 2001, when Human Rights Watch (HRW) examined the repression of highlanders, Viet-Kinh land grabs, and the increase in the policing of the Vietnamese border (HRW, 2002, 2011). While several sources place an emphasis on FULRO as a *montagnard* movement, a point that is not entirely incorrect, other sources have gone beyond the accuracy of historical representations: One historical dictionary source oddly refers to FULRO as an "indigenous *Vietnamese* resistance organization" (Berman, 2011, p. 403; italics added), while another major Vietnamese publication printed in English and aimed at the international audience notes: "In 1975 some wicked muslims [sic] set up the so-called Front for Champa Liberation, which diffused the idea of restoring the Chiem Thanh Kingdom, and participated in FULRO" (Nguyen Minh Quang, 2001, p. 69). By building on a damaging conflation between Vietnamese nationality and Viet-Kinh ethnic identity, the labelling of FURLO as an indigenous *Vietnamese* organization obscures the initial intentions of the movement; likewise, the *Front for the Liberation of Champa* (FLC) was not founded in 1975 by "some wicked muslims", but by the single figure of Les Kosem – one representative of the three member groups of FULRO more than ten years earlier.

10 Baird (2010) – in focusing on the Khmer minority in Laos and the Lao minority in Cambodia – defined *irredentism* as "the doctrine that a people or territory should be controlled by a country that is ethnically or historically related to it" (p. 187). In the case of highlanders, this would have been an *ethnically* related claim, whereas in the case of Chams and Khmer Krom it would be a *historically* related one.

The examination of the narrative of Les Kosem together with two other predominant FULRO leaders, Y Bham Enuol (Rhade) and Um Savuth (Khmer), combined with an analysis of the FULRO documents, shall provide a solid basis for the re-evaluation of secondary literature as well as for the reassessment of the analytical implementation of Scott's concept of lowland-highland relations. The central argument of the following analysis builds on both primary sources and secondary literature in English and Vietnamese accessed through the University of Wisconsin-Madison as well as on rare sources provided by Cornell University, and selected others, accessed during my research at the Faculty of Vietnamese Studies at University of Humanities and Social Sciences division of Vietnam National University in Ho Chi Minh City. Primacy in this analysis is given to the FULRO documents, as they have not been well discussed in any English language analysis to date. Eventually, this article inquires whether and how minority-majority relations or relations between non-state and state peoples may provide a basis for a useful, nuanced discourse on FULRO. The analysis begins by delving more deeply into the historical background of Khmer, Cham, and highland irredentist claims, continues with a reassessment of the FULRO documents, and concludes with a consideration of how to reframe this history for the sake of accuracy.

Historical Background

There is an immensely rich literature in the field of South-East Asian studies that discusses the historical background of the Khmer, Cham, and the highland peoples who later became members of the FULRO movement. Many of these early studies were completed by French scholars at the turn of the nineteenth century. While they applied similar models of social organization in their theorization of early South-East Asian polities, they did not agree on early historical evidence. While Finot (1927) credited the earliest Sanskrit language inscription in the region of Vo Canh to Khmer authorship, one year later, Maspero (1928) credited the same inscription to Cham origin[11].

11 The Cham are an Austronesian peoples who controlled much of the Vietnamese coastline from the Hoanh Son pass to Mui Ke Ga (200 miles). They formed a complex poly-ethnic society with multiple kingdoms that, some have argued, relied heavily upon plunder or piracy. However, more recent examinations of the Cham economy have suggested that the Cham not only engaged in long distance trade with merchants from China and Arabia, but also were particularly linked to the Chinese courts through trade tribute. To make gains in this network, the Cham, who also relied upon salt water fishing, lowland rice agriculture, and swidden plots (C: *apuh*), formed trade relations with

Regarding Cham societal structures, the prolific historian of Vietnam, Keith Taylor (1999), recently suggested that early Cham polities would be better thought of as an "archipelagically-defined cultural-political space" (p. 153), considering the geographical features of the Vietnamese coastline reminiscent of insular South-East Asia, and therefore argued that early Cham polities had probably followed a Malay pattern of political organization, trade relations, and settlement. Although Taylor's concept has been recently praised by leading scholars in the field (e.g. Lochart & Phuong, 2011), the terms *vuong quoc Champa*, literally "Champa Kingdom", or *Chiem Thanh*, literally "Cham citadel", still frequently appear as annotations for this "archipelagic space" in Vietnamese literature. Both terms are theoretically outdated. *Vuong quoc Champa* hearkens back to Maspero (1928), while the term *Chiem Thanh* owes its historical origins to a different source: the fifteenth century Dai Viet Su Ky Toan Thu. In this text, *Chiem Thanh* does not refer to highland portions of Cham polities, nor does it include the northern polities of Amaravati and Indrapura. Thus, the term *Chiem Thanh* does not include substantial portions of Cham territory in the province of Quang Binh or the territory deep into the hinterlands of the Annamite Chain, despite evidence that Chams did control this territory (Gafour-Meth, 1991, p. 443; Li, 1998, pp. 80-86, 99-116, 139-158; Ngo Si Lien, 2010, pp. 310, 316-317; Po, 1987, 1988, 1989, 1991, 2006).

The Khmer and highland peoples present a complex group whose consideration in the following analysis is rather reduced, considering that up to date my research has focused mainly on the Cham population. Meanwhile, highlanders generally originated in the Western Highlands region and represent a mixture of Austronesian and Austroasiatic peoples. They have predominantly relied upon hinterland products, which linked them to lowland trade. Importantly, historians have also suggested that there was a substantial trade of slave and debt-bonded labor that linked various groups together. The position of highland peoples changed substantially after the seventeenth century, when Vietnamese, fleeing the Nguyen-Trinh wars, were first allowed into Prey Nokor (now Ho Chi Minh City). As the trading port became increasingly popular both among Vietnamese and highland peoples who had migrated to the lowlands, lowland Khmer, known also as the Khmer Krom, eventually became a minority in the region of the Southern Delta (VN: Nam Bo).

highland peoples and even fought to bring highland peoples under their control.

Cham nationalism had its roots in the responses to early nineteenth century campaigns against Cham peoples, when the Vietnamese emperor Minh Menh (1820-1841) suppressed Cham culture and annexed the last Cham kingdom (C: *negar*) of Panduranga, now Ninh Thuan and Binh Thuan provinces, in 1832. However, a revolt led by Katip Ja Thak Wa (1834-1835) which aimed to establish a Cham state in Panduranga (Po, 1981, 1988, p. 60, 1987, pp. 153-155) defined Cham nationalist sentiments throughout the following century. While certain historians place an emphasis on the cooperative relations between Cham and Vietnamese during the process of decolonization (Cao Xuan Pho, 1988, p. 180), a close examination of the narratives of Les Kosem, Y Bham Enuol, and Um Savuth demonstrates that a contestation of participation in Vietnamese society was just as probable.

Les Kosem (alias Y Prin Enuol or Po Nagar) was a Cham Muslim, born in Phan Rang (now Ninh Thuan province, Vietnam) and raised on Khmer territory, where he eventually served together with Khmer Krom leader, Um Savuth (or Om Savuk alias Chau Dara) and formed an alliance with the advocate of highland nationalism and the highest-ranking representative of the Rhade people, Y Bham Enuol. By the 1950s, while Les was a leading operative in detachments to the Central Highlands,[12] Um Savuth was responsible for Khmer Krom operations in the Mekong Delta (Cornfield & Summers, 2002, p. 241; LaBrie, 1971, p. 113; Po & Phoeum, 2006, pp. 1-13).

There are surprisingly few sources available on Les' early career. One of the few accounts is Ngon Vinh's (1995) revision of an early work on FULRO, *FULRO: Hay la Tap doan toi pham* (*FULRO or A Criminal Organization*) (1983), which was published with the Cong An Nhan Dan or the Socialist Republic of Vietnam's security police press. According to Ngon Vinh (1995), shortly after his work as an interpreter during the 1944 Japanese occupation of South-East Asia, Les Kosem founded a youth anti-French colonial resistance corps that hoped for the "restoration of the former kingdom of Champa" (VN: *phuc hoi co quoc Champa*) (pp. 6-8). However, although both Cham and Khmer shared the experience of Vietnamese conquest, it is unlikely that this restoration of the former kingdom of Champa would have entered the political rhetoric, since Les was focused on anti-French colonialist, rather than on nationalist aims.

12 At that time, the highlands were increasingly under the control of the Vietnamese government and administration.

Les' initial anti-French stance more likely put him in contest with the early ethnonationalist movements of highland minorities. Minorities of the Western Highlands had previously fought for recognition with French colonial authorities. With the creation of the *Commiserate of the Federal Government for the Montagnard Populations of South Indochina* (F: *Commissariat du Gouvernement Federal pour les Populations Montagnardes du Sud Indochinois*) in May 1946, and an ordinance signed by the French High Commissioner Admiral Thierry D'Argenlieu, which founded the *Country of the Montagnards of Southern Indochina* (F: *Pays du Montagnard du Sud Indochinois* – PMSI) that same month, highland minorities shifted towards a relatively pro-French stance, even though D'Argenlieu's support of the PMSI was predominantly part of a larger plan to re-conquest Indochina after the surrender of the Japanese. However, highland sovereignty was quickly rescinded one year later (1947), when France granted the Vietnamese Emperor Bao Dai the PMSI as part of his crown domain (Salemink, 1991, pp. 264-266, 2003, pp. 129-179). Highland movements at this stage became anti-Vietnamese rather than anti-French, moving parallel to shifts that occurred among the Cham and Khmer.

Les Kosem shifted to an anti-Vietnamese position after late 1954, when the Saigon regime enacted a migration policy, which led to a large-scale Viet-Kinh incursion into Cham, Khmer, and highland territory (Hickey, 1982/2003b, pp. 2-32). After his resistance movement was repressed by the Southern Vietnamese regime, Les relocated to France to train at St. Cyr Academy, where he worked together with Lon Nol's younger brother, Lon Non, studied law, and developed an interest in works with relation to the "history of the Champa kingdom" (VN: *lich su vuong quoc Champa*) (Vinh, 1995, pp. 6-8).

Although by the mid-1950s, Les Kosem was very likely concerned with the development of Cham nationalism, this did not preclude participation in the activities of Khmer elites or highland minorities. After Ngo Dinh Diem's 1955 fraudulent referendum victory, the RVN policy supported a predominantly Viet-Kinh Catholic migration into the highlands and Cham lands. Local authorities working for the Diem regime banned the use of Cham language and burned Cham books. As they enacted Diem's policies, they tended to refer to the highland populations as "savages" using the highly charged Vietnamese term *moi* or the French term *sauvages* (Salemink, 1991, pp.

264-266, 2003, pp. 129-179).[13] Thus, by 1957 pressure on highland populations led to the formation of the BAJARAKA movement among the Bahnar, Jarai, Roglai, and Koho peoples, with Y Bham Enuol as one of the movements leaders, while Les, together with fellow Cham Muslims Chek Ibrahim (Che Ibrahim), El Ibrahim (Chak Prak Hum or En Rak Hum), and Prime, formed an advocacy group for Cham political and military participation in Kampong Chhnang province on Khmer territory (LaFont, 2006, p. 12; Vinh, 1995, pp. 6-8). While BAJARAKA's explicit resistance to the Diem regime resulted in the imprisonment of most of their leadership, including Y Bham Enuol, Les Kosem continued to partner with the Khmer elite (LaFont, 2006, pp. 11-12; Po & Phoeum, 2006, pp. 23-46).

After the foundation of his advocacy group, Les moved on to gain support from Cambodian Prime Minister Prince Norodom Sihanouk, which granted Les access to arms and funds. In his support for Khmer irredentism, Les became a founding member of the *Liberation Front of Northern Kampuchia* (FLNC) in the late 1950s, while Diem's repression in the highlands continued with the reorganization of hamlets until 1959 (Kahin, 1986, pp. 99, 108-109; Po & Phoeum, 2006, p. 39). It was around this time that the relationship between Les Kosem and the Khmer Krom leader Um Savuth became of critical importance. Both worked for the Khmer secret service and simultaneously fed information to the remnants of the French secret service agency, the *External Documentation and Counter Espionage Service* (F: *Service de Documentation Exterieure et de Contre Espionage* – SDECE) (White, 1992, p. 143). Thus, by 1960/1961, Les was in a good position to found the FLC (VN: *Mat Tran Giai Phong Champa*) which sought to liberate the poly-ethnic "territory of ancient Champa" (Hickey, 1982/2003b, p. 46; Po & Phoeum, 2006, p. 39; Po, 2007, p. 49).[14]

While the Ngo Dinh Diem regime had stalled hopes for peaceful negotiations, the winds shifted after the coup of 1963 and the assassination of Ngo Dinh Diem. Demonstrating his connections to Saigon, Les managed to petition the new generals in power – General Le Van Kim, General Ton That Dinh, and Colonel Nguyen Chanh Thi[15] – and

13 According to Scupin (1995), the Ngo Dinh Diem enacted ethnocidal policies against the Cham, as Cham language materials were burned, the study of Cham was banned, and they were reclassified as ethnic minorities (Dong Bao Thuong) that "needed to assimilate", whereas in the Northern Vietnamese territory Ho Chi Minh promised to create autonomous zones for ethnic minorities (Scupin, 1995, p. 315).

14 Ngon Vinh misrepresents the FLC as the: *Phong trao phuc quoc Champa* or the *Front for the Restoration of Champa*. (Vinh, 1995, p. 10)

15 Le Van Kim was the brother in law of Tran Van Don and the two had formed a triangular relationship with Duong Van Minh (alias "Big Minh"), which resulted in the coup of 1963. General Ton That Dinh became a member of the

secured the release of Y Bham Enuol in 1964. Later that same year, Y Bham Enuol was proclaimed President of the High Plateau of Champa, that is, the non-coastal provinces of the II corps region. The ceremony was held in front of a group of three thousand FULRO members with Les Kosem on their front (Kahin, 1986, pp. 93-181; Po & Phoeum 2006, pp. 42-46; Tarling, 1999, p. 218). FULRO then released a series of proclamations declaring their objectives. Almost no secondary accounts of FULRO examine the actual contents of these statements, even though they were collected and published by the organization itself as a reflection on the events that led up to the foundation of the Government of the High Plateau of Champa and their participation in the Conference of the Indochinese Peoples in 1965.

The FULRO Documents

The FULRO documents are a collection of archival materials, photographs, newspaper clippings from *Agence France Presse* (AFP) and the *Phnom Penh Post*, the FULRO proclamation, and the FULRO declaration. While some of the documents were originally written in French, others were translated into English. The collection, which was published by FURLO leadership and members of the Government of the High Plateau of Champa at the Conference of Indochinese Peoples in early 1965 under the title *The FULRO History*, represents the most concise collection of primary source documents that give a clear self-portrayal of the FULRO movement.[16] What follows is a detailed analysis of these materials, not present elsewhere in secondary literature, beginning with the FULRO proclamation that marked the organization's official founding on 1 August 1964 with the following words:

> *The Cham, Rhade, Jarai, Churu, Raglai, Chauma, Bih, Hrue, Bahnar, Sedang, Hre, Kabuan, Hadrung, Mnong, Stieng, and Khmer Krom peoples of the center and south of Vietnam have today joined the coup of the Viet Cong [sic].*[17]
>
> *This is because Nguyen Khanh and his valets are incapable of guaranteeing our life and our liberty and also undertook pretexts for our suppression and maltreatment.*

Military Revolutionary Council (MRC) after the coup and commander of the III corps tactical zone. While Colonel Nguyen Chanh Thi had previously fled to Khmer territory, after the coup he was put in control of the I corps tactical zone under the command of General Nguyen Khanh.

16 This compilation is available at Cornell University.

17 It should be noted that Viet Cong is a rather pejorative appellation for Viet Nam Cong San or "Vietnamese communist".

> *[These actions] prove that the Vietnamese have brought an unnecessary campaign of destruction against our grand races.*
>
> *Since we are not able to support the repressive policies of the [south] Vietnamese: We establish FULRO to release us from their yoke.*
>
> *By this proclamation we make a solemn appeal to the countries of the world to help us arrive at our goal, which aims to make the attempt at the extermination of our great races by the Vietnamese colonialists a failure.*
>
> *Signed,*
> *President Chau Dara (Om Savuk)*
> *Vice-President Po Nagar (Les Kosem)*
> *And Vice-President Y Bham Enuol (FULRO, 1965, pp. 13-17)*

The declaration begins with a list of the lowland and highland peoples who have joined "the coup of the Viet Cong". The use of the pejorative Viet Cong, as opposed to the *National Liberation Front* (NLF), suggests a relatively anti-communist stance of FULRO leadership. The second section also notes the peoples' explicit dissatisfaction with General Nguyen Khanh who had become the President of the RVN in January 1964. The dislike of both the communist and the Republic's stances, combined with a strong sentiment of fear that the "repressive policies" of the South Vietnamese were aimed at the "extermination" of FULRO, present a leading motivating factor in the "appeal to the countries of the world".

The proclamation was published in several languages – not only in French and Khmer but also in Cham Akhar Thrah script, the Malay-Jawi script used by Cham Muslim populations in Cambodia and South Vietnam, and two highland languages, most likely Rhade and Jarai, given the large participation from these two factions. The spread of the proclamation across linguistic barriers and regional boundaries was thus a primary concern for the organization's leadership, a step not taken in the FULRO declaration, which was published at the same time with the following wording:

Declaration of the High Committee of the Unified Front for the Fight of the Oppressed Races

Our peoples: the Cham, Rhade, Jarai, Churu, Raglai, Bih, Hrue, Bahnar, Sedang, Hre, Kabuan, Mnong, Stieng, and Khmer-Krom, have been brought together into a community by the expansionist South Vietnamese. A systematic policy of genocide is keen on destroying our civilizations, our cultures, our religions, our nationality, and our languages.

Our chief religions have been attacked, our historical monuments and our temples bombarded, our schools closed, our youth enrolled in the army of the South Vietnamese imperialists in order to be used as flesh in the gun of their civil war against the Viet Cong. These are immense sufferings. We have undergone them for 10 years and we are not going to endure the amplification of them.

The total elimination of our grand races from the center and south of Vietnam was at one time considered inevitable. If we do not react against the crimes of the South Vietnamese perpetrated against us this will be the case. This is the same for all minorities, representative of our being of common identity, original inhabitants of the countries of our father of the center and south, that were integral in the Kingdoms of Champa and the Cambodians, who decide to form the Unified Front for the Fight of the Oppressed Races called FULRO. Our goal is the defence of our survival, for our cultural, spiritual and racial patrimony and the independence of our country.

It would not be superfluous to emphasise to all countries who enthusiastically support peace, the hardships that we have endured vis a vis the South Vietnamese imperialists, supported by the American imperialists who seek to involve by any means [available] the countries of Southeast Asia in SEATO, their block of war, and do not back down in front of any crime, even if offensive to them and their goal.

The list of their [South Vietnamese and American] crimes is already long and well-known in the world, and it is not our intention to say more. We announce solemnly: today, to all of the members of the United Nations, the Member States of the Committee of Decolonization, the existence of our United Front for the Fight, and also our determination to fight until the end, to safeguard our races from extermination by imperialist Vietnamese and their American patrons.

We have the conviction that all the people of the world who enthusiastically support peace will not miss the opportunity to contribute their effective assistance to release us from the yoke of the South-Vietnamese colonialists. (FULRO, 1965, p. 18)

The declaration of FULRO seems to have been published only in French, which was still the de facto lingua franca of FULRO leadership and most likely a result of the predominance of French education amongst FULRO leaders. FULRO leaders drew upon the language used in the FURLO proclamation, extending the accusation of a coming extermination of FULRO peoples to a coming genocide. The grievance against the repression of minority languages, culture, and religion, along with the abuse of minorities in the *Army of the Republic of Vietnam* (ARVN) was a unifying call. It is important to note that the appeal of FULRO was not directed to the national authorities but rather to the United Nations as the Committee for Decolonization presented a means to make legal petitions to the international community.

Although the wording of the FULRO proclamation is, as common with nationalist material at that time, sprinkled with the hyperbolic language of radical nationalism, the petition to the international community provides evidence that the organization intended to act in accordance with international law. With this concern in mind, FULRO leadership began to plan the next phase of their revolt, the coup of 20 September 1964, which resulted in the capture of a large portion of Western Highland territory. From the radio station at Ban Me Thuot, FULRO leadership began to broadcast their proclamation, which was quickly dismissed as "propaganda" in several press sources. Nevertheless, Nguyen Khanh responded to their appeal, and although the declaration of FULRO had referred to him as the "leader of the puppet regime of Saigon", he did promise FULRO's "Austronesian brothers that they would be granted legitimate rights" (FULRO, 1965, p. 1). However, Nguyen Khanh did not mention any Austroasiatic participants and, according to dispatch No. 2.086 on 24 September 1964, the Saigon regime maintained its prejudices as it "feared the instalment of a local autonomous government" and was "under the influence of Viet Cong propaganda that tended to emphasize divergences existing between the tribes of central Vietnam and the populations of the Delta". Additionally, an AFP/*Saigon Press* relation during this time confirms Nguyen Khanh's "fears" that the FULRO revolt would "divide the country in two" (FULRO, 1965, p. 32). Khanh's words reflect the assumption that the "Delta" populations were already synonymous with the majority Viet-Kinh population, while FULRO's self-proclaimed aim was to unify lowland and highland minorities.

In response to FULRO's continued petitions, General Khanh visited one of FULRO's police constabularies in the Western Highlands on 17 October 1964 to assure "64 compatriots representing the Austronesians" that the promises of 28 September 1964 remained in place (FULRO, 1965, p. 1). These promises included development programs, the restoration of land rights to minority populations, and the restoration of 'the right' to join the ARVN. Not only did Khanh address solely "Austronesians", and thus disregard the participation of Austroasiatic minorities, he also disregarded one of FULRO's major concerns: how minorities were forced to serve and die disproportionately for the ARVN's cause. On the same day of General Nguyen Khanh's visit, FULRO leadership thus founded the *Provisional Government of Champa*, appointing Prime Minister Y Bham Enuol, Minister of Foreign Affairs Khua Y Ruah Anha, and Minister of War Khua Ip'ha L'and, while FULRO remained the military wing of the provisional government (FULRO, 1965, p. 1; Garfour, 1991, pp. 8-9; LaBrie, 1971, pp. 80-82).

The foundation of the Provisional Government of Champa marked an important shift in the formation of the FULRO movement, as the military group was now to take a backseat in relation to the provisional government, which exhibited significantly more highland leaders in its administration. Additionally, as displayed by the words of Y Bham Enuol upon the foundation of the provisional government, FULRO leadership began to take a slightly softer stance towards Saigon:

> *Dear Compatriots!*
>
> *Our coup of 20/9/64 is for us a bright national victory. Hasn't our victory meant the occupation of most of the Zone [II] of the Western Highlands, where our forces killed many enemies and we have more than 70 prisoners? Our forces have been able to occupy without difficulty the radio station of Ban Me Thuot and broadcasted in several languages a proclamation of our territorial claims.*
>
> *On 24/9/64, General Khanh promised in front of 300 representatives of the Western Highlands that he would restore our land rights and on 28/9/64 those representatives returned with the general to Sarpa, where he insisted in front of our brothers in arms upon these same agreements. Colonels Freund and Wendt and General Depuy, having played a key role in this process, are the principal persons in charge of continued negotiations. It is with the insurance of these American senior officers and the government of Saigon that our brothers in Sarpa have accepted the truce.*
>
> *Dear compatriots, we ask you to take guard of these verbal promises. In case the Vietnamese government does not give us satisfaction in the immediate future, we will take up arms again in our struggle until the final victory.*
>
> *Long live FULRO!*
> *Long live the countries enthusiastic of PEACE!*
> *Down with the Vietnamese colonialists!*
> *MADE WITH CHAMPA,*
> *October 17, 1964*
> *Y-BHAM Enuol (FULRO, 1965, p. 19)*

Although the composition of the Provisional Government of Champa reflected a shift towards increased representation of highland peoples, Les Kosem remained an instrumental link to the Khmer Royalty, guaranteeing the presence of FULRO in the Provisional Government of Champa and resulting in their participation in the Conference of Indochinese Peoples in 1965. This process began with FULRO letter No. 111, dated 17 December 1964 and addressed to "His Royal Highness Samdech Preah Norodom Sihanouk Varman" and ended on 19 February 1965, when FULRO members received their official invitation, just three days before they arrived in Phnom Penh (FULRO, 1965, p. 2).

Although FULRO leadership participated in the conference, they only acted as the military wing of the provisional government. FULRO sources document the participation of the Provisional Government of Champa with Y Bham Enuol as its President in meetings with the Vietnamese NLF and the delegation of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam. It was during this meeting that Y Bham Enuol refers to the "historically friendly relations" between all "Austrien" peoples for the first time (FULRO, 1965, p. 2; Gafour, 1991, pp. 8-9; Hickey, 1982/2003b, pp. 164-165).

Although the so-called "Austrien" peoples were in fact not always characterized by "historically friendly relations", as major conflicts between Cham and Khmer appeared during both the eleventh and fourteenth centuries, Y Bham Enuol's use of the term *Austrien* reflects a greater project at hand. Les Kosem had created the term as a merger between *Austronesian* (covering Cham, Raglai, Jarai, Rhade, and Churu factions) and *Austroasiatic* (covering Khmer, Koho, and Bahnar factions). The creation of this term, combined with general trends in FULRO decision making at that time, suggests that the immediate goals of the Provisional Government of Champa and FULRO were not to reclaim the historical territory of "Chiem Thanh" or "co vuong quoc Champa", as Ngon Vinh's account would suggest, but rather to create a unified identity of highland and lowland, Austroasiatic and Austronesian minority peoples under the banner of Austrien. Under this same banner, FULRO members sought to establish a series of relations with Vietnamese, Khmer, and international forces that would guarantee FULRO members rights to territory in the Western Highlands (FULRO, 1965, p. 2; Gafour, 1991, pp. 8-9; Hickey, 1982/2003b, pp. 164-165).

Initial press releases and sources from Saigon were inaccurate as they greatly overstated FULRO's territorial claims and did not consider their symbolic role, dismissed the FULRO proclamation and declaration by using the term "propaganda", and suggested that the rebellion included "only small groups of highlanders" who were "illiterate" (FULRO, 1965, pp. 25-32). Subsequently, in June 1965, when General Khanh's regime collapsed and Vice-Air Marshal Nguyen Cao Ky became Prime Minister of the RVN, the Vietnamese leadership terminated the afore proposed development programs. As the tension continued to mount, American Special Forces maintained a close relationship with FULRO for at least another several months as they recognized FULRO, rather than the ARVN II corps command as the primary authority of the Western Highlands (Hickey, 1982/2003b, pp. 164-165; HRW, 2002, pp. 13-25; Socheruk, 1965, pp. 39-54; 5th SFGA, 1965, p. 15).

The Second Revolt Through the 1970s

With the successes of the coup of 20 September 1964, the Conference of Indochinese Peoples, and the official recognition by the American forces, it was clear that the Provisional Government of Champa and FULRO had made substantial gains in relation to Saigon. The newly created *Front for the Liberation of the High Plateau of Champa* (FLHPC) was technically under Les Kosem's command, along with the FLC, the FLNC, and the FLKK.[18] FLHPC was responsible for creating, in the words of Scupin (1995), a "political renaissance" (p. 316) amongst the Cham, as language materials and teaching manuals were published in the Cham script (C: *Akhar Thrah*) and radio broadcasts released. However, internal divisions within the FULRO command structure were pressing. The subordinate command of former BAJARAKA members loyal to Y Bih Aleo remained loyal to the NLF, while the majority of the FULRO command owed loyalty to Phnom Penh, and a small minority to the Americans. However, due to a lack of recognition on the part of Saigon, a second revolt broke out in December 1965, which eventually led to negotiations. In its aftermath, Paul Nur (Bahnar) was appointed to the position of Directorate General for the Development of Ethnic Minorities and negotiations prompted the Plains of Pleiku Conference in Ban Me Thuot from 25 to 27 June 1967, when 250 FULRO fighters were allowed to return to the Western Highlands from their posts in Cambodia (Hickey, 1982/2003b, p. 164; HRW, 2002, pp. 13-35; Socheruk, 1965, pp. 39-54; 5th SFGA, 1966, p. 15).

The Plains of Pleiku Conference was a continued attempt by the RVN to court highland elements of FULRO that were not yet loyal to Phnom Penh and the NLF, which aimed to drive a wedge between highland and lowland elements of FULRO. Nguyen Cao Ky's Saigon regime proposed the creation of the *Commiserate of Montagnard Affairs* with Paul Nur at its head, if FULRO elements would rally against the NLF. Yet, the Provisional Government of Champa rejected Ky's offer on 7 July 1967, and in August 1968, Prime Minister Y Bham Enuol made an additional plea for the sovereignty of the Cham people (Hickey, 1992/2002, p. 275; Scupin, 1995, p. 317). The wedge between the highlands and Saigon continued to grow in 1969, as accusations that FULRO leadership was selling out to RVN began to spread. These and other concerns brought Les Kosem back to center stage and by June 1970, Les' new Cham battalion came in line

18 *Front for the Liberation of Kampuchia Krom*

along with a subordinate command responsible for a territory ranging from Modulkiri, Ratanakiri, Kratie, and Kampong Cham to the Kampong Speu transfer depot, monitoring the arms for rice trade along the borderlands of the Khmer Krom (Ahern, 2009, pp. 36-39, 49; Hickey, 1992/2002, p. 275).

It was the arms for rice trade that first brought Les Kosem into working directly with the CIA in 1970.[19] At this time, working with the agency proved deadly, as collaboration with the CIA became one of the first grossly exaggerated accusations of the Khmer Rouge regime against the Cham population of Cambodia. Furthermore, in the blowback of the coup, dubious sources reported that Les' militias were massacring Khmer Rouge villages (Vickery, 2000, pp. 1-27). The combination of these accusations, along with claims of Chams collaborating with Saigon, quickly contributed to a political situation that rapidly spiraled out of control. Even though many Cham members of the FLC, the FLHPC, and FULRO had supported the Khmer Rouge, policy quickly turned towards the systematic execution of *tuan* and *hakem* Islamic intellectuals who were the pillars of the community, forcing the ingestion of pork, forbidding the teaching of *kitap* Qur'anic commentaries, desecrating the Qur'an itself, and forcing Cham to wear blue and white checkered scarves, marking them for execution. The result was a genocide committed against the Cham population of Cambodia, wherein Cham accounted for 25 percent of deaths (400,000 to 500,000 deaths) between 1975 and 1979, while they represented only 10 percent of the total population. In the fervor of this socio-political disaster, Y Bham Enuol was executed, the Provisional Government of Champa was disbanded, and Les Kosem exiled to Malaysia (Hassan, 1992, pp. 21-22; Osman, 2005, pp. 100-118; Osman, 2006, pp. 2-17; Vickery, 2000, pp. 1-27). Only from this period onward did FULRO become an almost purely highland organization.

Conclusion

The biography of Les Kosem, combined with the history of FULRO and the Provisional Government of Champa, urge historians to reflect on the nature of interpersonal politics and political speech in the history of Vietnam and Cambodia from 1955 to 1975, as the analysis of the macro-spatial actors of American, Vietnamese, and Khmer

19 For example, Les Kosem was actively recruited by the agency to produce a collection of documents known as *The Kosem Files*.

elites is not enough. Furthermore, it has been demonstrated that to look at the history of FULRO as the history of a highlands movement is potentially misleading. The participation of significant lowland members in the FULRO movement demonstrates that, rather than thinking in highland-lowland dichotomies, it may be useful to focus on the dualities created by majority-minority relations in the region, in order to better understand the irredentist claims of FULRO. The events described in this article provide evidence which suggests that lowland Cham and Khmer territorial claims are equally important historical considerations, along with Les Kosem's creation of the Austrien unified highland-lowland identity and appeals to the international community. Barring re-examinations of this history bodes poorly on the improvement of minority-majority relations throughout South-East Asia, and in Vietnam and Cambodia in particular. The future of these relations could certainly not improve without direct policy initiatives by South-East Asian governments themselves, as even this brief examination of FULRO highlights the reconciliation work that remains to be done and the tensions between minority populations and government authorities that continue to provoke incidents with negative consequences for all parties involved. Nevertheless, scholars of the region can continue their work by striving to present a more detailed understanding of this borderlands region, from the periods of the seventeenth through the twentieth centuries, giving greater primacy to Cham, Khmer, and highland language sources. Thus, only through the continued study of non-English language material will historians gain a better understanding of the interstices between national frames in the region and, perhaps for scholars working in Vietnam, a better understanding of minority populations as a whole.

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"If You Come Often, We Are Like Relatives; If You Come Rarely, We Are Like Strangers": Reformations of Akhaness in the Upper Mekong Region

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Citation Morton, M. F. (2013). "If you come often, we are like relatives; if you come rarely, we are like strangers": Reformations of Akhaness in the Upper Mekong Region. *ASEAS – Austrian Journal of South-East Asian Studies*, *6*(1), 29-59.

In my paper, I offer a brief analysis of just some of the ways in which certain members of the Akha transnational minority group are redefining Akhaness amidst the Upper Mekong Region's ongoing transition from "battlefields to markets". Drawing on 32 months of research in the region, I bring attention to the efforts of certain Akha elite to promote a more formal pan-Akha sense of belonging of a profoundly religious nature. I highlight the complex ways in which certain local Akha actors are reshaping culture by way of multiple and shifting orientations to the past as well as the national and transnational in the contexts of social gatherings, communal rituals, linguistic productions, multimedia engagements, and cross-border travel. I argue that by virtue of these simultaneously multi-sited representations of Akhaness, certain Akha are composing their own theories of culture that in part challenge and incorporate dominant models of nationalism and globalization, all the while reproducing and claiming a distinctly Akha way of being in the world.

Keywords: *Akha; Identitarian Politics; Religion; Transborder Sense of Belonging; Upper Mekong Region*

Dieser Artikel bietet eine kurze Analyse der Art und Weise, wie einige Mitglieder der transnationalen Akha Minderheit ihre „Akhaness" inmitten der laufenden Transition der Region am oberen Mekong vom Grenzgebiet zum Wirtschaftsraum neu definieren. Basierend auf 32 Monaten Forschung in der Region, lenke ich die Aufmerksamkeit auf die Bemühungen von bestimmten Akha-Eliten, ein formales, tief religiöses pan-Akha-Zugehörigkeitsgefühl voranzutreiben. Ich hebe die komplexe Art und Weise hervor, durch die bestimmte lokale Akha-AkteurInnen Kultur durch multiple und wechselnde Bezüge zu Vergangenem ebenso wie Nationalem und Transnationalem im Kontext von gesellschaftlichen Treffen, gemeinsamen Ritualen, sprachlichen Produktionen, multimedialem Engagement und grenzüberschreitenden Reisen neu gestalten. Ich argumentiere, dass aufgrund dieser gleichzeitigen und an mehreren Standorten stattfindenden Repräsentationen von Akhaness, bestimmte Akha ihre eigenen Theorien von Kultur herausbilden, die Teile dominanter Modelle von Nationalismus und Globalisierung gleichzeitig herausfordern und einbinden und dabei eine spezifische Art des Akha-Seins in dieser Welt reproduzieren und für sich beanspruchen.

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Schlagworte: *Akha; Identitätspolitik; Religion; transnationales Zugehörigkeitsgefühl; Upper Mekong Region*

> *Wherever we Akha may be, and regardless of the country where we reside, we are all of the same 'heart and mind'. (Aryeevq Tivq, personal communication, February 26, 2010)*[2]

Introduction

In my paper, I present findings from recently completed research on the post-1980s efforts of certain members of the Akha minority group to construct a more formal sense of belonging among Akha residing in the borderlands of Myanmar (Burma), China, Laos, Thailand, and Vietnam.[3] This transborder area forms a significant part of a region referred to as 'Zomia' by Willem Van Schendel (2002/2005) and James Scott (2009). Contemporary Akha transnational identity exchanges are being made possible in large part by the region's ongoing transformation from the opium producing battlefields of the Golden Triangle to the expanding regional market of the Greater Mekong Subregion (GMS) (cf. Thein Swe & Chambers, 2011).

For the most part, the ethnic bonds of kinship evolving between Akha in China and Laos on the one hand and those in Myanmar and Thailand on the other are being formed either anew or for the first time.[4] Moreover, while Akha living in Myanmar and Thailand today have long held a mythical notion of a past homeland located at a "higher" elevation to the "north", recent identity exchanges (Schein, 2004) with Akha and notions of Akhaness from China are transforming this mythical sense of homeland into an actual homeland positioned in a particular place and time. Nevertheless,

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2 In this paper, when writing Akha names and terms, I use the most recent Romanized Akha writing system developed by an international network of Akha during a meeting in Jinghong, China, in late 2008/early 2009. In this system, Roman characters not used to denote initial consonants are used as tonal markers placed at the end of syllables and not pronounced. The consonants used for tonal markers in this system include *q* (long, low tone), *r* (long, high tone), *v* (short, mid-tone), *vq* (short, low-tone), and *vr* (short, high-tone). For example, in the word "Aqkaq" (Akha), *q* marks that each syllable in the word is pronounced with a long, low tone.

3 Akha from Vietnam, where they are officially categorized as part of the larger Ha Nhi national minority, have yet to participate in the cross-border movement that is the focus of my research.

4 In Thailand, with the exception of Akha belonging to the minority *Uqbyaq* subgroup, the idea that there are Akha *currently* residing in China and Laos is a relatively novel idea. The majority of *Uqbyaq* Akha in North Thailand and East Myanmar trace their ancestry back fewer than three generations to various parts of far South-West China. In contrast, ties based on historically shifting patterns of residence, mobility, kinship, marriage, and trade invariably link a majority of Akha in Thailand and Myanmar today. As a result, Akha in Thailand and Myanmar have long been aware of each other's presence.

elites' representations of the larger Akha world as a diaspora are complicated by the place and hence 'homeland' (re-)making practices of local Akha communities in the region (cf. Tooker, 1988, 2012).

These reemerging or newly forged ethnic bonds are being reinforced via the 'discovery', recognition, and endorsement by certain elite of a shared pattern of descent from a common apical ancestor to whom many Akha trace their roots back over 60 known generations. Moreover, Akha re-imaginings of the borders of belonging bring attention to the crucial role of direct or face-to-face exchanges in cultivating an actual rather than "imagined community" (Anderson, 1983/1991) that neither necessarily trumps nor is trumped by other forms of belonging ranging from the national to sub-group, dialect, clan, village, and/or household. The Akha significance of the face-to-face is reflected in the remarks of an Akha woman from Kengtung, Myanmar, during the closing ceremony of the Second International Conference for Hani-Akha Culture held in North Thailand in 1996: "If you come often we are like relatives; if you come rarely, we are like strangers" (Tooker, 1996).[5]

Moreover, the Akha world in the remaking can be likened to a non-state formation nevertheless shaped in part in the likeness and image of a state. For example, certain Akha elite are employing a number of so-called state-making technologies (Scott, 1998, p. 78) such as creating a common orthography (cf. Morton, 2010), standardizing culture, and reproducing a particular historical narrative in forming and shaping this emerging non-state space. These elite unanimously stress, however, that this reemerging Akha world is a "non-territorial" and even "virtual" space equally molded by their common bonds of ethnic kinship and divergent experiences of national belonging (Wang, personal communication, November 29, 2011). I must stress, moreover, that these elite disagree with my suggestion that their Akha world in the remaking can be likened to a non-state formation shaped in part in the likeness and image of a state. This particular case of Akha further challenges the non-state/state binary underlying Scott's (2009) more recent treatise wherein Akha are tightly cast as the quintessential 'Zomians' (p. 177; Fiskesjö, 2010; Friedman, 2011; Jonsson, 2010, 2012; Shneiderman, 2010).[6]

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5 In China, where these conferences originated, Akha are officially classified as part of the larger Hani National Minority.

6 Drawing largely on the work of the now deceased Dutch priest turned anthropologist Leo G. M. A. von Geusau, Scott (2009) writes of the Akha that "it would be hard to imagine a people whose oral history, practices, and

The Akha elite that are involved to varying degrees in efforts to promote a more formal pan-Akha sense of belonging include knowledgeable elders, ritual specialists, state officials, business entrepeneurs, scholars, artists, musicians, NGO workers, and Christian missionaries from various parts of the region. A significant number of these elite hail from certain villages in Myanmar, China, and Thailand, which, in recent years, have experienced unprecedented economic prosperity as a result of regional rubber and/or coffee booms. While the majority of these elite are men, a number of women are involved with at least three in positions of leadership. Moreover, Christian elite generally only participate in activities deemed to be neutral with respect to the question of religion. The latter activities have included a series of International Conferences on Hani-Akha Culture as well as more recent efforts to develop a common Akha orthography, both of which are further discussed below.

A Note on Research Methods

To date, I have conducted 32 months of fieldwork focusing on various dimensions of the transborder movement. A majority of fieldwork was conducted in the borderlands of Northern Thailand and Eastern Shan State, Myanmar, which form the movement's epicenter. I also conducted three months of fieldwork in Xishuangbanna, China, and a brief period of preliminary fieldwork in Muang Sing, Laos. My research methods were a combination of multi-sited, itinerant, and collaborative ethnography (Lassiter, 2005; Marcus, 1995; Schein, 2004, pp. 276-277).

I focused on the transnational by way of a variety of multiple and shifting localities wherein certain Akha gathered and/or engaged with other Akha as well as material representations and ideas of Akhaness. At the same time, I joined certain Akha as they traveled across borders and engaged in various kinds of identity exchanges with other Akha. Last, throughout each stage of the ethnographic process, "from fieldwork to writing and back again" (Lassiter, 2005, p. 17), I have collaborated with several key Akha figures, most notably Jianhua Wang, who is a prominent scholar and leader in the transborder movement.[7] Originally from an Akha village in rural South-

cosmology represented a more comprehensive rejection of states and permanent hierarchies" (p. 177).

7 Wang's Akha name is Nyawrbyeivq Aryoeq. 'Wang Jianhua' is his official Chinese and scholarly name as reflected on his Chinese national ID card and in his scholarship.

West China, Wang currently resides in North Thailand with his Akha wife and family.

Akha in the Upper Mekong Region Today

Akha are a Tibeto-Burman speaking people residing in the predominantly upland regions of an area expanding the borders of five neighboring nation-states: Yunnan Province in South-West China, Shan State in East Myanmar, North-West Laos, North-West Vietnam, and North Thailand (Kammerer, 1998, p. 661; Lewis, 1982/1992, p. 208). The upper section of the mighty Mekong River lies at the heart of this transborder region. Estimates of national populations vary from roughly 260,000 in China, to between 150,000 to 300,000 in Myanmar, 92,000 to 100,000 in Laos, 56,616 to 75,000 in Thailand, and roughly 9,000 in Vietnam (Geusau, 2000a, pp. 125-126, 225; Toyota, 2007, p. 109; Wang, personal communication, June 11, 2010). Based on these estimates the overall Akha population in the Mekong region is somewhere between 567,616 to 744,000 persons.

From Transborder Kinship to Transborder Movement

Akha have long maintained multiple and shifting relations with various lowland polities through time and space. However, from roughly the 1950s onward, Akha communities in the region have been "drawn inwards toward the center of culture and power" within different states through ties of nationalism and citizenship (Wilson & Donnan, 1998, p. 3). The rise of modern nation-states and border regimes limited earlier connections maintained by Akha via regional trade, migration, and kinship ties (Toyota, 2000). The rise of the Cold War and imposition of the "Bamboo Curtain" between China and South-East Asia made cross-border contact especially difficult (Geusau, 2000b, p. 1). Moreover, it was during the Cold War that uplanders' cross-border distributions and contacts first made them of direct strategic interest to various national governments in and beyond the region (Kunstadter, 1967, p. 29).

Akha have subsequently been assimilated to varying degrees into five distinct nation-states, each with different minority policies. In general, the governments of post-colonial Myanmar and Laos implemented a policy of "divide and conquer" (Evans, 2003, pp. 214, 217; Gravers, 2007, pp. vii, 4-5). In contrast, the Chinese and Vietnamese governments developed a general policy of "unify and conquer" (Kampe,

1997, p. 24; Keyes, 2002, p. 1183; Mackerras, 2003a, p. 21). Moreover, in China and Vietnam, minorities tend to identify officially at least as members of one of the state-endorsed national minority groups in order to access special privileges (McKinnon, 1997, p. 286). In China and Vietnam, Akha are officially categorized as part of the larger Hani and Ha Nhi National Minorities respectively (Kampe, 1997, p. 4; Vu, 2010).[8]

In practice, however, state policies towards upland minorities in China, Laos, and Vietnam have resulted in their "marginalization through inclusion", or assimilation to a national community wherein they are viewed as "primitives" requiring the civilizing influences of the political majority (Evans, 2003, pp. 214-215; Kaup, 2000; Mackerras, 2003a, p. 21; Rambo, 2003; Sturgeon, 2005, p. 51). In contrast, state policies towards upland minorities in Myanmar and Thailand have resulted in their marginalization through exclusion as either second class citizens or illegal migrants (Chayan, 2005; Gravers, 2007, pp. vii, 4-5; Keyes, 2002, p. 1183; Sturgeon, 2005, p. 51; Toyota, 2007). Moreover, the Thai government is unique in the region for downplaying ethno-religious diversity in its portrayal of a homogenous 'Thai-Buddhist' nation (Keyes, 2002, p. 1176; Thongchai, 1994).

Today, however, re-imagined ethnic ties are drawing certain Akha across the borders of the five nation-states in which they are embedded in ways that are generating new forms of belonging variably molded by and/or transcendent of the territorial basis of state membership (Wilson & Donnan, 1998, p. 3; Siu, 2001; Stephen, 2007). The region's post-1980s transition from "battlefields to markets" has been accompanied by the growth of more formal cross-border ties among groups such as the Akha. As a result, certain Akha are at once embedded in their respective nation-states and part of a transborder movement.[9] Other scholars have noted the reemergence of similar

8 Drawing from recent government surveys in China, Akha anthropologist Wang Jianhua estimates that there are between 1.3 and 1.4 million *Hani* in China, of which roughly 260,000 persons are *Akha* (personal communication, June 11, 2010). However, Wang further holds that, "While all Akha are Hani, not all Hani are Akha" (personal communication, June 11, 2010). In China, the Communist state's ethnic classification project resulted in *Akha* being subsumed within the larger category of *Hani* on the presumed basis of linguistic, historical, and cultural affiliation (Cox, 1984; Geusau, 2003, p. 2). However, this categorization is problematized by the fact that *Hani* and *Akha* languages are mutually unintelligible (Sturgeon, 2005, p. 202). In addition, Cox argues that the more frontier dwelling and less sinicized *Akha* concentrated in Xishuangbanna were subsumed under the category of *Hani*, a less frontier dwelling and more sinicized group concentrated in Honghe, for reasons of both administrative convenience as well as national security (1984, pp. 21, 34, 40). Nevertheless, Geusau argues that all *Hani* and *Akha* both within as well as beyond China "consider themselves to have descended from one apical ancestor called (SmrMirOr), who is located about 55-60 generations ago by the oldest Hani and Akha clans" (Geusau, 2000, 2003, pp. 2-3).

9 This is particularly the case for Akha who are able to exercise varying degrees of what Aihwa Ong refers to as "flexible citizenship" and hence more easily navigate the new regimes of border regulation emerging in the region (Ong, 1999). Nevertheless, a rapidly expanding regional infrastructure of highways, bridges, tunnels, and telecommunications coupled with the transborder efforts of certain elite is increasingly bringing Akha and cultural productions of Akhaness from other parts of the region into the everyday realities of local Akha communities lacking

kinds of transborder ties among members of the transnational Dai-Lue minority (Davis, 2003; Wasan, 2013).[10]

Since the early 1990s, a particular faction of Akha elite has been working to (re-) establish more formal ties with other Akha in the region by building on what they identify as a common history, ancestral genealogy, and language. This faction is working to transform an earlier mythical sense of transborder kinship into an actual transborder movement and sense of cultural citizenship (Rosaldo, 1997, 2003; Stephen, 2007). In this context, "transborder cultural citizenship" refers to a sense of belonging and engagement in a non-territorial and yet bounded transnational "imagined community" or "cybernation" that may be used in negotiating for certain rights within particular nation-states (Anderson, 1983/1991; Mills, 2002, p. 73; Rosaldo, 1997; Stephen, 2007).

Akha transborder cultural citizenship is being cultivated via a variety of everyday practices promoting the creation of cross-border networks, constructions of Akhaness, and a transborder sense of solidarity (Stephen, 2007, p. 279). Certain Akha are organizing festivals and conferences, developing multimedia and literary publications, reforming ancestral rituals, reaffirming genealogical practices, and unifying the written Akha language as part of their movement. They are increasingly using digital technologies such as radios, televisions, cell phones, and the Internet in this process. In their efforts, however, they face significant challenges such as religious factionalism, divergent state policies, competing Akha orthographies, and internal socioeconomic divisions.

I now turn to a brief discussion of the historical roots behind the transborder movement. In particular, I focus on a series of International Conferences on Hani-Akha Culture held tri-yearly since 1993. These conferences play an instrumental role in connecting certain Hani and Akha elite in the region. Moreover, it is in the contexts of these conferences that the genealogical and place-based anchors of an emergent non-state Akha space are first re-imagined or re-forged in relation to the larger Akha world in the remaking.

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the resources, networks and/or documents required to successfully navigate contemporary border regimes.

10 Akha in various parts of the region have long maintained often contentious relations with neighboring Dai speaking groups such as the Dai-Lue (Cohen, 2000; Cox, 1983; Geusau, 2000a; Hansen, 1999).

The 'Post-Modern' Phase of Akha History in the Making

A series of International Conferences on Hani-Akha Culture have been held largely in China tri-yearly since 1993. The most recent conference was held in Yuanjiang County, Yunnan, China, in late November of 2012 (cf. Figure 1). Initiated by certain Han Chinese scholars under the directive of the Chinese state, over time certain Hani and Akha elite from various parts of the region have gradually assumed the reins in organizing the conferences.

Figure 1: Group photograph of participants in the Seventh International Conference on Hani-Akha Culture held in Yuanjiang, Yunnan, China, in November of 2012. The photo was taken by the conference organizers. The author is standing in the center of the fourth row from the bottom.

The multifaceted identity exchanges taking place during these conferences have greatly influenced the trajectory and shape of the evolving transborder movement that is the focus of my paper. Akha anthropologist Wang Jianhua (n.d.) holds that

> *the First International Conference on Hani-Akha Culture held in Honghe County, Yunnan, China in 1993 marked the beginning of a new, postmodern phase in Akha history during which a sense of solidarity and belonging is reemerging throughout the region (p. 23).*[11]

11 Wang holds that during the preceding "modern phase" of Akha history, the Akha experience is characterized by "division, loss and deconstruction" as a result of the emergence of modern nation-states and the arrival of Western Christian missionaries (n.d, p. 21). This phase is identified as a period of "colonization" on multiple fronts by more powerful, non-Akha 'Others'. The current "postmodern" phase of Akha history is seen as a period of "decolonization" characterized by reunion, revitalization, and reconstruction, albeit in a manner that neither supplants nor is subsumed by existing national structures.

China's ethnic minority policies following the end of the Cold War were and continue to be shaped by both economic prospects as well as national security concerns, particularly in reference to border dwelling minorities with transborder co-ethnics such as Hani/Akha, Miao/Hmong, and Yao/Mien. Moreover, in reference to Hani/Akha, the Chinese state's financial support of the conference when held in China, which also allows for state surveillance and control, seems to be the primary reason it has been held almost exclusively in China. However, not unlike many other state-led projects the world over, these conferences have generated a number of intended as well as unintended consequences.

Certain developments in China were key in initiating the conferences. Following the passing of Chairman Mao, the end of the Cold War, and the lifting of the "Bamboo Curtain" in 1989, a state-driven cultural revitalization of sorts took place among various national minorities such as the Hani, under which Akha are officially subsumed (Geusau, 2000b, p. 1). During this period the Chinese state both promoted the revival of certain ethnic festivals as well as expanded the directives of numerous Nationality Research Institutes, including the Hani/Yi Nationality Research Institute in the Honghe Hani/Yi Autonomous Prefecture in Yunnan (Geusau, 2000b, p. 1).

It was the latter institute that organized the First International Conference on Hani Culture in 1993 under the direction of Han Chinese Professor Li Zi Xian of Yunnan University in Kunming, with financial support from the Kunming Bureau for South-West Border Nationalities, the Yunnan Academy of Social Sciences, and the Honghe Hani/Yi Autonomous Prefecture Government (Geusau, 1993, p. 1). The official title of the first conference, however, did not include the term Akha, which was only added to Hani in 1996, when the second conference was held in North Thailand.[12] American anthropologist Deborah Tooker (1996) notes that the first international conference was at the time the largest of its kind ever held in the Peoples Republic of China.

Hani and Akha from South-West China, Vietnam, Laos, and Thailand as well as non-Hani and non-Akha researchers were invited to the conference with over 180 individuals in attendance (Geusau, 1993, p. 1). The participation of Akha from regions outside of China was facilitated by Leo G.M.A. von Geusau, a now deceased Dutch

12 The Second International Conference on Hani/Akha Culture was held in North Thailand in May of 1996. The main organizers of the conference were Dutch anthropologist Leo G.M.A. von Geusau, American anthropologist Deborah Tooker, and Dutch linguist Inga-Lill Hansson. The Tribal Research Institute in Chiang Mai, Thailand, hosted the conference and funding came largely from the International Institute for Asian Studies (IIAS), based in Leiden, the Netherlands, and the Asia Committee of the European Science Foundation (Tooker, 1996).

priest turned anthropologist, and Paul W. Lewis, an American Baptist missionary and anthropologist. Geusau (1993), who gave one of the opening addresses, notes that in addition to being an academic forum, the conference "was also a traveling conference (as) seven buses took participants over nearly 2,500 km to and through the Yi-Hani Red River Autonomous Prefecture, to the north of Vietnam" (p. 1).

Finally, and most importantly for the purposes of the present discussion, Geusau (2000b) declares that during the inaugural conference

> *Hani and Akha, separated from each other for hundreds of years, discovered for the first time that they were actually one people (and) that they shared a common apical ancestor, SmrMirOr, and genealogical system stretching back more than 1,500 years. (p. 1)*

This 'discovery' was revealed during the conference by Pascal Boucherie, a French scholar working with Hani and Akha in Yunnan during the 1980s. To his surprise, Boucherie found that the first 14 names of Akha and Hani ancestral genealogies were the same beginning with an apical ancestor referred to as *SmrMirOr*.

Geusau and Thai scholar Panadda Boonyasaranai stress that in spite of political, economic, and linguistic differences between and within Hani and Akha in the region, their shared genealogy and related ancestral services have emerged as a fundamental "symbol of their unity, their 'cultural citizenship' in a situation of diaspora" (Geusau, 2000a, pp. 146, 150; Panadda, 2004, pp. 171, 189-190). Geusau (1983) further notes that

> *Patrilineal ancestry and the associated ancestor cults form the backbone of the Akha world-view, around which is organized both everyday and ceremonial life. Major seasonal ceremonies are generally related to one of the twelve yearly symbolic ancestor food offerings, in which the deceased patrilineal grandparents participate. (p. 252)*

Moreover, for middle-aged and elder Akha and Hani participants, a highlight of the conferences has been engaging in informal exchanges with other Akha and Hani during which they recite their respective genealogies and discover exactly how far back they converge (Lewis, personal communication, February 27, 2010; Luksch, 2003). From another vantage point, Wang once likened his ancestral genealogy to an "Akha passport". He added that wherever he travels in the larger Akha world he is able to both authenticate his Akhaness as well as position himself as a more or less distant kinsman to his hosts by reciting his genealogy and listening to theirs.

However, in spite of sharing many linguistic features (Hansson, 1982, 1989, p. 32), the Akha and Hani languages are mutually unintelligible (Sturgeon, 2005, p. 202). As

Figure 2: This photograph was taken by the author during the Seventh International Conference on Hani-Akha Culture in November, 2012. In the photo, several conference participants from China are observing and discussing a poster outlining the master patrilineal ancestral genealogy shared by all Hani and Akha in Mandarin Chinese. The poster was prominently displayed in the hotel lobby where the conference was held.

a result, apart from genealogical names, which are mutually intelligible, Akha and Hani participants must communicate via a third language or translator (Mackerras, 2003b, p. 13; Panadda, 2004, p. 189). In contrast, Akha from various parts of the region are easily able to communicate with each other in Akha following some minor adjustments for language variety and borrowed terms.

Last, a growing number of Akha participants in these conferences are engaged in a scholarly as well as social movement to reconstruct a distinct Akha identity grounded in a history, language, and culture separate and apart from Hani (Wang, n.d.; Wang & Huang, 2008). In response, a few Hani elite and Han Chinese scholars have accused these Akha ethnic entrepreneurs of attempting to secede from the larger Hani nationality and challenging the Chinese state. Wang, however, who is a leading figure in these efforts, holds that while he fully agrees with and celebrates the

ancient ties of kinship between Akha and Hani, he is merely interested in uncovering the more recent historical period during which Akha splinter off from Hani and emerge as a distinct people.[13] These debates highlight unresolved tensions between notions of ethnicity and belonging as constructed by the Chinese state on one hand and certain members of the Akha diaspora on the other.

Of Religion, Power, and Conflicting Representations of Akhaness

Akha elite involved in current efforts to promote a more formal pan-Akha sense of belonging tend to identify two major obstacles towards their efforts. Foremost, they refer to the religious borders dividing Akha both between and within each of the nation-states in the region, particularly North Thailand and East Myanmar. Second, they note the political borders dividing Akha into five modern nation-states on the basis of divergent experiences of nationalism.

Among elite, however, there are conflicting views of the religious borders dividing the larger Akha world. For example, Christian missionary elite envision these borders as temporary obstacles to their visions of a larger Christian and in turn "civilized" Akha world that is gradually materializing according to "God's will". For the Christian elite, Christianity serves as a primary motivation for reaching out to their ethnic kin, particularly in 'unreached' parts of China, Laos, and Vietnam. In contrast, an expanding network of self-declared 'Neo-Traditionalist' elite attributes what is seen as a rising degree of conflict and disunity in the Akha world to the "divisive" and "destructive" efforts of Akha missionaries along with their foreign predecessors and support networks.[14]

In spite of the above differences, however, elite as a whole tend to downplay the significance of the barriers posed to their efforts by either divergent experiences of state nationalisms or the differences characterizing Akha societies through time and space. The latter forms of difference can be found in historically shifting and contingent forms of belonging such as clan/lineage affiliation, customary law, locality of residence, socioeconomic status, sub-group affiliation, and dialect (Lewis, 1989, pp. 6-7;

13 Wang (2013) argues that Akha first splintered off from Hani and emerged as a distinct people in the context of an eleventh to thirteenth century Akha state (Jadae Mirkhanq) located in the upstream areas of the Red and Black Rivers in part of what is today's southern Yunnan, China.

14 'Neo-Traditionalists' define themselves in two broad manners. First, they assert that they are "carrying" a modified version of *Aqkaqzanr* or "the Ways of the Akha Ancestors". Second, they identify themselves in opposition to Akha converts to the religions of 'Others', particularly Christians.

Geusau, 2000a, p. 127; Kammerer, 1986, pp. 207-224; Tooker, 2004, pp. 243-288; Toyota, 2000). American Baptist missionary and anthropologist Paul Lewis (1989, pp. 6-7) identifies anywhere between 7 and 13 dialects of Akha.

Moreover, in terms of religious borders, the Akha stand out compared to many other upland minorities in the region for strongly resisting conversion, particularly to Christianity, until as recent as the 1980s (Kammerer, 1990; Kwanchewan & Panadda, 2008, pp. 59-60). Kammerer (1990, p. 284) attributes this resistance to what she identifies as the rigid, complex, and highly demanding nature of *Aqkaqzanr*, which I feel best translates as "the Ways of the Akha Ancestors". Rising conversion trends in the 1980s are attributed to economic deprivation and the breakdown of Aqkaqzanr amidst the heightened incorporation of upland borderlanders into expanding nation-states and the global capitalist economy – a situation that certain Western Christian missionaries are able to capitalize on in their efforts to transform Akha 'heathens' into Christians (Kammerer, 1990, p. 284; Tooker, 2004).

This situation, however, largely applies to East Myanmar and North Thailand where a majority of Akha now identify as Christians – primarily as Catholics in East Myanmar and Protestants in North Thailand (Geusau, 2000a, p. 125; Li, 2013, p. 26).[15] As a side note, in contemporary North Thailand a small but growing number of Akha households and communities are converting to Buddhism, which is seen as more compatible with Aqkaqzanr than Christianity (Li, 2013, p.136). This trend warrants further investigation given the longstanding assumption that Christian conversion is a primary means by which upland minorities in South-East Asia assert equality with and yet distinctiveness from lowland Buddhist majorities (Keyes, 2003).

In China, only a small number of Akha have converted to Christianity since 1994 when five female nursing students in Jinghong became the very first converts under the guidance of a Christian Han Chinese instructor (Chaiyot, 2002, p. 54). Moreover, in China, a series of state-led campaigns between the 1950s and early 1980s to promote national unity and eradicate "superstitious" practices had a profound impact on curtailing, reforming, and/or standardizing local religious practices among Akha and other minorities (Tooker, 1995, p. 31; Wang, n.d., pp. 20-21). However, beginning

15 In a recent Masters thesis focusing on conflicts stemming from rising rates of religious conversion within a particular Akha community in North Thailand, Akha scholar Haiying Li (2013) notes a large discrepancy in various religious organizations estimates of their Akha members in Thailand. Li (2013) in turn suggests that, based on her personal observations, the majority of Akha in Thailand at present are Christian (inclusive of Catholics and non-Catholics), followed by Buddhists, and finally Traditionalists (p. 26).

in the 1980s, the Chinese state initiated efforts to "revive" certain religious practices in the form of standardized "ethnic festivals" (Tooker, 1995, p. 31; Wang, n.d., p. 21).

In a recent publication of the *Akha Outreach Foundation* – the most prominent Akha evangelical organization in Thailand today – a small but gradually rising number of Akha from Laos are hailed as "the newest believers" who have nevertheless "come under intense scrutiny and [are] being persecuted for their faith" (Akha Outreach Foundation, 2011, pp. 34, 41). In the same publication, Vietnam is hailed as "the final frontier for Akha missions" (Akha Outreach Foundation, p. 41). The governments of China, Laos, and Vietnam have taken a strong anti-proselytization stance and in recent years Akha evangelists from Thailand have been both placed on blacklists in China and Laos as well as imprisoned for varying periods of time in Laos.

To further complicate matters, in 2008, a "return conversion" movement first began among some formerly Christian Akha based in the Mongsat District (Muang Sat) of East Myanmar located directly west of the Myanmar-Thai border towns of Tachilek-Maesai. This movement is described in Akha as *Aqkaq zanr tawq khovq lar-e* or "To turn back towards and pick-up or carry the Ways of the Akha Ancestors once again" (Wang, personal communication, April 16, 2010). This return conversion movement has subsequently spread to other parts of East Myanmar, where it is currently estimated to include some 400 households. The Tachilek, Myanmar-based faction of an expanding regional network of Neo-Traditionalists is the mover and shaker behind the movement.

Interestingly, several of the Tachilek, Myanmar-based elite behind the return conversion movement have either Catholic or Baptist backgrounds. The group's leader, a charismatic reformer-prophet hereafter referred to anonymously as Ardov Tivq, at one time considered entering the Catholic seminary in Kengtung before deciding to pursue what became a lucrative career in the Burmese military instead.[16] On one occasion, one of the key Thailand-based representatives of the regional network of Neo-Traditionalists, hereafter referred to anonymously as Ardov Nyivq, informed me that

16 Following his retirement from the military in the early 2000s, Ardov Tivq was appointed as one of two Akha representatives on an official Minority Representatives Council based in Kengtung. Later, however, as he began to discover what he refers to as "the rich and profound nature of Aqkaqzanr" and work on behalf of its reformation and revival, he encountered resistance to his work from the Catholic leadership in Kengtung. As a result, he resigned from his position in Kengtung and moved to Tachilek where he established an independent association to work on behalf of Aqkaqzanr. Note that this association includes in its membership a number of influential Akha with backgrounds and/or ties in/with the Burmese military government.

> *the situation among Akha Christians in Myanmar and Thailand is quite different. In Myanmar, most Christians are Catholic. The Catholic leaders in Myanmar have been more open in allowing their followers to retain certain aspects of Aqkaqzanr, particularly ancestral genealogies and offerings. This contrasts sharply with Thailand where the Protestant church dominates and its leaders have outright forbidden these practices. (personal communication, November 2, 2009)*

As of 2010, Ardov Tivq and several other influential Akha from Myanmar had established an independent association in Tachilek, Myanmar, referred to as *Mam Mirkhanq Aqkaqghanr Tawq-e Armavq* (MATA) or "The Myanmar Group for Carrying Aqkaqzanr". This local association has since grown in conjunction with the regional *Naqkaw Aqkaq Dzoeqcawq Armavq* (NADA) or "Mekong Akha Friends Network". The shared missions of these organizations are to develop and promote a common Akha writing system, (re-) educate youth and Christian converts about their "deep and rich roots" as grounded in Aqkaqzanr, sponsor international gatherings of Akha, promote regional networks among Akha leaders, and promote a general sense of dignity and pride in being (a 'Neo-Traditionalist') Akha (Wang, personal communication, June 11, 2010).

Wang Jianhua, a founding member of NADA originally from China, sees their primary mission as that of "de-colonizing" the Akha world. Their primary aim is to counter the lingering impacts of initially foreign and more recently Akha Christian missionaries in not only "bringing about the destruction of Aqkaqzanr and promoting divisions among Akha" but also misleading their subject-converts to reframe Aqkaqzanr as a "backwards and primitive form of demon worship" practiced by "lesser heathens" (cf. Nightingale, 1990; Wang, 2013, pp. 74-75). Moreover, Wang holds that Christians have been further taught to look down on other Christians belonging to different denominations. At the same time, the impacts of various national assimilationist efforts in contributing to the marginalization of Akha culture and language, while acknowledged by some Akha elite, are generally downplayed.

I am grateful to Panadda Boonyasaranai for first pointing out to me that the issue of language unification seems to be one of only a few issues that Akha from various religious factions are able to collectively address. As is revealed below, however, even the seemingly neutral issue of language is fraught with the politics of religious and state factionalism dominating the larger Akha world. In their language unification efforts, Akha elite employ particular "language ideologies" or "beliefs and feelings about language and discourse" in constructing certain representations of Akhaness (Kroskrity, 2004, pp. 501-509; Woolard, 1998).

A Transborder Language: Of Literacy, Power, and Factionalism

Regardless of their particular visions for the larger Akha world in the remaking, Akha elite generally stress the need for a unified orthography as fundamental in their efforts. Underlying these visions is a more implicit notion of the very need for the written word (in Akha), given the oral nature of Akha culture past. Wang, for example, informs me: "We need a unified orthography in order to overcome all of our political and social divisions stemming from international borders and competing Christian organizations" (personal communication, April 21, 2009). Another elite member, hereafter referred to anonymously as Ardov Oeq, who is the former head of a now defunct development foundation with Baptist roots in North Thailand, informs me:

> *Our goal is to promote a greater sense of dignity and pride in being Akha throughout the region. Our efforts to create a unified writing system are key in this regard. Many Akha are eager to read publications in our language. However, Akha literacy rates are very low and so we also need to focus our energies on literacy training. (personal communication, January 18, 2010)*

This stress among Akha elite on the centrality of the written word towards the emergence of a non-state Akha space further complicates Scott's controversial claim that upland groups such as the Akha may have actually abandoned their early writing systems in order to make themselves illegible to various lowland polities (Gesau, 2000a, pp. 130-131; Scott, 2009, pp. 221-224).

Since the 1920s, more than 13 different writing systems have been developed for the Akha language by various local, national, and transnational actors including Akha and non-Akha government officials, missionaries, linguists, anthropologists, and human rights activists (Morton, 2010). Each of these orthographies both represent as well as (re-)produce the political and religious divisions that have come to dominate Akha identitarian politics during the latter half of the twentieth century. Since the early 2000s, however, certain Akha have been organizing meetings "by and for Akha" exclusively in order to negotiate a "common international writing system" for use by all Akha in the region.

In their unification efforts, the elite have emphasized the importance of both print as well as digital/cyber culture in promoting a more formal pan-Akha sense of belonging (Anderson, 1983/1991; Stephen, 2007). An example of the latter is a video of

an Akha written language tutorial uploaded on Youtube in August 2010.[17] Moreover, in their orthographic choices, elite have been strongly influenced by technological considerations such as ease of writing on standard keyboards and the choice of Romanized characters (Morton, 2010, pp. 112-114). Elsewhere, Hmong anthropologist Prasit Leepreecha (2008, p. 99) notes the crucial role of a Hmong script in creating an "imagined" transnational Hmong community, particularly by way of an expanding digital/cyber culture.

In reference to the Akha, it was only after elite representing various factions formally agreed to 'put aside' religious and state politics that their language unification efforts came to fruition. Following this agreement, certain Akha elite organized two international meetings in order to negotiate a "common/international Akha writing system" referred to as *Khanqgm Aqkaq Sanqbovq* (KHAS). These meetings occurred in Maesai, Thailand, in August, 2008, and Jinghong, China, on the cusp of 2009.

The main organizers of the first meeting were a prominent female NGO leader from Thailand, a leading Protestant missionary from Thailand (referred to hereafter anonymously as Ardov Smr), a wealthy businessman from Thailand as well as Wang Jianhua and Ardov Tivq as noted earlier. The main organizer of the second meeting was the *Association of Hani-Akha Studies* in Xishuangbanna, China. The first meeting was attended by 36 participants – 33 Akha from various parts of Myanmar, China, Laos, and Thailand, and 3 US citizens, including the current author. A total of 40 participants – all Akha from various parts of the region excluding Vietnam – took part in the second meeting.

During each of these meetings, however, disagreements erupted over seemingly minute orthographic choices reflecting elite's divergent religio-political positions (Morton, 2010, pp. 119-123). The varying language ideologies or "beliefs and feelings about language and discourse" that elite brought to the negotiating table in each context were in large part a reflection of their particular positions and interests (Kroskrity, 2004, p. 509). For example, Wang, in his position as the sole Akha representative from China during the first meeting in Maesai, Thailand, strongly encouraged the other negotiators to create an orthography that would be more akin to rather than divergent from the official state-endorsed Hani orthography in China.

17 Daqteir (sanq bovq aq ma deq) [Akha language]. Retrieved from http://www.youtube.com/watch?feature=player_embedded&v=ELCCwPgfB6Q (Uploaded August 3, 2010)

Ultimately, however, several key members of the Christian elite reneged on their earlier agreement to endorse the orthography that was negotiated. These members of the Christian elite held that another faction of Neo-Traditionalists violated an earlier agreement to put aside religion in their language unification efforts by "using the new writing system to bring Akha Christians back to Aqkaqzanr". Ardov Smr, a leading Protestant missionary in Thailand, told me:

> *They violated the agreement we reached earlier about putting aside the issue of religion in our efforts and focusing rather on our shared culture. As a result we will not use the writing system ratified in Jinghong. Rather, we will continue to use a modified version of the earlier system created by Paul Lewis. (Ardov Smr, personal communication, July 7, 2010)*[18]

Ironically, foreign and Akha Christian missionaries alike tend to stress the appeal of Christianity by virtue of the deep sense of pride that it instills in its literate converts. Neo-Traditionalists' efforts to literalize Aqkaqzanr challenge the hegemonic hold of Christians on Akha literacy and in turn "the modern". Following the refracturing of the Akha elite along religio-political lines, Neo-Traditionalists began to capitalize on their newly created orthography in developing language primers, literacy training programs, publications, websites, and online forums in support of a 'Neo-Traditionalist' Akha sense of belonging. In short, this new orthography emerged as a 'Neo-Traditionalist' orthography that is being used to reconstruct a literalized, "lightened" and hence "modern" version of Aqkaqzanr. An example of the latter kinds of cultural productions is included below in Figure 3.

In reference to Karen in British colonial Burma, Japanese scholar Hayami Yoko (2004) notes that the introduction of the written word by American Baptist missionaries both afforded Karen access to power and a larger social world as well as "segregate(d) and enclose(d) its users into an imagined community" (p. 43). While similar kinds of dynamics have operated among Akha, notable exceptions can be found in both the deep sense of pride that traditional Akha ritual specialists have long held in their extensive oral traditions as well as the highly intertwined nature of particular Akha orthographies and religio-political identities.

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18 Paul Lewis, an American Baptist missionary and anthropologist who is now retired in the USA, collaborated with several Lahu and Akha figures in developing the second oldest Akha orthography while in Kengtung, Burma, in the early 1950s. The 'Lewis' orthography has since become the most widely used system among Akha, particularly Christians, in Myanmar and Thailand today (Panadda, 2004, pp. 177-178).

Transborder Rearticulations of Aqkaqzanr and Akhaness

Since 2008, Neo-Traditionalist Akha have organized four major International Gatherings in various parts of North Thailand and East Myanmar. Aqkaqzanr or "the Ways of the Akha Ancestors" has been the main issue on the agenda for each of these gatherings. I limit my discussion here to the second and fourth of these gatherings in terms of their significance in shaping the overall trajectory of the transborder movement.

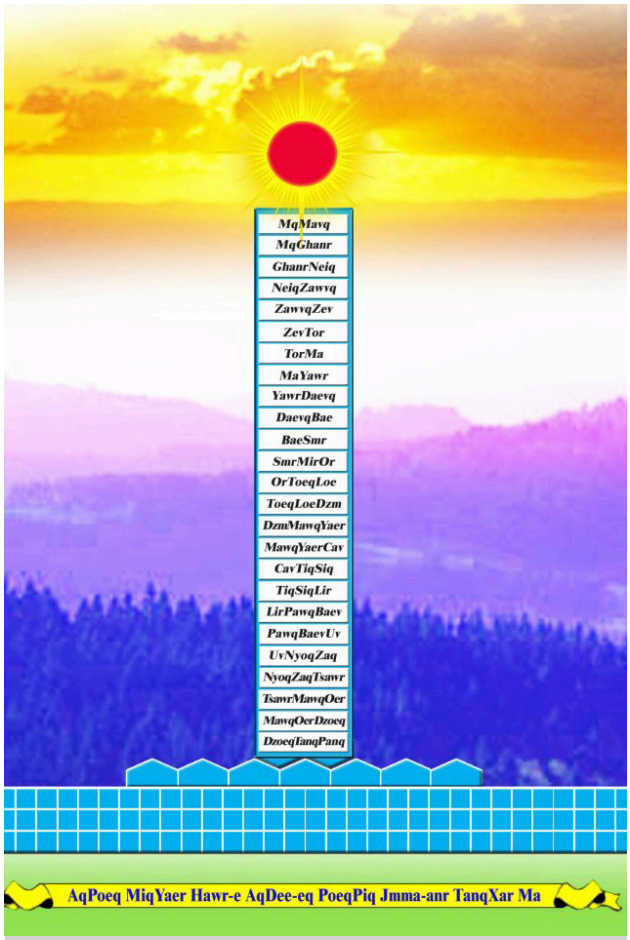

Figure 3: This image was downloaded by the author from the facebook page of the *Workers on behalf of the (Akha) Ancestors*, an informal association of Neo-Traditionalists based in Tachilek, Myanmar (Poeqpiq Jmma gar mr ghar, started on July 7, 2012). The image is of a literalized, pictorial representation of the master patrilineal ancestral genealogy shared by all Akha framed against the backdrop of the cosmos. Ancestral names are written in the Neo-Traditionalist Akha orthography. This image is being mass produced and distributed among Akha in the region to be used either alongside or in place of (earlier) versions of the ancestral altar constructed out of bamboo.

The second of these gatherings occurred in an upland Akha village in North Thailand in February, 2009, in the context of The Second Akha Cultural Festival and Academic Forum with sponsors ranging from the local Thai government to the *Akha Fellowship of Thailand* (FAT), a non-governmental and presumably non-denominational organization. More than 4,000 Akha from various parts of the region attended the event, during which public speeches were given, performances staged, and a series of more private meetings held. The latter more private meetings, organized exclusively by Neo-Traditionalists, culminated in a ceremony during which Akha representatives from Myanmar, China, and Thailand signed an official document written in the Neo-Traditionalist orthography.

The document represented a formal agreement on the part of an expanding net-

work of Neo-Traditionalists to support a "lightened" version of Aqkaqzanr that can be more easily "carried" in the contemporary world. One of the most significant reformations was an agreement that Akha may choose to observe as many ancestral rites per year as possible given their particular situation and still remain 'Traditionalist'. Akha 'Traditionalists' generally observe 12 ancestral rites per year. In explaining the significance of this as well as each of the other amendments, Wang informed me:

> *During the meeting we agreed to amend eight articles of Aqkaqzanr. It was truly a historical event and I am confident that these developments will further support our efforts to bring Christians 'back' to Aqkaqzanr. (personal communication, April 16, 2009)*

Moreover, shortly after the meeting, Wang, the sole China representative and signatory, scanned and e-mailed the written agreement to certain Akha officials in Xishuangbanna, Yunnan, China. By doing so, Wang proudly noted, "the document became the very first Akha language document ever distributed throughout the Akha diaspora" (personal communication, April 16, 2009).

An additional gathering of equal if not greater significance occurred two years later in the lowland Thai-Myanmar border town of Maesai where roughly 100 Akha elite from various parts of the region met in December, 2011, for a four day meeting referred to as *Naqkaw Aqkaq Ghanrsanrkhovq-e Baqdzan, Ardanq Bae-e Pov*, or "The First Mekong Akha Meeting on Aqkaqzanr". This meeting was unique in several respects. First, an expanding network of Neo-Traditionalists from Myanmar, China, Laos, and Thailand participated in the meeting. Most significantly, large delegations from Jinghong and Mengla in Yunnan, China, were present along with a smaller delegation from *Naqbaq*, an Akha controlled territory located in the part of far eastern Shan State bordering on China, Laos, and the mighty Mekong River.

Second, during the meeting, Ardov Tivq, the charismatic reformer-prophet of the Neo-Traditionalist movement, introduced and distributed a brand new publication entitled, *Aqkaq Ghanr Tawq Pardmq* or "The Book for Carrying Aqkaqzanr". This book, the culmination of several years of work on the part of various elite, was presented as a "manual" for both returning to as well as continuing to carry a "lightened" version of Aqkaqzanr. The meeting culminated with Ardov Tivq ceremonially distributing signed hardcover copies of the text to representatives from various parts of the Akha world. Last, the meeting was unique in that NADA, the umbrella organization under which

the meeting was held, was officially created via the selection of officers, setting of term limits, and explication of its relations with other organizations in the region.

Of Festivals, Ritual, and the Scaling-Up of Akhaness Past and Present

In late December, 2009, more than a thousand Akha from Myanmar, Thailand, Laos, and China joined a three day Neo-Traditionalist New Year's celebration in the border town of Tachilek, Myanmar, just a stone's throw across a narrow, muddy river from Maesai, Thailand. The celebration coincided with the buffalo (oxen), tiger, and rabbit days, marking the transition from the end of the buffalo year to the beginning of the tiger year. The Tachilek-based Neo-Traditionalist faction that financed and organized the celebration under the leadership of Ardov Tivq selected the auspicious buffalo day for its opening according to Aqkaqzanr (cf. Footnote 16 for notes on this particular faction).

This lowland, urban-based regional celebration of the 'Traditionalist' Akha New Year, however, differed significantly from the large number of rural, upland village level celebrations simultaneously taking place elsewhere in the region. In the 'traditional', upland setting, the celebration of the New Year is marked by both a series of household level ancestral offerings as well as the collective 'birthday' of everyone in the village. However, the organizers of the urban, lowland based celebration introduced an element of continuity by way of providing their guests with 'mass produced' ancestral offerings in the form of a small piece of pounded sticky rice and some boiled chicken meat.

On the second day of the celebration, a formal opening ceremony was held during which a large number of distinguished guests from the regional Burmese military government were welcomed and entertained along with a large crowd of bystanders who were kept from blocking the view of the former by young, heavily armed male soldiers. As the distinguished guests arrived, they were greeted by Akha of varying ages and gender standing on the sides of their pathway and decked out in full 'traditional' dress reflecting their diverse regional and sub-group affiliations (cf. Figure 4). Women of varying ages pounded ornately decorated bamboo poles on the ground in unison to the steady beat of bronze gongs and cymbals played by several middle-aged

Figure 4: This photo was taken by the author during the welcoming ceremony staged as the Burman regional commander of Tachilek district, located front and center, arrived along with an entourage of government officials, other distinguished guests, and military escorts. Note that he is wearing an Akha jacket over his uniform. This jacket was offered to him as a gift by the Akha organizers upon arrival at the festival grounds.

men. Nearly all of the greeters conspicuously held or displayed small flags representing either the Burmese nation or Akha 'sub-nation'.

The opening performance involved roughly 100 Akha youth, adorned in a diverse array of Akha wardrobes, singing/reciting the first 14 ancestral names of the master genealogy shared by all Akha, while clapping their hands in unison to a recorded instrumental accompaniment blasted from gigantic speakers arranged on each side of the stage. Thus, from the very beginning of the celebration, the organizers brought into play the powerful symbolism of 'family' and 'kinship'. For Neo-Traditionalist elite and non-elite alike, it is their patronymic linkage system and related ancestral services that comprise the fundamental core of Akhaness amidst the vicissitudes of modernity.

Moreover, the backdrop of the main performance stage was decorated with much larger versions of the mini-flags noted earlier, albeit with the Burmese flags hung in a more central as well as higher position than the Akha flags. When I inquired about the Akha flags, I was intrigued to learn that they represent the ancient Akha homeland of *Jadae Mirkhanq*. These (re-)constructed flags are composed of a large red circle in the center surrounded by alternating white, green, yellow, and blue triangular shaped patterns (cf. Figure 4). Throughout the remainder of the celebration, I noticed additional material representations of these (re-)constructed flags in the form of patches of varying sizes sewn onto individuals' jackets and/or headdresses.

Wang later informed me that this particular color pattern first emerged during the time of Jadae Mirkhanq and was subsequently maintained by Akha up until the present, albeit in the 'subaltern' form of the wardrobe rather than their former 'national' flag of Jadae. The idea or memory of Jadae Mirkhanq figures prominently in the efforts of Neo-Traditionalists to promote a more formal pan-Akha sense of belonging. In one respect, the focus on Jadae Mirkhanq is part of an effort to reeducate Akha, particularly youth, about their history and promote a sense of pride and solidarity in being Akha. This sense of solidarity is expressed in the popular saying, *Aqkaq Tseir Kaq Tivq Kaq Ma*, or "Ten Akha are united as one". The goal of promoting Akha pride and solidarity further relates to that of countering the long-standing efforts of Chrisitan missionaries to "brainwash their converts into thinking of Aqkaqzanr as a backwards form of devil worship, and then, like deadly viruses, infect our society with conflict and division" (Ardov Tivq, personal communication, July 24, 2010). This anti-missionary/Christian stance, however, betrays the cultural logic of the phrase *Aqkaq Tseir Kaq Tivq Kaq Ma* in contributing to the 'Othering' of Christian Akha as somehow unauthentic Akha.

In another respect, the focus on Jadae Mirkhanq is part of a concerted effort by certain Akha scholars from China, including Wang, to historicize the Akha (Wang, 2013; Wang & Huang, 2008). In doing so, these scholars are challenging representations of Akha as a "perennial minority" without either a history or state of their own (Geusau, 1983, 2000a; Kammerer, 1989, p. 277; Scott 2009; Tooker, 1988, p. 12, 2012, p. 32). Rather, Wang and others are constructing a historical narrative wherein Akha are positioned front and center. The main backdrop for this stage is Jadae Mirkhanq, an eleventh to thirteenth century Akha state during which it is believed that the eth-

nogenesis of Akha occurred.[19] In addition, these indigenous scholars affirm Geusau's earlier claims that the distinct genealogical system, related ancestral services, and codified system of customary law (i.e. Aqkaqzanr) forming the core of Akhaness, all evolved in the context of this short-lived Akha state and not as a means of state-evasion (Geusau, 2000a, p. 139).[20]

As noted earlier, in their efforts these indigenous scholars are building on and to a certain extent complicating the pre-existing multi-ethnic-nationalist narrative constructed by Han Chinese scholars in post-1950s China. Moreover, their scholarly productions can be added to a mounting and highly productive critique of Scott's re-imaginings of Van Schendel's notion of 'Zomia' (Fiskesjö, 2010; Friedman, 2011; Jonsson, 2010, 2012; Shneiderman, 2010; Scott, 2009; Van Schendel, 2002/2005). As Shneiderman (2010) notes in the case of the cross-border Thangmi in the Central Himalayas (p. 312), certain Akha variably imagine themselves as a state and/or non-state people depending upon their shifting positions and interests through space and time. In either case, however, Akha elite's contemporary representations of Akhaness as having cultural and historical continuity challenge Scott's portrayal of 'Zomian' identities as inherently fluid, shifting, and dynamic; a representation with earlier roots in classic ethnographic portrayals of the region (Keyes, 1979; Leach, 1954; Lehman, 1979; Moerman, 1965).

The Scaling-Up of Akhaness in the Upper Mekong Region?

John McKinnon and Jean Michaud (2000) note a recent trend among some upland minorities in the region, particularly the Mien/Yao, Hmong/Miao, and Akha/Hani, to organize cross-border intra-ethnic conferences. They argue, however, that the participants in these conferences are often met with "stronger divergent than unifying interests" (pp. 6-7). McKinnon (1997) further argues that state interventions have "deeply compromised" the basis on which ethnic solidarity might be constructed and that "proximity and common interest" rather than ethnicity are more likely "to serve as a rationale for group formation" (p. 300).[21]

19 This state is believed to have been located in the upstream areas of the Red and Black Rivers in part of what is today's southern Yunnan, China (Wang, 2013).

20 Geusau (2000a), however, differs in both his characterization of this early political formation as a "shamanic Akha chiefdom" rather than a state as well as his claim that the position of *Akha* within this "chiefdom" was that of 'refugees of war' in a *Hani* dominated, class-based corvee system (pp. 137-140).

21 On a side note, an inter-ethnic coalition of "indigenous peoples" is currently emerging in Thailand on the basis of

In reference to the Hmong, Michaud and Christian Culas (2000) argue that as a stateless, kinship based society they "cannot readily organize into a political body based on either territorial claims or supra-clan ties" (pp. 115-116). Evidence from Indochina and the USA, however, shows that Hmong have to some extent organized on supra-clan levels (Chan, 1996; Lee, 2005). Michaud and Culas (2000) further suggest that "support for a collective self-consciousness and, perhaps, some sort of political action", may come from members of the western Hmong diaspora (p. 116). Nicholas Tapp (2001) argues that the flow of remittances and projections of Hmongness from the western diaspora are reshaping local economies and conceptions of Hmongness in Thailand and Laos. Prasit (2008) further notes that a unified Hmong orthography created by foreign missionaries in 1953 and increasingly used by diasporic Hmong in various media forms at present is promoting the growth of an "imagined" Hmong transnational community (pp. 99, 111).

Louisa Schein (2004) describes the post-1990s "identity exchanges" that develop between Hmong/Miao in the USA and China via the transnational flow of people, ideas, videos, and clothing. Schein sees Chinese Miao involvement with transnationally mobile Hmong Americans seeking homeland connections as a search for resources that they are increasingly denied in post-Maoist China due to declining state intervention on behalf of minorities (Schein, pp. 286, 293). In the case of the Mien, Jeffery MacDonald (1997, p. 245) argues that their western diaspora is key in facilitating the growth of Mien transnationalism via their enhanced political-economic status and access to technology.

In contrast, there is no significant western Akha diaspora from which Akha in Asia may draw greater political and economic capital. However, there is an Asian diaspora of Akha. Building on Schein, it is possible to view the expanding array of identity exchanges occurring between Akha within and outside of China as a result of a growing realization on the part of the latter as to the relatively better-off position of Akha in China economically and politically. Ardov Oeq, a leading Akha representative from Thailand with a Protestant background, informed me:

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both "proximity and common interest" as well as a sense of possessing a unique identity that differs from that of the majority "Thai". Certain Akha in Thailand are participating in this sub-national-level movement, which has further links to regional and global "indigenous peoples" movements in Asia and beyond. The author is currently working with geographer Ian Baird on an article analyzing the historical roots and ongoing trajectory of this movement as contextualized in Thailand.

> *China wants its national minorities to be proud of their cultures and the government and university scholars there are doing a lot in this regard. In contrast, in Thailand Akha are in a very poor position along with the Lisu and Lahu – although the Akha seem to be in the poorest position. Many Akha here (in Thailand) still have not obtained full citizenship status and are unable to access basic government services. (personal communication, January 18, 2010)*

Ardov Oeq's views of China as expressed above, however, must be understood in light of his disenchantment with the position of Akha in Thailand, causing him to perhaps idealize the Chinese model without realizing its downsides.

Moreover, Geusau (2004) argues that, "the Akha genealogical system and related ancestor service" are a means by which Akha can realize their unity and "cultural citizenship" (pp. 146, 150).[22] Panadda (2004, pp. 189-190) similarly argues that in spite of political, economic, and linguistic differences between Akha in the region, the Akha genealogical system serves as a focal point in their efforts to (re-)construct a transborder sense of belonging. As noted earlier, for Neo-Traditionalist Akha elite and non-elite alike, it is their patronymic linkage system and related ancestral services that comprise the fundamental core of Akhaness amidst the vicissitudes of modernity. As a result, it appears that both proximity and common interest as well as ethnicity are generating a transborder sense of belonging among certain Akha. After all, as Renato Rosaldo (1988, pp. 162) argues, ethnicity tends to be both instrumental *and* expressive and theories opposing the two perspectives pose a false dichotomy.

Conclusion

In conclusion, my brief analysis of just some of the ways in which certain Akha are redefining Akhaness amidst the region's transition from "battlefields to markets" highlights the complex ways in which local actors are reshaping culture by way of multiple and shifting orientations to the past as well as the national and transnational in the contexts of social gatherings, communal rituals, linguistic productions, multimedia engagements, and cross-border travel (Jonsson, 2005; Tsing, 2005). By virtue of these simultaneously multi-sited representations of Akhaness, certain Akha are composing their own theories of culture that in part challenge and incorporate

22 John McKinnon (2001) argues that Geusau tends towards both "essentializing the people amongst whom he has spent the last 30 years" as well as downplaying "the degree of divergence among and/or between Hani/Akha" (p. 190). The same criticism can be leveled against Neo-Traditionalist Akha elite in their efforts to promote a more formal pan-Akha sense of belonging.

dominant models of nationalism *and* globalization (cf. Stephen, 2007), all the while reproducing and claiming a distinctly Akha way of being in the world. In addition, as suggested by American anthropologist Lynn Stephen (2007), "rather than labeling their efforts as either essentialist or constructionist, I suggest that we embrace their examples of geographic, spatial, and historical multisitedness and simultaneity and let them speak for themselves" (p. 307).

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Translating Thailand's Protests: An Analysis of Red Shirt Rhetoric

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From 14 March 2010 onwards, a mass of suea daeng, literally 'red shirts', began a prolonged, mass protest in Bangkok, which eventually degenerated into the worst political violence Thailand has seen in its modern history, leaving 91 people dead, around 2,000 injured, and a city smoldering from rioting and arson. This article provides a narrative of the protests and the Red Shirt movement which is informed by my own eye-witness account of the events and built around the translation of Thai language sources I encountered. By translating and analyzing original Thai language sources from the protests, e.g. banners, signs, t-shirts, speeches, and graffiti, I argue that the Red Shirts have a more sophisticated, far-reaching political philosophy than many give them credit for. Also, as events unfolded, the movement developed and grew beyond its original scope by demanding justice for victims of the military crackdowns and challenging the political role of the monarchy. Both as a political movement and as a sizeable section of the electorate, the Red Shirts have the potential to drastically reconfigure Thailand's social and political landscape.

Keywords: *Protest; Red Shirts; Social Movement; Thailand; Thai Political Crisis*

Ab 14. März 2010 begann eine Masse an suea daeng, wörtlich „Rothemden", einen anhaltenden Massenprotest in Bangkok, der letztendlich in einem der schlimmsten politischen Gewaltakte in Thailands moderner Geschichte mit 91 Toten, etwa 2.000 Verletzten und einer in Unruhe und Brandstiftung schwelenden Stadt ausartete. Dieser Artikel bietet eine Erzählung der Proteste und der Bewegung der Rothemden, informiert durch meinen Augenzeugenbericht der Ereignisse und einer Übersetzung von Thai Quellen, auf die ich gestoßen bin. Aufbauend auf der Übersetzung und Analyse von originalen Thai Quellen der Proteste, z.B. Transparente, Schilder, T-Shirts, Reden und Graffiti, argumentiere ich, dass die Rothemden eine durchdachtere und weitreichendere politische Philosophie haben, als ihnen von vielen zugestanden wird. Zudem entwickelte sich die Bewegung im Laufe der Ereignisse über ihr ursprüngliches Handlungsfeld hinaus, indem sie Gerechtigkeit für die Opfer des militärischen Durchgreifens forderte und die politische Rolle der Monarchie in Frage stellte. Sowohl als politische Bewegung als auch als ein erheblicher Teil der Wählerschaft, haben die Rothemden das Potenzial, die soziale und politische Landschaft in Thailand erheblich umzugestalten.

Schlagworte: *Protest; Rothemden; Soziale Bewegung; Thailand; Thai politische Krise*

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Bangkok 2010: A Year of Living Dangerously

From 14 March 2010 onwards, a mass of *suea daeng*, literally 'red shirts', began a prolonged mass protest in Bangkok. The Red Shirts is the unofficial name given to the protest movement known in Thai as *naew ruam pra-cha-thi-pa-tai to tan pa-det kan haeng chat*, translated as *The United Front for Democracy against Dictatorship* (UDD). They demanded the dissolution of parliament and fresh elections, which seemed certain to empower a party aligned with ex-Prime Minister Thaksin Shinawatra, who had been ousted by a military coup four years earlier. A former police lieutenant-colonel turned telecommunications tycoon, Thaksin revolutionized Thailand's political landscape when his *Thai Rak Thai* Party won a landslide victory in the 2001 general elections. His American-style campaign trail took him out to areas of the country usually given scant attention by Bangkok politicians and his populist policies – universal health care, debt moratorium for farmers, and development funds to stimulate local economies – won him massive support in these rural areas. He completed a full term in office – the first elected Thai prime minister ever to do so – and was re-elected with another landslide in 2005. However, despite his economic success and popularity, Thaksin's first term in office was also dogged by controversy. Civil society groups were appalled by his human rights record, particularly his 'war on drugs', and his attempts to control the media through defamation suits. He was also accused of corruption and, most seriously from his point of view, he had made powerful enemies within some sections of Thailand's elites. In particular, he was accused of being disloyal to the King – an extremely serious charge in Thailand. A protest movement, the *People's Alliance for Democracy* (PAD), began holding increasingly large rallies in the capital in an attempt to bring him down. The PAD, dubbed the 'yellow shirts' due to the color they wore to show their allegiance to the King, made Thaksin's second term in office extremely difficult and effectively paved the way for a military coup in 2006. The junta cited many reasons for the coup, including disrespect for the monarchy, corruption, and an "unprecedented rift in society" ("Statement From the Administrative", 2006). If Thaksin had indeed caused a rift in Thai society, then the coup only deepened and widened it, as a new movement, the Red Shirts, emerged to oppose it. Thailand had entered into what Montesano (2012) has called a "slow-burn civil war" (p. 3).

I was living in Thailand and found myself caught in the middle of events at the time, which became my own 'year of living dangerously'. As a *fa-rang*[2] visiting the protests, it was often a bewildering experience. I had been studying Thai language for some time but was by no means fluent and it was sometimes difficult to follow the many dramatic events of those months. At the rallies, I found myself surrounded by Thai, both written and spoken. Slogans adorned banners, placards, flags, and the actual red shirts from which the protesters took their name. My ears were assaulted by a cacophony of language from all directions; speeches from the main stage blared out of loud speakers, songs blasted from sound systems set up in the back of pick-up trucks, protestors chanted slogans; and I was often approached by friendly and curious protestors who would ask me, in Thai, what I thought of the political situation. All of this was a challenge to my limited Thai language skills but one which I accepted with vigor, such was my desire to understand what was going on. This article utilizes the linguistic landscape of the protests by translating and commenting on some of the original Thai language sources I came across. In doing so, I provide some insight into the political meanings of the protests and the motivations, desires, and frustrations of the protestors. I argue that the Red Shirts demonstrate a much more sophisticated political outlook than their detractors give them credit for and that the movement went far beyond mere support for Thaksin. The Red Shirts, often in very creative ways, subverted hegemonic cultural norms and challenged the existing order as they reasserted their stake in Thailand's political system. Also, as events unfolded, the movement adapted accordingly, expanding its scope to include issues such as justice for the victims of the military crackdown, *lèse-majesté,* and the role of the monarchy. By using translation of Thai language sources as the focus for my analysis I hope, in a sense, to let the protestors speak for themselves. Examination of the Red Shirts' own words may sound like an obvious method but it is one that has so far been underused as commentators rush to express their own thoughts of the protests. Also, the Red Shirts were very ineffective in their English language public relations and failed to communicate who they were, what they were doing, and why to an international audience. By contrast, their Thai language rhetoric and framing was extremely sophisticated, with Nattawut Saikua and Jatuporn Prompan

2 An often used term meaning 'Westerner'.

in particular emerging from the protests as two of the greatest Thai orators of recent times. Original Thai language sources are therefore fertile ground for those wishing to analyze the movement.

To avoid a top-down approach, I have used a variety of sources, ranging from graffiti scribbled on walls by the rank and file protestors to extracts of speeches made by core leaders. All translations are my own and are from Thai language I saw or heard at the protests, from photographs I took or from online sources.[3]

Heard and Read in the Land: Decoding Red Shirt Rhetoric

Many, including myself, were struck by the carnival atmosphere when the Red Shirts first descended on Bangkok. They paraded around the city in cars, pick-up trucks, motorbikes, and on foot. Stalls were set up selling food, merchandise, and even services like massage. There was much singing and dancing and several songs became popular anthems. One was "Red in the Land" ("Daeng Tang Phaen Din", 2009), a rousing marching song, which urged protestors to leave their homes and mobilize to join the Red Shirts (*ok chak ban ruam pa-lang suea daeng*). The numbers of protestors the Red Shirts were able to mobilize became a daily topic of conversation during the March-May period, with various estimates coming from police, media, and other sources. The size of the crowd was an obvious way to judge the size of the movement and its chances of success. With so much at stake, the estimates given were often extremely conservative or exaggerated, depending on the sympathies of those reporting. The protracted nature of the protests meant that the movement found it a challenge to sustain numbers, which waned in the morning and afternoon and then swelled again each evening as people finished work. Initial claims that the protests would be a "million man march" ("Day of Reckoning", 2010) were obvious hyperbole but, at its peak, there were definitely well over a hundred thousand Red Shirts on the streets. Whilst a few stalwarts sustained the protests by camping out in the city for the duration, many more shuttled back and forth between the capital and the provinces; as some left, others replaced them, ensuring that numbers were maintained. Between this and the many based in Bangkok who joined to make up the

3 With regards to transliteration style, no system of Romanization of Thai is perfect, but for the sake of consistency I have followed the commonly used Royal Thai General System of Transcription.

evening crowds, it is clear that Red Shirts are a movement of significant numbers. Another song was the irresistibly catchy "Love Red Shirt People" ("Rak Khon Suea Daeng", 2009), which proclaimed a love for democracy and for Thailand (*rao rak pra-cha-thi-pa-tai rao ko rak pra-thet thai*). Although nowhere near the ultra-nationalism exhibited by their political enemies, the PAD, the Red Shirts were also nationalistic. It is worth bearing in mind that Thaksin managed to successfully turn nationalist sentiment into political currency in the wake of the Asian financial crisis of 1997, when Thai pride was injured after being forced to accept International Monetary Fund (IMF) assistance (Pasuk & Baker, 2009, p.76). His Thai Rak Thai Party (Thais Loving Thais Party) had, as the name suggests, used a nationalist platform to help it win a landslide election victory in 2001. The latest incarnation of that party, which was dissolved by the military junta after the coup, is the Phuea Thai Party (For Thais Party) who, again, chose a name which would harness nationalist sentiment. Whichever side of Thailand's divided politics you are on; it seems it pays to be nationalistic. By comparison with the ultra-nationalist PAD, however, whose rhetoric and protests at the Cambodian border has enflamed a long running dispute over an ancient temple, leading to a series of clashes, the Red Shirts are decidedly mild. In their protests, the Red Shirts have also been much more outwards looking than their nemeses. Unlike the PAD, the Red Shirts have a wide network of chapters in various countries in Europe, Australia, and America who have campaigned on their behalf and held protests at their respective embassies. One reason for this could be that, rather than the backwards 'country bumpkins' their urban compatriots consider them to be, many rural Thais are now "cosmopolitan villagers" (Keyes, 2012), who have first hand experience of the international world through decades of migration for employment and marriage to foreigners. By contrast, the more right-wing PAD rhetoric is inward-looking and xenophobic, dismissing outside analysis of issues such as the monarchy as something that 'only Thais can understand'. At one point, founder and core leader of the PAD Sondhi Limthongkul went as far as to make the bizarre claim that American capitalists were behind a plot to overthrow the monarchy ("Sondhi: American Capitalists", 2010). Another song often heard at the protests, not from the main stage but from protestors' cars and tents, was "Khon Ban Diao Kan" (Phai Pongsatorn, 2009).

The song, which translates as something like "people from the same home"[4], is an extremely popular *phleng luk thung*[5], which talks about the empathy and closeness between poor people who go to Bangkok from the provinces in search of work. Although not overtly political in content, the song's popularity and meaning ensured its place as a favorite amongst the protestors. The *luk thung* style, which originates from the north-east, is a denigrated form amongst the middle class in Bangkok, who see it as provincial and unsophisticated. The lyrics of the song echo the socio-economic factors which mobilized the Red Shirts and forged their sense of communal identity – a feeling that, in the words of the song, they only need to "look into each other's eyes to understand one another" (*khae mong tha kan ko khao chai yu*). This also demonstrates the strong regional dimension of the political crisis and formation of the Red Shirts, many of whom come from the north and north-east, or Lanna and Isaan, which, since the formation of the modern Thai state, have not been successfully integrated and maintain distinct regional identities. However, the power balance between the center and the periphery has now begun to change with the consolidation of electoral democracy. More populous rural areas are now able to assert themselves, leading to a backlash from Bangkok, which attempts to "derail the political challenges emanating from outside the capital" (Glassman, 2010, p. 1319).

This 'all singing, all dancing' Red Shirt movement was in sharp contrast to the rioting Red Shirts who had caused havoc in the city in 2009, pointing to a better organized, more savvy movement. This change in tactics was well-advised because the riots of 2009 had failed to garner public sympathy and provided cause for their opponents to label them as violent and thuggish. In 2010, as mobile Red Shirt rallies snaked their way through Bangkok streets to cheering crowds, there was a tangible sense that the new, 'fun-loving' Red Shirts were winning the hearts and minds of many in the undecided camp. This change was, of course, calculated but may also have been a natural process; an example of what Collins (2001) describes as the "initiating emotion", which gradually subsides within the collective gatherings of social movements. This initiating emotion, which for the Red Shirts was anger and a sense of injustice, is necessary for a movement to achieve 'take-off' but then "gives rise to

4 In this case "home" means village or province.

5 The term refers to a genre of music in Thailand that is often translated as "country music" but a more literal translation is "songs of children of the fields" (Lockard, 1998, p. 184).

distinctly collective emotions, the feelings of solidarity, enthusiasm, and morality" (Collins, 2001, p. 29).

Of course, there was more to the protests than just singing and dancing, and the language displayed on shirts, jackets, hats, bandanas, banners, placards, and stickers gave some insight into what had brought tens of thousands of people onto the street in the first place. The main aim of the protests was to pressure the government of Abhisit Vejjajiva to dissolve parliament (*yup sa-pha*); one of the most repeated slogans in the protests. As analysts look for the bigger social and economic trends which are certainly at the root of Thailand's political crisis and the emergence of the Red Shirts, it is easy to overlook the one simple demand in 2010: fresh elections. The movement's faith in elections as a tool of political decision-making gives a fair degree of validation to their self-proclaimed commitment to democracy. It is worth bearing in mind that both the Red and Yellow Shirts have the word democracy (*pra-cha-thi-pa-tai*) in their official titles. However, by contrast, the PAD had petitioned for a palace-appointed government ("King the Only Hope", 2006) and poured scorn on the electoral process.

It is true that many of the protestors did show their loyalty to ousted Prime Minister Thaksin, with images of his face on t-shirts and banners and slogans such as "I love Thaksin" (*ku rak Thaksin*). The more colloquial pronoun *ku* was used during the protests instead of the more formal and hierarchal *phom/chan*. More personal and with rural, folk undertones, the form is rarely used in public discourse. Moreover, due to Thai culture's strict demarcation of the private and public spheres, the intimacy of the pronoun can sometimes cause offense as it is seen as 'too familiar'. By using this word, the Red Shirts were deliberately subverting bourgeois social norms and flaunting their alleged rural 'coarseness' in the faces of their detractors in the capital.

During the earlier PAD rallies, protestors used plastic, yellow 'clappers' shaped like hands, which when shaken produced a clapping sound to applaud speeches made from the protest stage. With cheeky reference to this, the Red Shirts produced their own 'feet-clappers', this time red-colored and shaped like feet. This juxtaposed nicely with the yellow hand-clappers used by the PAD and also had an element of shock-value, given that feet are considered dirty and offensive in Thai culture. Once again, the Red Shirts were defiantly playing up to their unrefined image and showing their

middle finger or, in the Thai context, showing their foot, to bourgeois hegemony.[6] Glassman (2011, p. 36) suggests that the Red Shirts' discontent was created by the very hegemonic projects designed to subvert them. It is fitting then, that resistance is communicated to elites by creatively recasting their own hegemonic cultural norms and moving away from bourgeois language and social practices to more local, rural ones.

Possibly the most potent weapon in the Red Shirts' rhetoric arsenal was the re-appropriation of an archaic Thai word *prai* – a derogatory word meaning an uncouth and uneducated peasant or serf. Bunthawat Weemoktanondha, an anthropologist from the northeastern city of Khon Kaen, comments that the Red Shirts were "breaking a cultural taboo by using this word so openly to describe themselves without feeling ashamed of being *prai*" (Macan-Markar, 2010). The word was juxtaposed to another archaic word, *am-mat*, which is often translated as 'elite' and in this case refers to high-level government officials. The *am-mat* criticized by the Red Shirts were influential bureaucrats such as the judiciary, who were blamed for the 'judicial coup' which ousted Prime Minister Somchai (Weaver, 2008), and the Privy Council, particularly Prem Tinsulanonda, who was accused of being the mastermind behind the military coup of 2006. The use of this word demonstrated the new understanding the Red Shirts had regarding the locus of power in Thailand. The word has its roots in the Sanskrit word *amatya*, which was the second highest level of officialdom in the Bhramanical theory of political organization, or *rajya* (Tambiah, 1976, p. 31). The *amatya* were second only to the king, or *svami*, himself. Given the proximity of the *amatya* to kings historically, and of the modern day *am-mat* (i.e. the Privy Council) to the current king, this choice of word seemed to have very subversive undertones. The *prai/am-mat* dichotomy also played on the feudal system, or *ra-bop sak-ka-di na*, of Thailand's past and thus highlighted inequality in modern Thailand. This phrase has strong connections to Thai Marxist ideology, specifically to the iconic leftist figure, Chit Phumisak, and the theme of his most famous work, *The Face of Thai Feudalism* (*Chom Na Sak-ka-di Na Thai*), published in 1957. In the same vein, the choice of the color red poses an obvious reference to radical Thai Marxist discourse. According to Tongchai (2010), the choice of the words *prai* and

6 In the aftermath of the crackdown on the Red Shirts at Ratchaprasong intersection, NGO worker and activist Sombat Boon-ngam-anong emerged from the grassroots of the movement with his own Red Sunday events to maintain the Red Shirts profile and remonstrate the killing of protestors. Aside from creative protests such as 'red aerobics' and 'red bicycle rides', his group became known for photo opportunities 'giving the finger' to the camera. This kind of public defiance may be passé in Western culture, but seemed quite shocking in more conservative Thailand.

am-mat "targets the oppression and injustice due to social class and hierarchy" and turns the Red Shirt struggle into a "revolt of the downtrodden rural folks against the privileged social and political class".

The Red Shirts realized that dissolving parliament alone, despite it being their central aim, would achieve little if the *am-mat* they claimed were pulling strings behind the scenes remained in place; therefore a complete overhaul of the Thai political system was necessary. Thus, t-shirts and banners called for the *am-mat* to be overthrown (*khon am-mat rat-ta-ban*) and "Power returned to the people" (*khuen amnat pra-cha chon*). Through such sloganeering, the Red Shirts were effective in tapping into a heritage of popular protest and struggle for democracy in Thailand. On 24 June 2012, the Red Shirts held a rally to commemorate the 80th anniversary of the 1932 revolution, which again historicized the movement – this time all the way back to the revolution which overthrew the absolute monarchy and started the country on its rocky road to democratization. Nattawut (2010b) describes this dramatic period in Thai history, saying that on 24 June 1932, a group of military and civilians were able to transform the government (*24 mi-thu-na-yon 2475 tha-han le phon-la-ruean . . . dai a-phi plian plaeng kan pok khrong*). However, he points out that, despite this, the foundation of the political structure in Thailand has actually changed very little since that time (*khrong sang lak thang kan mueang khong prathet mai dai plian pai loei*) and the core of the old system remains, dragging its feet (*nai sa-ra sam-kan pen yu yang nan yang khong yam kap yu che-na-nan*). He then presents the Red Shirts as playing a pivotal role in completing this historical process, telling the crowd that in 2012 a big struggle is on the verge of happening (*kam-lang cha kuet kan to su khrang*).

By contrast, the PAD failed to create a meaningful narrative, and instead misspent much of their rhetoric on vitriol directed at Thaksin. As the Red Shirt movement first emerged in defense of the ousted prime minster, the PAD and its sympathizers also directed its acrimony towards them, calling them uneducated 'red buffaloes' (*khwai daeng*). The term *khwai* is an extremely offensive term which implies someone is stupid and lazy and is often used towards people from the provinces who work in agriculture. This attempt to degrade the Red Shirts has been common since their inception and has taken many forms. In this case, the effect is to dehumanize them; not only are the Red Shirts not human, they are the lowliest form of beast. In other cases the Red Shirts have been perceived as being 'red germs' (Tongchai, 2010), in-

vading and thus infecting the cleanest and most sterile of places – a hospital. After sightings of snipers on the roof of the Chulalongkorn Hopital, which overlooked the Red Shirt barricade at Silom junction, a group of Red Shirts entered the hospital to demand that the soldiers vacate. Panic ensued as doctors and nurses wheeled out patients to escape the Red Shirts. Tongchai (2010) builds on his 'infection' metaphor by explaining that the Red Shirts and Thaksin have come to be viewed as a "disease to the Thai moral body". Others, such as Pavin (2010) and, in this journal, Poowin (2010) have demonstrated how nationalist discourses of 'Thainess' (*khwam pen thai*) have been used to portray the Red Shirts as somehow 'un-Thai' and therefore as alien or 'Other', and not deserving the same rights as other Thais. Not only were Thaksin supporters deemed 'too stupid to vote', it was also assumed that they lacked the agency to protest about something of their own volition and they were accused of being paid to attend the protests. To rebuke this claim, the slogan *mai tong chang ku ma eng* (there is no need to hire me, I came of my own accord) was adopted by the Red Shirts and printed on t-shirts and other merchandise – humorously but decisively reclaiming the agency which their opponents were attempting to take away. Commentators often suggest that the Red Shirt protests began as a pro-Thaksin reaction to the coup and then developed into something more. This narrative fails on two counts. Firstly, it fails to recognize that from the beginning, the Red Shirt movement was composed of various different groups, not all of whom were supportive of Thaksin. Take, for example, the academic and activist Giles Ungpakorn who was an affiliate of the Red Shirts and had been one of the first to oppose the coup but also distance himself from the controversial Thaksin by using the slogan *"No to Thaksin. No to the coup"* (*song mai ao*) (Ungpakorn in Walker, 2006). Secondly, this chapter has suggested that even those Red Shirts who did support the ex-prime minister also demonstrated sophisticated critiques of the Thai political system, defended electoral politics, cleverly subverted hegemonic cultural norms, and acted to reclaim their dignity and agency. However, it certainly holds true that the movement developed over the course of the protests and adapted accordingly, as new situations presented themselves. The following chapters will chart these changes.

Cruel April, Savage May: The Army Crackdown Inflames the Red Shirts

Despite the peaceful start of the protests, events soon took a turn for the worse. The two months of April and May became known as Cruel April (*me-sa-yon hot*) and Savage May (*phruet-sa-pha-khom ma-hit*) as Thailand witnessed the worst political violence in its modern history. Both of these terms resonate the expression "Black May" (*phreut-sa-pha tha-min*), the name given to the violent crackdown of demonstrations and massacre of protestors by the Suchinda government in May, 1992.[7] Again, these expressions created a historical link between the Red Shirts and popular resistance in modern Thailand.

The first violence occurred on 10 April at Kok Wua intersection, when an attempt by the military to clear one of the protest sites left 25 dead: 19 protestors, 5 soldiers, and a Japanese TV cameraman. Much of what happened that evening is still blurry but what does seem clear, despite official obfuscations, is that the majority of the protestors died after being fired upon by the army ("Military Admits Firing at Reds", 2010). Many of those killed suffered horrendous head injuries, seemingly shot by snipers positioned on nearby rooftops. In the aftermath, those killed on 10 April were eulogized in Red Shirt rhetoric. T-shirts with the date of the massacre and slogans such as "Praise the commoners, heroes of democracy" became popular (*sa-du-di prai wi-ra-chon pra-cha-thi-pa-tai*). Displays were hung up around the rally site, showing graphic photographs of Red Shirts who had been killed, accompanied by written commentary criticizing the military and decrying Prime Minister Abhisit as a tyrant (*thor-ra-rat*) and a murderer (*khat-kon*). As the Red Shirts mourned their dead, a rumor circulated that shortly before the attempted dispersal, Queen Sirikit's lady-in-waiting, Jarungjit Thikara, had visited the eleventh regiment army base, where the military and Abhisit government were conducting meetings. It was alleged that she had met with the government and top brass of the military to order, on behalf of the Queen, the crackdown on the Red Shirts. A leaked photograph of the alleged meeting was copied and pasted around the protest site. Jarungjit denied the rumours, leading Red Shirt leader Nattawut Saikua (2010a) to tell the crowd at Ratchaprasong that "Lady JJ (Jarungjit) has come out and said that she is not involved (*than phu ying JJ ok ma pa-di-set wa mai kiao khong*), that she didn't interfere in politics, (*mai dai yung kiao*

7 For an excellent account of this period in Thai history, cf. Murray (2000).

kap kan mueang), that she doesn't have the power to give orders to the commander in chief" (*mai mi am-nat nai kan sang phu ban-cha kan tha-han bok dai*). He refuted her claim, saying "if I wasn't sure, I wouldn't come and announce it on this stage" (*tha mai man chai khong cha mai ao ma thalaeng bon we-thi ni*). To a cheering crowd, he asserted that she had "interfered in politics" (*saek saeng sa-than kan mueang*). Jarungjit is said to be the Queen's closest aide so, for the Red Shirts, giving the order for the crackdown was the same as the Queen giving the order. Prior to this, there had been vaguely detectable discontent with the role of the monarchy, particularly when the Queen attended the funeral of a PAD protestor who was killed in a clash with the police, saying that she was a "good girl" and a "protector of the monarchy and the country" ("Fuelling the Pyre", 2008). However, with passions running high after the clash on 10 April, a more open dissatisfaction was beginning to emerge; something that had previously been almost unimaginable in Thailand.

The killings hardened the resolve of the protestors, who barricaded themselves in the commercial heart of the city, protected by fearsome-looking fortifications of car tires and sharpened bamboo sticks. Along with their calls for the dissolution of parliament, they now also demanded justice for the victims of the crackdown as a prerequisite for ending the protests. Having learned a lesson from their blundered attempt to disperse the protestors in April, the army this time created a parameter around the main protest site and attempted to stop food and supplies from entering. The outlying areas were then brought under complete military control using a tactic called containment by fire. In reality this meant shooting anything that moved, often with sniper fire from tall buildings and overhead bridges. The death toll started to mount and the crowd inside the 'red zone' slowly dwindled as protestors chose to avoid the main rally site and instead form pockets of resistance in other parts of the city. The protestors had by this time abandoned their trademark red shirts to avoid becoming targets for snipers. The dangerous conditions on the street precluded carrying signs and banners; instead, fireworks and childish looking catapults were used to stage a futile resistance to the soldiers who were armed with high-powered assault rifles. On 19 May, after a week of pressurizing the Red Shirts, the military decided the time was right to make a decisive push to clear the main protest site. The Red Shirt barricades proved no obstacle for the tanks and the protest leaders surrendered, fearing for their own safety and that of the crowd. The majority of

the protestors fled before the troops arrived, scattering out through backstreets to safer areas and trusted friends and family. Hundreds fled to a nearby temple which had previously been declared a "safe zone" by the government. However, the temple came under heavy fire, with several protestors shot either inside or just outside the temple; at least nine died ("9 Bodies Found", 2010). In the face of defeat, the protestors let out their final cry, rioting and setting fire to buildings around the city, the most famous being the huge Central World mall, a section of which was completely destroyed.[8] The rage spread to other provinces, with protestors setting fire to government buildings in Chiang Mai, Udon Thani, Khon Kaen, and Mukdahan – all Red Shirt strongholds. When the rioting subsided, Thailand stood back and assessed the damage. The charred shells of buildings could be seen dotted around the city, at least 91 people had died and a further 2,000 had been injured. Worse still, the crackdown and the killings had only intensified the anger which had brought the Red Shirts out to the streets in the first place, the country's social and political fissures had only been deepened, and the possibility of future confrontation seemed very likely indeed. Over the course of these two months the atmosphere of the protests had changed from one of fun and optimism to outrage and determined stoicism. Alongside the rhetoric discussed in the previous chapter emerged criticism of the military, a desire for justice for the victims of the crackdowns, and rumblings of discontent with the role of the monarchy.

The Writing on the Wall: Graffiti and Sedition at Ratchaprasong

After the clearance of the main rally site at Ratchaprasong, the Red Shirts were muted for a while, with most of its leadership in jail, but smaller groups, particularly the Red Sunday group led by NGO worker and activist Sombat Boon-ngam-anong soon began rallying again. The emergence of these new groups and leaders such as Sombat is evidence of the fluid and organic nature of the movement and seems to refute claims that it is a top-down, elite-mobilized "manipulated mass" (Crispin, 2010,

8 That the Red Shirts committed acts of arson is undeniably true. However, much remains unclear about the most devastating fire, which completely destroyed a large section of the Central World mall, with evidence suggesting that the area was already under military control before the fire broke out. Regardless, the destruction was seized upon by the state, which used it as justification for the crackdown and a reason to label the Red Shirts "terrorists". As Taylor (2011) points out, this is an "intentionally de-legitimizing epithet which carries considerable emotional force in the post 9/11 world" (p. 3).

p.109). The focus of these protests was expressing outrage over the killing of the Red Shirts. Slogans such as "People died here" (*thi ni mi kon tai*) appeared on placards as protestors took part in 'die-ins' on the street whilst young Thais awkwardly shopped in Siam Square, trying to ignore the chalk bodies that had been drawn on the ground. Public space around Ratchaprasong was used for state propaganda purposes, with billboards reassuring people that "Everything will be ok" and "Together we can" (*ruam kan rao dai*), the latter slogan being creatively subverted with stickers proclaiming "Together we can kill" (*ruam kan rao kha dai*) pasted up around Ratchaprasong and nearby Siam Square. Bangkok's middle classes, so traumatized by the protests, gladly swallowed the Prozac propaganda offered by the government. A 'memorial' wall was erected at the site of the destroyed Central World Mall, to which people added messages of their own, declaring their love for the King and mourning the loss of the place they shopped, ate, and socialized. One message lamented that the beer garden outside the mall wouldn't be open for watching the up-coming football World Cup (*yak du bon lok thi ni lae ao lan bia khong rao khuen ma*), whilst a girl complained that she wouldn't be able to attend her dance classes (*klap ma sak thi yak som ten*). Many in the city were understandably upset that the normal rhythms of their lives had been disrupted by the protests, but it was surprising that the destruction of the mall had provoked such strong emotions, illustrating the deep attachment people felt to the site of consumption which had served as a backdrop to their lives. Some even used the memorial wall as a chance to air their hatred of the Red Shirts, with some rather choice language used. However, others found the wall insensitive and were appalled by those quick to 'mourn' the loss of a mall whilst apparently lacking any emotional response to the deaths of 91 people (Taylor, 2011, p. 4). Some were moved to write their own messages, condemning the military and the government. Thus, the wall became a site of contention between those who backed the crackdown and 'mourned' the mall and those sympathetic to the protestors. Messages were written, responded to and angrily scrubbed out – a microcosm of the debate raging throughout the country.

On 19 September 2010, the Red Shirts held the first mass rally at Ratchaprasong since the crackdown and decisively claimed back the space, if only for the day, by completely covering the area with their own graffiti. I was working near the area that day and finished work around the time the protest ended. As I walked past Cen-

tral World on my way home I saw two policemen guarding the wall with the graffiti on it. The Red Shirts had long gone home and the only people on the street were a few passers-by, who were standing reading the graffiti, mouths agape. The majority of the messages targeted the monarchy and blamed them for the killing of the Red Shirts. In Thailand, the King is protected by the *lèse-majesté* law, Article 112 of the Thai Criminal Code, which states that "whoever defames, insults or threatens the King, Queen, the Heir-apparent or the Regent, shall be punished with imprisonment of three to fifteen years" (Streckfuss, 2010, p. 108). Much of the graffiti targeted the law itself, with anti-*lèse-majesté* slogans such as "*Mai ao* 112" (we don't want 112) featuring prominently. Derogatory remarks were written about the *wan si nam ngoen* (blue whale) and *pak daeng* (red mouth); both thinly disguised references to Queen Sirikit.[9] There were also several comments implicating Sirikit in the theft of a blue diamond belonging to the royal family of Saudi Arabia (US Embassy Bangkok, 2008). King Bhumipol also came under fire, with many comments teasing his blind eye and calling him a murderer.[10] With safety in numbers, some Red Shirts had challenged the monarchy in a public Bangkok space – an act of huge political significance in Thailand. Realizing the importance of the graffiti, I rushed home to grab a camera and return to take some photos. When I returned, just thirty minutes later, the entire wall had been removed by the police, demonstrating the seriousness with which authorities in Thailand treat any dissent against the monarchy.

The Red Shirts that day chanted *ai hia sang kha*, loosely translated as "that bastard ordered the killings" ("*Ai Hia Sang Ka*", 2010). The term *ai* is a male title, with a meaning similar to "guy". It is an extremely familiar term, which can be considered rude if used to address a person one is not close to. The word *hia* refers to a *tua hia*, or monitor lizard, which is thought to be a loathsome reptile in Thailand. That the Red Shirts were referring to the King can only be speculated, given that the phrase is so vague, but it is exactly this vagueness which is so intriguing. Other possibilities, such as then Prime Minister Abhisit, Deputy Prime Minister Suthep, Privy Councilor Prem, and Army Chief Anuphong had all come under fire from the Red Shirts before, and had

9 The 'blue whale' refers to her birth color, blue, and her rather corpulent figure. The 'red lips' nickname refers to the bright red lipstick she often wears. Often, the blue whale or a pair of red lips were drawn instead of actually writing the words, symbolic of the silence the *lèse-majesté* law imposes and, at the same time, testament to the protestors' ingenuity and determination to get around it.

10 Details are unclear but King Bhumipol either lost an eye or was partially or wholly blinded in a car accident as a youth.

been explicitly named; but not the King, protected as he is by *lèse-majesté* laws and by sections of society still fiercely loyal to the monarchy. Giles Ungpakorn (2010) speculated that they were referring to the King and that it suggests "a growing republican movement among millions of Red Shirts". A survey I conducted among Thais living in the UK who identify themselves as Red Shirts showed that most believed the phrase refers to the king. Taylor (forthcoming) points out that, in the wake of the killing of protestors at Ratchaprasong, the Red Shirts renamed the area using a subversive play on words. The name Ratchaprasong, composed of the words *ra-cha* (king) and *pra-song* (desire), literally means "the King's desire". During a protest shortly after the crackdown, this was changed to "people's desire", by replacing *ra-cha* with *rat*, from the word *pra-cha rat*, meaning "people" or "citizen". This symbolic re-naming challenges the power of the monarchy and the entire Thai social order.

Royal Bullets: "Killing the Children for the Father"

After the crackdown, with many grassroots Red Shirts seething at the monarchy, the topic could no longer be ignored by the Red Shirt leadership. On 10 April 2011, at a rally to mark the anniversary of the killing of protestors at Kok Wua intersection, Red Shirt core leader and Phuea Thai Member of Parliament Jatuporn Prompan (2011) delivered a controversial speech which subtly criticized the palace. Directing his speech rhetorically to then Prime Minister Abhisit, Jatuporn criticizes him for using the Royal Thai army (*ta-han rak-sa pra-ong*) to crack down on the protestors.[11] Whatever units are used to kill them, he said, the Red Shirts will not be hurt (upset) (*nuai nai ma kha pom phuak pom yang mai chep puak*) unless it is the royal units or the Queen's Guard (*ya-ga-wen nuai tha-han rak-sa phra ong tha-han suea ra-chi-ni*).[12] This is referring to the use of the regiments most closely associated with the palace, especially the Queen's Guard, who were most active in the crackdown on the protestors. He suggests that Abhisit wanted the Red Shirts to think that the bullets (which killed them) were royal bullets (*khun cha hai rao khao chai wa pen krasun phra rat than chai mai*). Jatuporn chose his words carefully; chastising Abhisit for using those specific regiments to dis-

11 Here, the emphasis seems to be on the *royal*.

12 The Queen's Guard refers to the 21st Infantry Regiment, whose nickname is the *tha-han suea ra-chi-ni*, or 'Queen's Tigers'.

perse the Red Shirts and, in doing so, tarnishing the reputation of the palace. Rather than attacking the palace, which would be extremely risky, he attacks Abhisit. However, few believed that Abhisit was holding any real power during the crisis, and so Jatuporn's words about "royal bullets" seem to have deeper significance. If Jatuporn knew that Abhisit held no real power, then the question is: Who was he directing his tirade against? Jatuporn then goes off on what seems like a tangent by mentioning that he would like to be interviewed by Khun Woody, a famous Thai talk show host. However, this reference was loaded with meaning that the crowd would immediately pick up on. Not long before Jatuporn's speech, Woody had conducted a controversial interview with Princess Chulabhorn. Whilst Woody sat prostrated on the floor, sharing food with her dog, the princess lamented that "what happened last year, when the country was burnt, brought great sorrow to Their Majesties the King and Queen" ("Princess: Country Burning", 2011). The Red Shirts had been extremely upset by her comments and would enjoy Jatuporn's pun that he could never be interviewed by Woody because he was not born to talk; he was one of those who were born to die (*pro rao mai dai goet ma khuy tae goet ma tai*).[13] Princess Chulabhorn's remarks had already been criticized by some as insensitive because she mentioned the 'tragedy' of the burning buildings but not the protestors who had been killed. Like any criticism of the monarchy, this was mostly in hushed tones, but the academic Somsak Jiamteerasakul (2011) aired his views more publicly in an open letter to the princess, slamming the *lèse-majesté* law and calling for more open public debate about the role of the royal family. Later, Jatuporn criticized the words of Princess Chulabhorn – and many other, anti-red segments in the country – by saying that "people in this country only see the smoke, but don't see the 91 dead and two thousand injured" (*khon nai prathet ni hen tae khwan fai tae mai hen 91 sop bat chep loei*). Jatuporn then returns to Abhisit, asking him why he had to kill us (the Red Shirts), even though they had done nothing wrong and are "good peasants" (*pen prai thi di*).[14] Jatuporn then denies that the Red Shirts wanted to topple the monarchy, insisting that their only goal was to dissolve parliament (*yup sa-pha dai yin mai, mai chai lom chao*). He then asks the crowd "*mi prathet nai bang nai lok ni kha luk phuea pho kha luk phuea mae, mi prathet ni*

13 Woody's talk show is called "born to talk", or *gèrt maa kui*. The pun of being "born to die" is reference to the massacre of Red Shirt protesters.

14 As well as protesting the Red Shirt's innocence, this is also a dig at Thailand's ruling elites, given the meaning of the word *prai*.

prathet diao" or "which countries in this world kill the children for the father, kill the children for the mother; only this country!"[15]. In Thailand, where public discussion on the monarchy is effectively impossible thanks to fierce social sanctioning and the country's *lèse-majesté* law, Jatuporn's speech was incendiary and openly articulated sentiments which had been percolating through the Red Shirt rank and file.

Conclusion

The Red Shirt movement and the protests of 2010 are of major significance in Thailand. The social forces unleashed when Thaksin courted the rural constituencies for votes have proven to be a genie that just will not be pushed back into the bottle, no matter how hard the country's elites may try. The political crisis has brought to the surface underlying tensions that have existed in Thailand for decades or longer. An examination of Red Shirts' rhetoric suggests they have a sophisticated understanding of politics in Thailand and have massive revolutionary potential, both as a social movement and as a large section of the electorate. This article has pointed to ways in which the movement has challenged the existing Thai social order by incorporating less hierarchal language and behavior into its protests. The existing cultural hegemony set by Bangkok elites has been shunned in favor of more rural traditions, particularly as the entire relationship between the center and periphery is shifting. Events from the coup until 2010 have led to a political awakening (*ta sa-wang*), in which the Red Shirts say they now see the true nature of the Thai state and the location of power more clearly. As I have detailed here, this has led to a re-evaluation of the role of the monarchy – an extremely inflammatory issue in Thailand which could prove to be a source of further conflict in the near future.

Without the pressure from the Red Shirts, it is doubtful whether the elections which brought the Phuea Thai Party, fronted by Thaksin's younger sister, Yingluck Shinawatra, to power would ever have happened. It is also possible that the threat of mass Red Shirt mobilization could have deterred the military from staging another coup against her. With their goal of 2010 now achieved, the Red Shirts remain active in fighting for the rights of those imprisoned either for their part in the Red

15 Here, "father" and "mother" refer to the king and queen who, according to official discourse, are imagined as the father and mother of the nation.

Shirt protests or for *lèse-majesté* crimes (the boundaries between which are often blurred). They have also been active in pushing for justice for the victims of the 2010 crackdown and ending the tradition of impunity for the state violence which has too often marred Thailand's history. With slow progress in both, and rumors of a possible rapprochement between Thaksin and the royalist elite (Crispin, 2011), many of the rank and file of the movement are expressing concern that its leaders, some of whom are now members of parliament, may be selling out in favor of reconciliation with the elites. As mentioned earlier, new groups of Red Shirts and new leaders continue to emerge. Chulalongkorn academic Suda Rangkupan has led several rallies, whilst another recent rally, organized by a group calling themselves the *Radio Broadcasters for Democracy*, seemed to ruffle the feathers of Phuea Thai Party and the more mainstream of the Red Shirt leadership, with reports that they might have intervened to convince the protestors to call off the rally ("Thaksin Key to Rally's End", 2013). So it seems, the movement might not exactly be one which "encourages the masses to seek their own action in relation to the situation at hand" (Taylor, 2010, p. 298), but rather one which the mainstream leadership would like to control but may ultimately find themselves unable to.

By using the original language of the protests as a framework for analysis, I have hopefully created a better understanding of the goals, desires, and frustrations of the protestors. Language sources such as slogans and speeches can offer much insight into the nature of protest movements and are too often overlooked in analysis. This is especially true of languages such as Thai, which may not be accessible to all observers and therefore require some commentary. Language is a tool for communication and is thus a vital and natural part of social movements who, by very definition, have something to communicate. Language is first used to negotiate shared values and goals within movements and then to express these values and goals to the broader community. Anyone who feels passionately enough about something to take an active role in a movement wants to have their voice heard. I hope that by translating some of the voices from the Red Shirt movement I have helped, in a small way, to make this happen. Many of them died trying to make their voices heard, and so deserve that much.

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Kontinuitäten im Wandel: Handlungskoordinationen von Frauenrechtsaktivistinnen in Aceh

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Muslimische Aktivistinnen nehmen in Aceh eine wichtige Rolle ein, indem sie soziale und politische Missstände zu beseitigen versuchen und Frauenrechte fördern. Im Aushandlungsprozess ihrer Visionen eines neuen Acehs positionieren sie sich zwischen ihrer persönlichen islamischen Religiosität und acehischen Identität sowie zwischen dem Nationalstaat und internationalen Konventionen. Die Frage nach den Erfahrungen und Einflussfaktoren, die Motive, Ziele, Strategien und Umsetzung frauenrechtlicher Arbeit von Aktivistinnen in Aceh bedingen, steht im Mittelpunkt dieses Artikels. Basierend auf einer 11-monatigen ethnologischen Feldforschung und biographischen Interviews in Aceh, argumentiert die Autorin, dass muslimische Aktivistinnen ihre frauenfördernde Arbeit nicht mit eigenen Erfahrungen der Benachteiligung durch patriarchale Strukturen begründen, sondern die anfängliche Triebfeder in der Betroffenheit, Empathie und Solidarität mit physisch und psychisch versehrten weiblichen Kriegsopfern sehen. Nach steigender Institutionalisierung und Kommerzialisierung von Wiederaufbau- und Entwicklungshilfe nach dem Tsunami 2004 empfinden Aktivistinnen hohe Diskrepanzen zwischen den Zielen der GeldgeberInnen und lokalen Organisationen und plädieren für eine Rückbesinnung auf die Bedürfnisse von Frauen an der Basis.

Schlagworte: *Aceh; Biografie; Frauenrechte; Gender; Islam*

Muslim women activists in Aceh play a central role in eliminating social and political ills and promoting women's rights. In their visions of a new Aceh, they situate themselves between their Islamic belief and Acehnese identity as well as between the nation state and international conventions. The central question presented in this article relates to experiences and factors which influence the aspirations, goals, strategies, and implementation of women's rights work among women activists in Aceh. Based on an 11-month ethnographic field research and biographic interviews, the author argues that Muslim women activists do not perceive their work for the advancement of women as a result of their own experiences of discrimination by existing patriarchal structures. Rather, the source of their engagement lies within their empathy and solidarity with physically and psychologically suffering female conflict victims. Due to the increasing institutionalization and commodification of reconstruction and development aid after the tsunami of 2004, women activists recognize large discrepancies between the aims of foreign donors and those of local orga-

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nizations and emphasize a return to women's needs at the grassroot level.

Keywords: *Aceh; Biography; Gender; Islam; Women's Rights*

Einleitung

Aceh Nanggroe Darussalam, die nordwestlichste Provinz Indonesiens – die den Namen Veranda Mekkas (*Serambi Mekka*) trägt – ist dafür bekannt, dass sich große Teile der Bevölkerung auf ihre islamische Identität berufen.[2] Als einzige Provinz Indonesiens werden seit dem Jahr 1999 sukzessive strafrechtliche Aspekte der *Syariat Islam* eingeführt. Die Implementierung der *Syariat Islam* in Aceh ist zum einen in den Trend der Politisierung von Islam und der steigenden Islamisierung in Indonesien eingebettet. Zum anderen trugen Dynamiken innerhalb des Versuchs der Befriedung des fast 30 Jahre andauernden sezessionistischen Kampfes der Bewegung Freies Aceh (*Gerakan Aceh Merdeka*, GAM) und der Tsunami im Jahr 2004 zu einer religiösen Revitalisierung bei.[3] Die Naturkatastrophe katalysierte und perpetuierte den Friedensprozess in Aceh. Das im August 2006 ausgefertigte nationale Gesetz über die Regierung und Verwaltung Acehs 11/2006 bildet die rechtliche Grundlage für eine politische und wirtschaftliche Neukonfiguration Acehs nach dem Tsunami.[4] Der Friedensprozess wurde von dem Verband Südostasiatischer Nationen (*Association of Southeast Asian Nations*, ASEAN) und der Europäischen Union (EU) vermittelt und überwacht, und den Wiederaufbau finanzierten und koordinierten zu einem großen Teil internationale Organisationen. Die Erhöhung von Frauenrechten und die Partizipation von Frauen ist auch in Aceh ein fester Bestandteil der entwicklungspolitischen Agenda. Zudem ist die Bezugnahme auf den Islam und die Durchsetzung islamischer Werte und Normen, wie die sukzessive Einführung der *Syariat Islam* zeigt, augenscheinlich ein wichtiger

2 Siehe Edward Aspinall (2009) für die Darstellung der Ausbildung einer speziellen acehischen Identität, die den Islam als Hauptbezugspunkt nimmt.

3 Obwohl das nationale Dezentralisierungsgesetz 44/1999 im Jahr 1999 die Provinz Aceh bereits legitimierte, die *Syariat Islam* zu implementieren (Miller & Feener, 2010), was als Vorstoß einer politischen Lösung des Aceh-Konflikts gesehen werden kann, wurde der bewaffnete Konflikt erst im Jahr 2005 beendet (vgl. Miller, 2009, für weitere Informationen über die Auswirkungen der Dezentralisierung auf Konfliktlösungen). Weitere Analysen bezüglich des Zusammenspiels von religiöser Revitalisierung und der verstärkten Einführung der *Syariat Islam* nach dem Tsunami siehe Feener (2013) und Großmann (2013). Mehr Informationen zur formellen Ebene der Einführung der *Syariat Islam* siehe Lindsey, Hooker, Clarke, und Kingsley (2007). Eine gute Analyse der Islamisierung von nationalem Recht gibt Salim (2008).

4 Einen guten Überblick der politischen, gesellschaftlichen und wirtschaftlichen Neukonfiguration Acehs nach dem Konflikt und dem Tsunami bietet Stange, Großmann, und Patock (2012).

Referenzrahmen. Acehische muslimische Frauenrechtsaktivistinnen entwickeln und rechtfertigen Visionen für ein neues Aceh, stellen Forderungen, entwickeln Strategien und setzen ihre Agenden um. Sie positionieren sich im Aushandlungsprozess zwischen ihrer persönlichen islamischen Religiosität und acehischen Identität, dem Nationalstaat sowie internationalen Konventionen.

Frauen, die sich kontinuierlich über einen langen Zeitraum öffentlich für Menschen- und Frauenrechte und dabei für die Interessen von Mitgliedern marginalisierter Gruppen einsetzen, bilden einen sehr kleinen Anteil der Bevölkerung. Welche Erfahrungen und Einflussfaktoren bedingen die Motive, Ziele, Strategien und Umsetzung frauenrechtlicher Arbeit von muslimischen Aktivistinnen in Aceh? Welche Triebfedern beschreiben sie für ihr anfängliches Engagement? Warum engagieren sie sich langjährig im zivilgesellschaftlichen Bereich und setzen sich dabei für die Interessen anderer Frauen ein? Welche externen Faktoren bedingen ihre Agenda und die Umsetzung ihrer Ziele? Die Beantwortung dieser Fragen wird im folgenden Artikel verfolgt, wobei die emische Perspektive von Aktivistinnen im Vordergrund steht. Im ersten einleitenden Abschnitt werde ich die Selbstwahrnehmung, Ziele und Strategien von muslimischen Aktivistinnen darstellen. Anhand von retrospektiven Beschreibungen biografischer Aspekte widme ich mich in dem zweiten Abschnitt des Artikels der Darlegung des Arguments, dass die Weitergabe eines bestimmten Wertekanons innerhalb der familiären Sozialisation von Aktivistinnen für die Ausprägung ihres sozialen und politischen Engagements von Bedeutung ist. Die darauf folgenden Darstellungen der initiierenden Momente, weiteren Entwicklung und aktuellen Ausrichtung von frauenfördernder Arbeit muslimischer Aktivistinnen vor dem Hintergrund des Konflikts und des Tsunami beantworten die Frage nach der Triebfeder für ihr anfängliches Engagement und der Herausarbeitung von externen Faktoren, die ihre Agenda und die Umsetzung ihrer Ziele im Weiteren bedingen.

Die in diesem Artikel präsentierten Forschungsergebnisse basieren in erster Linie auf biografischen Interviews mit Aktivistinnen, die ich innerhalb meiner insgesamt 11-monatigen ethnologischen Feldforschung zwischen 2008 und 2011 in der Hauptstadt Banda Aceh und in Lhokseumawe durchführte. Ein biografisches Interview – als spezifische Unterform des narrativen Interviews – eignet sich in besonderem Maß zur Erfassung der subjektiven Repräsentation und retrospektiven Darstellung von Ereignissen (Atkinson, 1998). Biografische Selbstrepräsentation gibt nicht nur einen

Einblick in die vergangene Lebensgeschichte, sondern auch in die Neuordnung der biografischen Erlebnisse aus der heutigen Sicht und Position innerhalb der Gesellschaft (Rosenthal, 1995, S. 13). In diesem Sinn stellen biografische Erzählungen mehr als die Geschichten von individuellen Anstrengungen dar. Sie sind vielmehr in die Interaktionen mit anderen Personen eingebettet, nehmen Bezug zu spezifischen Ereignissen und basieren auf erlangtem Wissen und Erfahrung. Die Analyse biografischer Interviews ist in besonderem Maß dafür geeignet, die persönlichen Aspekte des sozialen Engagements von Aktivistinnen – also ihr Selbstverständnis und ihre Motivation – herauszuarbeiten. Komplementär zu diesen internen Faktoren stelle ich externe Faktoren – wie strukturelle Dimensionen und historische Ereignisse – dar. Die Verflechtung beider Ebenen präsentiert ein plastisches Bild der Handlungskoordination frauenrechtlicher Arbeit von muslimischen Aktivistinnen in Aceh und leistet einen Beitrag zu Erklärungsmodellen für aktuellen politischen und sozialen Aktivismus.

Die Bezeichnung ‚muslimische Aktivistinnen' in diesem Artikel bezieht sich auf neun Frauen, mit denen ich während meiner Forschung besonders intensiven Kontakt hatte und die Schlüsselpersonen in dem Bereich der Frauenrechtsarbeit in Aceh sind. Sie haben in den 1980er und 1990er Jahren eine Organisation mit dem Schwerpunkt Frauenförderung und Frauenrechtsarbeit in den Städten Lhokseumawe oder Banda Aceh gegründet oder waren aktiv am Gründungsprozess beteiligt. Ich nenne sie anonymisiert Asmah Sari, Cut Nurdin, Dewi, Eka Diani, Ella Diani, Ilmu, Rika Syam, Salma Mahdi und Tia. Sie sind seitdem hauptamtlich in diesen oder anderen lokalen Organisationen in diesem Bereich tätig und bestimmen maßgeblich die inhaltliche und strukturelle Ausformung von organisierter zivilgesellschaftlicher Frauenförderung in Aceh.

Das Adjektiv *muslimisch* verwende ich, um deutlich zu machen, dass für diese Schlüsselpersonen im Bereich des Frauenrechtsaktivismus in Aceh der islamische Glaube immanenter Bestandteil des Denkens, Handelns und Fühlens ist. Religiosität ist intrinsisch mit der eigenen Identität, Weltanschauung und dem System der Sinngebung verbunden. Dies wird an der spezifischen Kritik muslimischer Aktivistinnen gegenüber der Einführung von islamischem Strafrecht deutlich, wie im ersten Abschnitt des Artikels über Ziele, Strategien, Selbst- und Fremdwahrnehmung explizit dargestellt wird.

Selbstwahrnehmung, Ziele und Strategien

Die Bezeichnung für Aktivistin oder Aktivist in der Landessprache Indonesiens, *Bahasa Indonesia*, lautet *aktivis* oder *aktifis*. *Perempuan* ist die Bezeichnung für Frau. *Aktivis perempuan* beschreibt eine Aktivistin, die sich für Frauenbelange einsetzt. Muslimische Aktivistinnen in Aceh gehen mit der Selbstbezeichnung *aktivis perempuan* äußerst strategisch und reflexiv um. Sie verwenden den Ausdruck situativ und kontextabhängig, das heißt nur in der Abwesenheit beziehungsweise Anwesenheit spezifischer Personen, denn sie sehen die Verwendung der Bezeichnung in bestimmten Situationen als hinderlich beziehungsweise förderlich für das Erreichen ihrer Ziele an. Die angeführten Gründe für die negative oder positive Bewertung sind dabei weitestgehend identisch, unterschiedlich ist die Konnotation der Kriterien. Die Bezeichnung *aktivis* weckt oftmals zwei Assoziationen: zum einen den vehementen und öffentlichen Einsatz für spezifische Inhalte, zum anderen die Verbindung mit dem englischen Wort *activist*. Die mit diesen Bildern verbundenen Bewertungen der jeweiligen Personen stehen sich oftmals diametral gegenüber. In Gesprächen mit lokalen politischen oder religiösen Autoritäten vermeiden Aktivistinnen die Bezeichnung *aktivis*, da diese als Lehnwort aus der amerikanischen oder englischen Sprache angesehen und mit westlicher Hegemonie in Verbindung gebracht wird. Ebenso weckt in lokalen Kontexten die assoziierte Nähe von *aktivis* zu missionarischem Eifer Misstrauen. *Aktivis* werden in religiösen Zusammenhängen als missionarisch oder fanatisch angesehen, religiöse Missionare werden beispielsweise *aktivis Islam* oder *aktivis Kristen* genannt. In internationalen Kontexten hingegen, beispielsweise in Gesprächen mit Vertretern und Vertreterinnen von internationalen Organisationen oder in Vorträgen und Diskussionen auf Konferenzen, verwenden Aktivistinnen durchaus die (Selbst-) Bezeichnung *aktivis perempuan*. Die Aktivistin Tia, die bereits für zahlreiche internationale Organisationen gearbeitet hat, erklärt dies damit, dass die oben genannten Assoziationen des vehementen und öffentlichen Einsatzes für spezifische Inhalte und die Verbindung mit dem englischen Wort *activist* in internationalen Kontexten als Qualifikationen angesehen werden. Große Einsatzbereitschaft werde sehr positiv bewertet, so Tia, und die Entsprechung des indonesischen Ausdruckes *aktivis* mit dem englischen *activist* erzeuge die Annahme, dass über ähnliche Kategorien, Inhalte und Ziele gesprochen werde.

Die Aktivistinnen Tia, Asmah Sari und Eka Diani definieren *aktivis perempuan* als eine Person, die sich für Frauen- und Menschenrechte und einen humanistischen und gerechten Islam einsetze. Es sei des Weiteren eine Frau, die gegen Ungerechtigkeit und Unterdrückung (*kezaliman*) kämpfe, die Männer als Verbündete mit einbeziehe und den Kampf für Frauen- und Menschenrechte als einen integralen Teil ihres Selbst ansehe.[5] Um diese Ziele umzusetzen, führen Aktivistinnen Projekte und Programme auf der persönlichen, gesellschaftlichen und politischen Ebene durch. Die Aktivitäten betreffen den ökonomischen, politischen, rechtlichen, soziokulturellen und religiösen Bereich. Frauenförderung soll auf jeder Ebene erfolgen und integraler Bestandteil jeder Entwicklung sein. Programme, die Aktivistinnen daraus entwickeln, betreffen die Aspekte Armut, Gesundheit – dabei vor allem Mütter- und Kindersterblichkeit – Bildung, Rechtsgleichheit, gesunde Umwelt, Partizipation in gesellschaftlichen und politischen Bereichen und Gewalt.

Dabei gibt es Programme, die in erster Linie die persönliche Ebene von Frauen betreffen und vor allem darauf abzielen, Frauen zu stärken, damit diese gegen patriarchale Strukturen vorgehen können. Dabei ist *Empowerment* von Frauen, *pemberdayaan perempuan* oder *penguasaan perempuan*, eine grundlegende Methode und Bestandteil vieler Programme. *Pemberdayaan* wird von Aktivistinnen als ein Prozess beschrieben, in dem die Möglichkeiten (*menciptakan suasana*) und Kapazitäten (*memperkuat potensi*) über Entscheidungsprozesse in sämtlichen privaten und öffentlichen, zivilen und politischen Bereichen von Frauen vergrößert werden. Ein weiterer Bereich auf der persönlichen Ebene ist Fürsprache (*advokasi*). Dies beinhaltet die Fürsprache und die Verteidigung von Frauen, die unter staatlicher und privater Gewalt in sozialen, ökonomischen, kulturellen und rechtlichen Bereichen leiden. Neben Beratung und Unterstützung von Frauen in Streitigkeiten, beinhaltet dies auch die Bildung von Schutzräumen. Eine weitere Strategie auf der persönlichen Ebene ist, die Kapazitäten von Frauen zu stärken (*capacity building*). Hierbei wird der englischsprachige Ausdruck übernommen. Meist beinhaltet dies die Schulung von Multiplikatorinnen und den Aufbau von lokalen Kadern, welche die numerische sowie die substantielle Partizipation von Frauen vor allem in Führungspositionen erhöhen soll. Im Bereich des *community empowerment* und *livelihood and economic recovery* – auch hier werden

5 Fokusgruppendiskussion mit Tia, Asmah Sari und Eka Diani, 2. Februar 2010, Banda Aceh.

in der Regel die englischsprachigen Begriffe übernommen – sollen lokale Gemeinschaften auf der *grassroot*-Ebene in erster Linie ökonomisch gestärkt werden.[6] In Anlehnung an das Konzept von *community development* werden Mikrofinanzierungsprogramme aufgebaut, die darauf abzielen, das Einkommen von Frauen zu erhöhen. Obwohl die seit Jahrzehnten durchgeführten Evaluationen Kritik an der Umsetzung dieser Programme formulieren und deren Neukonzeptionalisierung fordern (Berninghausen & Kerstan, 1991), sind kaum Veränderungen festzustellen. So beschreibt Linda Pennels (2008), dass frauenspezifische Mikrokreditvergaben in Aceh häufig zu der Dreifachbelastung von Reproduktion, Gemeinschaftsarbeit sowie Lohnarbeit führen und in vielen Fällen den Druck und die Arbeitsbelastung für Frauen erhöhen (S. 5).

Eine nach dem Tsunami sehr verbreitete Methode, Information und Bewusstseinsbildung bezüglich Frauenrechten zu fördern, ist die sogenannte Kampagnenarbeit. Dies beinhaltet die Durchführung von Schulungen, Diskussionen, Seminaren, Workshops, Übungen, Beratungen und ebenso das Verteilen von Broschüren und Postern. Themenkomplexe, die nach der Einführung der *Syariat Islam* und dem Tsunami verstärkt Beachtung erfuhren, liegen im Bereich der verstärkten Zusammenarbeit nichtstaatlicher und staatlicher Frauenförderung, der Verankerung von Frauenrechten auf der normativen Ebene, wie die Verabschiedung der *Charta der Rechte der Frau in Aceh* und die Beteiligung bei der Schaffung von islamischem Strafrecht (*Qanun Jinayat*).[7]

Die Bezeichnung *aktivis* beinhaltet für Aktivistinnen die persönliche Identifikation mit den vertretenen Zielen und die notwendige ideologische Überzeugung von Inhalten der Arbeit und schließt Personen aus, die sich beispielsweise nur aus ökonomischen Gründen für Frauenförderung einsetzen. Die Aktivistin Asmah Sari lehnt aus selbstkritischen Gründen ab, sich *aktivis* zu nennen. Ihrer Vorstellung zufolge ist die Bezeichnung mit einem bestimmen Maß an Erfolg verknüpft, welchen sie noch nicht erkennen kann.

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6 In entwicklungspolitischen Strategien der 1950er Jahre wurde Entwicklung in der Regel mit Modernisierung gleichgesetzt. In Indonesien wurden in diesem Sinne Modernisierungsstrategien, die Förderung von Industrialisierung und die Steigerung der Produktivität der Landwirtschaft weitestgehend zentralistisch gefördert. Der Gewinn dieser Entwicklungen sollte sich dann, so die Theorie, auf alle Teile der Bevölkerung ausbreiten (*trickle-down*-Effekt) (vgl. Braunmühl, 1998, S. 78-80). In den 1970er Jahren zeigte sich, dass diese technozentrische Sichtweise von Entwicklung nicht die gewünschten Ziele erbrachte. Mit Konzepten der *community development* und der Einbeziehung von lokalen NGOs in den Entwicklungsprozess sollte Abhilfe geschaffen werden. Das Konzept des *community development*, welches bereits in den 1940er Jahren von der britischen Kolonialregierung in Indien implementiert wurde, beinhaltet die Förderung von Selbsthilfe und Etablierung eines lokalen Netzes von EntwicklungshelferInnen, die Programme aufbauen und koordinieren. In den 1980er Jahren wurde die Idee der Selbsthilfe zu einem eigenen Konzept entwickelt und fand als Strategie der *development from below* oder *target group oriented development*, Eingang in die Entwicklungshilfe.

7 Mehr Analysen bezüglich der Handlungsräume muslimischer Aktivistinnen in Aceh nach der Einführung der *Syariat Islam* und dem Tsunami, siehe Großmann (2011, 2013).

> *Wenn ich kritisch bin, dann würde ich mich nicht als aktivis bezeichnen. Denn als aktivis müsste ich etwas bewegen. Ich aber habe das Gefühl, dass ich noch nicht viel bewegen konnte, deshalb fühle ich mich peinlich berührt, wenn ich als aktivis bezeichnet werde. (Asmah Sari, persönliches Interview, 2. Februar 2010, Banda Aceh)*

Muslimische Aktivstinnen sehen ihre Rolle darin, soziale und politische Missstände zu verändern und bestenfalls zu beseitigen. Sie sehen sich, trotz selbstkritischer Betrachtung, als befähigt, politischen und soziokulturellen Wandel zu induzieren. Eka Diani ist Mitbegründerin der Organisationen Freiwillige Frauen für Menschlichkeit (*Relawan Perempuan untuk Kemanusiaan*, RPuK) und leitete mehrere Jahre das Büro in Lhokseumawe. Sie nahm Anfang der 2000er Jahre eine Anstellung bei der staatlichen Institution Nationale Kommission gegen Gewalt gegen Frauen (*Komisi Nasional Anti Kekerasan Terhadap Perempuan*, Komnas Perempuan) an, entschied sich jedoch nach mehrjähriger Arbeitszeit in Jakarta im Jahr 2006 wieder nach Aceh zurückzukehren, um am dortigen Wiederaufbau mitzuwirken. Seit 2009 ist sie Generalsekretärin von RPuK.

> *Ich hätte noch eine [Wahl-] Periode länger bei Komnas Perempuan arbeiten können, jedoch entschied ich mich bewusst für eine Rückkehr nach Aceh. Ich habe gesehen, dass nach dem Tsunami viel Geld nach Aceh floss und meiner Meinung nach verloren danach viele Organisationen in Aceh ihre ideologische Ausrichtung. Die Arbeit orientierte sich nur noch an vorgegebenen Projekten, der Berichterstattung und der Kassenprüfung, um sich gegenüber dem Geldgeber zu rechtfertigen. . . . Der gefühlte Nutzen oder Gewinn für den Zusammenhalt der Gesellschaft ist sehr klein und deshalb ist es schwer, dass Aceh seinen Weg selbständig fortsetzen kann. Das bewog mich dazu, zurückzukehren und diesem Prozess durch meine Arbeit bei RPuK entgegen zu wirken. (Eka Diani, persönliches Interview, 15. Januar 2010, Banda Aceh)*

Des Weiteren möchte Eka Diani durch ihre Arbeit in Aceh der Politisierung des Islam entgegen wirken. Muslimische Aktivistinnen befürworten generell die Implementierung der *Syariat Islam*. Die Art und Weise, in der die Einführung vollzogen wird, beinhalte jedoch problematische Aspekte:

> *Warum ich nach Aceh zurückgekommen bin, ist die steigende Politisierung der Religion. Stimmen, die das Pro und Contra der Syariat abwägen sind Menschen, die erstens sehr mutig und zweitens gebildet sind. Aber die Gesellschaft an der Graswurzel weiß überhaupt nicht, wie sie mit der ganzen Sache umgehen soll, wie sie an Informationen kommt und sich eventuell gegen Übergriffe wehren kann. Ich denke, es ist sehr wichtig, die Menschen an der Basis zu informieren und Platz zu bieten für einen kritischen und gewaltlosen Meinungsaustausch. Für die meisten Politiker ist die Syariat nur wichtig, wenn es um Stimmen bei der Wahl geht. (Eka Diani, persönliches Interview, 15. Januar 2010, Banda Aceh)*

Neben der in dem Zitat erwähnten Politisierung von Religion und der fehlenden Information und kritischen Diskussion über die Einführung der *Syariat Islam*, stößt vor allem deren rigide Umsetzung auf Ablehnung. Kritisiert werden die Strafart der Aus-

peitschung sowie gewalttätige Übergriffe, Demütigungen und Willkür gegen Frauen, die nach dem Tsunami an Schärfe gewannen. Die Kritik von muslimischen Aktivistinnen bleibt jedoch *Syariat Islam*-immanent und betrifft in erster Linie die in ihren Augen konservative, inhumane und patriarchale theologische Grundlage, die deren Umsetzung dominiere. Nach wie vor sehen sie die *Syariat Islam* als Zukunftsmodell für Acehs politische, gemeinschaftliche und individuelle Ordnung an. Sie bewegen sich dabei argumentativ ausschließlich innerhalb des Referenzrahmens des Islam.

Kontinuitäten zwischen familiärer Herkunft und politischem Engagement

Der Bekannten-, Freundes- und Familienkreis begegnet dem Ehrgeiz und der Überzeugung, mit der Aktivistinnen ihre Ziele verfolgen, oftmals mit Wohlwollen und Unterstützung. Der Vater von Eka Diani bemerkte beispielsweise:

> *Meine Tochter hätte sich auch für eine Anstellung als Beamtin entscheiden können. Dann hätte sie ein sicheres Gehalt und lange Mittagspausen [lacht]. Jetzt kämpft sie für mehr Gerechtigkeit. Zum Glück gibt es noch einige, die das tun, sonst gäbe es in Aceh überhaupt keine Entwicklung. (Eka Dianis Vater, persönliches Interview, 15. Januar 2010, Banda Aceh)*

Zwischen Aktivistinnen und ihren Eltern oder dem sozialen Umfeld entwickeln sich oftmals angeregte Diskussionen über tagespolitische Ereignisse, in denen alle Seiten vehement Kritik an nationaler und lokaler Politik äußern und mögliche Aktionen von Seiten der Aktivistinnen erörtern. Viele der Aktivistinnen betonen, dass die kritische Haltung ihrer Eltern gegenüber politikrelevanten Themen und ihr Austausch darüber sowie generell die Erlangung von Bildung und Wissen wichtige Aspekte in ihrer Kindheit und Jugend gewesen seien. Die Weitergabe eines bestimmten Wertekanons innerhalb der Sozialisation wird von fast allen Aktivistinnen als besonders wichtig für die Ausprägung ihres sozialen und politischen Engagements beschrieben. Sie stellen die Bedeutung des Einflusses ihrer Eltern, meistens noch stärker ihrer Mütter, in der Ausbildung ihrer Werteorientierung, Lebensweise und Einstellung heraus. Ihre innere Haltung, die sie ihren Eltern zu verdanken haben, bilde die Basis ihrer Tätigkeit im zivilgesellschaftlichen Bereich. Die meisten Aktivistinnen betonen, dass sie Selbstvertrauen, Selbständigkeit und kritisches Denken vor allem durch ihre Sozialisation erlernt haben. Diese prägte den Wertekanon der späteren Aktivistinnen und trug dazu bei, dass sie fähig und motiviert waren, sich gegen soziale Ungerechtigkeit aus-

zusprechen. Der Aspekt der Kontinuität zwischen den Generationen ist von großer Bedeutung. Ihr soziales und politisches Engagement bedeutet für Aktivistinnen nicht, in Abgrenzung zu ihren Eltern zu stehen. Vielmehr finden in den meisten Familien lebhafte Diskussionen über die Themen und Strategien von Aktivistinnen statt, und viele der Aktivistinnen sind mit ihren Eltern in regelmäßigem Austausch über ihre Aktivitäten.

Die beschriebenen Kontinuitäten zwischen familiärer Herkunft und politischem Engagement finden sich ebenso in sozialisationstheoretischen Forschungen über die PionierInnen der politischen und sozialen Bewegungen der 1960er Jahren in den USA (Feuer, 1969; Flacks, 1967; Whalen & Flacks, 1989). Ich betone die Parallelen der Ergebnisse meiner Analyse biografischer Aspekte von Aktivistinnen in Aceh und denen der erwähnten – zugegebenermaßen länger zurückliegenden – Forschungen, da in rezenten Arbeiten über soziale Bewegungen und deren AkteurInnen die Betrachtung des Einflusses von Biografien und Subjektivitäten auf Handlungskoordinationen von Aktivistinnen selten einfließt. Forschungen zu Aktivistinnen und Frauenbewegungen in Indonesien beispielsweise stellen überwiegend historische, politische und religiöse Aspekte in den Mittelpunkt. Analysen behandeln Themen wie Nationenbildung (unter anderem Blackburn, 2004; Robinson, 2009), staatliche Gender-Ideologien (unter anderem Suryakusuma, 1987; Wieringa, 2002) oder die Entwicklung von Frauenorganisationen und Aktivismus (unter anderem Martyn, 2005; Robinson & Bessell, 2002). Aktuelle Forschungen stellen Fragen der Repräsentation und Einflussmacht im islamischen Kontext in den Vordergrund. Ein Schwerpunkt ist dabei die Neuinterpretation des Koran und der Sunnah von weiblichen Religionsgelehrten (zum Beispiel Schröter, 2010). Pieternella van Doorn-Harder (2006), Siti Syamsiyatun (2007), Monika Arnez (2009), Rachel Rinaldo (2007) und Dayana Parvanova (2012) beschreiben und analysieren den Einfluss von muslimischen Aktivistinnen und islamischen Feministinnen auf die gender-spezifische Agenda der zwei indonesischen islamischen Massenorganisationen *Muhammadiyah* und *Nadlatul Ulama* (NU).

Gemäß den sozialisationstheoretischen Forschungen über die PionierInnen der politischen und sozialen Bewegungen der 1960er Jahre in den USA kamen diese politisch linken und meistens pazifistischen AktivistInnen aus StudentInnenkreisen, vorzugsweise aus einem humanistisch geprägten, politisch liberalen, bildungsorientierten und wenig strengem Elternhaus, das in der oberen Mittelklasse verortet war (Flacks,

1967). Diese familiäre Sozialisation – so zeigen die Forschungen – prägte den Wertekanon der späteren AktivistInnen und befähigte und motivierte sie, sich gegen soziale Ungerechtigkeit und autoritäre Strukturen auszusprechen. Die These, die vor allem durch psychoanalytische Ansätze gestärkt wurde, dass Generationenkonflikte und die politische Divergenz zwischen Eltern und ihren Kindern wesentliche Faktoren in der Ausprägung von politischem Engagement der jungen Generation sein könnte (Feuer, 1969; Middleton & Putney, 1963), wurde damit zumindest teilweise entkräftet (Flacks, 1970/1971; Westby & Braungart, 1966).

Die Forschungen von Flacks (1967) zeigen, dass die Wurzeln für die anfänglichen studentischen politischen und sozialen Bewegungen in den USA nicht auf gemeinsamer Erfahrung von Ausbeutung, materieller Benachteiligung oder politischer Machtlosigkeit gründeten, denn diese Jugendbewegungen formierten sich aus Studierenden, die aus ökonomisch und soziokulturell privilegierten Familien kamen. Vielmehr sind die Aspekte der Bildung und familiären Herkunft für das Engagement gegen soziale Ungerechtigkeit relevant. Dabei sei, so Flacks, weniger ausschlaggebend, was genau in der Erziehung passiere, als vielmehr, dass die Erfahrungen der Kinder- und Jugendzeit in einer spezifischen Subkultur der amerikanischen Mittelklasse stattfanden. Spezifische Werte, Normen, Perspektiven und innere Haltungen innerhalb dieser Subkultur wurden durch soziale Praktiken der beteiligten Mitglieder, seien es Familien, Nachbarn oder FreundInnen, produziert, reproduziert und transformiert. Flacks (1971) nennt diese Subkultur „Intelligentsia“, eine soziale Schicht oder Gruppe, die in Gouldners Begriff die Kontrolleure des kulturellen Kapitals sind (Gouldner, 1979). Zwei Aspekte der moralischen Implikationen sind der Subkultur der Intelligentsia inhärent: zum einen das Engagement für soziale Entwicklung und zweitens das Selbstbewusstsein der Mitglieder dieser Gruppe, dass sie in einer herausragenden Art und Weise das Potential zu der Erfüllung des Projektes des sozialen Wandels, innehaben.

Auch wenn der Fokus und der Umfang dieses Artikels die Beschreibung der Elterngeneration von Aktivistinnen und deren Zuordnung in einer spezifischen subkulturellen Gruppe nicht zulassen, gibt es, wie beschrieben, sowohl in der familiären Sozialisation als auch in der persönlichen Überzeugung der Aktivistinnen die Dimension der moralischen Implikationen bezüglich des Engagements für soziale Entwicklung. Der persönliche Einsatz ihrer Töchter wird von den Eltern positiv und als erfolgversprechend bewertet. Aktivistinnen sehen sich selbst als potentiell befähigt, sozialen Wandel zu evozieren.

Konflikt als Initiator – Die Anfänge frauenfördernder Arbeit

Der folgende Teil des Artikels behandelt den bewaffneten Konflikt in Aceh als Triebfeder des anfänglichen Engagements von muslimischen Aktivistinnen und wieso sie sich speziell für die Förderung von Frauenbelangen einsetzen. Gründerinnen von zivilgesellschaftlichen Organisationen in Aceh sind unter anderem Frauen, die selbst in Gebieten wohnten, die als *panas* (heiß) galten. Das sind Regionen, in denen zeitweise schwere Kämpfe zwischen dem indonesischen Militär – TNI (*Tentara Nasional Indonesia*) – und den bewaffneten Streitkräften der GAM – TNA (*Teuntara Neugara Aceh*) – stattfanden, wie im Distrikt Nord-Aceh und in Randbezirken der Stadt Lhokseumawe.[8] Diese Frauen waren auf Grund dessen in besonderem Maß mit den Auswirkungen des Krieges konfrontiert. Cut Nurdin, die in Lhokseumawe aufwuchs, erzählt von der Häufung von berichteten oder erlebten Menschenrechtsverletzungen, die dazu führten, dass sie sich für die Verbesserung der Situation von Kriegsopfern engagierte. Ilmu erachtet als Schlüsselerlebnis, dass sie bewaffnete Kämpfe überlebte. Auch die meisten anderen Aktivistinnen beschreiben Betroffenheit, Empathie und Solidarität mit physisch und psychisch versehrten Frauen als anfängliche Triebfeder ihres Engagements. Solidarität beinhaltete für die Mehrzahl der Aktivistinnen in erster Linie die Verbundenheit mit anderen Frauen, der eigenen Familie und FreundInnen, und nur in zweiter Linie die Unterstützung des politischen Ziels der Unabhängigkeit mit dem Einsatz von Waffen. Da jedoch die Regierung Indonesiens als Kolonialmacht angesehen wurde und die Mehrzahl der Frauenrechtsverletzungen, wie Vergewaltigung, Folter und Mord, von Mitgliedern des indonesischen Militärs begangen wurden, sympathisierten Aktivistinnen mit der GAM. „Eindringlinge aus Java“, die „von außen“ (Cut Nurdin, persönliches Interview, 19. Februar 2010, Banda Aceh) kamen, wurden hauptsächlich für Menschenrechtsverletzungen während des Konflikts verantwortlich gemacht.

Benachteiligungen durch patriarchale Strukturen innerhalb acehischer Gesellschafts-, Gemeinschafts-, und Familienordnungen wurden von Aktivistinnen weniger in Verbindung mit initiierenden Momenten für ihre zivilgesellschaftliche Orga-

8 Die militärischen Auseinandersetzungen während des bewaffneten sezessionistischen Konflikts in Aceh steigerten sich während dreier Phasen: von 1989 bis 1998 innerhalb der Phase der *Militärischen Operationszone* (*Daerah Operasi Militer,* DOM), direkt nach dem Sturz Suhartos im Jahr 1998 und ab dem Jahr 2003, nachdem die damalige Präsidentin Megawati Sukarnoputri das Kriegsrecht über Aceh verhängte.

nisierung genannt. Diesbezügliche Themen tauchen auch nicht in den damaligen Programmen der Organisationen auf, in denen es hauptsächlich um oben genannte Frauenrechtsverletzungen und Missstände in Lagern von Binnenflüchtlingen, sogenannten IDP (*Internally Displaced Persons*), ging.

Die Unterstützung der Konfliktopfer durch Aktivistinnen während der Phase der Militärischen Operationszone DOM (*Daerah Operasi Militer*) basierte in der Regel auf freiwilliger und unentgeltlicher Arbeit. Aktivistinnen sammelten zum Teil Geld, Nahrungsmittel, Kleider, Planen, Kochutensilien und andere Gebrauchsgegenstände von ihren FreundInnen und Verwandten, um Konfliktopfer in entlegenen Gebieten zu versorgen. Den Transport der Hilfsgüter bewerkstelligten sie oftmals mit öffentlichen Bussen, die Fahrtkosten finanzierten sie durch Spenden von FreundInnen. Aktivistinnen berichten, dass es viele Freiwillige gab, die sich an solchen Aktionen beteiligten oder finanzielle Unterstützung leisteten.

Die Zunahme bewaffneter Übergriffe, die wachsende mediale Verbreitung von begangenen Kriegsgräueln seit Ende der 1990er Jahre und vor allem die steigende Pressefreiheit nach dem Sturz des autoritären Präsidenten Suhartos im Jahr 1998 führten dazu, dass erstmals Berichte über Mord, Folter, Vergewaltigung, das Niederbrennen von Häusern und andere Maßnahmen kollektiver Bestrafungen durch das indonesische Militär von acehischen, indonesischen und internationalen Medien öffentlich verbreitet wurden. Die gesteigerte internationale Beachtung des Konflikts in Aceh trug dazu bei, dass Aktivistinnen, die sich mit gender-spezifischen Problemen in der Konfliktregion auseinandersetzten, verstärkte Aufmerksamkeit erhielten. Ihr zivilgesellschaftliches Engagement wurde kanalisiert und der Aufbau eines institutionellen Rahmens gefördert. Mit der steigenden Institutionalisierung von Nothilfe durch die Gründung von Organisationen war die Voraussetzung der Finanzierung durch nationale und internationale Geldgeber geschaffen. Die Informationen über und Kontakte zu internationalen Organisationen wurden anfänglich innerhalb der vorhandenen Netzwerke weitergegeben.

Die langjährigen Erfahrungen im Konfliktgebiet Aceh und der permanente Zugang zu Zielgruppen in ländlichen Gebieten stellten für Aktivistinnen eine einzigartige Kompetenz und Ressource für die Arbeit in nationalen und internationalen Organisationen dar. Diese Qualifizierung auf dem Gebiet der Nothilfe stellten Aktivistinnen selbst jedoch nicht als besondere Fähigkeit dar, sondern beschrieben eher ein Gefühl

der Unterlegenheit gegenüber Kolleginnen in nationalen und internationalen Organisationen. Als Begründung führte Asmah Sari an, dass sie durch den Konflikt in Aceh ihre Arbeit nur auf konfliktrelevante Themen konzentrierten und von national und international geführten Diskursen über gender-spezifische Themen abgeschottet waren:

> *Durch meine Arbeit bei der . . . [lokalen Organisation] in Aceh bin ich mit . . . [einer nationalen Organisation] in Jakarta in Kontakt gekommen. Sie haben mich überredet, dass ich Sonderbeauftragte für Aceh werde. Ich war sehr unsicher, ob ich die Anforderungen der Arbeit auf der nationalen Ebene erfüllen kann. Sie aber meinten, dass ich eine spezielle Kompetenz habe, die keine andere besitze: Ich habe den Konflikt miterlebt. . . . Ich merkte inhaltlich bald, dass sich die Schwerpunkte der Arbeit in Aceh, in einer Konfliktgegend, sehr von denen auf nationaler Ebene unterschieden. Die Mitarbeiterinnen . . . [der nationalen Organisation] beispielsweise diskutierten, ob und wie sich ein neuer Feminismus nach dem Sturz Suhartos formte. Ich hatte mir dazu noch keine Gedanken gemacht. Wir waren in Aceh überhaupt nicht an diesem Punkt. (Salma Mahdi, persönliches Interview, 17. März 2010, Banda Aceh)*

Zäsur Tsunami

Die Abschottung Acehs fand nach dem Tsunami ein jähes Ende. Die indonesische Provinz rückte in den Mittelpunkt finanzkräftiger Nothilfe- und Wiederaufbauprogramme internationaler, kirchlicher und humanitärer Organisationen, der Weltbank und staatlicher Entwicklungsdienste. Die ersten Kostenpläne der Anträge für Nothilfe von Organisationen fielen meist bescheiden aus. Sie enthielten in der Regel die Kosten der zu verteilenden Mittel, ein geringes Honorar und Fahrtkostenerstattung für die Fahrt mit dem öffentlichen Nahverkehr.[9] Mit steigender Institutionalisierung, Professionalisierung und Kommerzialisierung von Notfall- und Entwicklungshilfe stieg nicht nur der Umfang der Programme, sondern auch die Höhe der Honorare.[10] Nach dem Tsunami erreichten die Höhe der Honorare für Beraterinnentätigkeiten internationaler Organisationen, aber auch das Einkommen für Mitarbeiterinnen in zivilgesellschaftlichen Organisationen und Angestellte wie Fahrer oder Haushaltshilfen den absoluten Zenit.[11] Nachdem die erste Phase der Notfallhilfe beendet war, sanken zwar die Höhe

9 Beispielsweise enthielt der im Jahr 1997 aufgestellte Kostenplan einer Organisation für die Versorgung von zirka 30 Frauen und Kindern mit Nahrungsmitteln und medizinischer Grundversorgung in einer Notunterkunft unter anderem ein Honorar von umgerechnet EUR 25 pro Monat für eine Mitarbeiterin.

10 Die erzielten Einkünfte einer Aktivistin durch die Tätigkeit in einer Organisation pendelten sich von Anfang der 2000er Jahre bis Ende des Jahres 2004, vor dem Tsunami, auf einem Niveau ein, welches mit dem Einkommen einer Lehrerin vergleichbar war.

11 Das Einkommen eines Fahrers in einer der Vereinten Nationen affiliierten Organisation war beispielsweise vergleichbar mit dem eines Direktors einer Universität in Banda Aceh. Diese Unverhältnismäßigkeiten waren unter anderem auf pauschalierte Honorare innerhalb der Notfallhilfe zurückzuführen, die nicht im Verhältnis zum

und Menge der möglichen Einkünfte innerhalb der Notfall- und Wiederaufbauhilfe, das Einkommensniveau in dieser Sparte blieb jedoch generell hoch.

Für die Implementierung der Programme wurde eine Vielzahl von lokalen Angestellten, Beraterinnen und Expertinnen benötigt und neue, befristete Arbeitsplätze geschaffen. Neue Positionen, wie beispielsweise die der sogenannten Gender-Expertin, wurden kreiert, um die vorgegebenen Standards innerhalb der Implementierung westlicher Entwicklungszusammenarbeit einzuhalten. Die meisten Programme müssen geschlechtsspezifische Gleichstellung in sämtlichen Bereichen, sogenanntes *Gendermainstreaming*, garantieren und werden nach einer sogenannten G-Kennung eingestuft. Diese gliedert sich in drei Kategorien, die helfen sollen, Programme nach ihrem Beitrag zur Umsetzung der Gleichberechtigung der Geschlechter und Stärkung der Rechte von Frauen zu beurteilen.[12] Die Position einer sogenannten Gender-Expertin ist, als Teil der Strategie des Gender Mainstreaming, unter anderem für die Gewährleistung der geschlechtsspezifischen Gleichstellung zuständig. Die genaue Bezeichnung dieser Position ist ebenso vielseitig wie deren Aufgabenbeschreibung. So gibt sich oft die Person, welche die Position besetzt, selbständig eine Bezeichnung. Meist wird ein englischsprachiger Ausdruck, wie beispielsweise *advisor for gender* oder eine Mischform aus dem Englischen und Indonesischen, wie beispielsweise *gender spesialist*[13], gewählt. Die Aufgaben werden bei der Einstellung grob skizziert oder entwickeln sich während der ersten Monate der Anstellung. Sie enthalten meist die Erstellung der Pläne zur Umsetzung von gender-sensibler Haushaltsplanung, sogenanntes *Gender Budgeting*, die Konzeptualisierung und Durchführung von Seminaren zu geschlechtsspezifischen Themen oder die programmübergreifende Kontrolle und Evaluierung von Gender Mainstreaming. Die Position als Gender-Expertin, Beraterin oder Programmdirektorin in internationalen Organisationen, der Weltbank oder bilateralen Entwicklungsdiensten verhalfen Aktivistinnen zum einen zu überdurchschnittlich hohen Einkünften und zum anderen führte die stark gestiegene Nachfrage an ihrer Expertise dazu, dass viele acehische Aktivistinnen ihr Empfinden der Unterlegenheit ablegten.

Einkommensniveau in Aceh standen.

12 Für die Mitgliedsstaaten der OECD gelten seit dem Jahr 1997 die *Gender Policy Markers*, die sogenannten G-Kennungen. Sie bestehen aus drei Kennungen, die sich auf die Zielsetzung des Vorhabens beziehen. In Programmen der Kategorie G-2 ist die Gleichberechtigung der Geschlechter ein Hauptziel, in der Kategorie G-1 hat es ableitend positive Wirkung und G-0 Programme haben kein Potential, zur Gleichberechtigung der Geschlechter beizutragen. Im Jahr 2001 hat das Bundesministerium für wirtschaftliche Zusammenarbeit und Entwicklung die Einstufung aller Programme der deutschen Entwicklungszusammenarbeit nach den G-Kennungen verbindlich eingeführt (GTZ, 2006).

13 Das Wort in *Bahasa Indonesia* für Spezialist lautet *spesialis*.

Durch die Schaffung einer großen Anzahl von neuen Arbeitsplätzen im Menschen- und Frauenrechtsbereich entwickelte sich eine Gruppe von Mitarbeiterinnen, die sich in sehr verschiedener Weise mit den Inhalten ihrer Arbeit identifizieren, als das bei den langjährigen Aktivistinnen der Fall ist. Für die Mehrzahl der neu eingestellten Mitarbeiterinnen stellt die Arbeit in einer zivilgesellschaftlichen Organisation in erster Linie eine Möglichkeit dar, Geld zu verdienen und wurde oft als ein Sprungbrett in die Berufstätigkeit genutzt. Das Engagement von Aktivistinnen, die während des Konfliktes zum Teil unter Einsatz ihres Lebens und meistens unentgeltlich humanitäre Hilfe leisteten, wurde durch Mitarbeiterinnen kontrastiert, die ihre Tätigkeit in einer zivilgesellschaftlichen Organisation in Aceh in erster Linie als Verdienstquelle und Qualifikationsmöglichkeit auf ihrer Karriereleiter sahen.[14] Dewi kommentiert die Ernennung einer Frau, die vorher weder in zivilgesellschaftlichen Organisationen noch im Bereich Frauen oder Gender gearbeitet hat, zur Gender-Expertin einer internationalen Organisation folgendermaßen: „Es ist schon ein komisches Gefühl, wenn ich dieser sogenannten Gender-Expertin in gemeinsamen Treffen gegenüber sitze und ihr erst einmal erklären muss, was *Genderbudgeting* bedeutet“ (Dewi, persönliches Interview, 2. Oktober 2009, Banda Aceh).

Trotz ihrer Kritik bezüglich der fehlenden Qualifikation, Erfahrung und Ideologie sahen die meisten Aktivistinnen dem Zuwachs an Mitarbeiterinnen kurz nach dem Tsunami gelassen entgegen. Zum einen profitierten Aktivistinnen selbst von den erhöhten finanziellen und nicht-materiellen Ressourcen. Zum anderen wussten sie, dass mit dem Ende der Wiederaufbauhilfe im Jahr 2009 viele neu entstandene Positionen abgebaut werden würden und im Anschluss daran wieder die Qualifikation, Erfahrung und der Kontakt zu den bestehenden Netzwerken ausschlaggebend für die Besetzung einer Position in einer zivilgesellschaftlichen Organisation wurde.

Die zahlreichen Anfragen für Beraterinnentätigkeiten nach dem Tsunami, die damit verbundene steigende Arbeitsdichte und die oft empfundene fehlende Sinnhaftigkeit der Tätigkeiten wurden von vielen Aktivistinnen als störend empfunden. Die Aktivistin Salma Mahdi resümiert, dass es „oft nicht darum ginge, die Gelder sinnvoll zu verwenden, sondern darum, sie überhaupt einfach auszugeben. Das entspricht nicht meiner Intention“ (Salma Mahdi, persönliches Interview, 17. März 2010, Banda

14 Viele BerufseinsteigerInnen in der Entwicklungszusammenarbeit konnten aufgrund ihrer Position in Aceh nach dem Tsunami eine weiterführende Anstellung in internationalen, bi- oder multilateralen Organisationen erhalten.

Aceh). Deshalb lehnten einige Aktivistinnen die Angebote für Positionen und Beraterinnenverträge bei internationalen Organisationen kategorisch ab. Aufgrund von Diskrepanzen zwischen den Zielen der Geldgeber und lokalen Organisationen reagierten auch einige Aktivistinnen in der Wiederaufbauhilfe ablehnend auf Förderungen. Dadurch haben sie größere Unabhängigkeit in der Umsetzung ihrer Ziele, so Eka Diani (persönliches Interview, 23. Februar 2011, Banda Aceh). Tia hingegen sieht – je nach der Zielsetzung der jeweiligen lokalen Organisation – ein gewisses Maß an Entscheidungsfreiheit, obwohl sie prinzipiell von einem Abhängigkeitsverhältnis von ausländischen Geldgebern zu Ungunsten der lokalen Organisationen ausgeht.

> *Die Autonomie von Organisationen ist ein sehr kompliziertes Thema. Natürlich gibt es eine Abhängigkeit der lokalen Organisationen von ausländischen Geldgebern. Aber nichts desto trotz ist es die Entscheidung der Organisation. Wenn die Organisation Projekte im Gesundheitsbereich anbieten will und Gelder fließen gerade für den Bereich der Gewaltprävention, dann hat die Organisation im Grunde zwei Möglichkeiten. Entweder sie bietet Programme zur Gewaltprävention an und bekommt schnell Geld. Oder sie plant ein anderes Projekt und sucht nach anderen Geldgebern. Der eine Weg verspricht schnell viel Geld, der andere Weg verspricht langfristige Veränderung. (Tia, persönliches Interview, 12. März 2009, Banda Aceh)*

Dewi betont, dass die lokale Organisation, in der sie arbeitet, mit den Geldgebern verhandelt, wenn letztere nicht ihre Prioritäten unterstützen. Vor allem wenn die Beziehung zwischen der lokalen Organisation und dem westlichen Geldgeber etabliert ist, gebe es fast immer eine Lösung. Ihre Erfahrung sei, dass die Förderer im Prinzip die Agenda der lokalen Organisation unterstützen wollen, es aber manchmal kleine Anpassungen in der Zielsetzung gebe, die die Implementierung der Programme jedoch kaum beeinflussen.

In der Frage der Autonomie von lokalen Organisationen komme es sehr auf die Kapazitäten, Kompetenzen und Zielvorstellungen dieser an, so Tia. Manchmal gerate das Ziel etwas aus den Augen. Es sollten jedoch die Bedürfnisse der Zielgruppe im Mittelpunkt stehen und im Grunde darauf hingearbeitet werden. Aber es sei oft zu beobachten, dass es in erster Linie darum geht, die MitarbeiterInnen zu bezahlen. Es sei natürlich auch sehr wichtig, den Arbeitsplatz der MitarbeiterInnen so sicher wie möglich zu gestalten, aber das Ziel sollte doch immer noch die Zielgruppe sein (Tia, persönliches Interview, 12. März 2009, Banda Aceh). In diesem Sinn beschreibt Eka Diani die Ziele für ihre Arbeit in der Organisation nach dem Ende der Wiederaufbauprogramme Ende des Jahres 2009 hauptsächlich in der Rückbesinnung auf die Bedürfnisse von Frauen an der Basis.

> *Die Jahre nach dem Tsunami waren eher davon bestimmt, die Bedürfnisse der Geldgeber zu bedienen. Jetzt geht es wieder darum, an die Bedürfnisse der Frauen an der grassroot [sic] zu kommen. Ich möchte so viel Zeit wie möglich mit ihnen verbringen, um durch Diskussionen und gemeinsames Überlegen zusammen mit Frauen Lösungen zu finden. Ich fahre gerade in die Dörfer, auch wenn ich keine Projekte mache, einfach nur um mit Frauen zu reden und wieder ein Gespür für die Bedürfnisse der Frauen dort zu bekommen. (Eka Diani, persönliches Interview, 23. Februar 2011, Banda Aceh)*

Fazit

Aktivistinnen, die langjährig im zivilgesellschaftlichen Bereich tätig sind und in den 1980er und 1990er Jahren eine Organisation mit dem Schwerpunkt der Frauenförderung und Frauenrechtsarbeit gründeten oder aktiv am Gründungsprozess beteiligt waren, sehen ihre Rolle darin, soziale und politische Missstände zu verändern und bestenfalls zu beseitigen. Sie sehen sich – trotz selbstkritischer Betrachtung – als befähigt, politischen und soziokulturellen Wandel zu induzieren. Die Kontinuität zwischen den Generationen und die Weitergabe eines bestimmten Wertekanons innerhalb der familiären Sozialisation von Aktivistinnen sind für die Ausprägung ihres sozialen und politischen Engagements von Bedeutung. Auseinandersetzung, Diskussion, kritisches Denken bezüglich politischen und soziokulturellen Themen, aber auch Selbstbewusstsein, Ehrgeiz und Eigenverantwortlichkeit im Handeln sowie finanzielle Unabhängigkeit und ein gewisses Maß an Autonomie haben ihre Wurzeln oftmals in dem Wertekodex, der in der Kindheit und Jugend vermittelt und innerhalb eines spezifischen Umfelds gefördert wurde. Aktivistinnen sehen ihr soziales und politisches Engagement nicht in Abgrenzung zu ihren Eltern, als Kritik oder Bruch zwischen den Generationen, sondern als Weiterentwicklung von deren Werten und Normen.

Aktivistinnen wohnten oftmals in besonders betroffenen Gebieten des bewaffneten Konflikts und waren aufgrund dessen direkt mit den Auswirkungen des Krieges konfrontiert. Sie beschreiben die Empathie und Solidarität mit weiblichen Konfliktopfern als grundlegende Motivation für ihr zivilgesellschaftliches Engagement, welches durch die Zunahme bewaffneter Übergriffe, die steigende Internationalisierung des Konfliktes und die damit einhergehende, wachsende mediale Verbreitung von Menschenrechtsverletzungen seit Ende der 1990er Jahre verstärkt wurde. Persönliche Erfahrungen von Frauenrechtsverletzungen oder die Benachteiligungen durch patriarchale Strukturen innerhalb acehischer Gesellschafts-, Gemeinschafts-, und

Familienordnungen wurden von Aktivistinnen nicht in Verbindung mit initiierenden Momenten für ihre zivilgesellschaftliche Organisierung genannt.

Diese Ergebnisse decken sich mit Erklärungsmodellen für politischen und sozialen Aktivismus, die im Zuge der politischen und sozialen Jugendbewegungen in den USA und Europa seit den 1960er Jahren Eingang in die Bewegungsforschung fanden. Die Möglichkeit der finanziellen Absicherung durch die Arbeit in zivilgesellschaftlichen Organisationen stellt eine Voraussetzung dafür dar, dass Aktivistinnen auch über die Altersphase der Adoleszenz und des jungen Erwachsenenalters hinaus politisch aktiv sein können. Das Einkommen ist für die meisten Aktivistinnen, die langjährig im Menschen- und Frauenrechtsbereich arbeiten, jedoch von untergeordneter Bedeutung. Muslimische Aktivistinnen in Aceh erfuhren durch die steigende Institutionalisierung, Professionalisierung und Kommerzialisierung von Notfall- und Entwicklungshilfe nach dem Tsunami nicht nur eine Steigerung des Umfangs der Programme, sondern auch der Höhe der Honorare. Die überdurchschnittlich hohen Einkünften und die zahlreichen Anfragen für Beraterinnentätigkeiten wurden jedoch bald von vielen Aktivistinnen als störend empfunden. Der steile Anstieg an neuen karriereorientierten Mitarbeiterinnen im Frauenrechtsbereich ebbte mit dem Ende der Wiederaufbauhilfe im Jahr 2009 ab. Aktivistinnen etablierten sich wieder, konnten mit Qualifikation und Erfahrung überzeugen und die Kontakte zu den bestehenden Netzwerken waren ausschlaggebender für die Besetzung einer Position in einer zivilgesellschaftlichen Organisation. Die Ziele für ihre Arbeit in der Organisation nach dem Ende der Wiederaufbauprogramme Ende des Jahres 2009 sehen Aktivistinnen in Aceh hauptsächlich in der Rückbesinnung auf die Bedürfnisse von Frauen an der Basis und knüpfen damit an ihre grundlegende Motivation für ihr zivilgesellschaftliches Engagement an.

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Participatory Theater, Is It Really? A Critical Examination of Practices in Timor-Leste

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Dance, music, and oral narratives are an important and vibrant part of cultural practice and heritage in Timor-Leste. But while Timorese people have used such creative methods and processes during rituals, celebrations, and their fight for independence, today arts and artistic expression become an increasingly popular strategy in development cooperation. Especially different forms of so-called participatory theater with origins in development cooperation, arts, and social movements, present themselves as innovative, participatory, and well applicable in terms of capacity building and stimulating positive social transformation. Based on the author's experience and observations, this article critically examines the alliance between various stakeholders in Timor-Leste engaging with the fact that the current scene of participatory theater can hardly be seen as an independent grassroots or even social movement, rather than an initiated top-down process by donors with specific agendas.

Keywords: *Development Cooperation; Empowerment; Participatory Theater; Social Change; Timor-Leste*

Tanz, Musik und mündliche Erzählungen sind ein wichtiger und dynamischer Teil der kulturellen Praxis und des kulturellen Erbes in Osttimor. Während TimoresInnen solche kreativen Methoden und Prozesse insbesondere in Ritualen, Feierlichkeiten und ihrem Unabhängigkeitskampf nutz(t)en, sind Kunst und künstlerische Ausdrucksformen heute eine zunehmend populäre Strategie in der Entwicklungszusammenarbeit geworden. Insbesondere unterschiedliche Formen des sogenannten partizipativen Theaters mit Ursprüngen in der Entwicklungszusammenarbeit, der Kunst und sozialen Bewegungen präsentieren sich als innovativ, inklusiv und gut anwendbar in Bezug auf capacity building und Stimulierung positiver sozialer Transformation. Aufbauend auf Erfahrungen und Beobachtungen der Autorin untersucht dieser Artikel die Allianz zwischen unterschiedlichen Stakeholdern in Osttimor vor dem Hintergrund, dass die derzeitige Szene des partizipativen Theaters kaum als unabhängige Grassroots- oder gar soziale Bewegung angesehen werden kann, sondern eher als ein von oben initiierter Prozess von Geberinstitutionen mit spezifischen Vorstellungen.

Schlagworte: *Entwicklungszusammenarbeit; Empowerment; partizipatives Theater; sozialer Wandel; Osttimor*

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Introduction

Development projects and practitioners all around the world claim to use arts as participatory tool to engage people and communities in processes of creation and recreation to transform life and societies as well as strengthen peace and development (Sloman, 2011, p. 1). This is also the case in Timor-Leste – the youngest nation in South-East Asia with a long history of violence, conflict, and deprivation of basic rights and needs (Commission for Reception, Truth and Reconciliation in Timor-Leste [CAVR], 2005). Celebrating the 10th anniversary of independence last year, its second quite peaceful elections, and the withdrawal of the UN after a decade of almost ongoing presence, Timor-Leste is still struggling with coming to terms with its past. People and communities are divided and traumatized and while a small middle class is slowly emerging, the majority of people hardly benefit from the country's oil wealth and emerging economy – especially in rural areas (Scharinger, 2012).

As such, Timor-Leste seems to be a highly attractive field for a variety of development agencies and organizations and while some agencies focus on capacity building of high-level-ministries, others engage with local communities trying to stimulate positive social change in areas like peace, health, or women's empowerment. In the face of widespread illiteracy, difficult access to remote areas, widespread fragmentation, and ongoing conflicts and violence, more and more organizations adopt theater activities to spread their message and acknowledge arts' positive contribution to healing, reconciliation, and identity-building (Epskamp, 1984, p. 46). Moreover, participatory arts projects are widely perceived as being rather inexpensive and having desirable impacts on people's lives by forming relations to indigenous knowledge and cultural understanding. Exploring relations between important stakeholders in Timor-Leste mostly through participatory observation and critical analysis of performances and performing groups,[2] this paper acknowledges the challenging work and positive effects of participatory theater[3], while specifically drawing attention to

2 The author gained insights and experiences as a research student and theater practitioner working with a youth group in Dili, in 2011. Since late 2012, her activities focus less on practical application but rather on observing and analyzing different groups and activities within and outside development cooperation structures.

3 With terms like Theater for Development (TFD), Community Theater, Applied Theater, Popular Theater, Educational Theater, or Theater for Social Change, a vast amount of terminology was created and even though these terminologies show differences in appearance and appliance, all of them have the common basis of applying participatory methods of theater in non-conventional spaces with non-conventional actors and audience. Therefore, this paper uses the term *Participatory Theater* to cover the variety of participatory practices, which usually work outside the area of conventional theater.

critical and often contradictory applications and impacts. By adding perspectives of emerging and shifting paradigms and working methods of development cooperation (DC) to the analysis of participatory theater in Timor-Leste, I hope to gain a clearer understanding of such paradoxical applications.

From Modernization to Participation in Development Cooperation

In the 1950s and 1960s – the widely assumed 'birth' of development in theory and practice – the most preeminent development theory was the one of modernization and growth then adopted by most of the countries recently released into independence. Based on the US' experience with investing in infrastructure and technology, development was solely defined as a single-linear and evolutionary process of economic growth with developed countries being just a few steps ahead of the colonial and post-colonial countries (Rostow, 1960).

Starting in the mid-1960s, however, it became more and more apparent that modernization and growth were not the only road to development. In fact, after a decade of focusing solely on modernizing society and stimulating infrastructure and economic growth, countries faced internal problems such as stagnation of economy, corruption, and fragmentation of society. Especially social scientists in Latin America related the problems of so-called underdeveloped countries to dependencies between countries and regions within the global world system (Cardoso & Faletto, 1979; Esteva, 1993). And even though they too did not manage fully and satisfactorily to explain the world and its dynamics, people started to question the very ideas and approaches of development per se. As can be seen with the emergence of the theory of post-development, this resulted in a deep and existential crisis of development in theory and practice (Ziai, 2007).

It was during this time, when former British colonial administrator and new post-colonial development practitioner Robert Chambers grew increasingly skeptical towards common top-down development approaches and undertook his first steps on a new path of participatory development. He argued that not NGOs or donor organizations should have the primary power in decision-making over development issues but rather the targeted communities themselves (Chambers, 1994). Though the

very concept of participation was not new at all – one need only to think about the Greek Acropolis or traditional community meetings – with this, Chambers managed to introduce the very concepts of participation, ownership, and empowerment into DC and its related scientific discourse. With DC being criticized as more and more ineffective, exclusive, and ignorant in terms of cultural and social structures and skills, participation seemed to be the best approach to overcome local and global challenges, backlashes, and critics (Chambers, 2004). Research presented the empowering and overall positive effects of such approaches, which were additionally viewed as fairly inexpensive and simple (Chambers, 1994). For example, theater was and is being celebrated as an ideal method of integrating stakeholders as holistic human beings into projects and empowering them to be their own "motors of change":

> *If development is understood as a process in which people's conditions – material, social, political or cultural – are changed, then theatre with its immense transformative potential seems to be an ideal form through which to explore a community's developmental aspirations and possibilities. (Prentki, 1998, p. 420)*

Accordingly, even initially criticized donors such as the World Bank adopted Chambers' participatory approaches and mainstreamed them into their agendas (Cornwall, 2008). As a result, a set of participatory and creative methods of community-based work – including theater – was developed or integrated into DC approaches and donor frameworks. Theater and development practitioners started to adopt participatory and often community-based approaches towards their own work and with the rise of the 1970s' social movements, links between arts and socio-political activism grew stronger and stronger (Boal, 2001).

With the rise of these social movements – promoting for example gender equality, environmental sustainability, democracy, or human rights – came major changes in socio-political spheres and discourses, which eventually also impacted the status of arts in society and arts itself. James Thompson and Richard Schechner (2004), for example, argue that until the 1960s and 1970s the "aesthetic" or conventional theater was dominant in Western countries and their colonial or post-colonial counterparts. Then, however "'The theatre' ceased to exist as a single entity" and many kinds of different theaters for different audiences and with specific social agendas emerged (Thompson & Schechner, pp. 11-12). Even though artists were at all times aware of the great space for reflection, analysis, criticism of mechanisms of power, and stimulation of social change that theater could offer – one need only to think about Shake-

speare or Brecht [4] –, in the 1970s, they started to incorporate education theorist Paulo Freire's approach of critical pedagogy in their theater (Freire, 1972). This approach attempted to liberate people and stimulate social transformation by engaging the audience into dialogue and valuing local and traditional knowledge. Theater practitioners all around the world realized that "only dialogue, which requires critical thinking, is also capable of generating critical thinking. Without dialogue, there is no communication, and without communication, there can be no true education" (Freire, p. 65). Consequently, they started to search for theater methods and approaches, which could overcome the barrier between theater and people to open up spaces for dialogue and interaction between actors and audience in order to encourage people's participation in arts, just like in their individual and social realities (cf. Ganguly, 2011). Moreover, especially artists in colonial and post-colonial countries aimed to liberate their theaters from influences of Western dramaturgy, approaches, and theatrical methods. By re-opening theater to a wide audience rather than only to those who could afford it and by returning to pre-colonial and participatory styles of theater, they sought to re-establish and remodel indigenous theater approaches and methods, which were meaningful in their country's socio-political situation (Boal, 2001; Prentki, 1998).

In such approaches, rather than delegating power to an imagined character or a single director, people are asked to identify issues of concerns and to imagine and discuss possible solutions. With *Forumtheater*, for example, famous inventor of *Theater of the Oppressed*, Augusto Boal, stages a play based on a community's concern and then asks this very community to engage in a creative process of envisioning and acting upon possible solutions themselves, eventually leading to a transformative process inspiring activism for social transformation and personal behavior change. With encouraging people from the audience to come up on stage and rewrite the script according to their envisioned solutions, they are not only engaged in a tremendously empowering and participatory moment, but also provided with a safe space to test and modify their ideas (Boal, 2002).

Most commonly, participatory theater groups are either asked to create a performance based on issues and concerns they explored together with members of communities, which will then be presented to the relevant communities along with

4 Shakespearean and Brechtian theater are two well researched and discussed examples of how artists in different centuries have been able to utilize drama for the purposes of analyzing and challenging political power structures and social behavior (cf. Boal, 2001; Prentki, 2003).

discussions of possible solutions. Alternatively, facilitators of participatory theater work with the relevant communities themselves to identify issues of concern and create performances. Participatory theater, however, is not only used to express one's worries or challenges of life. Drawing from my own experience as Joker and actress, while usually the focus is put on the outcome of a project – in this case a performance – the process of engagement and creation of such a performance is just as important. For example, in working with victims of violence such a process can provide a safe space to explore and express their experiences and current situation, while also having positive effects on trauma-recovery such as identity-rebuilding, disruption of processes of isolation, reconnection of the physical, intellectual, and emotional self, or encouragement and empowerment to engage in social activism. Such plays are then rarely performed in traditional playhouses but rather staged on streets, public places, in traditional meeting spaces, schools, prisons, or other institutions, inviting an alternative and often spontaneous audience to watch.

Cultural Practices in Timor-Leste

Throughout the emergence of DC and participatory theater approaches, Timor-Leste was fighting to come into existence. Until the 1970s, the eastern part of Timor Island was a neglected colony of Portugal and when independence seemed to be within reach, Indonesian troops invaded their neighboring country in 1975, claiming it as Indonesian territory for more than 20 years. The Timorese resisted the Indonesian 'culturization' and tried to preserve their cultural identity and practices while also communicating secret messages amongst each other. As such, social dramas of rituals and community celebrations were an important and vibrant setting to preserve traditional songs, dances, and oral narratives, promoting the cultural identity of Timorese warrior clans and kingdoms (Dunphy, 2012, p. 187). At the same time, they were used in demonstrations and protests to promote the struggle for independence and self-determination. However, the period of the Indonesian occupation had a fundamental impact on the country's cultural heritage. With the aim of assimilating the Timorese traditional social fabric, community and traditional leaders and story tellers were a primary target of oppression and killing, should they refuse to collaborate

with the Indonesian forces (CAVR, 2005). Especially during the days of the invasion and the brutal genocide in 1999, much of the country's traditional infrastructure was destroyed together with thousands of people being killed (CAVR, 2005). With Timor-Leste being an oral society, much of its cultural heritage and practice was therefore lost within a short period of time, since people were not able to transmit their knowledge and powers to their successors.

After Indonesia withdrew in 1999, the country's cultural heritage was further endangered by socio-economic pressure and the vast amount of external influence as the UN and other international organizations established themselves on the ground. Fearing the loss of culture, Timorese artists and youth engaged – and were engaged by NGOs, governments, and international artists – in the preservation, but also recreation and reshaping of culture, history, and identity, eventually promoting peace and development (Dunphy, 2012). As a result, and often internationally supported, new arts initiatives such as the *Arte Moris Free Art School* (Living Art Free Art School) in the capital city of Dili, *Afalyca* (Wild People) in Baucau, or the *Lospalos Centre for Traditional and Contemporary Arts and Culture* came into existence. Incorporating various visual and fine arts forms, these initiatives combined traditional practices with elements of contemporary arts, further claiming on a positive impact in terms of trauma recovery, peace-building, and popular education.[5]

In- and outside such structures, in the past 10 years, a lot of more or less well-known theater groups arose and declined again all over the country. Well-known examples would be the Arte Moris performance group *Bibi Bulak* (Crazy goats, which stopped operating at the end of 2012), the *Sanggar Haburas* based in Lospalos, or the *Nafo Fila* in Ainaro.

The following examples and critical examination of participatory theater in relation to DC is mostly based upon experience and insights working with or observing theater projects and groups in Dili, directly placed within the structures of NGOs, while at the same time also being hired by other NGOs for advocacy purposes.

5 Cf. Arte Moris' website: www.artemoris.org;
http://www.whitehorse.vic.gov.au/IgnitionSuite/uploads/docs/Afalyca%20Flier%202.pdf;
http://manyhands.org.au/our_activities/lospalos_centre_for_traditional_and_contemporary_arts_and_culture

The Reality of Practice in Participatory Theater

While participatory theater in theory is a process led by, with, and for communities, in the Timorese reality it is often a process initiated and guided by external, non-artistic actors within local or global DC structures. This makes not only sustainability and effectiveness questionable but also results in donor-driven agendas and practices (Etherton & Prentki, 2006; Sloman, 2011). A detailed exploration of the involved actors reveals the hierarchy between stakeholders and messages sent to each other. Therefore, it can provide insights on the gorge between theory and reality of participatory theater as applied in Timor-Leste.

When the Donor Writes the Script

When donors such as international organizations (IOs) or NGOs approach theater groups and provide funding in exchange for a play based on a specific topic, artists often find limitations, regulations, and stereotypes that weaken autonomous creative exploration, expression, and overall political dynamics such groups could have or develop. Oftentimes, actors explore issues in and with communities and engage in a series of briefings and discussions with respective donor organizations. However, when it comes to scripting the play, the donors show a lack of trust and value in the group's knowledge and skills. This problem can be seen with the preparation of a theater play in Dili. Asked to create a play about gender equality and women's empowerment, a theater group consisting of young and inspired actors committed to promote change and transformation of their society, examined living situations in nearby communities and engaged with national and international standards and human rights. After this research process, they created a humorous script with the main female character aiming to run for president at the next elections and facing numerous challenges before she can do so. The donors, however, had a very different idea of how this topic should be approached. Within a few meetings and review sessions of the developed script, the groups' ideas were completely overturned, and the emerging play showed a traditional family arguing over who was to do the dishes. The donors firmly controlled the content and performance, highlighting that some political spheres should better remain untouched and unchallenged. Additionally, their tremendous interference showed that their message and its promotion were

the chief concerns, whereas creative and aesthetic dimensions together with appreciation of the theater groups' ideas and practices were irrelevant.

Technical experts sent to review and reshape scripts often lack experience in script-writing, theater, or engaging in the indigenous creative thought process in a participatory and respectful way. As a consequence, the resulting scripts lack aesthetical quality, cultural relevance, political linkages, or simply factors of entertainment. Moreover, such scripts reflect donors' attitudes of superiority and their ideas of theater being a fairly inexpensive way to educate people and communicate messages in the face of lack of infrastructure. Prentki (2003) makes these consequences clear:

> *As long as a development process leaves the affective aspects of human beings out of account, it will never succeed in facilitating changes of attitude and behavior. People may pay lip-service to transformational goals but in their hearts they will remain untouched and unreconstructed. (p. 41)*

Furthermore, controlling processes of exploring and expressing individual and social realities within a public space in Timor-Leste sends a very concerning message to a population, which is part of a transition process from an oppressed nation during Indonesian occupation to an independent democratic state. It is vital to mention here that, until today, most Timorese are growing up and being educated in a style which does not encourage critical reflection, analytical skills, or freedom of expression, but rather obedience to authority. Tightly controlling a presumably creative and critical process creates another authoritarian space where Timorese are not able to acquire knowledge and skills regarding democratic citizenship and creative and peaceful self-expression. This problem has also been encountered within theater groups outside of Timor-Leste. Reflecting upon Forumtheater and its potential influence on democracy in India, director and founder of famous forumtheater group *Jana Sanskriti*, Sanjoy Ganguly, shows the challenge of developing political citizenship in a context where NGOs – just like politicians – aim to use arts for their "publicity machinery" (Ganguly, 2011, pp. 62-63). In such cases, theater becomes another mode of "one-way communication", where the message is worked out beforehand and the sole role of theater is to "persuade people to adopt the new practice or participate in a certain program" (Kidd, 1984, p. 270).

Reports and evaluations following such top-down-approaches consequently show the same lack of incitement and sensitivity to people's actual needs. As Etherton and Prentki (2006) point out, the very definition of impact and transformation is not

neutral, and especially NGOs working on a project-basis do not have the means or mechanisms to evaluate any long-term effects and sustainability (pp. 140-141). While in reports and evaluation, participatory theater is often stated to be efficient, effective, and sustainable, the focus rests more on numbers of performances, participants, and audience rather than on generating comprehensive and meaningful data:

> *The impact of such theatre cannot be quantified in terms of numbers. Certainly the numbers define the outreach statistically, but it is often difficult to gauge what effect it has on the minds of audience members whose values may be engrained in their minds owing to hundreds of years of tradition. (Mundrawala, 2007, p. 160)*

In reality, the very methods of acquiring knowledge regarding sustainable and transformative impacts on behavior change need to be critically examined. For example, a theater group based in Dili was hired by an NGO to create a performance to promote conflict transformation skills and tour throughout the country. Within two weeks, they performed in 11 of the 13 districts of Timor-Leste. Yet, their only evaluation tool was pre- and post-surveys handed out to a small percentage of the audience before and after the performance with questions such as "How many tools of conflict prevention do you know?" as a pre-survey-question and "Have you learned about tools for conflict prevention while watching the performance?" as part of the post-survey. Such questions, however, can by no means be any indication of a decreased use of violence or appearance of conflicts, nor can they indicate long-lasting and sustainable transformation of conflicts or personal behavior. In the given example, the group dropped in and out of communities, performing almost every night in another community. They did not have time to actually engage with their audience and learn about their problems, leaving their play to nothing more than a commercial against conflict and violence

However, it is not only communities or the audience who experience a drop-in and -out of donors but also participants in theater projects themselves: For example, identifying school-drop-outs in various communities in Dili and involving them in theater and social activism in order to prevent them from being engaged in gangs and violent behavior can be a great project with great outcomes. The youth indeed receive an alternative tool for expression to ease their anger and frustration, they feel empowered and important within their community, and are included in a regular, stable, supportive, and yet challenging environment. In following youth who engage in

such projects, it is a wonderful experience for me to observe the transformative and empowering processes stimulated by such projects. However, it is a cause for concern that after a certain period of time, the project finishes or enters another stage, incorporating other youth without providing adequate care and alternative means of expression and engagement for the previous participants. Worried about the negative effects on their former participants' well-being and sustainable positive development, facilitators often spend their spare time to meet and mentor them rather than just let them down. However, as admirable their efforts are, facilitators risk an overload by trying to keep a project or project-cycle alive, which was abandoned by its donors in order to search for new numbers of participants and performances for their reports.

Top-Down Approaches

It seems to be a universal challenge for urban theater groups with members educated in a conservative development and education philosophy not to enter communities "as empty vessels to be filled with the knowledge by the teacher" (Odhiambo, 2005, p. 195). For example, Odhiambo gives a shocking account on how theater for development practitioners in Kenya are influenced by a sense of superiority due to their university education while at the same time stating that they are not aware of any philosophy or ideology which defines and characterizes their practice (p. 195). Similar experiences can be heard from theater researcher Syed Jamil Ahmed (2002): "There is no in-depth analysis of the complexities of life, because, as the development workers often explain, 'the villagers will not understand it'" (p. 212).

Observing participatory theater in Timor-Leste, I find that after experiencing a top-down script writing process, with scripts being hardly designed for or with communities but rather to please specific interests of donors, there is a high risk that such top-down experiences are reflected into scripts and performances themselves. Such attitudes and approaches can exacerbate the situation to such an extent that the created play will show severe signs of stereotyping and patronizing traditional culture and elements of society. Accordingly, as Annie Sloman (2011) who worked with different theater groups in Timor-Leste for several years describes, theater groups often enter "a community and dogmatically [tell] the people how they should change their lives" (p. 4).

Just like "Mr. Wise and Mr. Foolish", traditional characters are displayed as stupid, ignorant, and violent. They can only be saved by modern characters – often richer and more educated relatives – who suddenly appear for a visit and explain mistakes and solutions to the foolish traditional opponent. Without any further discussion, the foolish traditional relatives understand and vow to change. However, "the complexity of people's lives, of definitions of what constitutes empowerment and transformation, of the ethics of an artist's involvement in social transformation and of what an arts project can offer, suggest no quick fix" (Houston, 2005, p. 167). In fact, performances directed in such a short-minded sense cannot have any deeper impact on people's lives. Not only that people refuse to identify with the stupid, ignorant, and violent "Mr. Foolish"; such performances can only scratch the surface of the perceived problems and therefore present a very limited and short-framed solution. Ignoring the fact that behavioral change or social transformation often consists of a challenging long-term struggle, the audience is provided with the idea that it just takes a few minutes of basic explanation to change people's perceptions, behavior, and life. Prentki (1998), however, points out that "especially when working with groups who have long social and cultural histories of oppression and silence, it is unreasonable to expect the TFD process to be implemented rapidly" (p. 421). Additionally, micro-issues and macro-issues cannot be linked and questions of power and accountability remain untouched – what seems especially the case when international or national organizations fund the performances (Kerr, 1991, p. 66).

The audience becomes a simple receiver of the funding agency's message and power asymmetries remain unchallenged. For example, displaying a violent husband on stage and teaching him to count from one to ten to regulate his anger does not touch underlying problems of domestic violence, perceptions of power, manliness, or failures of the political system to protect victims from any harm. Similarly, performing a play, which encourages people to eat at least five colors per day cannot have any impact as long as people lack access to different kinds of food or crops; not even speaking about topics such as global food dependency or cultural perceptions of richness and poverty.

Theater groups and donors performing in such a way hardly understand that in order to stimulate the very beginning of transformation of thought and behavior – which itself is never to be guaranteed and certainly not completed after watching a

single performance – it needs a creative process and interaction between actor and audience (Ganguly, 2011, p. 77). In a hierarchical relationship based on assumptions about the 'Other' and a feeling of superiority, empathy, mutual respect, and understanding are hardly to be found. This idea is exemplified by Augusto Boal's approach that opposes educational, didactical, or propaganda theater in which lessons are simply being delivered to the audience. Theater to him is a dialogue and a process of learning together. Arts in this sense means the integration of thought, words, and action, otherwise such performances present just another package of development propaganda with participation, empowerment, ownership, and sustainability only being found in project proposals (Ganguly, 2011, p. 117).

The Critical Role of the Facilitator

As can be seen in the preceding critique, a great part of responsibility rests with the theater groups and facilitators. As Sloman (2011, p. 15) describes, facilitators need to be multi-skilled "agents of change", who are able to negotiate between different interest groups, facilitate creative and participatory processes, provide inspiring and encouraging leadership, engage in ongoing and critical self-reflection, and ideally have skills in finance, administration, and project management. They should be independent, with in-depth knowledge of their working context and possess cultural sensitivity and language skills.

This is hardly the case in Timor-Leste, where groups are often set up, run, and/or funded by NGOs with international facilitators who come into the country for mostly a short period of time and work or perform for different communities with different cultural and linguistic backgrounds. Many groups face conditions, time and other limitations due to both the funding proposals and donors' agendas, which hardly allow creative exploration and meaningful participation of the 'real' stakeholders in terms of agenda setting. If donors for example would expect a performance on youth violence in the streets, whereas the youth engaged are much more interested in the limited access and quality to formal education, the facilitator faces a quandary. If he or she engages with the youth, takes their concerns seriously, and opens up channels to express their grievances, the possible consequence is that donors and employers terminate contracts and funding due to unfulfilled requirements. This will not only

harm the employing NGO and restrict its future access to funding, but also the youth who will be left in the middle of an important process of exploring and expressing grievances in non-violent, but creative ways. If, on the other hand, the facilitator decides to stick to the initial proposal and topic, he or she risks that the project and its activities will lack relevance in the eyes of the youth.

Discussions about who makes the best facilitator are still ongoing; some argue that it is the well-established and experienced facilitators who enjoy greater creative freedom and less dependency on funding mechanisms; others argue that it is especially those well-established and experienced facilitators who become extremely self-confident and authoritarian rather than participatory and empowering. Participating in such a Theater of the Oppressed-Workshop myself, I was astonished by how much the incoming facilitator attempted to streamline her own work-experience with her theater group into a totally different context and how ignorant she was towards the participants' experiences, interests, and aims.

Nevertheless, younger and less-established facilitators show similar weaknesses. In Timor-Leste, it is especially these younger and enthusiastic so-called 'volunteers' or 'youth ambassadors' who are placed within different NGOs and settings and take responsibility for theater groups and projects. These volunteers hardly have a background in Development Studies or Participatory Theater but, if so, more often in Theater Management or Fine Arts. This often means that performances and the methods of creating them seem more or less like streamlined Western theater as the new facilitators are used to from their native countries (Lee, 1978, p. 79). Overstrained and overwhelmed, they hardly have time to do adequate research – neither about methods and ideas of participatory theater nor about communities' perceptions and problems. As a consequence, they barely reflect upon their own ideas and approaches, in order to adapt them to new contexts and the challenges they face. Already being integrated in DC structures, they are not only at risk but moreover "a compliant tool of Northern development agencies" (Kerr, 1991, p. 71). As a result, they tend to reinforce hierarchies and stereotypes, not only in their work with theater groups but also in performances. Instead of enabling actors and communities to explore and express themselves, they tend to control creative processes and outcomes. But, in a country like Timor-Leste, where stereotypes about the "uneducated and unskilled Timorese" are widely shared amongst international development practitioners, trans-

ferring leadership and capacity to local stakeholders is meant to be a necessity, and yet often remains an untouched sphere.

The worst example observed in such a context was a European Master's candidate conducting research for her thesis and volunteering with a local NGO in Dili. Twice a week she would join Timorese facilitators for their theater classes. While the NGO had offered three-month cycles of theater classes for disaffected and marginalized youth, who were often perpetrators or victims of violence, for approximately a year, it was the first cycle in which two Timorese facilitators were given the opportunity and responsibility to handle these classes without international facilitators. Within a cycle of three months, the actors should acquire knowledge in different theater methods and explore issues important to them and their communities. Afterwards, together with the facilitators, they would create a performance based on these issues and do showcases in their communities. The newly incoming international volunteer was asked to join the classes, observe the facilitators' performance, and provide ideas and mentoring, based on her own theater experience after the classes. However, soon she would not only enter the stage as a facilitator but also as an actor. She would more or less create lesson plans for the facilitators and step in to show the youth how to act 'her way'. As a result, both, facilitators and actors felt increasingly intimidated and did not come up with ideas for performances themselves. Facing time pressure, facilitators would use scenes from past projects, while the international volunteer would create more scenes. As a result, the actors were increasingly alienated by the planned performance. Showing a scene about the empowerment of women, for example, the girls refused to participate because they felt shy dancing to pop music in front of an audience. Showing another scene about domestic violence, the male actors acting as husbands did not understand the basic message of the scene and acted more and more violent stimulated by a laughing audience who – accordingly to Timorese social behavior – expressed discomfort and distress with laughter.

James Thompson and Richard Schechner (2004, p. 15) describe the positive processes and impacts theater can have in post-conflict contexts: With making themselves heard instead of being silenced, victims of violence re-gain action and power over their own lives, what proves to be a highly important process in trauma-healing and recovery. Furthermore, in enabling communities to come and work together to understand their past and to move forward while also providing time for joy, relief,

and entertainment, new bonds between people are created and the social fabric can re-emerge. With Timor-Leste being a post-conflict country with high levels of violence in homes and on the streets, theater projects engaging young victims and perpetrators of conflict and violence seem to be very popular, but hardly include people with any background in psychology or drama-therapy (Dunphy, 2012, p. 191). In terms of the *do no harm*-approach, this is highly concerning. Instead of trauma-recovery, empowerment, community-building, or transformation, inexperienced and unskilled facilitators and projects put great risk on actors and audience in terms of re-traumatization, re-victimization, and reinforcement of social stereotypes.

Conclusion

As this critical examination of ongoing theater activities shows, the current scene of participatory theater in Timor-Leste can hardly be seen as an independent grassroots movement. Originating within a mix of DC, arts, and social movements, it has widely abandoned its relations to arts and social movements and solely follows the premises of DC and its inherent power and economic structures. Hence, what Ahmed (2002) states in the case of Bangladesh is also applicable in Timor-Leste:

> *At the field level, the NGOs, not the people, determine the issues. . . . In turn, the issues of the NGOs are determined by the donors' agenda, where the 'larger' have some bargaining power but the 'smaller' have none. Hence, at the end of the day, whatever their vision, mission or goal, they are geared to fulfilling the donors' agendas. At the 'globalised' level, the donors' agendas are determined by the interest of multinational capital. (p. 215)*

Integrated in structures of DC, theater practitioners seem to become part of a mainstreamed cultural framework defined by major political actors who are apparently still operating under the premises of top-down approaches of Western modernization theory, while hiding under the disguise of participatory approaches. As such, participatory theater has become another tool and label which legitimizes projects claiming to achieve empowerment and ownership of marginalized groups. Once believed to be the way out of top-down approaches, cultural insensitivity, and mainstreamed economic development, participatory theater today serves hegemonic interests and mass development. Ostensively, participatory tools are integrated in donors' approaches and frameworks without being sensitive to stakeholders' needs and

wants. By only adopting the techniques of participatory theater rather than the full set of ethics, methods, and approaches, donors manage to take an originally critical and challenging approach and include it into a hierarchy that depends on the acquisition of further funding and is therefore less able to critically examine and challenge power mechanisms and structures which compromise donors' agendas, interests, or even reputation (Faschingeder, 2011, p. 21). As such, participatory theater has in many cases lost its original link to the social movements of the 1970s and lacks ethical, political, and aesthetical quality. Furthermore, just like Cooke and Kothari (2001) criticize that participation has degenerated to a "tyrannical power" oppressing the already poor and marginalized, participatory theater shows a similar potential. This seems even more dangerous, since it inherits the Western romanticist idea of arts being initially "good" and "transformative" in and of themselves. As a consequence, participatory theater is at risk, not only of becoming just another meaningless buzzword of DC, but rather of being turned around to defeat its own purpose of liberating and empowering marginalized people.

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Thinking Globally, Framing Locally: International Discourses and Labor Organizing in Indonesia

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In the final decade of the New Order regime, Indonesian labor activists turned to international organizations as a key ally in the dangerous work of challenging the state-controlled labor regime. As the political context has become more open, international organizations have continued to play an important role in the labor movement. This paper examines the changing role of transnational labor activism in democratic Indonesia. First, the paper describes the emergence of the discourse of global labor rights in response to the challenges of globalization. It then sketches the historical relationship between the Indonesian state, the labor movement, and international activists. Finally, the paper examines an internationally supported union organizing campaign. Drawing upon the literature on discursive framing, the case suggests that while internationally circulating, rights-based discourses remain an important resource for domestic activists, such discourses must be translated and modified for the local political context.

Keywords: *Indonesia; Labor Rights; Labor Unions; Transnational Labor Activism; Transnational Social Movements*

Im letzten Jahrzehnt der Neuen Ordnung wandten sich indonesische ArbeitsaktivistInnen an internationale Organisationen als wichtige BündnispartnerInnen für ihre gefährliche Arbeit, das staatlich kontrollierte Arbeitsregime infrage zu stellen. Im zunehmend offeneren politischen Klima spielen internationale Organisationen weiterhin eine wichtige Rolle für die ArbeiterInnenbewegung. Dieser Artikel behandelt die sich verändernde Rolle von transnationalem ArbeiterInnenaktivismus im demokratischen Indonesien. Dazu wird zuerst die Entstehung eines globalen Arbeitsrechtsdiskurses als Antwort auf die Herausforderungen der Globalisierung beschrieben. Der Artikel skizziert anschließend die historische Beziehung zwischen dem indonesischen Staat, der ArbeiterInnenbewegung und internationalen AktivistInnen. Schließlich wird eine international unterstützte Kampagne zur gewerkschaftlichen Organisierung analysiert. Mit Bezug auf die Literatur zu discursive framing zeigt der Fall, dass international zirkulierende, rechtebasierte Diskurse eine wichtige Ressource für innerstaatliche AktivistInnen sind, solche Diskurse allerdings übersetzt und für den lokalen politischen Kontext modifiziert werden müssen.

Schlagworte: *Arbeitsrechte; Gewerkschaften; Indonesien; transnationaler ArbeiterInnenaktivismus; transnationale soziale Bewegungen*

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Introduction

After the democratic transition following the fall of Suharto's New Order regime in 1998, Indonesian labor activists went from being suppressed by the state and considered a 'communist' threat to be dealt with by force (Hadiz, 1997, p. 131) to gaining legal protection, including the right to organize unions and bargain collectively (Caraway, 2009, pp. 157-158). Both under the authoritarian New Order regime and in the post-Suharto democratic era, international activists and organizations have served an important role in supporting the Indonesian labor movement. In the final decade of the New Order regime, international organizations aided the difficult and often dangerous efforts by local labor activists to challenge the authoritarian regime (Ford, 2009, pp. 88-89). Likewise during the initial transition to democracy, when the Indonesian labor movement was still rebuilding and politically disorganized, international actors played an important role in advocating labor law reforms (Caraway, 2009, p. 177).

A decade into democratic rule, is there still a role for international actors in the rejuvenated Indonesian labor movement? And, if so, has this role changed as the political context has become more open? This paper examines the changing role of transnational labor activism in democratizing Indonesia. First, the paper provides an overview of the challenges globalization presents for labor activism, and the emergence of a globally circulating discourse of labor rights as a response to these challenges. The paper then provides a brief sketch of the historical relationship between changes in the Indonesian political system, the ability of Indonesian workers to organize unions, and the role that international activists have played in supporting domestic campaigns. It then uses an internationally supported organizing campaign by hotel workers in Bandung, West Java, to analyze the dynamics of international labor activism in a labor dispute in Indonesia. Finally, drawing upon the social movements literature on discursive framing, the paper examines how local activists draw upon internationally circulating discourses of labor rights and adapt these discourses into the local political context. The case study highlights the opportunities and limits for social movements in Indonesia to draw upon global rights-based discourses. The openness of the democratic context has not created a blank slate. Instead, activists drawing upon global discourses continue to adjust these discourses to the local political, institutional, and discursive opportunity structures, translate abstract rights

claims into citizenship claims embedded in Indonesia's democratic reforms, and enact social justice discourses when institutional channels fail.

Globalization and Labor Rights

The intensified globalization of recent decades, coming in the form of increased global market integration and the increased role of global governance bodies, has created pressures linked to the decline in labor union membership and bargaining power. Capital mobility and neoliberal policy reforms have led to weakened regulation of work conditions and safety, increased "flexible production" and contract work, decreased job security and density of union representation, and reduced wages due to the weakened bargaining position of labor unions (Deyo, 1997; Lerner, 2007; Mazur, 2000; Tilly, 1995). Labor unions face a complex and transnational corporate environment in which corporations can shift capital and jobs across borders (Bronfrenbrenner, 2007, pp. 1-2), while mobile capital pressured states to adopt policies that discourage workers' organization and weaken measures to protect workers' welfare (Deyo, 1997, pp. 103-104). Internationally, unions find the political landscape increasingly influenced by supra-governmental institutions such as the World Trade Organization (WTO), the International Monetary Fund (IMF) or the World Bank, which have failed to make labor rights a serious part of their agenda (Stevis & Boswell, 2007, p. 177).

In recent decades, nations in East and South-East Asia have seen trends that in other eras and regions have been associated with the development of strong labor movements, such as increased literacy, expanded wage labor, urbanization, and democratic reform. Despite these trends, labor unions in Asia remain relatively weak (Deyo, 1997, pp. 97-98; Hutchison & Brown, 2001, p. 12). Many states in South-East Asia have pursued economic strategies of light export-oriented industrialization, based upon labor-intensive industries and a compliant and low-cost labor force to attract manufacturing investment. International pressures to open domestic markets to foreign imports have intensified competition and further pressured employers to minimize labor costs. These pressures have led firms to adopt flexible production systems that rely heavily upon contract labor and outsourcing, which undermines the

bargaining power of workers and creates a precarious labor force difficult to organize (Deyo, 1997, pp. 103-104). This region-wide transformation of industrial relations has given capital more power over workers and has led to declines in union density and collective bargaining coverage (Caraway, 2009, p. 167; Kuruvilla, Das, Kwon, & Kwon, 2002, pp. 432-440). Though democratic reforms in the region have offered unions opportunities to influence state policy and labor legislation, labor movements have played marginal roles in the development of respective policies (Deyo, 1997, p. 100), while unionization and collective bargaining remain poorly institutionalized (Caraway, 2009, p. 170).

With these global changes, there has been increased awareness of the need for transnational organizing and a consistent rise in the number of transnational social movement organizations (Smith, 2010, p. 172). Many of the key factors in the process of globalization have also provided transnational networking opportunities for social movements (Keck & Sikkink, 1998, pp. 14-15), while the creation of international governing bodies has, unintentionally, brought together social movement organizations and created new forums for political claims (Kay, 2010, p. 87; Smith, 2010, p. 184). Such trends have led to an interest in "globalization from below" and the possibility for international civil society to contest the effects of globalization (Appadurai, 2000).

The labor movement has long fought for its place in the global economy and the need for transnational action. Much of this has come from the ideological left, epitomized by Karl Marx' declaration "Working men of all countries, unite!" (1848/1978, p. 500). However, the pressure of international competition, capital mobility, and neoliberal reforms have demanded a renewed interest in transnational organizing across a wider spectrum of labor activists and has come to be considered a *sine qua non* for the future of the labor movement (Herod, 1995; Lerner, 2007). If the sites of struggle are to be at the level of transnational capital and supra-governmental institutions, then labor must take on projects that operate at this global scale (Bronfrenbrenner, 2007, p. 1).

The internationally circulating discourses of labor rights have been one of the most important resources in the labor movement's response to globalization. Part of a wider trend of a rights-based approach, such as human rights, women's rights, and indigenous rights, the discourse of labor rights offers activists a set of universal claims flexible enough to be used to make claims and frame issues in the local context

(Keck & Sikkink, 1998; Shafir & Brysk, 2006). Historically, labor claims have taken the form of citizenship claims embedded in and enforced by the state. However, as the welfare state and labor regulations have eroded and human rights claims have gained legitimacy, a universal rights discourse has increasingly been applied to the claims of labor (Fudge, 2007, p. 31; Kolben, 2010, p. 451; Tilly, 1995). This discourse is most clearly embodied in the ILO conventions, which attempt to establish global labor standards through the voluntary ratification of key labor relations principles by member states. These conventions cover a wide range of issues such as freedom of association, collective bargaining, forced labor, child labor, and discrimination in the workplace. For labor unions, the most important of these conventions are Convention No. 87 and Convention No. 98. The former protects the right of workers to organize, the right of these organizations to control their own administration, and the right to form labor federations. The latter protects workers from anti-union discrimination and obligates states to establish procedures to respect these rights (Novitz, 1998, pp. 170-171). However, due to the ILO supervision of state compliance, the voluntary nature of convention ratification, the vagueness of their wording, and the impossibility of ILO enforcement, the conventions act as policy guidelines rather than legal standards (Novitz, 1998, pp. 171-173; Standing, 2008, p. 356). With the continued erosion of the welfare state and labor regulation, the ILO has emphasized negative rights against the worst abuses over strong state regulation and standard setting. In doing so, critics contend the ILO has ceded too much ground to the neoliberal agenda (Alston, 2004; Standing, 2008), while for proponents the current rights-based discourse is flexible enough to survive economic transformations and be deployed in multiple contexts. As the case study of Indonesia will illustrate, the rights-based approach offers local activists discursive resources to make labor rights claims. However, the operation of these discourses in local labor disputes requires further consideration.

A Brief History of the Indonesian Labor Movement and International Involvement

Before examining the role of labor rights discourses in contemporary Indonesia, this section provides a brief overview of the historical relationship between the Indonesian state, the Indonesian labor movement, and its international allies. In the years

following independence, Indonesia was a parliamentary democracy in which most labor unions were linked to political parties, the largest of which was the communist-affiliated *All-Indonesia Central Workers' Organization* (SOBSI – *Sentral Organisasi Buruh Seluruh Indonesia*). While representing a relatively small industrial working class, labor unions of that time took advantage of a weak state and fierce party competition to organize a vibrant movement. However, when Indonesia made the transition from parliamentary democracy to Sukarno's Guided Democracy in 1957, the consolidation of state power and increased role of the military led to greater restrictions on labor unions and workers' rights to organize (Hadiz, 1997, pp. 52-56). In 1965, the New Order regime under Suharto came to power through a coup and ensuing massacre of an estimated 500,000 people, based on the pretext of eliminating a communist threat to the nation. For the labor movement, this meant the banning of leftist labor organizations (Caraway, 2004, p. 33), especially the communist-affiliated SOBSI, and the killing or arrest of leftist labor activists (Hadiz, 1997, p. 59). Following the violent defeat of the left, any form of independent labor activism came to be labeled as 'communist' and, thus, a security threat (Hadiz, 2002, p. 131). The regime revoked many of the labor rights from the Sukarno era and consolidated all remaining labor unions into a politically docile, state-sponsored union run by officials with government, military, or ruling party ties that rarely confronted employers or the state (Caraway, 2004, p. 33; Quinn, 2003, p. 13).

The banning of independent labor unions and the domination of state and military interests came to characterize the state's industrial relations policy, known as *Pancasila Industrial Relations* (HIP – *Hubungan Industrial Pancasila*).[2] HIP emphasized harmony and partnership between workers and employers and specifically rejected "foreign models" of industrial relations that acknowledged antagonism between workers and employers (Ford, 2009, p. 34). In practice, this meant the stifling of workers' grievances and guarding against the development of an independent labor movement (Hadiz, 2002, p. 132; Quinn, 2003, p. 13). The regime characterized labor activists as dangerous outsiders attempting to use workers for their own political agendas (Ford, 2009, pp. 78-79). This included restrictions on the activities of international labor organizations, unless they were willing to accept the constraints of the *Pancasila*

2 *Pancasila* represents the five fundamental principles of the Indonesian state: belief in one god, humanitarianism, national unity, consultative democracy, and social justice. First articulated by Sukarno in 1945, the principles have remained the philosophical basis of the Indonesian state to this day.

framework and work with the state-sponsored labor union (Ford, 2009, pp. 49-50).

In the 1990s, the final years of the New Order rule saw an increase in labor disputes (Quinn, 2003, p. 51), along with the emergence of labor-related NGOs and a few independent labor unions that attempted to challenge the state-controlled labor relations (Quinn, 2003, pp. 7-8). This led to a growing concern within the regime about the possibility of labor unrest, a concern amplified by international labor rights campaigns that put Indonesia's labor conditions on the international agenda. The regime's concern for its international reputation opened up important political space for domestic activists, including modest reforms in labor relations and the protection of labor NGOs with international connections from the regime's most repressive tactics (Ford, 2009, pp. 88-89).

Much of the international support for domestic labor activism in Indonesia resembled what Keck and Sikkink (1998) term the "boomerang pattern", in which domestic actors attempt to bypass blocked political channels domestically by drawing upon transnational activist networks through which they bring pressure upon the state from the outside (pp. 12-13). Adopting the "naming and shaming" strategies commonly used by human rights campaigns (Hafner-Burton, 2008, p. 1), international campaigns used the most dramatic cases of labor rights suppression, such as the murder of female labor activist Marsinah, the jailing of union leaders Muchtar Pakpahan and Dita Indah Sari, or the sweatshop conditions tied to prominent multinational clothing brands to moderate the regime's most repressive tactics and create some political space for domestic labor activists (Hadiz, 1997, pp. 179-180; Quinn, 2003, p. 14). International connections also served as a key source of funding for labor activism outside the regime-backed labor union, with funds coming from such organizations as the Ford Foundation, the *United States Agency for International Development* (USAID), the ILO, and the *AFL-CIO's American Center for International Labor Solidarity* (Ford, 2009, pp. 88-89). This support led to the growth of labor-specific NGOs and was part of a larger civil society resistance against the New Order regime (Aspinall, 2005, pp. 86-115).

Following the fall of Suharto in 1998 and the subsequent democratic transition, labor activists worked in a far more open political context that gave Indonesia arguably

the most worker-friendly labor laws in the region (Caraway, 2009, pp. 157-158).[3] While these labor reforms have been undermined by a lack of quality enforcement (Caraway, 2009, p. 177) and criticized for their emphasis on business-friendly flexible labor relations (Suryomengglo, 2008; Tjandra, 2008), they provide a basis for workers' claims to workplace justice. Along with gaining formal rights and institutional access, previously risky public demonstrations have been decriminalized and labor street protests have become a routine element of the political landscape (Juliawan, 2011).

International organizations have continued and even increased their involvement in the Indonesian labor movement (Ford, 2009, p. 170). International actors played an essential role in the initial labor law reforms following democratization (Caraway, 2004, p. 44; Tjandra, 2008, p. 5) and, while international labor organizations were unable to unify the Indonesian labor movement under one umbrella federation (Ford, 2009, p. 170), they provided important funding and organizational support to a labor movement decimated by decades of authoritarian rule.

Furthermore, while the "boomerang pattern" remains important, international organizations increasingly play the role of offering organizational and discursive support to domestic actors who have more political space to adopt and transform them in the local political context. In order to examine these dynamics in contemporary labor campaigns, the paper now turns to a union organizing campaign by workers at the Grand Aquila Hotel in Bandung, West Java, that reflects the intersection between a dynamic local union organizing drive and universal labor rights claims.

The Grand Aquila Campaign

Drawing upon the social movements literature on discursive framing, this case study points to the ways in which transnational connections help domestic actors to tap into internationally circulating discourses on labor rights. However, it also emphasizes the need to translate and enact these discourses in the local political context. The following analysis of the Grand Aquila campaign draws on local press reports of

3 This included the ratification of ILO Convention No. 87 on Freedom of Association and Protection of the Right to Organise; the passage of the Trade Union Act of 2000, guaranteeing freedom of association, the right to organize, and the right to bargain collectively; the Manpower Act of 2003, which strengthened the right to strike, limited outsourcing, and contract labor, and raised severance pay (Caraway, 2004, pp. 37–38); and the creation of the Industrial Relations Courts independent of the Ministry of Manpower (Mizuno, 2008).

protest events, findings from the ILO Freedom of Association Committee, local and international union press releases, and correspondence with local union leadership. While the use of press reports is limited by potential biases and selective reporting, such an approach is common among studies of protest movements as a way to both confirm activist narratives and capture what elements of a protest are being communicated to the public at large.

The union organizing campaign at the Hotel Grand Aquila, a luxury hotel located in the commercial district of Bandung, began in September 2008, when workers organized a union affiliated with the *Federation of Independent Labor Unions* (FSPM – *Federasi Serikat Pekerja Mandiri*) (International Union of Foodworkers Asia/Pacific [IUF Asia/Pacific], 2008). The campaign received support from the *International Union of Foodworkers* (IUF), a global union federation with local union affiliates in 120 countries (IUF, 2009). In early October, Grand Aquila workers informed the management that they had formed a union and would like to begin negotiating. The next day, the general manager dismissed the union chairperson and two other union officers without cause and let security forces escort them from the building (ILO, 2010, p. 151; IUF Asia/Pacific, 2009a). In a series of one-on-one meetings, the hotel management threatened the union members with dismissal or pay cuts if they did not resign from the union (ILO, 2010, p. 151).

Soon after the initial firings, management and the union engaged in talks mediated by the Bandung Ministry of Manpower. In those talks, according to the union, the management expressed their willingness to rehire the fired workers but refused to put anything in writing (Merdeka, 2008). These promises did not lead to the reinstatement of the fired union leaders. On 1 December, the management confronted the union members with an ultimatum: Union members would accept pay cuts or face dismissal. Following the ultimatum, the union continued to seek mediation through the Bandung Ministry of Manpower. However, as the management continued to refuse collaboration, the union informed management that they would go on strike if the union leaders were not reinstated and all anti-union discrimination ended. This culminated in a one day work stoppage. The next day, management distributed a list of 128 union members who were to be barred from the hotel premises, effectively terminating their employment (ILO, 2010, p. 154; Sopandi, personal communication, June 4, 2011). Furthermore, the hotel management attempted to undermine the

union by helping to create a competing union, the Family Association of Grand Aquila (SP IKGA – *Ikatan Keluarga Grand Aquila*) (IUF Asia/Pacific, 2009b). The case represents many of the most common forms of union discrimination by employers, both in Indonesia and worldwide: firing union activists, holding one-on-one meetings with workers, threatening dismissal, and creating an employer-friendly alternative union.

After the initial conflict over the right to form a union, workers started a more public campaign against the hotel. The union established a presence in front of the hotel, held weekly demonstrations, and demanded reinstatement, back wages, and the freedom to form a union (IUF Asia/Pacific, 2009b). Workers also created a "solidarity café" next door to the hotel to help raise funds for the campaign (IUF, 2008). In one of its early workplace actions, the union blocked two of the hotel's entrance gates with 50 meter banners reading "Prohibiting workers from organizing is 5 years in jail or a 500 million Rupiah fine" (Rakasiwi, 2009), referring to a rarely enforced law against the violation of workers' freedom of association.

Along with publicizing the dispute, workers sought redress through institutional channels. These included lobbying the West Java Ministry of Manpower to mediate the dispute (ILO, 2010, p. 159), demonstrating outside the Bandung City Legislature calling for the hotel to have its business license revoked (Sayuti, 2010; "SPM Desak Kasus Grand Aquila", 2010), and urging the West Java Prosecutor's Office and local police to bring criminal charges against the hotel (Martadinata, 2010). These attempts to seek redress through state channels gained the workers recognition but few results. After the failed mediation attempts, the Bandung Ministry of Manpower sent a series of reprimanding letters to hotel management, asking them to reinstate the dismissed workers, repay back wages, and respect the workers' freedom of association. Workers also held mediation meetings with management through the Bandung Regional House of Representatives, but according to the union, management did not take these talks seriously. The local police opened an investigation against the management, though the charges were ultimately dropped. Even the National Commission on Human Rights recognized the case, repeatedly offering to provide mediation and urging President Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono to intervene to end the dispute (ILO, 2010, pp. 151-152; Sopandi, personal communication, June 4, 2011). Despite this recognition, the ILO identified a lack of willingness by the state to "impose sufficiently dissuasive sanctions" against the violating employers (ILO, 2010, p. 155). While the

ILO did not recommend specific sanctions for the Grand Aquila campaign, the ILO's Freedom of Association Committee recommends severe fines, the reinstatement of workers, and closing down enterprises in cases of anti-union discrimination where a settlement cannot be negotiated (ILO, 2006, ∫ 825). The lack of sanctions in the Grand Aquila case illustrates the ways in which union organizing remains highly dependent both upon the freedom of association protections that came with Indonesia's democratic reform and the state's often lax enforcement of laws prohibiting anti-union discrimination (Caraway, 2009, p.165).

Universal and Local Framing Strategies

The Grand Aquila campaign shows how the campaign's discursive strategies have been informed by the union's international connections and internationally circulating discourses on labor rights. In the social movements literature, these discursive strategies are discussed in terms of framing. David A. Snow et al. (1986) describe framing strategies as the "rendering of events or occurrences meaningful", in which frames "function to organize experience and guide action, whether individual or collective" (p. 464). This approach to social movements emphasizes that activists not only act upon the world, but also give it meaning through interpretation and articulation (p. 466). In this way, social movements use framing strategies to make their message "comprehensible to target audiences, to attract attention and encourage action, and to 'fit' with favorable institutional venues" (Keck & Sikkink, 1998, pp. 2-3). While the literature on discursive strategies has focused on "new social movements", that are based on identity and cultural politics (Edelman, 2001, pp. 288-289), the Grand Aquila case suggests the utility of framing analysis for labor union organizing as well.

Internationally circulating, labor rights-based discourses provided the language with which workers framed their initial grievances against the hotel management. During early demonstrations, workers held signs referring to ILO Convention 87 on Freedom of Association or signs saying "Stop union busting", with "union busting" written in English (Gandapurnama, 2008; IUF Asia/Pacific, 2009a). By referring to the right to form a union under ILO Convention 87, ratified by Indonesia in 2000, the campaign drew upon internationally accepted labor rights as a way to introduce new political norms and pressure their employer and the state to resolve the dispute. While the ILO does not have the enforcement

mechanisms to effectively combat such labor violations (Rütters & Zimmermann, 2003, p. 30), Indonesia's ratification of ILO Convention 87 provided the "texts and pretexts" upon which activists were able to build a campaign (Waterman & Timms, 2005, p. 185).

These international discourses, along with domestic legal protections, were part of a language of abstract rights with which the campaign framed its grievances. However, as the campaign moved on, protest strategies shifted from universal claims of labor rights to normative claims of local justice. In one such protest, outside the Bandung Legislature, activists staged a theatrical performance in which they carried plates of sand, representing the economic hardship the workers faced after 15 months off the job, while demonstration speakers emphasized the back pay workers were owed and the difficulty they had paying rent ("SPM Desak Kasus Grand Aquila", 2010). Similarly, the campaign received some of its widest press coverage when it conducted a seven day "long march" from Bandung to Jakarta, concluding it with a demonstration in the capital and demanding a meeting with the President (IUF, 2010; Sunarya, 2010). In describing the march, one activist called it an "action [that] comes purely from the hearts of our comrades" (Ginulur, 2010, author's translation), a language far more emotive and normative than the legalistic claims of ILO conventions. Furthermore, when two union members died from heart attacks during the course of the campaign, the union posted harrowing bedside photos on its official Facebook page and demonstrated with two caskets outside the Bandung Mayor's office (Demo Serikat Mandiri, 2011).

In each of these examples, one finds a shift away from the abstract claims of international labor rights to a normative framing, adopting an emerging repertoire of street protest in Indonesia that focuses on performance, symbolism, and hardships (Juliawan, 2011). The shift points to the importance of framing strategies that resonate with the way that grievances are experienced (Snow & Benford, 1988, p. 208) and the relationship between framing strategies and institutional opportunities, in this case the move away from failed institutional strategies. The shift in campaign narrative from one about universal labor rights to one about the material impact of union busting and dismissal from their jobs also represented a key change in the claims of workers, from globally circulating abstract labor rights to social rights claims. Social rights, as described by T. H. Marshall (1949/1964), are claims to prevailing standards of economic welfare and based on a relationship between citizens and the state.

Whereas abstract labor rights provided the initial frame for the Grand Aquila workers, activists operationalized this rights discourse through claims embedded in material experience and targeting the state as citizens.

Friction and Transgressing Proper Political Channels

The shift in narrative represents a strategic choice of workers to frame grievances in ways that resonate with local target audiences, but it also speaks to the necessary translation of social justice discourses across borders and what Anna Tsing (2005) refers to as "friction". According to Tsing, friction is the process through which cultures and discourses are continually co-produced across borders, with special emphasis on the negotiation between universal categories and particular local contexts (pp. 4-5). This process has particular implications for globally circulating social justice discourses. While they allow local actors to make claims, they also "must be negotiated not only across class, race, gender, nationality, culture, and religion, but also between the global South and global North, and between the great mega-cities of the world and their provincial hinterlands" (Tsing, 2005, p. 13; cf. Thayer, 2010). This is equally true of the universal labor rights claims deployed by the Grand Aquila workers, which must be adapted in ways that have relevance in the local political context (Seidman, 2007, p. 20).

Perhaps no event in the Grand Aquila campaign better illustrates this process of transforming universal rights into locally relevant political action than the union's reaction to an ILO decision in its favor. In November 2010, the ILO published a decision stating that there was evidence that workers' freedom of association had been violated and recommended that the Indonesian government "take without delay all necessary measures, including sanctions where appropriate" to have the fired workers reinstated and the union recognized (ILO, 2010, p. 156). The decision was a victory for the union as it gave legitimacy to the workers' grievances, but it was not binding. The campaign had to translate the international recognition of its claims in a way that had local political meaning. The workers did so days later in chaining themselves to the gate of the West Java Governor's office, demanding the government act upon the ILO recommendations (Budiana, 2010). Whereas the ILO decision gave symbolic capital and legitimacy to the campaign, it had to be articulated and made real, in this case in a physical sense. The choice to demand the implementation of the ILO

decision by chaining themselves to the gates of the Governor's office represented a strategy, in which they not only reframed the language of their claims but deployed protest strategies that transgressed 'proper' political channels and the ineffective institutional methods of resolving the dispute. The new tactics represented a shift to what Doug McAdam (1996) calls "strategic dramaturgy", in which the message of the movement is framed by the meanings encoded in actions, rather than language alone. In the Grand Aquila campaign, these transgressive, action-oriented strategies often involved physical demonstrations and made the hotel itself a politically contested space. A series of demonstrations, which coincided with large events at the hotel, involved union protesters throwing trash, rotten eggs, and chicken feces onto hotel property and burning tires in front of the hotel gates. The actions left guests holding their noses in disgust, while activists urged customers to leave the hotel ("Demo SPM", 2010; "Karyawan Hotel Lemparkan", 2010; Kurniawan, 2010). While receiving local press coverage, the actions were absent from the press releases of the campaign's international supporters, the IUF.

The union adopted other transgressive strategies which were left unmentioned by the otherwise regular updates of the union's international affiliates. For months, the cover photo of the local union's official Facebook page featured a picture of graffiti painted on a wall outside the hotel. The graffiti read "This hotel has been confiscated", co-opting the bureaucratic language of an official posting and declaring hotel property a site of political contestation. The graffiti included the word "dog" (*anjing*), a highly derogative term in Muslim-majority Indonesia. While the graffiti may not translate well for international audiences, it represents a shift in framing from abstract rights and the failed bureaucratic channels to a localized and emotional framing. These strategies are highly political, and the personalization of grievance can be seen as both a powerful way of generating anger and possible action and a way of imagining and articulating alternative social relations (Scott, 1985, p. 347).

The campaign did not only use graffiti to construct a political imaginary in which workers actually had the power to confiscate the workplace, but also attempted to enact this imaginary in a small way. For three months in 2009, workers occupied a section of the sidewalk outside the hotel with an installation of tents and banners. After three months, workers and the management met with government officials to negotiate the legality of the workers' sidewalk occupation. Soon after the meeting,

the local Satpol PP, Indonesia's unarmed public order police, arrived at the site to dismantle and confiscate the tent installation. Workers, left to clean up the remains, only did so after throwing some of their remaining things onto hotel property and turning two large speakers playing rock music in the direction of the hotel (Yulianti, 2009). These skirmishes between workers and management over the control of hotel property became an opportunity for the campaign to take the dispute outside the bureaucratic channels of the state that continued to fail the workers.

Conclusion

Like other social movements in Indonesia, the Indonesian labor movement has seen its ability to organize and mobilize rise and fall with Indonesia's shifting political contexts. The democratic context of post-Suharto Indonesia has provided social movements with many new political opportunities unavailable under the New Order regime, including more opportunities to supplement domestic campaigns with internationally circulating rights-based discourses. Despite the lack of a resolution to the dispute, the Grand Aquila campaign represents a multi-faceted labor organizing campaign – involving international support, government lobbying, and direct action – that would have been difficult to imagine in Indonesia prior to democratization. The new political opportunities include the freedom to mobilize around internationally circulating discourses on labor rights. Yet, as the Grand Aquila campaign suggests, democratization has not created a blank slate upon which international discourses can be simply inscribed verbatim. Activists can more freely adopt international discourses, but must grapple with the limited impact of universal rights claims in the local institutional and discursive context. Each of the campaign strategies described above – the rhetorical shift from legal rights to social rights claims based on economic hardship, the use of symbolic demonstrations, the transgression of proper political channels, and the enactment of labor rights claims through physical demonstrations – illustrates how international support provides discursive resources to domestic activists and the need for those discourses to be translated and enacted locally by domestic actors. As Snow and Benford (1988) put it, framing and mobilization are "highly dialectical, such that there is no such thing as a *tabula rasa* or empty

glass into which new and perhaps alien ideas can be poured" (p. 204). In contemporary Indonesia, the more open democratic context has not eliminated the *friction* between international and local discourses for social movements. The Grand Aquila campaign's shift from rights-based appeals to normative appeals demonstrates the ways that activists adjust framing strategies to the discursive and political opportunity structures in which they operate (Ferree, 2003; Meyer & Minkoff 2004; Snow, 2007). In this case, the shift away from rights-based appeals that garnered little response from the state bureaucracies assigned to enforce them points to the limits that institutional opportunity structures place on social justice discourses and the importance of work by local activists to deploy, adapt, and transform these discourses in ways that have meaning in the local political context.

Thus, for the Indonesian labor movement, international allies and internationally circulating social justice discourses remain a powerful resource to draw upon. Just as important, however, is creative adaptation of these discourses in the local political context, whether it is translation of universal discourses in ways that resonate locally, transformation of universal rights claims into citizenship claims upon local state actors, or enactment of these claims through transgressive direct action. Yet, the lack of resolution for the Grand Aquila workers illustrates how the utility of universal rights discourses remains dependent upon the strengths and weaknesses of civil and citizenship rights embedded in the domestic state.

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No Call for Action? Why There Is No Union (Yet) in Philippine Call Centers

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This contribution presents findings from a qualitative study which focused on young urban professionals in the Philippines who work(ed) in international call centers – workplaces usually characterized by job insecurity and other forms of precarity, factory-like working conditions, and disembeddedness. Nevertheless, trade unions in these centers have not come into existence. Why collective action is not chosen by call center agents as an option to tackle the above mentioned problems – this is what the research project this article is based on tried to understand. After outlining some work related problems identified by Filipino call center agents, the article will focus on the strategies the agents employ to counter these problems (mainly accommodation and everyday resistance). By highlighting five objective and five subjective reasons (or reasons by circumstances and reasons by framing), we conclude that it is not repressive regulation policies, but rather the formative power and the internalization of discourses of rule within individual life strategies that are preventing the establishment of unions and other collective action structures.

Keywords: *Call Centers; Coping Strategies; Everyday Resistance; Philippines; Precarity*

Der folgende Beitrag präsentiert die Ergebnisse einer qualitativen Studie unter jungen Berufstätigen, die in internationalen Callcentern im städtischen Raum in den Philippinen arbeite(te)n – an Arbeitsplätzen, die gewöhnlich durch hohe Jobunsicherheit und andere Formen der Prekarität, wie fabrikähnliche Arbeitsbedingungen und Entbettung charakterisiert sind. Trotzdem wurden bis dato keine Gewerkschaften in den Call Centers gegründet. Warum kollektives Handeln unter ArbeiterInnen in Callcentern nicht als Option für die Lösung der oben genannten Probleme identifiziert wird, stellt die leitende Frage der Untersuchung dar, auf der der folgende Artikel aufbaut. Nach der Skizzierung einiger arbeitsgebundener Probleme, die von philippinischen ArbeiterInnen in Callcentern identifiziert werden, fokussiert der Artikel auf ihre Strategien, diesen Problemen zu begegnen (hauptsächlich mittels Anpassung und Formen alltäglichen Widerstands). Indem wir fünf objektive (umstandsgebundene) und fünf subjektive (framing-gebundene) Ursachen hervorheben, kommen wir zu dem Schluss, dass nicht repressive Regulierungen, sondern die formative Macht und Internalisierung von Regeln

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innerhalb einzelner Lebensstrategien die Entstehung von Gewerkschaften und anderen Strukturen kollektiven Handelns verhindern.

Schlagworte: *Bewältigungsstrategien; Callcenter; Philippinen; Prekarität; alltäglicher Widerstand*

Introduction

Are the unorganized organizable? This question haunts sociologists as well as activists in Europe nowadays. Especially social uncertainty (precarity) of life paths and working conditions seem to aggravate this dilemma. Bourdieu (1998) and Dörre (2006) are just two out of many who believe that precarity discourages collective political protest and that the lack of biographical perspectives caused by precarity (allegedly) leads to despair and depression.

Also in the Philippines, activists are concerned that young urban professionals do not organize themselves and often accuse them of being politically disengaged. Agents in International Call Centers, which nowadays offer employment to hundreds of thousands of well-educated young people, are specifically highlighted in this concern. In this case, however, reactions of despair to a precarious life are not evident, or at least not among the young urban professionals interviewed in this study. Three out of four respondents (of altogether a total of 40 participants) claimed that they have “clear life plans”; four out of five strongly disagreed with the statement that “when a person is born, how things are going to work out for him/her is already decided”; and the same number likewise strongly disagreed with the statement that “seeing the way things are, I find it hard to be hopeful for the world” .

Likewise, in the last years, one could witness from the Mediterranean up to Chile that young professionals are not per se in despair due to their precarious lives. Recent protest movements in Portugal and Spain, or Egypt have even proven that strategies to counter precarity are not necessarily confined to ‘muddling through’ and can actually catalyze political reactions and collective mobilization. These examples indicate that it is inaccurate to consider precarious living and working conditions as causes for the lack of political mobilization and collective political protest as, for instance, Bourdieu would assert.

This paper though does not aim at providing an answer to the question of whether young urban professionals in the Philippines may soon emulate their Mediterranean counterpart and carry their disgruntlement into the public sphere. After having ruled out the more general assumption that precarity triggers despair and thus inaction, we will rather concentrate on identifying alternative reasons of why collective action is not arising among call center agents.

After outlining some work-related problems that Filipino call center agents identify as significant, the article will focus on common but *not* collective strategies that agents employ to counter these problems (mainly accommodation and everyday resistance). In the second part of the article, five objective and five subjective reasons (or reasons by circumstances and reasons by framing) are identified as of why collective action and trade unions are scarce in the Philippine call center setting.

This paper presents an overview of the findings and preliminary conclusions of a qualitative research with 40 currently employed and former call center agents in Metro Manila, Davao City, and Dumaguete City in the Philippines; 28 of them took part in all three interview stages. This study – which is part of a three-year comparative research (2010-2012) by the University of Bonn on the making of new social movements under the conditions of precarity and transnational location in South-East Asia, supported by the *Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft* – included biographical interviews; problem-focused interviews on how to cope with work-related problems; and finally, interviews on the political orientations of call center agents. Additionally, we used secondary literature on Filipino call center agents *and* complementary Indian call center agents (Noronha & D'Cruz, 2009; Taylor, Scholarios, Noronha, & D'Cruz, 2007). The latter was included as the situation in Indian call centers proves highly comparable with that in the Philippines, and analytical literature on Indian call centers offers a more detailed picture especially with regard to collective action and unionization.

Not an Unproblematic Industry

Nearly all employees in international call centers in the Philippines have finished at least a few years of college, several even graduated from college. They have studied

to become nurses, engineers, anthropologists, or political scientists. Given the scarcity of better paid opportunities in their chosen courses and professions and the limited employment opportunities for those with a liberal arts or science degree, high pay and easy entry in call centers have enticed mostly young individuals to join the workforce. Hence, the Business Process Outsourcing (BPO) sector has become the fastest growing provider of employment for Filipino college graduates, employing more than 600,000 people by end of 2011.

Job dissatisfaction and high work stress are widespread among call center agents. The findings of this research reaffirm former findings on the nature of call center work (Fabros, 2007; Noronha & D'Cruz, 2009) and already outlined earlier in this journal (Reese, 2008a). Despite the glowing promise projected by job offers at call centers as a place of self-realization, it could be observed among the respondents that the less the work in the call center resembles their chosen course (and the less autonomous and challenging the position is), the more they feel that they are wasting their talents, and the less they see call center work as a career. This is reflected in the common assertion of: "Do I really want to touch the lives of North American people? Na-ah."

The central aim of the research though was not to capture 'objective' situations of 'exploitation', but rather to find out how people deal with their dissatisfaction and if this may lead to protest – maybe even in a collective manner. This research direction was identified because social movements and political socialization theories agree that readiness to political action (*Politische Aktivierungsbereitschaft*) and political action itself do not (mainly) spring from 'objective criteria' – be it precarity, poverty, or social inequality. People also have to (subjectively) suffer under such a crisis (the reasons for which should be attributed externally); they have to "dare to protest", for which next to "a minimum of education and self-confidence . . . various resources and personal qualities are required"; and, it finally needs "categories creating collective identities" (Schmitt, 2006, p.19). Hence, Schmitt draws the conclusion that "the emergence of social protest is a process with lots of requirements" (p. 19).

In order to claim rights, it is usually not enough to have an awareness of such rights (framing), or a sense of injustice, (relative) deprivation, and denied dignity (Piven & Cloward, 1986; Scott, 1990; Thompson, 1963). It is also important to believe that these rights can be enforced and that violations can be remedied. These,

likewise, rely on the perception/detection of existing political spaces and favorable opportunity structures that would increase the likelihood of successful action: "For a protest movement to develop out of the traumata of everyday life", as Piven and Cloward (1986) assert, "the disadvantages and disorders experienced by people must be considered as unjust as well as alterable" (p. 36). Here, collective protest is usually only the culmination of a series of protests, starting off as everyday resistance and in the form of a hidden transcript (Scott, 1990).

But indeed, there are several issues which respondents to this study consider problematic. Next to performance pressures, which a majority of them consider a major or significant (*pinakagrabe/grabe*) problem, issues like the denial of vacation and sick leaves, forced leave (without payment), the lack of security of tenure and easy termination, or excessive and tedious workloads were perceived as "*(pinaka) grabe*". A considerable number of them also consider the lack of due process in cases of termination or that they have no say in working conditions as a major problem. (Although, a significant number finds this latter problem manageable [or *OK lang*, as expressed in everyday language] or did not mention it at all.) Despite the relatively high pay, almost half of the research participants (12 out of 28) also categorized both issues of low wage and high deductions as pressing and significant (while 12 said it does not arise as a problem for them).

However, for quite some agents (including the respondents), there is not much to heavily complain about (*pinakagrabe*) when it comes to their working conditions. Despite the fact that the pressures of mass servicing are unrelenting, call center work provides real benefits and increased autonomy outside of production, which agents prize quite highly. Many agents do not necessarily consider themselves oppressed, calling themselves instead as "stressed out".

Coping Strategies

Because the reason to work in the call center industry is foremost economic, frontline call center workers struggle to positively construct the workplace and learn ways to cope in order to deal with various levels of precarity (Fabros, 2007; Noronha & D'Cruz, 2009; Taylor et al., 2007).

One of these ways is *identification*, done by embracing the imperatives of the call center regime. One respondent claims: "I do believe in the products which I am troubleshooting or handling. So it's not that difficult to sell, not difficult to love the products, so it's not difficult to love the job." Other agents associate themselves with the company and its policies. Regarding overtime, one respondent had this to say:

> *"If they do ask you for overtime . . . you would understand because you would know: If we are going to lose half of those 200 calls, that would be a loss for the company . . . if it's a loss to the company, it's our loss as well cause it's the company who is paying us."*

Others resort to *adjustment* and *submission* – not agreeing to, but simply accepting the conditions of the workplace as inevitable. Complaining is considered as whining or as 'unprofessional'. On the number of calls taken by the agents, a respondent said: "Sometimes, it hurts, like you're so tired, your throat is so dry … but you could not really complain about it, about changing the way things are." Another agent explains that: "Eventually you'll get used to it. It's already normal, although inside you rebel against it." Another says: "You don't really have a choice . . . your option is either you can resign and get more time for yourself or you accept that you don't have time for yourself, then you only have to work, you only have to take up calls." It is in this spirit that half of the respondents said the monotonous and routinely work is *OK lang*, one out of four does not even have an issue with it at all.

A strong belief in God's providence has also been mentioned by several respondents, which could be interpreted to rationalize submission. Such is expressed by one of them in this way: "I believe that there's always a hand that guides us, that no matter how much you want to, it will always guide you to something else . . . I believe that there is always a purpose" (male agent, 35).

Another way of coping can be to resort to *split off* from the 'real life', a term often heard to label the life outside of the call center. This kind of coping can especially be located among former activists who struggle with the fact that "before, we were fighting the imperialists and now we are serving them", as well as artists (singers and writers) who especially suffer under the lowbrow work in the call centers. They live two different lives and leave the real persons that they are behind once they go to their workplace – making activism in the workplace more unlikely. This is shown in the response by an agent who was once an activist (and is now an NGO worker):

> *"I would not take [problems in the workplace] personally … I know that even if I'm not doing good in that*

> *[i.e. work performance], I know I'm still an intelligent person; I know I'm capable of other things . . . I can write, I can speak to other people . . . it's not the basis of my personhood; it's just my job."*

Such split off though can also be an expression of self-management (Selbstführung) – just like identification and adjustment – by which agents condition themselves for work to be able to handle the demands of the job. This is considered by governmentality studies as "governing from a distance" and as the main means of neo-liberal governmentality (Opitz, 2004; Reese, 2004). This is illustrated in the statement of a respondent saying: "The moment you step inside the company, you have to totally log yourself out from (your) problems … it's just a matter of how you manage your emotions, yourself. . . ."

Being able to manage oneself might even be a source of pride for being a professional. Like for this 26-year old female respondent who shared:

> *"I realized, all you need to is . . . you should adopt it, you should adopt to the changes, you should adopt the pressure and eventually you will love the job, then you'd feel proud of yourself. Hey, I can stay awake the whole night."*

Professionalism also goes along with finding the mistake in oneself: "Maybe you wouldn't be issued a termination order if you didn't do something wrong in your job," as one respondent said. Professionalism also includes keeping up a notion of agency even in difficult situations and criticizing colleagues of being a *reklamador* (habitual complainant). As one agent said: "There are others who always blame the company, company, company . . . You have the will to change your life so why rely on the hands of other people . . . They really overstretch themselves."

Not every coping though should be understood as making ends meet and even fooling oneself. Indeed there are at least traits in the call center work that agents consider *fulfilling*. Aiming to be helpful, they believe that they are able to be of help by assisting callers (e.g. old people or disaster victims calling a hotline) and so they aim to give satisfaction to customers – a notion fed by the management side: "Agents are advisers who help people fix their problems" (Executive Director Jojo Uligan of the *Call Center Association in the Philippines*, personal communication, in Ermitanio, 2012). Feelings of fulfillment are also oftentimes present when agents are able to hit performance metrics or resolve issues especially with irate callers.

At the same time, this ambition for self-fulfillment and the sense of professionalism which is "capturing the essence of agents' lived experience . . . [and] mak(ing) agents accept stringent work systems and job design elements, techno-bureaucratic

controls and the primacy of the customer" (Noronha & D'Cruz, 2009, p.72) serves as an entry point for dissent. The delivery of so-called 'good work' is systematically obstructed by the relations of production, which hurts the employees' pride of doing their work well. Like in the case of a female agent who was troubleshooting for the company's cell phone products – models which she never actually saw except in an online manual which the company provided her with.

The frustration that management does not listen to the views and ideas of agents is likewise an entry point for dissatisfaction, as an agent says: "(W)e have suggestions . . . they don't know the real issue at work . . . there are things we are aware of that supervisors are not aware of . . . so we are suggesting but they are still the ones that will be followed."

Self-management though does not make external management (*Fremdführung*) dispensable as people do not always 'want what they should' (*wollen, was sie sollen*). Therefore, instilling a self-construction as professional, e.g. as done in job advertisements, is complemented by surveillance and monitoring techniques which at times are reminiscent of Bentham's panopticon, where inmates always feel observed without seeing the one observing them. An example for this is recording calls or documenting the transactions done within the IT-based interaction between agent and callers.

Hidden and Open Individual Protest

The narratives of several research participants are not only marked by stories of coping. Significant everyday resistance could be identified in the narratives of nearly every second respondent, "small, seemingly trivial daily acts through which subordinate individuals or groups undermine – rather than overthrow – oppressive relations of power" (Groves & Chang, 2002, p. 316), *as well as* open protest on an individual basis – be it in the form of 'voice' with the human relations department or by 'exit' exemplified by call center hopping or even leaving the industry.

Individual struggles against the 'system' are evident with call center agents who have familiarized the 'insides' and who have evolved ways of challenging the status within the bounds of strict rules of operations, for as long as it does not threaten employment. An agent phrases it the following way: "There are lots of things you

cannot do, especially on a call . . . (but) there are lots of crimes you can do, until you get caught." Agents found ways of subverting the control of the panopticon over the process, which is also a source of pride for them. In seemingly trivial matters, some tend to bend certain floor policies.

Respondents share a variety of ways in asserting themselves to irate callers. Since there is a strong policy over call-releasing (hanging up), agents typically put up with such callers by cursing at them while putting the phone on mute or on hold and making the customer wait on the line for a long time until they hang up, or getting back in other ways possible.

But while the everyday resistance of subalterns shows that they have not consented to dominance and resist to being totally converted into a docile body, many of these actions might as well be classified as adaptation strategies, which make work easier to bear than as disturbing the process of accumulation. Agents calling these actions 'stress out' rather than 'resistance', offers a hint of this perspective. Fabros (2007) explains that "these forms of resistance have been practiced within spaces available, without considerably altering relations and conditions in this global enterprise" (p. 170). "Interventions do not result in any considerable improvements in work conditions or bargaining capacities of call center workers". (Fabros, p. 273)

"Everyday resistance" is not even necessarily detrimental to the interest of their employers and may even be a form of governance to leave marginal arenas for alternative practices to the subalterns (here, to 'stress out'), serving the reproduction of the agents' performance and allowing them to believe that they can exert some agency and resistance. In this sense, McKay (2006, p.179) states that

> *"workers necessarily help constitute the labor regimes they consent to or resist. In spite of the benefits of high-tech work to workers' personal lives, without collective organization, such individualized or 'asymmetric agency' does not challenge management authority in production, thus demonstrating how workers' actions and discourses can simultaneously challenge and reproduce their own subordination and capital's flexible accumulation strategies".*

However, everyday resistance and irony may not only serve as valve that helps to make the pressure bearable but might also be "building blocks for more manifest resistance against structures and apparatuses to control" (Scott, 1990, p. 57).

Why is Collective Protest so Sparse? And the Unions Even Fewer?

As mentioned above, there are instances when individuals resist not only 'everyday', and cautiously so as not to be caught, but also protest openly. This is done on a case to case basis, depending on the kind of situations the agents consider to have breached their personal limits of what they view as just and reasonable (*tama na, sobra na*), the resources they have command over, and on how promising they consider the tearing down "the political cordon sanitaire between the hidden and the public transcript" (Scott, 1990, p.19). While some agents put up with supervisors or account managers when they are humiliated on the floor or shouted at during calls, others publically defy the company, like by refusing to work overtime, especially if unpaid. These are individual acts of protests though.

> *"Forms of resistance have yet to take on a more organized and collective character to substantially transform bargaining power of workers in order to establish a level of control over the pace, content, direction, context and over-all conditions of their day-to-day work"*

as Fabros (2007, p. 270) concludes her study on call center regimes and experiences in the Philippines.

There have been protests staged collectively in call center settings in the Philippines. More than half of the respondents report that they have experienced taking action together with others, although it is only in one out of the four cases when the issues were raised beyond the team level, i.e. with the management. Oftentimes, court cases are raised against erring companies, mainly for reasons of undue termination and non-payment of salaries. Such is the case involving 664 Cebu-based agents who filed a legal suit not individually but collectively (Mosqueda, 2012). Furthermore, the taking of legal actions is singular and usually only initiated after the employees have left the call center they are protesting against.

Efforts of union building, however, show more or less nil results, despite several attempts by radical political groups and moderate labor federations (especially the Trade Union Congress of the Philippines, and party-lists and labor centers from the orthodox Left spectrum). An organizing project initiated in 2007 by the International Labor Organization (ILO), which involved major trade union federations, did not successfully lead to the setting-up of a sustainable union. Expert interviews in this research with personnel of organizations whose efforts to organize agents were in

vain revealed that, up to now, they only attained the role of serving as support in filing cases and as givers and sources of advice. This failure in organizing unions persists, despite the fact that the (scant) research done on the organizing potential in call centers (Sale & Bool, 2005) shows that there are more agents who are open to joining a union than those who are against it. Likewise, in this research, nearly every second respondent considered the 'no-union' policy within call centers as a problem and said that they would be willing to join a union; while another 25 percent at least said "it depends". Only one out of four are hostile to the idea of unions. The reasons for the lack of collective actions on interest representation, therefore, have to be located elsewhere. This study proposes ten probable reasons; five of them are due to external circumstances (lack of resources and political opportunities) while five can be described as internal (framing).

1. The "no-union" policy discourages some agents as they fear termination or discrimination

During their trainings, call center employees are usually discouraged by management from joining or forming unions. In some companies, a 'no-union' provision is even clearly stipulated in pre-employment contracts. Instigating such formations therefore spells a threat to their employment. As one agent reveals: "Once they [the management] hear you provoking or doing things like that [fighting for your right], you are immediately out of the company . . . Of course, if you're against the company, it leads you nowhere. You lose." An agent in Manila conveys her apprehension by saying that:

> *"There's this cloud hanging over our heads that if you're too hard on the company there'd come a time that they'd replace you, then you have to pay for your bills . . . here comes me, I have to pay for my apartment, I have to pay for my brother's enrollment."*

These fears are aggravated by the fact that, in Filipino culture, the ones speaking out are easily considered as *disturbo* or "troublemakers" and *hirit* (talking back or disagreeing) is frowned upon. An agent shares that during an apprenticeship in a fast-food chain: "My co-trainee told me that management said that I was an activist. What?! Just because you speak your mind, just because you raised a question, they tag you as an activist."

2. Forming unions in call centers is perceived as futile given the transient character of the workforce [and the accounts]

Many young agents do not consider the industry as their lifetime career and they do not intend to stay in such a workplace for a long time. Additionally, frequent changes of employment are believed to hinder the deeper understanding of shared affectedness, the development of solidarity and of common interest patterns – all prerequisites for association organization. The interaction spaces that exist – e.g. the teams the agents have been organized into by the management or any place outside of the call center which is no longer under surveillance of the management – (only) serve as a vehicle for discussion of work-related issues aside from account updates. Their mere existence does not suffice to trigger organizing.

Experiences of successful organizing amongst the precariously employed show that the few who lead (and push the 'rank and file') have been permanent in one location or have even been with one company over several years (cf. Girndt, 1997). Moreover, campaigns like the Justice for Janitors in the US, which is famous for its successes, have been planned and carried out over several years.

3. It is not clear whom the agents should turn to

"There are really huge violations against labor laws in the call center industry," says a respondent, "but . . . you don't know who to blame. You don't really know whom to talk and bargain with." Rapid changes in clients make it difficult for them to have a clear counterpart to turn to or mobilize against. Furthermore, these clients who should be held accountable are abroad and not visible in the tripartite container society, and hence, cannot be approached. Others even say that nobody is to be held responsible in particular: "You could not help it; it's the system . . . You could not really complain about it, about changing the way things are. The supervisors don't have control over it."

4. Grievance procedures are a form of token participation

In almost all call centers, workers are encouraged to approach and settle issues with the Human Resource Department (HRD) individually or raise them during town hall sessions. This creates the imagination that it is easy to approach the HRD whenever

one has a grievance (*open door policy*). The image constructed by the management is this: There is no need for unions as the HRD takes up individual complaints, employers take care of employees' needs, and the interests of employers and employees go in the same direction. This is furthermore fostered by an atmosphere of congeniality and camaraderie created by fun initiatives or the first-name principle and the perception that employers value their professional employees.

Yet, most respondents doubt that their opinions are of great value to the company. An agent observes that: "You can tell your supervisors but they can't do anything much," as complaints may go unaddressed if supervisors are busy with an account. He elaborates that: "All you can do is tell your concerns, but it's up to the management to act on it . . . you can say your concern but I don't know if the management will act on it." A Manila respondent echoes this sentiment by saying that: "We had a grievance mechanism where you can rant but nothing happened." An agent from a different company affirms this, stating that: "How many times did they do surveys and still nothing happened; there's no improvement."

Town hall meetings are controversial as well. Management's responses to some issues, e.g. office facilities, are written in tarpaulins and publicly displayed in office premises. But, for several agents, major issues that they view as pressing are often unclearly answered, if responded to at all, or neglected.

Noronha and D'Cruz (2009) consider the participation mechanisms therefore as a "false claim, concerned only with impressing and misleading agents" (p. 165). This notion is shared by a respondent of this study who says that:

> *"I considered it [the participation mechanisms] as . . . a game by the management; it's a spectacle just to show that they have a grievance process . . . the management can tell [i.e. promise] them [the agents] everything . . . they're not in the company anymore when that's supposed to happen."*

Another agent says that: "In the call centers, they want to prevent unions . . . they don't do union busting, they do union-avoidance . . . you have to give the democratic space so that (agents) would not think that they are being oppressed."

Agents who have experienced utilizing the grievance and participation mechanisms consider them mostly as token. Seven out of ten respondents in the study, therefore, consider no genuine grievance mechanisms to exist, with more than half of them considering this a (very) significant problem. Similarly, while several agents are impressed by the seemingly symmetrical relationship practiced between a boss

and a worker in call centers – contrary to the hierarchical Filipino society – most of them recognize that this kind of relational symmetry limits itself to the interpersonal surface, which does not necessarily manifest in work standards and dynamics that are essential to a worker's well-being. In the overall structure of authority, this emphasizes the agents' disadvantaged position – one wherein they cannot negotiate with management over matters of utmost concern for them, i.e. job security, account selection, work schedules, and rational work tasks, contract terms, or even in the implementation of trainings.

All in all, agents are fully aware that participation and grievance mechanisms are subordinate to production imperatives which at any time may override whatever feedback procedures have been put into place. "As long as they can squeeze out more from you, they will," an agent believes (Fabros, 2007, p. 211). As an agent in this research concludes: "You might be performing (well) in other fields, but you'd be summed up in only one system: 'We don't care how you manage your personal life; we just want this; and this alone.'"

But even if agents come to the conclusion that human resource management practices do not sufficiently address the grievances they have presented, in the Philippine call centers this does not (yet) spark organizing alternatives – be it in the form of unions or through company-independent redress systems.

5. Call Center hopping

Finally, it is often heard that the ease of moving from one call center to another (termed call center hopping) when problems arise might be a reason why hardly any collective action can be observed. *Exit*, ergo seems to be another coping mechanism for agents. With the mushrooming of the industry and the lack of qualified personnel, changing a call center company for another one presents an easy option. When asked what the respondents would do if they lose the job, "find another job" is easily articulated.

Circumstances hostile to unionizing alone though cannot comprehensively explain non-unionization in the Philippine call center sector. Many of the structural and external reasons for non-unionization mentioned so far also apply to call centers in the US or in Europe, wherein, however, a few unions have been set up. (This may also be

due to the fact that some of these societies are relatively densely unionized.) Other reasons, which can be classified as issues of *framing* (i.e. the way people perceive and construct the circumstances), seem to be equally important.

6. Individualism

People with considerable resources tend to believe that they can manage and thrive on their own. They believe they can rely on their individual capabilities for success. Schultheis and Schulz (2005) have documented among the precarized in Germany that the "ethic of achievement is very pronounced among those who believe to be able to make it" (p. 539). This is why they are less inclined to organize themselves collectively at least in socio-economic matters.

Agents are further induced by a corporate culture that encourages competitiveness and individualism. The display of performance statistics, for instance, is such a tool used by management to promote competition (in terms of productivity) among the workers, which affects 'individualization'. Agents' calls are considered their own and how these turn out depends on their individual communication skills. The only help they can get from other agents is encouragement. "It's like you're programmed . . . you don't really work for the team; you're working for yourself. You are just contributing something to the team" (male agent, 25). As a result, an agent's scores are his/her own, and how one fares in the competition and mechanical dynamics of the workplace is one's struggle for wage.

Fixing of wages and settling disputes are done individually. Employees are encouraged to not discuss salaries with each other and to think of salary figures as a purely personal issue. This not only prevents people from developing notions of relative deprivation (which could have a mobilizing effect), but also feeds to the idea of personal performance, which is also evident in most of the agents' personal perspectives.

7. Violations of rights and the lack of humane working conditions are considered "normal"

Contractualization, e.g. workers getting terminated after a five-month probationary period, is typical for many parts of the Philippine service sector and has increased by about 20 percent in the past few years (Reese, in print), creating the impression that such is 'normal'. When things are considered 'normal' or 'without alternative', they

evoke less protest. The same applies to the explicit ban on unionizing – a policy which many other companies have imposed as well, even if this goes against the Philippine Labor Code.

The necessity of finding a living (*hanapbuhay*) forces workers to accept nearly any working condition because "beggars cannot be choosers", as a common saying in the Philippines goes. When one is a proletarian (i.e. one who has no control over the means of production), there is something worse than being exploited: Not to have work at all. The demand to have whatever kind of work takes paramount precedence, while the demand for humane work takes a backseat. A female agent (30), puts it clearly this way: "If you're helping your family, . . . you won't think of the hardships or the exhausting work inside; just think of the money that you can get [as an agent]."

It was also observed that the agents do not find it unjust to earn around five times less than their American counterparts who are doing exactly the same kind of work. The variations in the cost/standard of living are quickly regarded as a convenient justification for the disparity, even if the comparison of purchasing power only explains a difference of 200 to 300 percent (cf. United Bank of Switzerland, 2013). It can therefore be assumed that the acceptance of these wage differentials can be traced to the *habitualization* of one's position in the current world order, i.e. of coming to terms with the fact that one belongs to a country which is supplying the rich countries with cheap or sought-after manpower as "servants of globalization", as Rhacel Parreñas (2001) calls them in her book on the massive outward migration in the Philippines; or a *naturalization* of social inequality (Souza, 2008). Some respondents frame it as: "You have to accept the fate of the world . . . It's life. It's not fair"; and this is immediately followed by the claim that: "It's kind of a blessing in disguise actually, here in the Philippines. Because it's generating a lot of jobs."

The phenomenon of "normalization" is closely connected to the strategies of downward comparison. Agents consider themselves to still be in a better situation than other workers (relative privilege instead of relative deprivation). The jobs in the BPO industry in developing countries are of reasonably good quality by local standards in terms of working and employment conditions (wages, hours of work, non-wage benefits, etc.). Seen relatively, these jobs are less precarious and easy to get. As an agent puts it well: "Because of the benefits and salaries, one cannot even think anymore of unionizing. What more could you ask for? You already have health benefits and the like."

8. Trade Unions are Considered by them as Something for Workers

Furthermore, several researchers have observed that despite the fact that many of the issues faced by agents in mass service call centers are no different from those faced by their blue-collar counterparts, trade unions are considered by them as something for workers (Fabros, 2007; Noronha & D'Cruz, 2009). Experiences of mass servicing are sidelined by highlighting academic backgrounds, the well-equipped working places (gyms included), and the above-average salaries they receive. They are "communication people" and their direct contact in service work should not be confused with the physical and menial work of blue-collar workers. However, despite the difficulty to completely ignore the fact that the repetitive, even robotic mode of work, makes call centers appear like factories, agents take pride in being able to "make something out of it". Furthermore, being involved in sloganeering, picketing, and striking – activities commonly associated with trade unions – is considered as an unworthy demeanor of a professional. Management supports the strategy of dissimilarity by giving call center employees catchy designations and prestigious-sounding positions such as Customer Care Agent, Customer Support Agent, or Customer Support Executive.

9. The Stigma Attached to Unions

That unions do not have much appeal to agents is aggravated by the "stigma" (Aganon, 2008, p.124) attached to unions in the Philippines in general. Not only has the 'no-union' policy gotten more and more normal, it is also that membership in trade unions has in general reached new lows. Barely 5 percent of the workforce is organized into trade unions and a mere 13 percent of them are covered by collective bargaining agreements – which are not even deemed universally binding. Together with the rapid and steady decline in the number of trade organized workers, strikes have also dramatically dropped.

10. Underestimation of Market Power

Finally, this study has come to the observation that agents underestimate their market power as expressed in this response by a male agent (30): "It's useless . . . they can always hire more agents if you strike." What may hold true for factory workers is, however, questionable in the case of call center agents. As outlined above, the call center industry has difficulties in meeting its demand for personnel who have

the specific qualifications needed to sustain its operations (e.g. flawless English or communication skills). Furthermore, it can be considered highly unlikely that the call center industry would reach the point of moving out from the Philippines once the workforce would demand and organize for more in terms of better working conditions and benefits. Call centers demand very specific skills that are neither easy to find nor can be quickly developed, namely, the ability to speak the customer's language in an acceptable manner and to be familiar with the culture the callers come from. The call center industry has made the Philippines the world champion as far as voice-based operations are concerned. A significant number relocated their operations from India for the very reason that American customers complained about the British accent of Indian agents. It is very unlikely then that call centers would move on to Vietnam or China, as some factories did.

Prospects for Unionizing: Dim, but Not Impossible

This study concludes that the prospects for unions in the Philippine call center industry are for now rather dim. As a result of the combination of external and internal reasons, there are even indications that it is also more difficult to establish these unions in this high-end service sector than in the production sector. In the case of export processing zones in the Philippines, repressive regulation policies are resorted to at times to prevent unionizing (McKay, 2006). In the Philippine call centers, open repression is of no need as it is rather the formative power and the internalization of discourses of rule within individual life strategies that is preventing the establishment of unions and other collective action structures.

Having said that, the prospects collective action offers to agents are considerable: Call center agents not only have market power, they also have productive power (terms following Silver, 2005), as the industry is very vulnerable to production slowdown and in need of a quick turnaround. What they lack is organizational power which would give them even more leeway to push their interests.

But as mentioned above, call center agents are not closed to the idea of joining a union and most even consider it a better grievance mechanism in lieu of token spaces such as town hall meetings and individual complaints. But considering it trade orga-

nization in reality boils down to strategy. As one agent cum activist explains: "If you think about a union, the image that we have is that of a poorly dressed worker . . . and then you're this someone with high heels, super attire." The agent continues that it could be an "English-speaking union . . . but it should have a different approach, not the militant one that could possibly antagonize the agents. It should be done gradually, depending on the capacity of your mass base". This resonates very much with the successful experiences on organizing in India, Europe, and North America (for the experience of the union UNITES, cf. Noronha & D'Cruz, 2009; Taylor et al., 2007).

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Resisting Agribusiness Development: The Merauke Integrated Food and Energy Estate in West Papua, Indonesia

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The Merauke Integrated Food and Energy Estate (MIFEE), launched in 2010 by the Indonesian government, aims to transform 1.2 million hectares of indigenous and forest land in West Papua into large-scale agribusiness estates for food and bioenergy production. This article looks both at the power structures and geopolitics behind the project and at the emerging resistance to the MIFEE land grab. What is the extent of local opposition to the project? What coalitions between local groups and organized movements and NGOs are developing and what national and international alliances are they involved in? How do they counter the state narrative of MIFEE as a development path for the region? Analyzing key documents of the different organizations and initiatives involved, we examine three distinct but connected narratives of opposition around the discourses of customary forest rights, Indonesian 'imperialist' subjugation of Papua, and land reform and food sovereignty. We argue that their relation to each other needs to be rethought in order to overcome internal divisions and to broaden and deepen the social movement opposing the project.

Keywords: *Indonesia; Land Grab; MIFEE; Social Movements; West Papua*

Das Merauke Integrated Food and Energy Estate (MIFEE) wurde im Jahr 2010 von der indonesischen Regierung ins Leben gerufen und zielt auf die Umwandlung von 1,2 Millionen Hektar indigenem Land und Wäldern in West Papua in großflächige Agrarindustrieflächen für die Nahrungsmittel- und Bioenergieproduktion. Der folgende Artikel betrachtet die Machtstrukturen und Geopolitiken im Hintergrund des Projekts sowie die dabei entstehende Widerstandsbewegung. In welchem Ausmaß gibt es lokalen Widerstand gegen das Projekt? Welche Koalitionen entwickeln sich zwischen lokalen Gruppen und organisierten Bewegungen und NGOs und in welche nationalen und internationalen Allianzen sind diese eingebunden? Wie entgegnen diese dem staatlichen Narrativ von MIFEE als Entwicklungspfad für die Region? Auf Basis der Analyse von Schlüsseldokumenten der unterschiedlichen involvierten Organisation und Initiativen untersuchen wir drei unterschiedliche, aber miteinander verbundene Narrative des Widerstands rund um die Diskurse um Gewohnheitsrechte an Wald, die indonesische „imperialistische" Unterwerfung Papuas sowie Landreform und Ernährungssouveränität. Wir argumentieren, dass die Beziehung zwischen diesen Diskursen neu gedacht werden muss, um die internen Spaltungen zu überwinden und die soziale Bewegung zur Ablehnung des Projekts zu verbreitern und zu vertiefen.

Schlagworte: *Indonesien; Landraub; MIFEE; soziale Bewegungen; West Papua*

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Introduction

This paper looks at the emerging resistance to a new major land grab in Indonesia, the *Merauke Integrated Food and Energy Estate* in West Papua, Indonesia, known more commonly by its acronym MIFEE.[3] Land grabs have been identified as a crucial new arena of political and social conflict, provoking local struggles for land and globally coordinated campaigns. However, there is as yet little written on these new social movements. We try to find some answers to the question of "to what extent have agrarian political struggles been provoked by the new land investment dynamics?" (Borras, Hall, Scoones, White, & Wolford, 2011, p. 212) and argue that a new alliance opposing the project is emerging that draws on different traditions of struggle. We also look at some of the "issues that unite or divide the rural poor, organized movements, and rural communities" and how MIFEE is "discursively challenged and opposed" (Borras et al., 2011, p. 212). We argue that there are three distinct but connected narratives of opposition around the discourses of customary forest rights, Indonesian 'imperialist' subjugation of Papua, and land reform and food sovereignty. At the same time, there is also a division between the indigenous Papuans resisting the project and migrant small farmers living in Merauke who tend to welcome the project. This creates a key dilemma for the resistance. Although alternatives such as indigenous customary rights to land and forests, land reform and "food sovereignty" are all "relevant and useful" (Borras et al., 2011, p. 212), we argue that their relation to each other needs to be rethought in order to overcome these divisions and to broaden and deepen the social movement opposing the project.

MIFEE: A Textbook Land Grab?

MIFEE is in some ways a textbook land grab: "Powerful transnational and national economic actors from corporations to national governments" have identified Merauke as an "'empty' land" and a site for "fuel and food production" (Borras et al., 2011, p. 209). Indeed, the very name of this land grab points to the convergence of

3 A draft version of this paper was first presented at the International Conference on Global Land Grabbing in April 2011, organized by the *Land Deals Politics Initiative* (LDPI) in collaboration with the *Journal of Peasant Studies* and hosted by the *Future Agricultures Consortium* at the Institute of Development Studies, University of Sussex.

agribusiness and agrofuel interests. Key players behind the project are large domestic conglomerates, joint venture capital from South Korea and Japan, local authorities, and the national government.

State entities play an active and decisive role in the MIFEE land grab. The national government developed a "grand design" for the project as part of plans to "turn the food and energy crisis into an opportunity" and "to feed the world" (President Yudhoyono) (Takeshi, Rachman, & Savitri, 2013). The Presidential Instruction 5/2007 on the Acceleration of Development in Papua and West Papua (the names of the two provinces now comprising West Papua) and the Government Regulation No. 39/2009 on Special Economic Zones (*Kawasan Ekonomi Khusus*, KEK) established Papua as a strategic location of national development fantasies. In 2010, Government Decree No. 18/2010 on Agricultural Crops created the format of Food and Energy Estates and Merauke became the flagship estate project. At the launching of the project in August 2010, Agriculture Minister Suswono proclaimed MIFEE as a future "bread basket" of Indonesia and that it would eventually produce "almost two million tons of rice, two million tons of corn and 167,000 tons of soybeans" as well as "2.5 million tons of sugar and 937,000 tons of palm oil" (Ekawati, 2010). Takeshi, Rachman, and Savitri (2013) identify this "creation of the corporate agricultural estate to solve food and energy crises" as the key discourse through which "the process of accumulation by dispossession was legalized" (p. 26).

Locally, the MIFEE project was preceded by a program developed by Merauke's then regent head, Johannes Gluba Gebze, called the *Merauke Integrated Rice Estate* (MIRE). Investors were wooed in order to transform the regency into a rice basket of Indonesia. When the plans failed to materialize, Gebze was quick to take up the opportunities offered by Indonesian's president Yudhoyono's declaration to seize the international food crisis as an opportunity. The district government promised to "provide the necessary infrastructure (construction of a sea port and airport expansion, procurement of three Boeing 737 aircraft, and irrigation)" and proposed themselves that the estate should cover 1.2 million hectares, or over one quarter of Merauke's total area (Takeshi et al., 2013). Gebze was to play a crucial political role in overcoming legal problems to the project posed by customary land rights.

A closer look behind the companies who have been awarded permits within the MIFEE scheme reveals that transnational capital from East and South-East Asia plays

a major role. Korean capital, which has long been active in Indonesia, has secured permits for industrial tree plantations and oil palm. In 2009, *LG International* (2009) announced that it had secured a "massive forestry concession in Papua" through a joint venture with the Indonesian *Medco Group* in a company called *Metra Duta Lestari*. Meanwhile, *Mitsubishi* is a major shareholder in *Medco Energy* (AwasMIFEE, 2012). *Wilmar*, an agribusiness giant based in Singapore, has also been reported to have been offered 200,000 hectares, this time for sugar cane ("Wilmar begins", 2010).

The Medco Group, an oil company whose owner Arifin Panigoro was an influential politician with the *Partai Demokrasi Indonesia Perjuangan* (PDI-P), has an influential role. Typically, Medco is a conglomerate that is involved in energy, agribusiness, finance, manufacturing, and real estate and hotels. Through its subsidiary, *PT. Selaras Inti Semesta* (SIS), it is already developing a 300,000 hectares timber plantation in Kurik, Kaptel, Animha, and Muting districts. Its chipwood mill, *PT. Medco Papua Industri Lestari* (MIL), needs 10 million tons per annum for chipwood production and another 2 million tons annually for pulp production. While waiting for the timber plantation, which will need eight years to mature, the mills utilize tropical timber from community forests and their concessions. Medco is an active proponent of the whole MIFEE concept and has established its own *Merauke Integrated Food and Energy Estate Research Centre* that is "promoting bio fuel experiment [sic] that will support energy resilience for the country" (MedcoFoundation, n.d.).

The second major group of MIFEE investors are agribusiness and logging conglomerates that reaped super profits under general Suharto's export-oriented New Order. Apart from state corporations that are involved, key players from the private sector are politically well-connected. *Kertas Nusantara*, for example, with a permit for 155,000 of industrial tree plantations, is owned by the notorious ex-*Kopassus* general and Suharto son-in-law Prabowo Subianto. Another company, *PT. Bangun Cipta Sarana*, is connected to former Suharto minister of interior and minister of transmigration Siswono Yudo Husodo. A third important group, *Artha Graha*, is owned by Tommy Winata, who is well-connected to the military in West Papua and has been involved in various infrastructure projects (Klute, 2010; Papua Forest Eye, 2010a). The involvement of Suharto cronies is a sign of the special circumstances surrounding the project in West Papua.

Or a Papuan Exception?

At the same time, West Papua is in many ways an exception to most land grab contexts. It has been under Indonesian military occupation since 1962 and was coerced into joining Indonesia in 1969 (Drooglever, 2009). Since then, the politics in West Papua have been characterized by military repression of the widespread underlying separatist sentiment of the Papuan population and a West Papuan political elite that is co-opted by the Indonesian state. Freedom of speech is massively curtailed and activists often jailed or harassed. Occasional raids by armed separatist forces (*Organisasi Papua Merdeka*, OPM) are used to legitimize continued occupation and the criminalization of any discussion about independence, including raising the flag of West Papua, the Morning Star (Widjojo, 2006). The special Papuan context of the MIFEE land grab and how resistance to it develops is defined by this historical experience and how the relationship with Indonesia has changed since the *reformasi* movement and the fall of Suharto in 1998.

Mega projects have a long and painful history in West Papua, reflecting development fantasies of Jakarta. As Carolyn Marr (2011) argues, natural resource exploitation has been a consistent feature of Indonesian intervention, characterized by "a steady marginalisation of indigenous Papuans, with top-down projects imposed from outside, and often accompanied by the threat of, or the use of violence to enforce plans". Previous mega projects include the 8 million hectare *Mamberamo* project that was promoted by then prime minister Habibie and aimed to combine a series of dams with agro-industrial estates (Carr, 1998) and the infamous *Scott Paper* plantation and pulp factory project. Above all, Indonesian timber companies have used military occupation to log West Papuan forests, a trend that has increased in recent years (for a comprehensive list of activities cf. Marr, 2011).

Of major economic, political, and symbolic significance is a huge gold and copper mine in the central highlands of West Papua owned by the mining corporation *Freeport* (Leith, 2003). Based on the violent expropriation of indigenous lands, the exploitation of migrant labor, and the environmental degradation of rivers, Freeport generated billions in revenue for the Suharto regime. Military occupation and human rights abuses were intimately connected to the Freeport mine. Recently, the Amungme people sued Freeport for 32.5 billion dollars for the legal appropriation of their

land. Other foreign investment and the exploitation of Papuan natural resources are therefore always seen within the context of this violent history.

Another characteristic of Indonesian occupation was its integration within the state-organized transmigration program that sought to relocate millions of landless farmers from densely populated Java to the "idle lands" of the "outer islands" (Adhiati & Bobsien, 2001). In West Papua, the transmigration program was closely connected to political and security considerations. The national government in Jakarta wanted to change the demographic character of key lowland areas and build up a political base of Muslim Javanese to counter the Christian Papuans. Military occupation regularly used the symbolism of Muslim festivities in order to shore up the identification of the migrants with the Indonesian state and the occupation project. From the Papuan perspective, therefore, transmigration is seen as part of an Indonesian strategy of domination.

The national *reformasi* movement that toppled Suharto and his New Order in 1998 represented a historical shift in this history of occupation. Crucially, the *national* movement in Jakarta adopted the demand for the autonomy of Aceh and West Papua as part of their list of ten demands (Lane, 2008). The resultant Special Autonomy status passed by the Indonesian parliament in 2001 was a partial fulfillment of this demand. It included a much larger share of taxes from West Papua being returned by the national government, with transfers rising from under IDR 5,000 billion (USD 500 million dollar) in 2001 to over IDR 20,000 billion in 2008 (World Bank, 2009). However, ten years down the track, these extra billions have not reached most of the Papuan inhabitants. Instead, the political elite use the funds for their own (private) version of development whilst basing their power on compliance with Jakarta, the military, and votes from the increasing number of Javanese migrants. Papua has become a kind of New Order 'time warp': Military business involvement is as ubiquitous as it used to be for Indonesia as a whole. West Papua has become their favored 'retreat' from the less friendly atmosphere in many other parts of Indonesia. It remains an attractive destination of the more informal public-private forms of transmigration (Li, 2011, p. 288).

The MIFEE project is set firmly within this framework of military-business-politicians networks and of political intimidation and oppression. According to an NGO report by the *Environmental Investigation Agency* (EIA) and *Telepak* (2009), the combi-

nation of Gebze's political aspirations, central government interests and the potentially huge investment in plantations expansion, has created a climate of intimidation towards anyone who opposes the plantations or new province. Local sources report that irregular groups allied to Gebze work in unison with the state security forces to monitor and intimidate any dissenters in the region (p. 20).

Military personnel is very visible in the proposed project area and the recent suspicious death of the journalist Ardiansyah Matra'is, who had been writing critically about the MIFEE project, is seen by NGOs as a sign of the authorities' determination to squash any dissent to the plan (Tapol & Down to Earth, 2010).

Emerging Resistance

Although portrayed as a "food and energy estate", the largest part of the MIFEE project is slated for industrial plantations (over 970,000 hectare), with oil palm (over 300,000 hectare) and food crops (69,000 hectare) in second and third place (Tri & Haksoro, 2010). Most of the major companies involved and most of the activities on the ground have prioritized wood plantations, palm oil, and sugarcane and very little food production has taken place at all. The large-scale nature of the plantations, their location within forested areas and the fact that the permits were handed out for customary owned land led to concern by environmental and indigenous organizations that a major land and forest grab was underway. Government plans and media hype on projected huge investments in Merauke soon alerted NGOs in West Papua and Jakarta, who were already operating within established networks. Successful campaigns that had thwarted previous mega projects such as the Scott Paper project and the Mamberamo mega development had led to established networks, both within West Papua and Indonesia and with campaigners in Australia and Europe.

During 2010, a loose coalition came together as the Civil Society Coalition Against MIFEE (*Masyarakat Sipil Tolak MIFEE*) that coordinates exchange among around 30 local and national organizations. A key member is the Papua NGOs Cooperation Forum (*Forum Kerjasama Lembaga Swadaya Masyarakat Papua*, Foker LSM Papua), the NGO umbrella for 118 member organizations all over Papua that was founded in 1991. Foker LSM Papua has a strong focus on human rights, natural resourc-

es exploitation, and development issues. Church organizations are also central to the alliance, for example, the *Sekretariat Kemanusiaan dan Perdamaian Keuskupan Agung Merauke* (SKP-KAM), a Catholic church's organization dealing with peace and humanitarian issues. Important national organizations include the indigenous peoples' alliance *Aliansi Masyarakat Adat Nusantara* (AMAN), Friends of the Earth Indonesia (*Wahana Lingkungan Hidup Indonesia*, WALHI), the mining advocacy network *Jaringan Advokasi Tambang* (JATAM), *Greenpeace Indonesia*, and the think tanks *Pusaka* and *Sawit Watch*.

The Foker LSM Papua member *Yayasan Santo Antonius* (YASANTO), a local development NGO that provides education and health services to communities in Merauke, is one of the most active groups dealing with MIFEE. YASANTO has become a focal point for the NGOs/groups from outside who are concerned with the MIFEE issue. It plays a key facilitating role, connecting local communities and indigenous people from the area with NGOs from Jayapura, Jakarta, and beyond. Foker LSM Papua also helped set up the Papua Peoples Solidarity against MIFEE (*Solidaritas Rakyat Papua Tolak MIFEE*, SORPATOM) that is a mainly student activist group. This offered students and other interested citizens in Merauke and Jayapura the chance to become active against the project without being a member of one of the established NGOs.

Indigenous representatives on the official Papuan Adat Council (*Dewan Adat Papua*) were among the first to reject MIFEE. The secretary general of the Papuan Adat Council of Region V (Ha-Anim), Johanes Wob, denounced the agribusiness interests behind the project as a threat to the indigenous people of Merauke. He criticized that indigenous people were structurally disadvantaged versus companies in legal procedures and announced that indigenous peoples land was "not for sale" (Hardianto, 2010). On 18 July 2010, the Papuan Adat Council of Region V sent a letter to president Yudhoyono stating that they reject the MIFEE project. They warned that continuing with the project would cause serious dissatisfaction with the government. The council proceeded to map their territory and to provide legal assistance and training to the indigenous people in the area. The Adat Council enjoys the support of local Malind people and also works together with NGOs such as YASANTO and with the Catholic church organization SPK-KAM. As members of the Alliance of the Indigenous Peoples of the Archipelago (AMAN), they are also well-connected nationally (J. Wob, personal communication, August 13, 2010).

The first primary objective of the NGO coalition was to exchange information and research about MIFEE. In addition to research such as the Pusaka report *Beyond Malind Imagination*, groups cooperated to develop a spatial analysis on who will be affected and the environmental impact of the project. Another area of cooperation was awareness raising and trainings for local people in the area. Various members of the alliance organized a series of consultations, public meetings, and trainings for local people in the area (12 of which are listed by Zakaria et al., 2010, p. 5-6). SPK-KAM ran a series of research and training for communities while other Foker LSM Papua members gave trainings on rights of communities, the principle of Free and Prior Informed Consent (FPIC) or local reporting via sms. Meanwhile, Jayapura-based members lobbied the provincial governor and parliament, who were side-tracked out of the decision-making process by the direct agreement between president Yudhoyono and regency head Glebze.

Very quickly, the established NGO networks transnationalized their protest. In 2010, AMAN, with the support of 26 indigenous and related organizations issued a statement before the 9th Session of the United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues in New York (AMAN, 2010). They urged the UN Special Rapporteur on the Situation of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms of Indigenous Peoples and the UN Special Rapporteur on the Rights to Food to visit Merauke and conduct an independent report into MIFEE. In 2011, the NGO coalition appealed directly to UN Special Rapporteur on the Rights to Food (Tarigan & MacKay, 2011). Both rapporteurs and the *UN Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination* (CERD) responded by expressing their concern to the Indonesian government and to halt further activities until UN bodies could investigate the project. However, Indonesia rejected the recommendation that the Rapporteurs be allowed to visit the area (Down to Earth, 2013).

If international pressure did not have the desired effect of at least stalling the project, resistance at the local level, although slower off the mark, was to have a bigger impact. Most of the land earmarked for MIFEE is part of the Malind Anim-ha, that is the customary *boan* land of the Malind People consisting of various clans (Balagaise, Basik-Basik, Gebze, Kaize, Mahuze, Samkakai) (Zakaria et al., 2010). The "right to use *boan* land is held by the clan, not by the individual headman of the clan, and only a member of the clan can access and use *boan* land" (Takeshi et al., 2013). Even though this indigenous control over land is overwritten by state ownership (and permit al-

location), it remains the biggest obstacle to developing the MIFEE project. Of major symbolic and political significance was therefore the 'adoption' of Medco head Arifin Panigoro into the Gebze clan, which was facilitated by the then regent Johannes Gluba Gebze (Takeshi et al., 2013). By becoming a clan member, Panigoro could then receive permission to use hundreds of thousands of hectares of clan land for his industrial tree plantation.

Most companies with permits to develop plantations within MIFEE have tried to secure clan permission to do so. At first, promises of development, including roads, schools, and jobs persuaded many clan leaders to sign agreements with the companies. However, indigenous feelings changed as negative impacts of some of the first projects came to be felt and some of the promises of development were not forthcoming (YASANTO, 2010). Medco, the most active company so far, has become embroiled in various conflicts (Zakaria et al., 2010, pp. 37-44), culminating in direct action by Sanggase villagers, who blocked a wood chip factory located on their land, occupied the Medco office and finally received IDR 3 billion compensation in October 2011 (AwasMIFEE, 2012, p. 17).

By 2011 dissatisfaction and conflicts on the ground had spread across Merauke. An overview in the Tempo weekly journal shows that most of the companies with permits who had started logging or plantation activities were involved in some kind of dispute (Aliansi Gerakan Reforma Agraria [AGRA] & Pesticide Action Network Asia and the Pacific [PANAP], 2012, pp. 10-11). These were often related to the terms of agreements made with the company which were disputed by other communities or by people within the same community. In Ulilin, Muting, Jagebob, Okaba, and Malind districts internal conflicts within and between communities developed over the delineation of concessions and size and distribution of compensation. In Ngguti and Animha districts villagers protested about the size of the compensation offered whilst locals in Kaptel district managed to double the amount of compensation paid by the company. In Kurik district, communities refused to hand over any of their land. In Ilwayap district, protests led by village head Leo Mouyuend managed to stop a MIFEE road being bulldozed through the sacred grounds of Bibikem village (Boy, 2012).

These local disputes were in part facilitated by information provided by the NGO networks involved in opposing MIFEE. They also led to networking between local activists themselves. On 18 December 2012, 23 indigenous community members from

Baidub, Boha, Bupul, Erambu, Kindiki, Kweel, Muting, Pachas, Poo, and Tanas villages signed the *Demands and Aspiration of Indigenous Peoples of River (Kali) Ban – River (Kali) Maro, Papua, Merauke*, in which they questioned the leasing of their land by the regency government (Down to Earth, 2012). Also in December 2012, the Malind Bian Customary People's Assocation (*Malind Bian Lembaga Masyarakat Adat*, Malind Bian LMA) called on the government to revoke all the plantation permits in Merauke. The association that is made up of representatives from all the indigenous groups in the area was worried about the effects of logging that was underway to establish the plantations and that were jeopardizing people's access to forest products. They criticized the lack of consultation and warned that by agreeing to the permits, the locals were effectively signing away their customary rights, as the land would be returned to the state after the lease period expired (Aliansi Demokrasi Untuk Papua [ALDP], 2012a).

The overall result of widespread opposition to investment plans and/or negotiations over the terms of such investment has cooled the excitement of potential investors and has changed the political atmosphere in Merauke itself. In 2011, the new regency head, Romanus Mbaraka was elected on a platform that claimed "to uphold the people's rights against aggressive companies" (AwasMIFEE, 2012, p. 22). After being elected, Mbaraka "even repealed Medco's license to cut further into the forest, and asked villagers to report any investor who came secretly to their village trying to trick them into a deal" (AwasMIFEE, 2012, p. 23). By 2012, only 10 of 46 companies with permits were actively developing their plantations (ALDP, 2012c).

Counter-Framing MIFEE

The emerging resistance against MIFEE is located within a national (and international) alliance against land grabs *and* within the movement against Indonesian occupation and exploitation. Both operate with preconceived assumptions, ways of working, frameworks, and networks and both, on their own, can lead to different strategies of resistance. As Widjojo (2006) argues, in the history of West Papuan activism, two connected but distinct strategies and discourses – one focusing on independence, the other on human rights – developed. Under Suharto, mega development projects

in West Papua resonated with activists in other parts of Indonesia. The Freeport mine "became a focal point for NGO protests on issues ranging from environmental pollution to the violation of human rights" (p. 413) and led to a broad coalition between Jakarta-based organizations such as WALHI and *Lembaga Studi & Advokasi Masyarakat* (ELSAM), and indigenous and church organizations based in West Papua that "replaced the symbols and discourse of Papuan independence with those of human rights, justice, and environment" (p. 415). The *reformasi* movement that toppled Suharto in 1998 with its demand for more autonomy for regions affected by military occupation opened up new space for calls for independence. Unfortunately, renewed separatist violence (and some military provocations) was used by the military to justify their continued and increased presence (p. 418). The 'threat' of separatism is used to shore up a nationalist discourse for continued occupation and repression, which then reinforces separatist, anti-imperialist discourses among West Papuan activists.

In the face of the MIFEE project, the West Papuan activists engage in critical dialogue with the international campaigners around land grabs, leading to new and innovative ways of criticizing and stopping the project. The groups opposing MIFEE operate with three different basic frameworks that are used in varying intensity and combinations. Because of their different background, they discursively challenge and oppose the MIFEE deal in different ways and this is relevant for how resistance is organized and developed (Borras et al., 2011). These are firstly, a narrative of indigenous peoples living within the forest and threatened by commercial interests, secondly, a story of resistance against the occupation and exploitation of West Papua by foreign interests, and thirdly, a framework of land reform and food sovereignty against agribusiness food estates.

The potentially huge conversion of forests by MIFEE has been criticized by environmentalist organizations, and the NGO *Greenomics Indonesia* estimates that up to 90 percent of the area is still covered by natural forest (Ekawati & Satriastanti, 2010). Locally, forest protection is usually associated with the defense of indigenous customary land rights. The discourse around indigenous peoples and their harmonious relation with forests has been a powerful one in Indonesia and in related international campaigns. It has been systematically developed in Indonesia by the environmental justice movement, particularly by AMAN and WALHI, in order to defend customary

land rights against the territorialization of state control (Peluso, Afif, & Rachman, 2008). Reminiscent of the situation in Indonesia under the Suharto regime, the forest issue is also seen by Foker LSM Papua as something that activists can work on without seeming "too political". The basic strategy of this framework is to strengthen the traditions that celebrate indigenous knowledge and reinforce the position not to sell land but only to rent it and even then not for huge plantations (S. Manufandu, secretary general of Foker LSM Papua, personal communication, March 28, 2011).

The second framework is one of Papuan independence. Here, MIFEE is seen as a continuation of occupation and exploitation of the Freeport kind: foreign companies moving in to extract maximum profit from the natural resources of West Papua. In this view, MIFEE, and politicians like Gebze who pursue it, are merely serving imperialist interests, particularly the US, who want to use West Papua to solve their food and energy crisis (SORPATOM, 2010). The presence of a large number of army units in the MIFEE area testifies to the role of the military in protecting the interests of foreign investors against the local population (S. Manufandu, secretary general of Foker LSM Papua, personal communication, March 28, 2011). In this context, the potential recruitment of migrant workers to work the food and biofuel estates is interpreted as a calculated means of control and ethnic subjugation by Indonesia. Huge numbers of migrant workers are predicted to arrive with the MIFEE project. Several accounts predict 4 million workers coming in from outside. SORPATOM (2010) extrapolates this (with wives, children, and relatives) to a total of 24 million, concluding that "*genocide* or extermination of the indigenous community will occur spontaneously". AMAN (2010) also speaks of the "structural and systematic genocide" that will occur if the Papuans (already in a minority in Merauke) are marginalized by an influx of migrants.

The third framing argues for land reform and food sovereignty against agribusiness food estates. Here, the main contradiction is seen as between big business interests and small farmers, although, again, foreign capital is seen as paramount (Idham, 2010; Serikat Petani Indonesia [SPI], 2009). As part of the neoliberal restructuring of agriculture, the food estates will exacerbate the food crisis by feudalizing independent peasants into cheap laborers and dependent smallholders, thereby undermining food sovereignty (SPI, 2009). WALHI connects the large-scale destruction of forests with the loss of food sovereignty and draws a parallel with the *Central Kalimantan Mega Rice Project* that had converted forests and swamps into rice fields

with the help of transmigrant labor. The project collapsed mainly because of inappropriate land use and environmental problems, and was cancelled after the fall of Suharto. Sustainable and family based farming is put forward as the alternative to the predicted failure of the food estate project.

Strategic Questions in Resisting MIFEE

In view of the relatively young status of MIFEE and the modest amount of actual investment and 'land grabbing' on the ground, the speed of indigenous and NGO reactions to the project has been impressive. Also, the breadth of involvement of and cooperation between NGOs at the local and national level and good links with the indigenous population in the area promise a potentially sophisticated, enduring, and even successful campaign against the project. There is a real possibility that a lot of the land grab can still be stopped before it materializes. However, resistance is still in a very early stage and to date basically involves information gathering, networking, and awareness raising. It is still a long way away from 'grabbing land back' (Borras et al., 2011, p. 212). This will depend on how the emerging coalition can extend the base of the opposition beyond existing NGOs, how political pressure can be built up (so that the national or district/provincial governments back out), how economic pressure can be developed (targeting existing and potential investors), and what people living in the area can do to prevent agribusiness development if the project does go ahead.

The early stage of both deal and resistance opens up the opportunity to think through some of the strategic questions in developing a successful campaign. In this sense, the campaign coalition against MIFEE can benefit from international linkages and experiences, and also critical reflection by and dialogue with activist scholars. This is particularly important in Merauke because of the way the resistance builds on existing networks and 'modes of resistance'. This is at once a strength and a weakness because these modes of resistance operate within certain assumptions and ways of working that may not be helpful for tackling some of the key challenges posed by the land grab. This also applies to international networking and campaign strategizing that can fall into a 'default mode' – paths of connection and ways of operating that have been in place and are therefore repeated.

The Forest Option

Using 'indigenous peoples and forests framing' could be a way of generalizing resistance amongst the indigenous Malind Anim. It also seems to be promising in terms of creating a split within government agencies, particularly between the ministry of forestry and the ministry of agriculture. The forestry minister has already declared that much of the land earmarked for MIFEE is forest land and cannot be converted into farm land (Simamora, 2010). Zoning issues have already slowed up project implementation and could lead to MIFEE being scaled down to only 500,000 hectares. These turf wars between ministries can be understood within the context of REDD, which could redefine forest conservation as a major source of funding via the carbon market. The ministry of forestry is therefore reluctant to relinquish control over potentially lucrative areas. REDD money could also be a powerful economic alternative to agribusiness investment.

However, the celebration of indigenous forest communities on its own will not be enough to stop agribusiness development. In the indigenous communities themselves, people are not content with just continuing the traditional 'hunting and sago' way of life, but want some kind of cash income as well. This is shown clearly by the nature of many of the local protests that demand a just development including jobs, hospitals, and education. The indigenous way of life strategy is further complicated by that fact that the "clans" in Papua represent "pseudo-tribal entities" and "neotraditional political communities" (Filer, 2012, p. 602) in which people like Gebze compete for political power. The practice of renting out land for logging and receiving a commission per cubic meter is one way of generating income, even if it undermines the traditional subsistence economy.

In this context, REDD money could also be attractive for indigenous communities as an alternative way of generating cash income. But using REDD as an alternative to MIFEE has its own dangers. The forestry sector is firmly in the hands of the Indonesian government and powerful timber companies and in West Papua, it is entwined with the military and is notoriously corrupt (EIA & Telepak, 2005, 2009). It could become a Trojan horse, facilitating a 'forest grab' by military-linked companies and further marginalizing indigenous communities by plugging their forests into a global carbon market controlled by carbon brokers and hedge funds (as in Papua New

Guinea, cf. Filer, 2012). There is also the risk that, with the help of large conservationist NGOs like World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF) and *Conservation International*, it 'greenwashes' MIFEE by taking out some of the most 'high conservation value' areas in 'partnership' with the large agribusiness corporations involved. For example, the Medco Group is one of Conservation International's corporate partners. Foker LSM Papua is therefore skeptical towards REDD and has adopted the position of "No Rights, no REDD" (S. Manufandu, secretary general of Foker LSM Papua, personal communication, March 28, 2011). Nevertheless, this glosses over different positions within the coalition against MIFEE. While WALHI rejects REDD, AMAN, for example, has adopted a position of critical engagement in order to use REDD to strengthen indigenous rights to forests. A REDD-based strategy to stop MIFEE would therefore generate intensive debates between the different opposition groups and could potentially split the coalition.

The Autonomy/Independence Default Mode

Based on the framing of MIFEE as an example of (Indonesian) imperialism marginalizing the Papuans with a kind of military/corporate/transmigrant block, this uses Papuan identity as a resource to mobilize local communities to reject the project. The strength of this option is that it is integrated within the broader movement for Papuan independence, which is gaining strength with the rejection of the Special Autonomy status. Disgust with the connivance of local political representatives with military and Indonesian business interests finally burst in January 2011, when thousands of people, including thousands of church members and hundreds of students from the Indonesian Christian Students Movement (*Gerakan Mahasiswa Kristen Indonesia*, GMKI) (a member of the *World Student Christian Federation*) occupied the Papua People's Council (PRC). In an extraordinary statement, Church leaders criticized the "present tyrant state authorities, who is on a rampage of internal colonialism, ethnic cleansing (genocide), and disguised slavery against your own Nation" and called for the rejection of the Special Autonomy status and a referendum on the future of West Papua mediated by a third party (Doirebo, Giay, & Yoman, 2011).

It also plugs into an existing network of international West Papua solidarity groups (and churches) that can help to fund activities (particularly *Christian Aid*), organize

watch dog and solidarity actions, and generate international pressure on Indonesia. This path is already being followed by Foker LSM Papua in order to generate political pressure (pressuring the new district head of Merauke who is less gung-ho about MIFEE, lobbying the provincial parliament and governor who were sidelined by MIFEE) and also to ward of (potential) investors. Here, the threat of indigenous rejection and potential unrest is used as a resource to undermine trust in the viability of MIFEE as a safe investment (S. Manufandu, secretary general of Foker LSM Papua, personal communication, March 28, 2011). Internationally, MIFEE has already become quite well known via the solidarity groups and church networks in operation.

However, there are two major problems with this strategy. The first and fairly obvious one is that a movement for Papuan real autonomy or independence that is based on indigenous identity opposition and international solidarity and pressure has not been successful for perhaps 50 years. The whole modus operandi of Indonesian control over Papua is to ignore and criminalize any sentiment for independence. Military occupation and repression is backed up by building a political base amongst an increasing number of Muslim migrants and among some Papuans and creating enough profit via the exploitation of Papuan natural resources to do so. While West Papuan solidarity is important in providing a space for activists to operate and to prevent some of the most atrocious human rights violations, it will not upset this Indonesian occupation regime. In fact, significant progress in the direction of autonomy was only made in the context of the *reformasi* movement – that is a national movement for more democracy that challenged key political cornerstones in Jakarta (Lane, 2008). 'Nationalizing' the Papua question, perhaps by creating Papua solidarity groups *in Indonesia* could be one way of encouraging policy change on this issue.

The second and perhaps most challenging question is that of the transmigrants. Migrant small-scale farmers from Java, Sulawesi, and from other parts of Papua now make up more than half of Merauke's population. Although understandable given the political and economic marginalization of the indigenous Papua and the role migrant farmers play in this process, polarizing against these migrants can only be counterproductive because it encourages unity within the military-corporate-transmigrant block. On this basis, politicians like Gebze can continue to control the district government by mobilizing the migrant votes. Some of the anti-MIFEE arguments also tend to sensationalize the problems of immigration by exaggerated numbers and by the claim

of "structural genocide". As Li (2011, p. 282) points out, the labor required for plantation agriculture and forestry are grossly exaggerated by government and corporate land grabbers and range from 10 to 400 per 1000 hectares depending on the crop. A rough estimate using an average of 150 workers per 1000 hectares would give us a total number of migrant workers of 180,000 for 1.2 million hectares of fully developed MIFEE. This is still large in relation to the current population, but nothing like the often quoted number of 4 million and the extrapolated 24 million migrants (!) feared by SORPATOM.

In the Merauke context, therefore, rejecting the land grab by defending indigenous customary rights based on "ethno-territorial identity" that excludes migrants who have been living there for some time creates a particularly "troubling dilemma" (Hall, Hirsch, & Li, 2011, p. 11). In this dilemma, "counterclaims" based on "indigeneity and ethno-territory" collide with those based on land reform and the "need for land as the basis of an agrarian livelihood" (Hall et al., 2011, p. 183). Creating a "migrant scare", albeit from an indigenous rather than a supremacist perspective, also risks the more sinister danger of "ethnic violence" witnessed under similar circumstances between indigenous Dayaks and Malays and Madurese transmigrants in Kalimantan and Acehnese and Javanese migrants in Aceh at the end of the 1990s (Hall et al., 2011, pp. 176-177; Peluso, 2008). This can lead to local elites using "ethnic identity as a resource" (van Klinken, 2008, p. 44) in order to create "racialised territories" (Peluso, 2008, p. 62) and in the Papuan context, could well be answered with a military or para-military crackdown against the Papuans.

Land Reform and Food Sovereignty

The critique of MIFEE as part of agribusiness expansion at the cost of small farmers can be seen as the default resistance strategy of national organizations SPI and WALHI. The advantage of this strategy is that it offers a way of struggling for an alternative kind of development rather than harking back to a solely traditionalist (indigenous people living in harmony with the forest) or a nationalist/ethnic perspective. The fight against MIFEE in Merauke could thereby become part of a generalized movement against food and energy estates in Indonesia and be connected to a global reaction against land grabs.

However, there are various complications in the Merauke context that mean that the strategy would have to depart from its default mode and become something else

and new. The first is fairly blatant: Neither SPI nor WALHI have local organizations in Papua, let alone Merauke, which means there is as yet no organized social force that could struggle for land reform or food sovereignty as an alternative to MIFEE. The polarization between Papuans and migrants also complicates things. If land reform is seen as distributing land "in areas where population is sparse" to smallholders rather than to agribusiness, and in providing supporting government services (Li, 2011, p. 285), would a call for food sovereignty include handing out indigenous land to landless migrants instead of to palm oil companies? What would this mean in a situation where the "potential for conflict between locals and transmigrants over both land and jobs is clearly very high" (Li, 2011, p. 288)? How would an alternative development path based on food sovereignty look like for Merauke? How would it polarize successfully against the government framing that appeals to a nationalist 'food security'? And how could a different future look like that could balance a wish to maintain traditions and a successful co-existence with the forest with the desire for some kind of development, perhaps along the lines of successful smallholders?

Conclusion

The MIFEE land grab is a show case piece in many ways. The proactive role of the national and local government, the key involvement of domestic agribusiness conglomerates, and also the state condoned violence are some aspects that are typical for other land grab projects. Indeed, this particular constellation of forces could be part of one type of land grab that is different from those characterized more by the role of foreign investment and financial equity funds. Another typical feature of the MIFEE land grab is the gap between planned territorialization and investment and real investment and action. This opens up the opportunity for resistance to the land grab. As we have argued, this resistance is already quite well organized and therefore, has a real chance of stopping or seriously downsizing the planning fantasies of the government officials and corporations involved. At the same time, the emerging resistance also shows some of the potential strategies and also some of their limitations. There are serious contradictions between the forest-livelihoods strategy, the ethno-territorial strategy, and the land reform strategy which are probably relevant for many other resistance set-

tings in other parts of the world. In particular, the forest-livelihood strategy underplays the development aspirations of local communities, while the ethno-territorial strategy prevents a class-based alliance between indigenous and migrant small-scale farmers. However, all three strategies are also very much interconnected, and finding those connections that can complement and enhance each other might be the key to developing new and successful models of resistance.[4]

Opposition to MIFEE is not solely fueled by an outright rejection of the project in order to preserve traditional sago and hunting lifestyles. Rather, much of the dissatisfaction arises from the failure of the development promise to deliver: low wages in the plantations (ALDP, 2012b), and a lack of jobs and of social and infrastructure projects. Sebastianus Ndiken, the head of Malind Bian LMA, for example, argues that he would like to see progress "that doesn't deceive the people" (*pembangunan yang tidak menipu masyarakat*) and that delivers the promised jobs, schools, and hospitals (ALDP, 2012c). Following De Schutter (2011, p. 258), the challenge for the emerging resistance to MIFEE would be to develop an alternative and better way of agricultural investment around a locally adapted program of land reform. As Li (2011, pp. 289-292) shows, the success of such an alternative would depend very much on *how* it is developed, and particularly, on whether smallholders are in the driving seat and supported by the government or become indebted contract workers within a corporate-dominated landscape of liberalized agrarian relations. "Hard-fought struggles" (Li, 2011, p. 292) will be necessary for this and, given the current schism between indigenous people and transmigrants, imaginative and creative strategies will be needed in order to create an alternative that could appeal to both groups of small-scale farmers. One step in this direction has been taken by Foker LSM Papua and allies. After the two separate consultations with Papuans and migrants had led to seemingly irreconcilable positions, Foker LSM Papua then brought the two groups together. Migrants and Papuans listened to each other's problems and agreed that neither of them were to blame, but the government was (S. Manufandu, secretary general of Foker LSM Papua, personal communication, March 28, 2011). Without representing a common program of any kind, these discussions could be the start of one.

4 For example, a broad coalition of Papuan and Indonesian organizations (WALHI, Pusaka, Sajogyo Institute, Sorpatom, Papuan NGOs Working Group, Sawit Watch, AMAN, Huma, Jaringan Kerja Pemetaan Partisipatif, Consortium for Agrarian Reform, Kontras, Greenpeace Indonesia, Down to Earth) have combined elements of all three frames without polarizing against migrants, cf. WALHI et al., 2011).

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Constitutionalism in Thailand: Key Questions of an On-Going Research

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Citation Schaffar, W. & Guth, R. (2013). Constitutionalism in Thailand: Key questions of an on-going research. *ASEAS - Austrian Journal of South-East Asian Studies, 6*(1), 183-187.

Our research project[3] analyzes the Thai political crisis with reference to, firstly, the global trend towards rights-based development and specific liberal democratization trajectories. Secondly, the project is based on a micro-level analysis of the strategic positioning of and debates within social movements concerning a quest for fundamental rights and a rejection of a 'judicialization' of politics. This focus leads to critical questions about democratization processes along liberal constitutional ideas in general. As the situation in Thailand points beyond the particular case, its analysis has implications on a regional and global level, both for democratic and political theory and also for the practice of development cooperation. We would like to outline some of these critical core questions in the following.

Since the political crisis in Thailand fully unfolded with the military coup in 2006, it continuously intensified and preliminarily culminated in the protests, clashes, and eventually the violent crackdown of red-shirt demonstrations in May 2010. When Pheu Thai, the party close to the red-shirts and ousted Prime Minister Thaksin Shinawatra, won a majority in Parliament in July 2011, it immediately sparked rumors of a new coup; two years later, the party faces severe criticism by supporters for seeking reconciliation with the military, including amnesty for the shootings of 2010, and resistance from opponents for trying to amend or even re-draft the constitution of 2007.

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3 This research project is funded by the Jubilee Fund of the Oesterreichische Nationalbank (Austrian National Bank), Project-nr.: 14710, and is situated at the Department of Development Studies, University of Vienna.

When we talk about the deep crisis of Thai political institutions, we have to keep in mind that for a whole decade, the democratization process of Thailand was hailed as one of the most promising in all South-East Asia: It started with the strong pro-democracy movement in 1992, which pushed the military out of politics, and many analysts saw the adoption of the People's Constitution in 1997, with its institutional arrangements and its orientation towards good governance and human rights, as the culmination and the institutional enshrinement of the democratization process. Yet, the optimism soon gave way to tensions within society when, in 2001, Thaksin Shinawatra became Prime Minister and large parts of society became alienated by his political and economical agenda (Pye & Schaffar, 2008). Ultimately, he was mentioned along with Silvio Berlusconi and Hugo Chavez as a prototype of new populism (Mizuno & Pasuk, 2009). Since the military coup of 2006, the introduction of far-reaching media censorship, and the curtailment of political rights and civil liberties, Thailand is widely regarded as an example of the return of authoritarianism (Case, 2009).

The case of Thailand requires questioning the basic assumptions about the framing of state institutions (or polity). As their implementation is often schematically promoted, certain state institutions remain the unquestioned *target* of democratization and development processes worldwide – and not the unanticipated *outcome* of such processes. This problem lies at the center of our research project. The aim is to capture the struggle for democracy as something *processual*. In Europe and North America, this process has produced different systems of government, like the British Westminster system, the Swiss consensus democracy, or the US-American checks and balances model of liberal constitutional democracy. Neither of these systems is uncontested or ideally democratic, and all of them are under attack by de-democratization tendencies in the wake of globalization as well as by the most recent political developments in reactions to the worldwide financial and economic crisis (Guth, 2013). The critical analysis of institutional diversity forms one of the theoretical bases of the project and focuses on a particular observable global development of the past years and decades: the increasing *judicialization* of politics (cf. Hirschl, 2004a, 2004b).

Generally, judicialization means the development of legal strategies to address social problems, or that "the exercise of political power is increasingly being transferred from the legislature to instances of case-by-case decision-making by individual

judges" (Fischer-Lescano & Christensen, 2012, p. 94). Increasing judicialization can be observed at different levels: Various social and political problems are negotiated in a rights discourse, while progressive judicialization is also the focus of most strategies of development cooperation. The problem of inequality between men and women, of discrimination against the disabled and against ethnic, religious, and other minorities is usually met through means of a definition of enforceable rights or anti-discrimination legislation. An example is the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) (UN, 1979/2008), which is referred to by the United Nations as a 'bill of rights for women'. Also the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) pursues a rights-based poverty reduction program under the concept of Legal Empowerment of the Poor and the Eradication of Poverty (LEP) (UN, 2009). At the micro level, which is in the everyday relationships between people, the globalization of law and legal norms is reflected in the development of a specific *legal consciousness* (Merry, 2006). Only the development of a particular self-perception and interpretation of one's own position in legal categories makes global initiatives such as CEDAW or the LEP applicable. This point is receiving increasing attention in legal sociological and anthropological research.

Legal sociologists and anthropologists have interpreted the democratization process in Thailand, especially the People's Constitution, as an originally Thai articulation of a developed legal consciousness (Munger, 2006/2007). The People's Constitution is distinguished precisely by a variety of institutional innovations that reflect a judicialization: a detailed charter of fundamental rights and a variety of newly created constitutional institutions that monitor compliance with these rights, e.g. a Human Rights Commission, an Anti-Corruption Commission, and, above all, an active Constitutional Court. As such, this constitutional model corresponds to the global trend of constitutional innovations of the 1990s and to the concept of good governance, which was at the center of many programs of international development cooperation.

The failure of Thailand's constitution therefore raises questions beyond the individual case and regarding liberal constitutional models in general; it also points to critical implications and risks inherent to strategies of increased judicialization as a means of emancipatory politics. One aspect of the political crisis in Thailand is the politicization of the judiciary, engaging ever more openly in the political process of

the country, and the failure of the numerous constitutional bodies that had been established for the protection of fundamental rights.

Contrary to the above mentioned interpretations, Engel's (2005) in-depth empirical investigation of litigation cases shows an increasing reluctance to get involved with the judicial system. Our investigation of the strategic orientation of social movements point in the same direction as Engel, yet our interpretation is different. In contrast to what Engel perceives as decay of legal consciousness and as a move to irrational patterns of behavior and beliefs, we interpret the strategies of the social movements as a very rational and creative search for an alternative to the rights-based approaches to democratization.

Our empirical work on social movements is based on the assumption that social movements have two different broad strategies to pursue their goals: a judicial and a political strategy. While the judicial strategy is based on a legal discourse and involves the courts as a central arena of conflict, the latter relies on various forms of protests, demonstrations, and so forth, to achieve a shift in the balance of power and influence the processes of norm-setting. The focus of the investigation is thus on the discourse and practice of social movements on these strategic orientations. The extent up to which various movements pursue a rights-based strategy or focus on the participation in and influence on political processes of negotiation in their everyday practical political work is investigated by using the example of three movements: the health movement – in particular, people living with HIV and AIDS and their struggle for access to drugs; the labor movement; and groups working for internet freedom. Based on preliminary studies (e.g. Schaffar, 2007; Schaffar & Ziai, 2011), the research showed that the failure of the institutions introduced by the liberal constitutional model of 1997 is one reason why social movements in Thailand do not rely on actors such as the Human Rights Commission, the Administrative Courts, and the Constitutional Court, but rather look for alternative negotiating methods and opportunities for political participation as a quest for alternative forms of democratic government beyond liberal constitutionalism.

Considering examples of social movements in Latin America (Unterberger, 2012) and critical judicialization trends in Europe (Guth, 2013), the results of this research project will be interpreted in a comparative perspective and made available through publishing, lectures, and conference presentations.

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Discussing the Social Entrepreneurial Movement as a Means of Provoking Normative Change in West Kalimantan, Indonesia:

An Interview With Kinari Webb

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Citation Kois, B. (2013). Discussing the social entrepreneurial movement as a means of provoking normative change in West Kalimantan, Indonesia: An interview with Kinari Webb. *ASEAS - Austrian Journal of South-East Asian Studies, 6*(1), 188-194.

Kinari Webb is a Yale-trained physician and currently runs the healthcare and environmental non-profit organization Alam Sehat Lestari (ASRI) that is based in Sukadana, Indonesia. She has lived and worked near Gunung Palung National Park in Indonesian Borneo for 20 years. In this interview, conducted through email correspondence in March, 2013, Kinari talks about the social entrepreneurial movement, provides background on social and legal norms as they relate to illegal logging in West Kalimantan, Indonesia, and discusses the structure and methods used by ASRI to provoke positive societal change.

Kinari Webb ist eine in Yale ausgebildete Ärztin und leitet derzeit die gemeinnützige Gesundheits- und Umweltorganisation Alam Sehat Lestari (ASRI) in Sukadana, Indonesien. Für 20 Jahre lebte und arbeitete sie in der Nähe des Nationalparks Gunung Palung in Borneo, Indonesien. In diesem Interview, das mittels E-Mail-Korrespondenz im März 2013 durchgeführt wurde, spricht Kinari über die soziale Unternehmensbewegung, gibt Hintergrundwissen über soziale und gesetzliche Normen und deren Bezug zu illegaler Abholzung in West Kalimantan, Indonesien, und diskutiert die Struktur und Methoden der Organisation ASRI für die Förderung eines positiven sozialen Wandels.

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BETHANY D. KOIS: William Drayton said, "The job of a social entrepreneur is to recognize when a part of society is stuck and to provide new ways to get it unstuck. He or she finds what is not working and solves the problem by changing the system, spreading the solution, and persuading entire societies to take new leaps."[2] As a social entrepreneur yourself, how do you define social entrepreneurism?

KINARI WEBB: I love that definition. However, I think it suggests that the entrepreneurs come up with all the ideas and execute those ideas themselves. In my experience, idea creation

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2 Leviner, N., Crutchfield, L. R., & Wells, D. (2007). *Understanding the impact of social entrepreneurs: ASHOKA's answer to the challenge of measuring effectiveness*. ASHOKA Working Paper. Retrieved from https://www.ashoka.org/sites/ashoka/files/UnderstandingtheImpactChapterPDF.pdf

doesn't happen like that – and if it did, the ideas wouldn't be as good as those that are created collaboratively. I define social entrepreneurism a little differently. For example, I'm good at creating a space where great ideas happen. I'm good at recognizing when an idea is potentially game-changing and at working together with others to bring those ideas to fruition. I think we need to be careful about supporting Drayton's definition of social entrepreneurism because it encourages people to work individually and not truly honor the communities and staff they work with. In my experience, the best ideas always come from the people who are experiencing the problem. We need to support collaborative idea creation and social entrepreneurs can, absolutely, facilitate that type of action.

KOIS: Social entrepreneurial ventures are increasingly targeted towards sweeping, long-term change instead of immediate, small-scale effects. Why do you think that is?

WEBB: Because sweeping long-term change is what is necessary. We cannot view world issues as a series of discreet problems solvable on their own. We exist in an interconnected web of culture, economics, and law. If we fail to recognize that, we can actually make things worse. For example, working towards decreasing poverty in a way that results in lowered human health and higher environmental degradation will not improve a community's well-being in the long run. Making one thing better by making others worse is not a sustainable solution. I think that's why many people are working to tackle these problems on many fronts.

KOIS: Let's talk numbers. In the 26 countries studied by the *Johns Hopkins Comparative Non-Profit Sector Project*, citizen organizations now employ 19 million workers and engage the equivalent of another 11 million full-time volunteers.[3] The UN Human Development Report estimates that one in five people participate in a citizen organization.[4] What do you think is driving this explosive growth?

WEBB: I think there are two things. First, I just read the brilliant book *Better Angels of Our Nature* by Steven Pinker. He persuasively argues that throughout all human history our circles of compassion have been expanding – from family, to tribe, to ethnic group, to nation, and then slowly beyond those borders to encompass all humanity. I would also argue that we are expanding our compassion to include other life on earth and even the earth itself – the global boat that we all share. That is the first reason I think we care more about others. The second reason is that, for the first time in human history, many of us no longer have to worry about our basic needs. People are realizing that material things do not, in fact, bring happiness. If that doesn't bring happiness and meaning, what does? The answer I, and millions of others, have found is that working to make the world a better place is fulfilling in a way that nothing else is.

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3 Center for Civil Society Studies at Johns Hopkins Institute for Policy Studies. (2004). *Global civil society: Dimensions of the nonprofit sector* (vol. 2). Retrieved from http://ccss.jhu.edu/research-projects/comparative-nonprofit-sector/cnp-publications

4 United Nations Development Programme. (2000). *Human development report 2000*. Retrieved from http://hdr.undp.org/en/media/hdr_2000_ch0.pdf

KOIS: Salamon has observed that "we are in the midst of a 'global associational revolution', a massive expansion of structured citizen activity outside the boundaries of the market and the state."[5] Do you think this movement has the capacity to provoke widespread societal changes?

WEBB: Absolutely! I agree that an almost unseen revolution in the way the world is governed is taking place. People are removing power from governments and, in many cases, governments are struggling to keep up with changes that have already taken place. And we mustn't forget that much of what is happening on a global scale is also happening across national boundaries. Globally, people are working together on issues they care about. This is possible today largely thanks to technology. For example, here in Borneo, global communities are partnering with the local communities to protect a national park that is home to 10 percent of the world's remaining orangutans. This is happening partially because the Indonesian government does not have the capacity to protect it. What amazes me is that the world has not woken up to how powerful a force this kind of citizen action can be, but they will. It gives me enormous hope for the future.

KOIS: You work in West Kalimantan, Indonesia, in an area near Gunung Palung National Park. From my understanding, there has been extensive deforestation in this area in recent years. Can you tell us about illegal logging there?

WEBB: Twenty years ago, when I first came to West Kalimantan to study orangutans, it was said that an orangutan could go from coast to coast without touching the ground. That is no longer the case. Borneo has had the fastest rate of deforestation the world has ever known, with more wood coming out in the 1980s than from all of South America and Africa combined. Sadly, this has left the few national parks as islands of forest and made their conservation even more critical. But, in reality, these parks are just paper parks and a few major factors have led local people to continue cutting down the forest. First, the lack of education means that local populations have few alternatives to logging, even though one of our village surveys suggests that 100 percent of village loggers would prefer alternative work. Second, there are very few local sources of liquidity. If people need money for health care or education, one of the easiest ways to get it is through illegal logging. Ninety-nine percent of the people around the park want to protect it, but what choice do they have if they need to log to pay for their child's health care? Having to choose between long-term and short-term well-being is a horrible choice. Third, there are now few sources of timber outside the park. This drives villagers to enter the park to get timber for income.

KOIS: It seems that the traditional approach to illegal logging, through the Indonesian legal system, doesn't adequately address these local problems. Could you describe the methods that ASRI uses to stimulate and produce societal change? Do you work toward creating new social norms that provide social sanctions to villagers who continue illegal logging?

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5 Salamon, L. (2002). *The state of nonprofit America*. Washington, DC: Brookings Institution Press.

WEBB: In a round-about way, yes. We work to harness social pressure using a variety of methods. First, we employ local leaders to monitor the logging of their villages and to advocate for a reduction in logging. We call these local leaders Forest Guardians. This program was the idea of the local communities. There is a Forest Guardian for every hamlet that borders Gunung Palung National Park. They work together with individual loggers – most of whom are their childhood friends – to find alternative livelihoods. Second, while locals can always access care in our clinic, patients that come from non-logging villages are provided a 70-percent-reduction in the cost of their health care services. Rainforest conservation donors provide the funds to cover the remainder of the bills. The bill reduction determination is, thus, made on a village level, not on an individual level. This is partly because we could never get data on an individual level, but also because the whole community has to deal with the negative effects of deforestation, not just the loggers. Therefore, we hope the whole village will work together to stop it. Third, we provide community education on the importance of protecting the forest for people's long-term well-being. However, our experience is that we are often preaching to the converted and sessions are more a time for people to talk about how they value the forest and want to protect it. People talk about how critical the trees are as a watershed to prevent flooding and that malaria seems to increase in logged areas.

KOIS: Do you think your efforts begin to change the logging behavior of villagers?

WEBB: Our data suggests that it is. We have taken various village level surveys to try to understand how our methods have impacted the community. Sixty-two percent of the people we surveyed and who knew about the health care discount had discussed it with others. And 95 percent of the people who discussed it believed that our methods were decreasing logging in their village. As for the Forest Guardian program, in its first year of operation, we found that 60 percent of the loggers who had worked with a Guardian stopped logging and another 25 percent were considering stopping.

KOIS: It seems that ASRI doesn't condemn illegal logging with inflammatory rhetoric or personal attack of villagers. Is this an intentional strategy?

WEBB: Yes, it is absolutely intentional. We do not see our relationship as confrontational, but rather as a partnership. Together we are seeking solutions where both people and nature benefit. All the best ideas have come from the communities themselves. One man once said to me, "Some conservation organizations just tell us what to do. Don't they realize we are trying to do that? It seems like they don't care about us. But we know that everyone at ASRI truly cares about us and wants what is best for us. That is why we like working with you. We have also never experienced a program where we feel like we own it. We get to design what happens."

KOIS: Can you see the ASRI model being effective at producing positive societal change, introducing new social norms, and improving compliance with environmental law in other places as well?

WEBB: Absolutely. We believe the key elements could be universal. Truly listening to the communities for what the best solutions are, working together to bring in skills and resources from outside when they are not available locally, and seeking ways to enhance both environmental and human well-being at the same time. Our plan is to replicate next in Indonesian Papua. Ideally, people all over the world could address the problem of unsustainable practices in this way.

KOIS: What social or legal norms would improve ASRI's effectiveness?

WEBB: If the rule of law actually worked in Indonesia and people who violated the law could be prosecuted, that would be a wonderful thing. In every nation on earth there are cheaters and people who think only of themselves. Even a tiny bit of negative reinforcement would go a long way. Recently, one of the biggest exotic animal traffickers was caught and prosecuted. That is a wonderful thing. It remains to be seen whether he will be sanctioned or just pays to be released. I am very much in support of Indonesia's efforts to combat corruption. When corruption is not tolerated, both socially and legally, it is a huge help. As an organization, we also work to change corruption. We never pay bribes. My co-founder, Hotlin Ompusungu, has an effective way of responding to a request for a bribe. When asked for one, she lovingly turns the conversation around and instead asks for a donation so we can continue helping people who have no other source of healthcare. We haven't got any donations yet, but they do back-pedal and promise to help us without 'extra' fees. It's interesting, the head of our regency recently told us how much he liked working with our organization because of how ethical we are. It is likely that he is directly or indirectly involved in corruption, but still the norms are changing and even someone participating in the system does not like corruption. I think this is progress for Indonesia and I hope it continues.

KOIS: How has ASRI evolved since its foundation in 2007?

WEBB: Well first off, we have grown from 8 staff to over 90. We estimate that we have had direct contact with about 25,000 of the 60,000 people around the park and with many more indirectly. But this is just the beginning. Changing social norms, improving people's lives, and protecting a precious biological treasure is not a short-term project. Our results are impressive so far. Our surveys indicate a 68 percent decline in logging households and an increase from 6 to 10 out of 30 villages that have completely stopped logging over the last year and a half. Health improvement indicators suggest an 18 percent decline in infant mortality and a 49 percent decline in diarrhea rates. We now have enormous social capital. We have begun to see success in our organic farming program, the Forest Guardians are seeking solutions with their communities, and the health of the community is improving as we improve access to care, immunizations, water, sanitation, and health care knowledge.

KOIS: From a leadership perspective, what have been some critical challenges you have overcome that significantly contribute to the success of ASRI?

WEBB: A year and a half ago, I was stung by a highly venomous jellyfish and almost died. After that, I had residual damage to my autonomic nervous system. I am still not back to full capacity. That was pretty terrifying. I wasn't sure if my team could go on without me. But everyone rose to the challenge. Hotlin has done a fabulous job running the program and taking over managing the staff and grants. One of our Indonesian doctors, Nurchandra Bunawan, took over the clinic operation and the training of all our young Indonesian doctors, as well as the volunteer medical students and residents. We sent him to Yale for further training and they were so impressed with him they gave him a lectureship position. A young woman from the village, who had only a grade school education and had never used a computer when we hired her, is now doing almost all the accounting after taking a correspondence course and learning what I could teach her. Truthfully, they are now running the program better than I did and I am now able to focus on replication. It has been a joy to watch them succeed.

KOIS: Besides from more capital or other tangible assets, what are some intangibles you need in order to be successful?

WEBB: It used to be said of a woman in the 1800s that her most precious possession was her reputation. After living out here, I totally understand that. ASRI has a reputation for listening, for carrying through on its promises, for caring about people, for integrity, and for honoring all ethnicities, religions, and national backgrounds. That reputation is our most precious possession. We guard it jealously.

KOIS: What's next for the social entrepreneurial movement? What needs to happen to continue to build support for and interest in social entrepreneurship?

WEBB: I think an awareness of how powerful small citizen organizations can be – possibly more powerful than governments – is important. Recognition of this truth, research studies that show it, and funding of people who are working on bottom-up solutions is critical. When we first came here, the biggest obstacle was getting our staff and the communities to believe that change was possible and that they could do it themselves. They used to be pessimistic, felt disempowered, and cynical. The change five years later is amazing both in the communities and with our staff. They can't wait to tackle the next issue and are proud to receive global attention for their success. My wish is to give this sense of empowerment to everyone on the planet.

KOIS: What's next for you?

WEBB: Replication first, but I also want to think about social change on a global scale. We are at a critical time in the history of humanity. Population growth and climate change threaten all life on earth. The big question is whether the twenty-first century will be a Great Turning or a Great Ending, as Bill Plotkin calls it. I worry that there are not enough people talking about the possibility for us as humans to create great change. I have spent the last

seven years watching it happen on a small scale. I want to convey hope and encouragement to others. We don't have much time left and, if we are going to save our planet, we have to expand our circle of compassion to include the whole earth. Each of us has to work on personal, community, and global scales. On a personal level, we have to honor others and the planet that gives us life. On a community level, we have to work on finding ways to live together more sustainably. And, on a global level, we have to be willing to work across the planet, offering our skills, passions, and resources wherever they are needed. My experience is that what is needed in one place happens to be excess in another. By working together we can do it.

KOIS: Thank you for participating in this interview. It was wonderful talking with you!

WEBB: And wonderful to get to think about your great questions! Thank you.

A Buddhist Way of Drug Rehabilitation in Thailand - Approaching Drug Addiction With Loving Kindness:
An Interview With Phra Maha Narong Chaiyatha

Carina Pichler[1]

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Narong Chaiyatha has worked at the Quality Development of Life Center for 12 years and is engaged in diverse social projects as a Buddhist monk. The Quality Development of Life Center is an alternative program of dealing with drug addiction in Thailand and was established in 1993. On the premises of a Buddhist temple, the participants live together with monks, practice meditation, join chanting and dhamma talks, and help cultivate the temple. The program is part of the implementation of restorative justice in the criminal justice system. Depending on the severity of the drug addiction and the social background of the person, the Department of Probation of the Ministry of Justice sends clients to the center to take part in the Buddhist rehabilitation program for two months. This interview is based on the experiences of Narong Chaiyatha at the Quality Development of Life Center in Thep Mongkol temple, Amnat Charoen, Thailand, and gives an overview of some of the central elements of the program, positive impacts for the community as well as challenges in its implementation. The interview was conducted at the same location on 28 January 2013.

Narong Chaiyatha arbeitete 12 Jahre im Zentrum Quality Development of Life und engagiert sich als buddhistischer Mönch in diversen sozialen Projekten. Das Zentrum Quality Development of Life stellt ein alternatives Programm zur Behandlung von Drogensucht in Thailand dar und wurde im Jahr 1993 gegründet. Auf dem Gelände eines buddhistischen Tempels leben die TeilnehmerInnen zusammen mit Mönchen, praktizieren Meditation, nehmen an Gesängen und Dhamma-Gesprächen teil und helfen, den Tempel instand zu halten. Das Programm ist Teil der Implementierung von restorative justice im Kriminal- und Justizsystem. Je nach Schweregrad der Drogenabhängigkeit und sozialer Herkunft der Personen, schickt die Abteilung für Bewährung des Justizministeriums KlientInnen zum Zentrum, um an dem buddhistischen Rehabilitationsprogramm für die Dauer von zwei Monaten teilzunehmen. Das folgende Interview basiert auf den Erfahrungen von Narong Chaiyatha am Zentrum im Thep Mongkol Tempel, Amnat Charoen, Thailand, und bietet einen Überblick über zentrale Elemente des Programms, positive Auswirkungen für die Gemeinschaft sowie Herausforderungen im Rahmen der Implementierung. Das Interview wurde am gleichen Ort am 28. Jänner 2013 durchgeführt.

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CARINA PICHLER: In the beginning, I would like to know how you understand Buddhism and what it means to you in your life.

NARONG CHAIYATHA: I see Buddhism as a way of life, a Buddhist lifestyle. I was born in a poor family with seven siblings and there was not enough money to pay for school and education. My father died when I was four years old. That made the situation in the family very difficult; my mother had to take care of all children without him. I went to the Buddhist temple to stay there and ordained as novice when I was 13 years old. I was surrounded by a good loving environment and many opportunities evolved for me through living as monk; aside from studying the Buddha teachings I could learn a lot about other traditions such as Christianity, Islam, and Hinduism as well. I had the opportunity to visit higher education institutions; obtained a Bachelor and a Master degree and am now working on my PhD thesis. If I had not ordained, it would have hardly been possible for me to study considering my family background. I want to study and practice more and support other people to live a happy life.
I felt a lot of support from society and want to give something back. Through studying the Buddha teachings I have gained benefits for myself; happiness, confidence, and more abilities to support society in various ways. It is difficult for me to explain the meaning of Buddhism for my life in only a few words. Many opportunities had opened up to me: associating with good teachers, living in the forest temple close to nature, covering my basic needs, studying and practicing the Buddha teachings, studying abroad, taking part in diverse trainings, meeting many interesting people, etc.

PICHLER: You are currently working on your PhD thesis about the role of meditation in drug rehabilitation treatment in Thailand. At the *Quality Development of Life Center* you worked together with the participants of the Buddhist drug rehabilitation program for 12 years. How can meditation help to deal with drug addiction?

CHAIYATHA: I think that meditation is only one aspect. The Buddhist way of rehabilitation is not only about practicing meditation alone, but also about applying morality (*Sila*), concentration (*Samadhi*), and wisdom (*Panna*). Those factors cannot be separated from meditation practice and they are applied into the rehabilitation method of the center. The value of meditation is to strengthen the ability to focus on one thing such as the mind or breathing. This concentration helps to gain happiness. The fruits or result of meditation practice is happiness. Happiness can't be gained by taking drugs; it is rather the opposite of drug abuse. The kind of happiness that is produced through drug abuse is not pure. Drugs can have different effects such as keeping you awake. Happiness that can be gained through meditation practice is much greater, because it comes from inside and not from outside.
I would like to share a metaphor in relation to that: If you look into calm water you can see yourself like in a mirror. If the foundation is not stable you can't see yourself. Through *Samadhi* (concentration or meditation) you are able to see the real problem. This ability leads to wisdom. Wisdom is the power to realise the truth of things. A stable mind is the condition for it.

PICHLER: Can you tell me a bit about your experience of working with the participants?

CHAIYATHA: It was a great experience and I feel very grateful. Only a few monks were working at this project. I did many activities with the participants; morning and evening chanting, Dhamma teachings, socialising with community members, exchanging and discussing the project with the community leaders, etc. Many different people from many different fields of society come together at the center and work as a team.

I spent a lot of time and energy and gained a lot for myself as well. Seeing the participants returning to society as good people gives me happiness, even now. Many of the former participants are now studying at higher education institutions, whereas others are working as officials at the police or with the government; in positions where they can serve society. Some of these ex-addicts have ordained as monks and are now living and working at the temple helping others, or have re-entered society, some even rising to become abbots.

The aim of the program is to find out more about what can be contributed from the Buddhist field for helping people in rehabilitating themselves from drug addiction. There were many positive experiences and many participants are abstaining from drugs since being trained at the temple. Many of them transformed their behavior and are now serving society. But I also experienced negative things: Some people were behaving badly and wanted to do harm. Usually we could solve the problems through working together as a team, but sometimes I tried to help, but it wasn't possible. It made me very sad and I even cried. I saw that the problem was mental and it was beyond my ability to help. Sometimes even the abbot or senior monk couldn't help to deal with the problem and if there was no other way, we had to contact a doctor who came and admitted the participant into a hospital for mental illness. Sometimes we had to do this, but not often. In these instances, the responsibility for these people will revert to the probation service and their own families.

I want to mention another positive example of a transformative impact that Buddhist activities can have on people who came into conflict with the law: I used to visit a prison to do meditation with the prisoners. One of the former prisoners now regularly joins in temple activities, works as taxi driver, and has a good relationship with us. Indeed, this person has become a role model and has worked as a volunteer with newcomers for the past three years, encouraging them to take a full part in the program. That is the result of meditation and Buddhist practices.

At the Quality Development of Life Center I was working together closely with the participants, learned to understand emotions, and gained a lot for my personal training through the years. Helping others and thereby gaining happiness – I think this is the value of life. We are born into the society to do something good for ourselves and others as well. That is my understanding of the purpose of being born in this world. Through the drug rehabilitation program I got in contact with different people, worked together with good teachers in a good environment. I gained a lot of experiences through that and am now confident enough to work internationally. I already had the opportunity to give a speech at a World Conference to introduce the Buddhist drug rehabilitation center and discuss the issue of drug addiction.[2]

2 The 21st World Conference of the World Federation of Therapeutic Communities was held in Melbourne in 2002.

PICHLER: What do you think are the most valuable benefits that the participants can gain at the center?

CHAIYATHA: One of the most valuable aspects is social reintegration. When the participants come to the temple they usually are supported by their families. The community – even the public – supports and respects them, because getting trained in the temple is appreciated throughout Thai society. The participants can associate with good persons, live in a good environment, and are offered good teachings. They can learn and grow in a supportive environment through activities such as chanting and meditation. Meditation is like 'power giving'; it makes them mentally strong. They have the opportunity to cultivate loving kindness for themselves and for others as well. The individual's gains can be to realize the truth of life, understand what is good and bad, and right and wrong; *Samadhi* supports this understanding. After having spent 60 days at the center they can be a good example for the society. It benefits both the individual and the public.

PICHLER: How would you describe the involvement and benefits for the community?

CHAIYATHA: The participants enter the rehabilitation program as humans; without being labeled as drug addicts or criminals. Through their training in our program they can gain both physical and mental strength. They help to develop the temple through work such as cultivating the garden, maintaining the facilities, help building residences. These activities benefit the temple – which means it also serves the community. The participants can be proud and happy because they created something for the community. Society appreciates and respects them for their activities. The benefits relate to society as a whole.
We are using an alternative way where participation is an essential part: We include the society; inform them about and invite them to take part in shared activities such as practicing yoga, walking in the forest, excursions, or providing opportunities for counseling sessions. All of these activities can be applied to the rehabilitation methodology, as can contact with all levels of society. After completing their stay, the former participants can serve as good example for society. They can support their families and other people. Some set up different activities such as group sports. It's not always like that, some get addicted to drugs again. Meditation and Buddhist activities are not the only curing factors for rehabilitation; it also strongly depends on the environment and the person. The role of the monks is to help and support them; to give loving kindness. That is a main aim of the program: to provide a space and framework for cultivating loving kindness for oneself and society. I want to mention that there is no money or profit making through the program. I like to express my appreciation for the financial support for the maintenance of the temple from the government and people in the society.

PICHLER: What are your experiences with conflict dealing during the rehabilitation program?

CHAIYATHA: Every day there is a circle meeting with the participants and the monks where everyone can speak about their feelings and emotions. There we can observe and analyze problems. We use the power of the group. People can share their understandings and perspectives of the problem in the group and we try to find a solution together. If we can't find a solution in the group, we do individual counseling together with the abbot and senior monk or someone who has the ability to help in the matter. Sometimes we invite family members and relatives to participate and discuss the conflict together. If the participants continue to break the rules we have to send them home.
In the beginning my mind and emotions were unstable and sometimes I felt very happy, but sometimes I suffered a lot. Through working there for many years and training myself, my mind got more stable. The abbot of the temple, who is a great teacher to me, reminded me that there is no reason to suffer, because we are here to support them. I want to mention the concept of dependent origination. It says that everything depends on another and everything is conditioned: A leads to B and B leads to C. It helps to understand that the situation is like that because of karma. All is linked with each other. I learned to apply Buddhist teachings to understand this interrelatedness in the practical situations.
The staff needs to be well trained in order to successfully and professionally work with the participants. Working as a team is very important. The team working in the program – monks, community members, and the chiefs of the community – was trained at the hospital before working at the center. The form of training has been determined by the government and it takes place at the Thanyarak Hospital in Bangkok. There is also the *New Life Center* (Christian) where we learn about diversity. Generally, it is important to use methods that can be flexibly applied according to the needs of the people in the specific situations and contexts.

PICHLER: What is your personal impression of the success of the program?

CHAIYATHA: In my opinion the program has mainly been a success. There are many successful cases, but there are also some less successful cases: Some of the participants started using drugs again after going back to their homes. Sometimes they get in conflict with the law again and the Department of Probation sends them to another program, for example to a military camp to train in discipline. Compared to the Buddhist rehabilitation program at the temple, the military camp is very different in its approach. However, we all work together; sometimes monks go to the military camp and give dhamma talks. The abbot of Thep Mongkol temple set up an organization under which different social projects were established; such as a school, a kindergarten, a museum, and the Quality Development of Life Center[3]. Community participation is an important aspect of all the projects. There is a range of social

3 The center was relocated from Thep Mongkol temple to Bankaobo temple in Amnat Charoen, where the program is currently conducted.

activities with the aim of providing supportive social structures that prevent problems like drug addiction to a certain extent beforehand.

There are many examples of former drug addicts that contribute to society in good ways after leaving the Buddhist drug rehabilitation center. The aim is to enable the participants to return to society as good persons and good members of society. Social reintegration serves the former drug addicts, the community members, harmony in society, and prevents future problems. Drugs are a big issue in Thailand and the society uses a lot of money to address the problem. Especially North-East Thailand is affected, because drugs are smuggled in from the neighboring countries of Laos and Cambodia. Alcohol is a big problem as well.

In the center we live like a family and share everything. That loving environment supports the participants to open their minds. In the temple they can find loving kindness and there are no guns, etc. It is very different compared to the military camp. It is difficult to help these people. They need loving kindness, tolerance, and sincerity. In order to work successfully, it needs people from all fields of society to work together, because drug addiction does not only concern individuals, but is a social issue. When people from different fields of society are involved, it also creates a sense of shared responsibility.

From a personal perspective I believe that the experiences at the center also helped me to grow. Through observation and participation I have strengthened my personal beliefs and gained great merit. I also gained great happiness and satisfaction from seeing the rehabilitated 'ex-addicts' return to become fully functioning members of society.

PICHLER: What do you see as the main reasons for getting addicted to drugs?

CHAIYATHA: There are many conditions: for example friends or environment. There is the aspect of fashion and popularity and a lot of entertainment such as bars, etc. Sometimes people push others to take drugs. Bad social conditions such as living in slums, broken families, and lack of education are also problematic. Family problems could be divorce and separation or fights within the families. Some parents are not a good example to their children and don't know how to advise them. Another reason is that many people want to make money through selling drugs – even people from the government or police – and they try to get young people addicted. Even if they are rich already they want to make more money. It is important to see that there are many conditions that lead to taking drugs; it is not only one condition.

PICHLER: What do you think about the future potential of applying Buddhist ideas in responding to drug addiction? How would you envision dealing with drug issues in society?

CHAIYATHA: In my opinion, it is not only Buddhist ideas, beliefs, and traditions that can be applied to these rehabilitation programs. Anywhere where the ideals of loving kindness and compassion can be found, these principles can be applied. But spirituality, love, kindness, and compassion are just the start. It will take all levels of society, from spiritual leaders, through the medical profession, to the legal and probation services, to work together as a cohesive whole in order to meet the difficulties inherent in drug addiction.

At the center we put strong emphasis on establishing contact between the participants of the program and the community members. Instead of isolating the participants from the rest of society we should rather provide structures that enable encounter, where people can support each other and increase mutual understanding. Loving kindness and compassion can provide the basis for working with people to overcome drug addiction. Also other problems, conflicts, and crimes in society can be approached with loving kindness and compassion. We are all linked with each other and depend on one another, so we need to take good care of and support each other, even if we sometimes make mistakes. That is all part of our experience.

PICHLER: Is there something more that you would like to mention? Do you have another comment?

CHAIYATHA: When we were working with the government officials from the Department of Probation in Ubon Ratchathani in 1999, it was a different team dynamic than it is now in Amnat Charoen. Many of the government officials that were supposed to work with us as a team just didn't come. It seems like their intention of doing the program was more to have a high position in the job and to earn more money, rather than truly wanting to support the program. It makes me sad. Now, in Amnat Charoen, the teamwork is better. The team in Ubon Ratchathani is still there, but a few years ago a new center in Amnat Charoen was opened that is responsible for this area. I would like to finish by reiterating the value of good team work in this field.

PICHLER: Thank you for this interview and sharing your knowledge and experiences!

One Mountain – One Struggle: A Story About Zombies, Dragons, Punks, and Farmers in Their Fight Against Giants

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The exploitation of natural resources in Indonesia is not a new phenomenon. Ever since the Dutch colonial period, there has been massive cultivation, excavation, and cheap production for export to the global North. The history of exploitation is as old and diverse as the history of resistance against it.

Within the scope of this photo reportage, I wish to illustrate a social movement which is not well known even inside Indonesia, and yet is definitely worth the discussion for its uniqueness and plurality: the *Sedulur Sikep* (siblings 'Sikep') and the surrounding solidarity movement. Its focus, such as mine, is on a current topic: the resistance against the construction of large cement factories in the regions of Blora, Pati, Rembang, Grobongan, and Kudus in Central Java, Indonesia. *Semen Indonesia* (SI) (previously: *Semen Gresik*, SG) and *Indosemen*[2] are the main counterparts in this conflict.

In 2006, the largest Indonesian cement company, SI, published plans for a factory building in Pati for the first time. In the name of economic growth and regional development, this project would bring only good to local residents. However, these alleged 'local profiteers' could not get anything out of this idea. In their opinion, the project would only benefit private stakeholders. In their experience, only destroyed nature, contaminated water, and high pollution as well as their long-term effects would be left over for them.

A big part of the population living in the region belongs to the movement of *Saminists*; they call themselves *Sedulur Sikep* (term for siblings) or *Wong Sikep* (term for

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2 Indosemen collaborates with the cement giant Heidelberg Cement also known for its human rights violations.

an individual). The illiterate farmer Samin Surosentiko (1859-1914) from Randublatung is the founding father of this movement. His doctrines were spread towards the end of the nineteenth and beginning of the twentieth century. He and his followers resisted non-violently against the Dutch colonial empire and especially against the taxation of their fields and the closure of teak forests for locals.

The new enemy is national and multinational corporations and the state, which especially threaten teak forests and karst mountains. Despite pressure from paramilitary units and *Preman* (gangsters), the Sedulur Sikep refuse to sell their land, resist generous corruption offers, and react with peaceful campaigns to constantly recurring attempts to construct factories. It is due to them and the surrounding solidarity movement that, until today, it has not come to more than the plans to construct these factories.

In the early 2000s, a young solidary movement (today: *Gerakan Rakyat Menggugat*, GERAM – Popular Movement of Resistance) was founded. The different grassroots organizations call themselves *Saminista Anarkista*[3], *Supersamin*, *Samijoyo Allstars*, or *Anak Seribu Pulau*. Their main objective is the fight against exploitation through large-scale enterprises like *Exxon Mobile* or SI. The activists mainly come from rural regions, mostly without access to higher education. They independently upgrade their education outside of state institutions via self-organized projects and workshops as well as the Internet and various social networks. What makes the movement, borne by traditional *Sedulur Sikep* and the young generation, so successful, is the efficient communication and cooperation with the local population as well as among the generations. They manage to accommodate punk concerts, zombie costumes, and traditional Javanese music and theater.[4]

3 The term *Saminista* is reminiscent of the *Zapatistas* in Chiapas/ Mexico, whom they sympathize with.

4 What is interesting here is that especially the punk movement, in all its facets and anarchism, has become very popular.

BOTH PAGES: “Jangan korbankan rakyatmu hanya untuk pabrik semen!”, meaning “Stop victimizing your people just for a cement factory!” On 29 April 2013, the JM-PPK organized a protest campaign in front of the government building in Pati. The decisive factor was the new phenomenon of annual floods in the region of North Kendeng. The massive karst depletion and deforestation of the coveted teak forests are to blame for the floods. The residents demand the forest be preserved as protection against floods and the government’s campaign pledge to protect Kendeng honored. Farmers from the whole region traveled to Pati with 30 trucks to bring their claims before the local government. “Pabrik Semen penjajah Kendeng” means the cement factories are colonizing/occupying Kendeng. The dragon in the background is Nagaraja, one of the guards of the Kendeng mountains.


PABRIK SEME
PENJAJAH
KENDENG

Mbak Guarti (LEFT) and Pak Gunretno (RIGHT), Wong Sikep from Sukolilo, Pati, and members of the SPP and JM-PPK , co-organized the following campaign. An alliance of several organizations, farmers, and young rural residents managed to delay the factory construction until now and prevent further projects. “One fight may have been won, but the real war is imminent, so it is not yet time for jubilation”, Mbak Gunarti said (personal communication, April 29, 2013, in Sukolilo, Pati).

Sedulur Sikep and young activists in Desa Sumber, Kradenan, Blora. The Sedulur Sikep refuse to defer to state structures and institutions, they have their own religion *Agama Adam* (not one of the five recognized religions in Indonesia), do not speak Bahasa Indonesia, but only *Ngoko* (low-level Javanese), and homeschool their children. They are also known for shrewdly circumventing questions and answering in their own, often seemingly cynical, way.

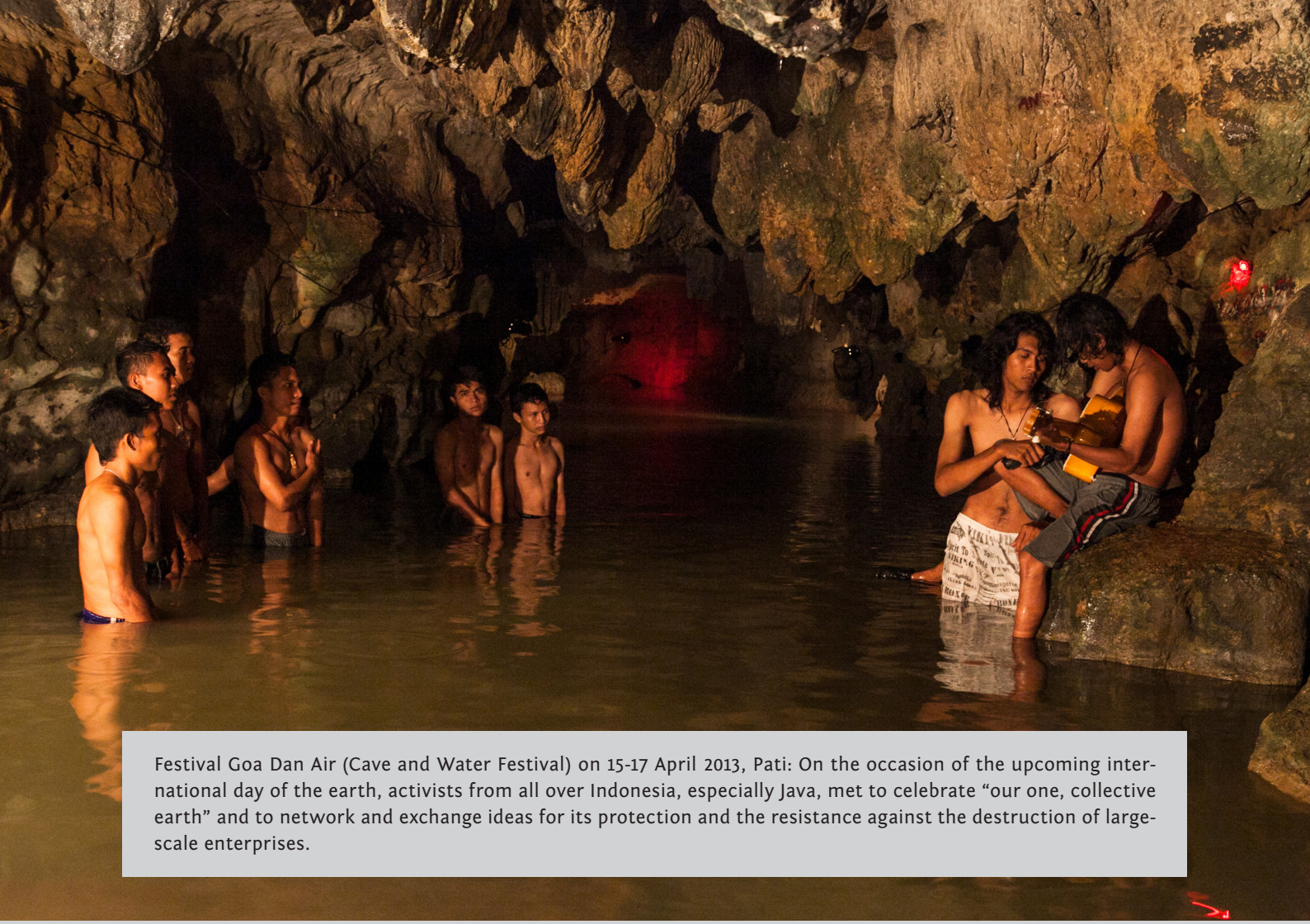
The Sedulur Sikep live on subsistence farming and reject any kind of trade. As far as possible, they also try to subsist without the use of money. They are not only proud of being farmers, but also of their knowledge of organic farming. The planned construction of factories would contaminate the water and enhance the risk of natural catastrophes, they say.

There is not yet any large-scale mechanical karst exploitation in the region, but there are small mines everywhere, in which underpaid laborers remove karst themselves in the midday heat using simple tools. On average, a laborer earns IDR 10,000 per day; that is about USD 1.

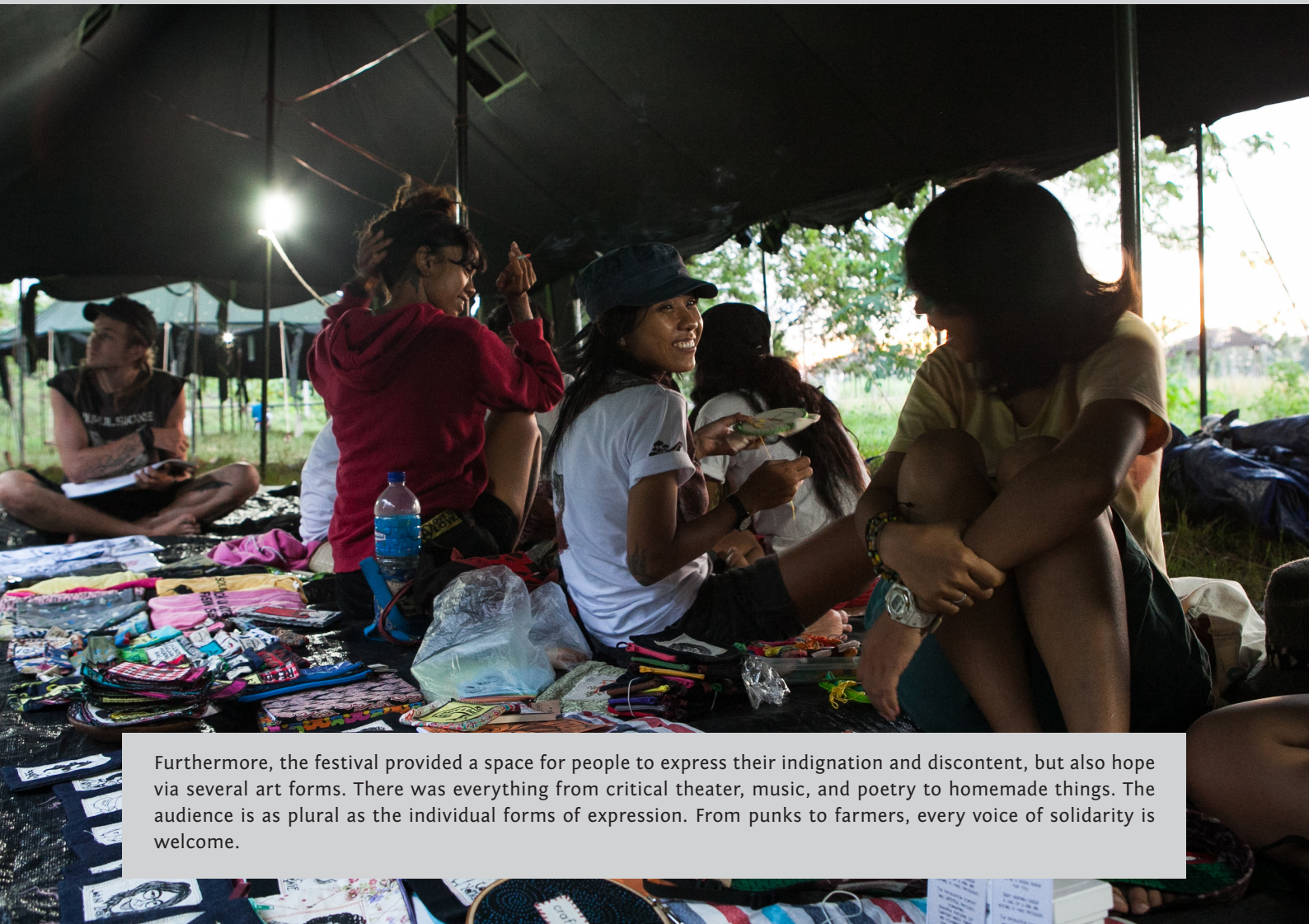
The mined karst is sold to small-scale entrepreneurs, who subsequently supply to large-scale companies. Even if only comparatively small amounts are mined here, the negative consequences are already noticeable.

BOTH PAGES: Blora on 27 April 2013: A demonstration at the home of the well-known sociocritical writer Pramoedya Ananta Toer (1925-2006). On the occasion of the third anniversary of his death on 30 April, Soesilo Toer presented a book on the life of his brother. Activists and artists were invited to participate at the event. “The masks serve the traditional theater Barongan. Barongan is the embodiment of Singa Barong – the guard of the forest. Zombies portray the living dead – the ghosts of the ancestors. Together with the ghosts of the forest and the powers of the ancestors, they fight against the danger of mining companies.

BOTH PAGES: The combination of Barongan and zombie costumes is a combination of two cultures – a traditional and a modern one,” explains Eko Arifianto, alias Koko . He further explicates, “Over time, art forms of the own culture often disappeared and thus must be maintained. Java has a whole lot of potential, traditions, historical sites, culture, and natural resources, which must not be destroyed by globalization and capital; because it is these systems that make us zombies of consumption” (personal communication, April 27, 2013, in Blora).



Festival Goa Dan Air (Cave and Water Festival) on 15-17 April 2013, Pati: On the occasion of the upcoming international day of the earth, activists from all over Indonesia, especially Java, met to celebrate “our one, collective earth” and to network and exchange ideas for its protection and the resistance against the destruction of large-scale enterprises.



Furthermore, the festival provided a space for people to express their indignation and discontent, but also hope via several art forms. There was everything from critical theater, music, and poetry to homemade things. The audience is as plural as the individual forms of expression. From punks to farmers, every voice of solidarity is welcome.

ABOVE & BELOW + NEXT PAGE: The activist Jatra Palepati (Attak) produces t-shirts, stickers, and other accessories with revolutionary motives; he publishes a fanzine and organizes workshops and exhibitions in Pati with his collective Roemah Goegah (House of Uprising).


PEJUANG
DI JAMAN
Merdeka"
SABLON KAOS BUNG!
PANGAN BUKAN TAMBANG
RUKUN
FRIEDRICH NIETZSCHE
Indomie

Underneath the huge billboards for SG on the one hand and the governor Bibit Waluyo (Central Java, 2008-2013) on the other, workers demonstrated on 1 May 2013, in Semarang for better working conditions. *Bali Deso – Mbangun Deso* (Return to the village and reconstruct it) – the slogan of the governor – is directed against urbanization and promotes return to rural hometowns. The knowledge acquired in the city or outside of Central Java should be used for the development of the local regions. The fact that SG has adopted this slogan for advertising purposes also demonstrates the close collaboration between the state and the major enterprise. Incidentally, the home of Bibit Waluyo is right behind SG's billboard.

1 May 2013, Semarang: The Food not Bombs (FNB) movement as well as the anonymous mask are well known expressions of resistance. They, too, express solidarity with the movement against the factory construction.

Digie Sigit is a well-known street artist, political activist, and musician from Yogyakarta. His work *Terimah Kasih Untuk Petani* (Many thanks to the farmers) is directed against the marginalization of the peasantry through the capitalistic, consumerist society, and is also supposed to demonstrate the cohesion between the rural and urban population.

"The Indonesian society has to develop a consciousness for its history and its cultural roots, in order not to mutate into self-destructive consumerist zombies", explains Digie Sigit (personal communication, Mai 2, 2013, in Yogyakarta).

Südostasien in Österreich: Dreikönigsaktion, Hilfswerk der Katholischen Jungschar Österreichs

Philipp Bück[1]

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Die Dreikönigsaktion (DKA) ist das Hilfswerk der Katholischen Jungschar Österreichs und mit über 80.000 aktiven Kindern die größte Kinderorganisation Österreichs. Neben dem Sternsingen als solidarischem Handeln von Kindern werden von den Jungschar-Gruppen auch entwicklungspolitische Themen spielerisch-kreativ mit freizeitpädagogischen Methoden aufgegriffen. Während der jährlich stattfindenden Sternsinger-Aktion wurden im Jahr 2012 österreichweit Spenden im Wert von EUR 15,3 Millionen gesammelt. Um diese Spenden wirksam einzusetzen, ist seit den 1960er Jahren die DKA als entwicklungspolitisches Hilfswerk der Katholischen Jungschar entstanden.

Als kirchliches Hilfswerk umfasst unser Auftrag das solidarische Engagement zugunsten benachteiligter Menschen, basierend auf der UN-Charta und allgemeinen Erklärung der Menschenrechte sowie dem Prinzip der Option für die Armen, dem zentralen Bestandteil der kirchlichen Soziallehre. Die Erfahrungen und Selbstbestimmung benachteiligter Menschen in der von Ausbeutung und Ungerechtigkeit bestimmten Gesellschaft stehen im Zentrum unseres Engagements.

In Südostasien unterstützt die DKA seit den 1960er Jahren hauptsächlich Projekte und Initiativen in den Philippinen.[2] Seit 1991 sind die Philippinen mit einem Budget von insgesamt EUR 1,1 Millionen ein Schwerpunktland unserer Projektförderung. Derzeit werden etwa 50 Projekte finanziert. Neben der Projektförderung bietet die Jungschar/DKA einen jährlichen *LernEinsatz*, ein einmonatiges *Exposure-Programm* für

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2 In Einzelfällen hat es in der Vergangenheit Unterstützungen in Indonesien, Malaysia, Thailand, Vietnam, Myanmar sowie bis 2006 regelmäßige Projektförderungen in Osttimor gegeben.

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entwicklungspolitisch Interessierte, sowie *SolidarEinsätze*[3], das sind mehrmonatige Praktika und Volontariate bei philippinischen Partnerorganisationen, an.

In unserer Projektförderung unterstützen wir ausschließlich lokale, nicht-staatliche Organisationen, meist aus dem kirchlichen Umfeld. In den Philippinen teilt sich die DKA mit der katholischen Frauenbewegung (kfb) ein Projektreferat über die Arbeitsgemeinschaft Projekte. Die PhilippinenreferentInnen der DKA betreuen daher auch Projekte der kfb[4].

Regional konzentriert sich die Projektförderung derzeit auf die Regionen Nord Luzon, die administrative Region der Cordilleren (CAR), die Region Infanta, den Großraum Metro Manila sowie vereinzelte Gebiete in den Visayas. In Mindanao sind die Schwerpunktregionen Davao (Davao City, Davao del Sur, Davao Oriental), Zentralmindanao (Maguindanao, Provinz Nord Cotabato) sowie CARAGA (Nordostmindanao). Hier sind über die Jahre erfolgreiche Netzwerke und Projektpartnerschaften entstanden. Die meisten Partnerorganisationen leisten Basisarbeit im ländlichen Raum, daneben unterstützt die DKA auch einige überregional anwaltschaftlich arbeitende NGOs und Netzwerke.

Inhaltlich bewegt sich unser Projektpartnerspektrum in fünf Themenfeldern. Diese wurden in 2008 in Folge einer Systematisierung auf Basis bestehender Kooperationen und zukünftiger Herausforderungen identifiziert.

Gesicherte Lebensgrundlagen

Ländliche Armut ist in den Philippinen von kleinbäuerlicher (Subsistenz-)Landwirtschaft, ausbeuterischen Pachtverhältnissen, mangelhafter Infrastruktur, starkem Bevölkerungsdruck, Überschuldung, geringem Mechanisierungsgrad und schlechtem Marktzugang und unzureichendem Zugang zu sozialen Dienstleistungen geprägt. Häufig spielen auch bewaffnete Konflikte im Zusammenhang mit Landreformen, Landnahme oder Bergbau eine Rolle. Die DKA unterstützt daher gezielt Projekte, die gesicherte Lebensgrundlagen durch ökologische kleinbäuerliche Landwirtschaft mit integrierten und lokal angepassten Ansätzen schaffen.

3 Nähere Informationen zu Voraussetzungen und Auswahlkriterien für Lern- und SolidarEinsätze finden sich unter: http://dka.at/globales-und-lernen

4 Die kfb hat in den Philippinen ein Budget von derzeit EUR 250.000.

Die *Don Bosco Foundation for Sustainable Development* ist beispielsweise auf Mindanao tätig. Sie bietet mit dem Umstieg auf biodynamischen Anbau seit den 1990er Jahren Bauernfamilien eine Möglichkeit, aus der teuren und in Armut und Abhängigkeit führenden konventionellen Landwirtschaft auszusteigen. Neben der Beratung in nachhaltigen Landwirtschaftsmethoden haben sich ökologische Kleinbauern und -bäuerinnen in einer Kooperative zusammengeschlossen. Sie werden bei der Saatgut- und Produktentwicklung sowie Vermarktung von Don Bosco unterstützt.

Menschenrechte und Zivilgesellschaft

Die Menschenrechtssituation in den Philippinen ist durch einen grundsätzlich guten normativen gesetzlichen Rahmen, jedoch ebenfalls durch mangelhafte Umsetzung desselben gekennzeichnet. Insbesondere rechtlose Räume und Straflosigkeit im Hinblick auf Morde, Verschleppungen und Gewalttaten durch staatliche Sicherheitskräfte oder Privatarmeen einflussreicher Personen werden von MenschenrechtsverteidigerInnen seit Jahren kritisiert. Die philippinische Zivilgesellschaft ist zudem ideologisch komplex und von internen Konflikten durchzogen. Bei der Projektauswahl wird daher auf Gewaltfreiheit, Transparenz und politische Offenheit geachtet und in der anwaltschaftlichen Arbeit unserer PartnerInnen spielen Rechtsberatung und die Durchsetzung von Rechten benachteiligter Gruppen eine zentrale Rolle.

In der Provinz Casiguran, Aurora, wird zur Zeit die Sonderwirtschaftszone *Aurora Pacific Economic Zone and Freeport Authority* (APECO) errichtet. Sie umfasst 12.427 Hektar und betrifft fünf Gemeinden in Casiguran, Aurora. Das APECO-Projekt wird von der einflussreichen Angara-Familie, einer bekannten politischen Familie, getragen. Widerstand gibt es vor allem von Seiten der Kirche und der indigenen Bevölkerung. Es ist bereits zu Mordanschlägen, Vertreibungen und Missachtung von Konsultationsprozessen gekommen. Die *Task Force Anti-APECO* lobbyiert auf nationaler Ebene gegen das APECO Projekt und wird dabei von der DKA unterstützt.

Bildung

Bewusstseinsbildung spielt in vielen integrierten Entwicklungsprogrammen eine zentrale Rolle, um marginalisierte Gruppen zu selbstbestimmtem Handeln zu ermächtigen. Eine wichtige Rolle spielt in unserer Projektförderung die Unterstützung indigener Bildungsprogramme. Vernetzung und gemeinsames Lernen sowie Prozesse, die die übergreifende Reflexion von Entwicklungsfragen der lokalen Gemeinden stärken, sind für den Erfolg von Entwicklungsprogrammen in ressourcenarmen, marginalisierten Gemeinden von entscheidender Bedeutung.

Das *Tribal Center for Development* arbeitet mit einem integrierten Bildungsprogramm in entlegenen mehrheitlich von indigenen Agta bewohnten Gemeinden in den Provinzen Quezon und Aurora. Kernbestandteile sind zehn Schulen mit kulturangepasstem Lehrplan, Stipendienprogramm und ergänzenden Programmen zur Ernährungssicherheit, Ausbildung von Gemeinde- und GesundheitsarbeiterInnen sowie anwaltschaftlichem Engagement für Landrechte und gegen mehrere Großprojekte in den Sierra Madre Bergen. Außerdem werden Forschungs- und Dokumentationsmaßnahmen zur indigenen Sprache und Kultur sowie Kapazitätenbildungsmaßnahmen für indigene lokale Organisationen durchgeführt.

Stärkung von Kindern und Jugendlichen

Die Unterstützung von Präventivprogrammen und Kinderrechtsinitiativen sowie die Begleitung von Kindern und Jugendlichen in Krisensituationen sind ein wichtiger Fokus unserer Projektförderung. Neben der Unterstützung anwaltschaftlicher Programme zur Einforderung und Umsetzung von Kinderrechten, sind das Empowerment von Kinder- und Jugendgruppen zur lokalen politischen Beteiligung und persönlichen Entwicklung als zukünftige EntscheidungsträgerInnen wichtige Ansätze der Projektarbeit unserer PartnerInnen.

So setzt sich zum Beispiel die NGO *Child Alert* in den städtischen Slums von Davao City für die politische Beteiligung und Ermächtigung von Kindern und Jugendlichen auf der Ebene der Lokalregierung ein.

Kirche im Dienst an den Menschen

Die katholische Kirche hat auf den Philippinen eine sehr große Bedeutung und viele unserer ProjektpartnerInnen sind Organisationen aus dem kirchlichen Bereich bzw. Umfeld. Derzeit konzentrieren sich viele Projekte in diesem Themenfeld auf die Kinder- und Jugendpastoral sowie auf die Zusammenarbeit mit Diözesen für den Aufbau von Basisgemeinden und sozialpastoraler Arbeit. Daneben spielt die Unterstützung philippinischer pastoraler Institute bei der Aus- und Weiterbildung von pastoral arbeitenden Personen aus dem gesamtasiatischen Raum eine wichtige Rolle.

Der *Marinduque Council for Environmental Concerns* (MACEC) wurde in den 1980er Jahren von der Diözese Boac gegründet. Nach dem großen Bergbauunglück auf Marinduque im Jahr 1996 beteiligte sich MACEC maßgeblich an den anwaltschaftlichen Aktivitäten der betroffenen Bevölkerung, seither ist die Organisation von der Diözese mit der Anwaltschaft für Umweltfragen und der Unterstützung für die Geschädigten der Umweltkatastrophen betraut. MACEC ist eine Vorreiterorganisation, was die Bewusstseinsbildung in Bezug auf die negativen Folgen des Bergbaus betrifft.

Neben unserer Projektförderung werden viele ProjektpartnerInnen von lokalen ExpertenInnen inhaltlich und organisatorisch begleitet. Zu diesem Zweck arbeiten wir mit *Integrated Pastoral Development Initiatives* (IPDI), einer auf Projektbegleitung spezialisierten lokalen NGO, sowie nach Bedarf mit weiteren lokalen BeraterInnen zusammen. Der Bedarf wird hierbei durch die inhaltlichen und organisatorischen Herausforderungen der ProjektpartnerInnen bestimmt. Das Projektmonitoring wird zudem auf regelmäßigen Projektreisen der zuständigen LänderreferentInnen geleistet, mit bedarfsweiser Unterstützung durch lokale BeraterInnen. Eine Stärke der DKA in den Philippinen ist die intensive PartnerInnenbetreuung. Durch Vorortbegleitung durch IPDI und regelmäßige Projektreisen können ProjektpartnerInnen durch Trainings im inhaltlichen und organisatorischen Bereich, über die reine Projektfinanzierung hinaus gestärkt werden. Auf die Nutzung von Synergien über bestehende zivilgesellschaftliche Netzwerke wie zum Beispiel über MASIPAG (*Magsasaka at Siyentipiko para sa Pag-unlad ng Agrikultura*, oder Farmer-Scientist Partnership for Development) im Bereich der ländlichen Entwicklung, wird Wert gelegt.

Zudem sind wir mit anderen nationalen und internationalen Hilfswerken vernetzt und in den Philippinen an verschiedenen Formen der Kofinanzierung beteiligt. Hier

sind häufig enge Absprachen zur Sicherstellung der GeldgeberInnen-Kohärenz notwendig.

Angesichts des Rückgangs an Spendenmitteln in Folge der Wirtschaftskrise, der hilfswerkspolitischen Neuorientierung vieler internationaler Hilfswerke, sowie des anhaltend schwachen Euros im Vergleich zum Peso sind viele unserer Partnerorganisationen mit einem Rückgang an Projektfinanzierung konfrontiert. Zukünftig spielen daher Maßnahmen zur Stärkung der finanziellen Nachhaltigkeit, sowie zu einer besseren Nutzung von Synergien mit anderen Hilfswerken und lokalen Fachorganisationen eine wichtigere Rolle. Außerdem wird im Zuge des zu erwartenden wirtschaftlichen Aufstiegs der Philippinen und in der Hoffnung auf eine verbesserte Umsetzung des normativen gesetzlichen Rahmens die Befähigung von lokalen Basisorganisationen zur politischen Mitsprache bei der Umsetzung staatlicher Projekte und Programme wichtiger. Als Hilfswerk steht die DKA hier vor der Herausforderung, diesen Bedarf an zusätzlichen Kapazitäten bei unseren ProjektpartnerInnen in einem Umfeld zurückgehender Kooperationen anderer Hilfswerke mit der philippinischen Zivilgesellschaft zu decken.

Ford, Michele (Hrsg.). (2013).
Social Activism in Southeast Asia.

Oxon, NY: Routledge. ISBN: 978-0-415-52355-4 (hbk). 214 Seiten.

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Mit 8,5 Prozent der Weltbevölkerung hat Südostasien eine der weltweit höchsten Bevölkerungsdichten und ist gleichzeitig eine der ethnographisch heterogensten Regionen der Erde. Zehn der elf Nationalstaaten ist eine koloniale Vergangenheit gemeinsam, heutige südostasiatische Regierungssysteme reichen von absoluter Monarchie über verschiedene Ausprägungen autoritärer, repressiver und sozialistischer Regime bis hin zu diversen Abstufungen liberal-demokratischer Systeme. Für die dynamischen gesellschaftlichen und politischen Veränderungsprozesse des Erdteils spielt sozialer Aktivismus eine entscheidende Rolle.

Social Activism in Southeast Asia ist zu Beginn des Jahres 2013 der jüngste Band in der zeitgenössischen Südostasien Reihe des Routledge Verlags und bietet aktuelle Studien zu den mannigfaltigen Ausprägungen und Kontexten zivilgesellschaftlichen Aktivismus in Südostasien. Die zwölf Kapitel des Buches enthalten Beiträge hochrangiger WissenschaftlerInnen aus sieben Nationen – drei davon aus Südostasien –, die theoretische Modelle zur Entstehung sozialer Bewegungen mit detailliertem Wissen über die Region vereinen.

Die Herausgeberin Michele Ford ist Direktorin des Südostasienzentrums der Universität Sydney und eröffnet den Sammelband mit einer Einführung in wissenschaftliche Hintergründe zur Entstehung neuer Theoriezweige, als die Protestbewegungen der 1960er Jahre nicht mehr durch gemeinsam erfahrene Missstände einer Bevölkerungsgruppe erklärt werden konnten. In diesem Zusammenhang analysiert der westeuropäisch geprägte Ansatz der *Neuen Sozialen Bewegungen* die Bedeutung identitätsstiftender und universeller Themen für kollektiven Aktivismus, während die aus den USA stammende *Ressource Mobilization Theory* von rationalem Handeln der AkteurInnen ausgeht und die *Political Process Theory* den Grad der Liberalität politischer Regime untersucht. Der *Social Constructivist Approach* thematisiert die Reproduktion

von Sinn und Positionierung einer Bewegung durch *Framing* – ein Ansatz, der sich ebenso wie das Konzept *transnationaler Aktionsnetzwerke*, mit denen globale Allianzen untersucht werden, als geeignet für die Untersuchung von südostasiatischem Aktivismus erweist. Ford bemängelt universelle Geltungsansprüche wissenschaftlicher Modelle, deren Ursprünge im globalen Norden liegen, und empfiehlt die Analyse sozialer Bewegungen aus multiplen theoretischen Perspektiven.

Garry Rodan präsentiert im zweiten Kapitel ein Modell zur Differenzierung zwischen individuellem und kollektivem Aktivismus und der jeweiligen Beziehung zum Staat. Die Legitimation eines Regimes sieht Rodan gestärkt durch die Eingliederung autonomer Kräfte in das politische System, und macht nicht zuletzt kapitalistische Entwicklungen und internationale Unterstützung autoritärer Regime während des Kalten Krieges für eingeschränkte Handlungsspielräume südostasiatischer Zivilgesellschaften verantwortlich.

Edward Aspinall widmet seinen Beitrag der Unabhängigkeitsbewegung in Aceh, für deren Mobilisierung kulturelles Erbe ebenso bedeutsam war wie der Machtverfall Suhartos. Als die Rebellen ihre Waffen für das Recht auf politische Partizipation eintauschten, gerieten ehemalige Anführer in Bedrängnis, ihr Handeln schlüssig zu argumentieren, da der ideologische Kern der Widerstandsbewegung auf „incompatibility of Acehnese and Indonesian identities" (S. 48) beruhte.

Im vierten Kapitel bietet Vincent Boudreau einen Abriss der philippinischen Demokratisierung, die mit der Absetzung Marcos offiziell eingeläutet wurde und sich in Form Jahrzehnte langer politischer Machtkämpfe und wechselhafter Allianzen entfaltete. Boudreau spricht von einer Institutionalisierung des Aktivismus, die sich in „periods of popular mobilisation, regime transition and political disappointment" (S. 68) niederschlug.

Im fünften Kapitel widerspricht Nicola Edwards mit einer Analyse dreier Fallbeispiele zu Indonesiens Bewegung für ökologische Landwirtschaft der unter anderem von Robert Michels vertretenen These des unvermeidlichen Radikalitätsverlustes durch den Prozess der institutionellen Eingliederung aktivistischer Kräfte.

Die prekäre Situation burmesischer ArbeitsmigrantInnen in Thailand beschreibt Dennis Arnold anhand des Grenzortes Mae Sot, in dem Flüchtlinge aus Myanmar Ausbeutung und Missbrauch durch ArbeitgeberInnen und Staatsgewalten beider Länder für einen unsicheren Arbeitsplatz eintauschen. Transnationale Solidarität und NGOs

beider Länder stärkten den rechtlichen Rückhalt der MigrantInnen, die sich durch Streiks und andere aktivistische Aktionen zunehmend Gehör verschafften.

Auch die von Andrew Brown und Sakdina Chatrkul Na Ayudhya im siebten Kapitel beleuchtete nationale ArbeiterInnenbewegung in Thailand hat eine schwierige Mission. Obwohl in den 1970er Jahren erstmals gewisse Rechte verankert wurden, führten kapitalistische Entwicklungen, die Asienkrise und politische Instabilität zu einer Schwächung der Gewerkschaften und zunehmender Beteiligung von ArbeiterInnen an alternativen Formen zivilgesellschaftlichen Aktivismus, was eine tendenzielle Zersplitterung der ArbeiterInnenklasse zur Folge hatte.

Dominique Caouette und Teresa S. Encarnacion Tadem schildern anhand von drei national orientierten Organisationen und zwei transnationalen Netzwerkinstitutionen die Anti-Globalisierungsbewegung auf den Philippinen. Obwohl es ihnen gelingt durch internationale Kooperation von verschiedenen Seiten Druck auf die Regierung auszuüben, stehen sich die Organisationen auf nationaler Ebene teilweise in oppositionellen Lagern gegenüber und sind somit „inherently local regardless of the scale at which they engage" (S. 120).

Im neunten Kapitel erörtert Thushara Dibley das Spannungsfeld zwischen Aktivismus und internationaler Entwicklungshilfe, in dem sich die Friedensbewegung in Osttimor seit 1999 befindet. Mit dem Einzug internationaler Hilfsorganisationen änderte sich die Prioritätensetzung timorischer AktivistInnen zugunsten von Geberkriterien, wodurch sich der Raum zur Entwicklung einer autonomen nationalen Friedensbewegung verringerte und es zu einer Entpolitisierung des Themas kam.

Kontroverse transnationale Einwirkungen auf die Bewegung für die Rechte von SexarbeiterInnen in Kambodscha analysiert Larissa Sandy in ihrem Beitrag. Spaltungen in der globalen Frauenbewegung, aber auch die Thematisierung von HIV/Aids und Menschenhandel, hatten direkte Auswirkungen auf den kambodschanischen Aktivismus, der trotz gewisser Erfolge einen herben Rückschlag erhielt, als die USA mit dem angedrohten Entzug von Entwicklungshilfegeldern Druck auf die ohnehin konservative Regierung ausübten, woraufhin diese ein Gesetz zur Kriminalisierung von Prostitution erließ.

Julian C. H. Lee setzt sich im elften Kapitel mit *Seksualiti Merdeka* auseinander, einer Bewegung für die Anerkennung nicht heteronormativer sexueller Orientierungen und Identitäten in Malaysia. Obwohl das Land historisch eine relativ liberale Position

einnahm, entwickelte sich durch koloniale und islamische Einflüsse ein höchst konservatives gesellschaftliches und politisches Umfeld. Mithilfe internationaler Allianzen und unter dem Deckmantel der Kunst gelang es der inoffiziellen Organisation dennoch, drei Jahre lang weitgehend unbehelligt zu bleiben.

Im letzten Kapitel nimmt Lenore Lyons einen Vorfall innerhalb der namhaftesten liberal-feministischen Organisation in Singapur unter die Lupe, der 2009 zu den höchsten „levels of mass participation outside of the political sphere for over fifty years" (S. 199) führte, als eine Gruppe konservativer Christinnen in das Präsidium der *Association of Women for Action and Research* (AWARE) gewählt wurde.

Social Activism in Southeast Asia bietet einen qualitativen Überblick zu sozialem Aktivismus in der Region und arbeitet die kontroverse Rolle historischer und aktueller internationaler Einflüsse heraus. Transnationale Netzwerke können den Artikulationsraum national basierter Aktionsgruppen erweitern und hinsichtlich argumentativer Professionalität, effektiven *Framings* und finanzieller Engpässe Unterstützung bieten. Letzteres birgt jedoch das Risiko des Authentizitätsverlustes, da Empfängerorganisationen, um als solche in Frage zu kommen, meist den Kriterien der Geberinstitutionen entsprechen müssen, womit die AutorInnen an Kritiken innerhalb des Entwicklungsdiskurses anknüpfen. Bereits Maria Eriksson Baaz (2005) argumentierte in diesem Zusammenhang, dass offizielle Partnerschaft auf Augenhöhe in der Praxis nicht umgesetzt wird, und Uma Kothari (2005) entlarvte die Professionalisierung der internationalen Entwicklungszusammenarbeit (EZA) als Triebkraft der neoliberalen Agenda. Für zukünftige Forschung mag die Unterscheidung zwischen unabhängigen und EZA-basierten Organisationen von Nutzen sein.

Die Kombination wissenschaftlicher Theorien unter Berücksichtigung regionalgeografischer Spezifika erlaubt es, komplexe Wirkungsmechanismen innerhalb südostasiatischer Aktivismen zu erfassen. Auch staatstheoretische Ansätze werden eingearbeitet und so erscheint der Nationalstaat zum Teil als Kontaktfläche rivalisierender AkteurInnen, als vermeintlicher Verbündeter oder als Gegenspieler.

Im globalen Norden verortete Produktion von Wissen über den globalen Süden wird zwar durch die Dominanz westlicher AutorInnen nicht eindeutig durchbrochen, das Buch kann aber dennoch als Alternative zu eurozentristischen Darstellungen gewertet werden, da die AutorInnen teilweise aus Südostasien stammen und Einflüsse aus dem globalen Norden insgesamt kritisch hinterfragen. Stereotype Welt- und Men-

schenbilder werden durch die profunde Analyse dynamischer Mobilisierungsstrategien und individueller Positionierung südostasiatischer AktivistInnen dekonstruiert.

Social Activism in Southeast Asia bietet nicht nur einen einzigartigen Beitrag für sozialwissenschaftliche Forschung und Theoriebildung, sondern auch eine spannende Lektüre für Südostasien Interessierte.

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Hall, Derek, Hirsch, Philip, & Li, Tania Murray (Hrsg.). (2011). Powers of Exclusion. Land Dilemmas in Southeast Asia.

Honolulu, HI: University of Hawaii Press. ISBN: 978-0-8248-36030. vii + 257 Seiten.

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Angetrieben von wirtschaftlichem Wachstum, Industrialisierung und weitgehender Urbanisierung finden in Südostasien seit den 1980er Jahren drastische Landnutzungsveränderungen statt, in deren Folge große Flächen an Agrarland für kommerzielle, industrielle, touristische und infrastrukturelle Zwecke umgewandelt werden. Als Konsequenz des steigenden Drucks zur Kommerzialisierung von Land, kombiniert mit einem Boom in der Nachfrage nach landwirtschaftlichen Erzeugnissen, sind heute Auseinandersetzungen zwischen lokalen Gemeinschaften, Staaten und privaten AkteurInnen rund um die Frage von Zugang zu und Kontrolle über Land allgegenwärtig. Mit *Powers of Exclusion. Land Dilemmas in Southeast Asia* widmen sich die AutorInnen Derek Hall, Philip Hirsch und Tania Murray Li diesen ländlichen Transformationsprozessen und erforschen, wer die daran beteiligten AkteurInnen sind, wie Prozesse der ländlichen Exklusion funktionieren, welche Dilemmas und Debatten durch besagte Transformationen provoziert werden und wer dabei schließlich als Gewinner oder Verlierer hervorgeht. Finanziert durch das kanadische Forschungsprogramm ChATSEA (*Challenges of the Agrarian Transition in Southeast Asia*) kombinieren die drei AutorInnen ihre durch extensive Feldforschung in den untersuchten Gebieten (Kambodscha, Indonesien, Laos, Malaysia, Philippinen, Thailand und Vietnam) erworbene Expertise mit ihren unterschiedlichen akademischen Hintergründen in Politikwissenschaft (Hall), Humangeographie (Hirsch) und Anthropologie (Li).

Im Gegensatz zu vielen bisher erschienenen Werken rund um den Zugang zu Land, setzen die AutorInnen von *Powers of Exclusion* ihren Fokus nicht auf den *Zugang* (*access*) zu, sondern auf den *Ausschluss* (*exclusion*) von Land. Dabei begreifen sie *exclusion* nicht als negativ konnotierten Prozess oder Zustand, der „den Schwachen" von „den Mächtigen" auferlegt wird, sondern definieren *exclusion* als „the ways in which people are *prevented* from benefiting from things (more specifically, land)" (S. 7). Damit

kehren sie Jesse Ribot und Nancy Peluso's Definition des Begriffes *Zugang* um, den sie in ihrem einflussreichen Artikel „A Theory of Access" (2003) als „the ability to benefit from things" definieren. Der Ausschluss von bestimmten AkteurInnengruppen ist bei dieser neuen Definition eine an sich neutrale Notwendigkeit für jede Art von Landnutzung, wobei sie in der Praxis oft mit Enteignung verbunden ist und zu Ungleichheit führt.

Die AutorInnen nähern sich der Frage, durch wen solche Formen des Ausschlusses perpetuiert werden, zunächst durch eine Analyse der Antworten von Betroffenen. Werden diese nach den Gründen ihres Ausschlusses von einem bestimmten Stück Land befragt, lauten die häufigsten Antworten, dass erstens der Zugang schlicht nicht erlaubt wäre, dass man es sich zweitens nicht leisten könne, dass man drittens bei dem Versuch verletzt werden würde und viertens, dass es schlichtweg falsch wäre. Aufgrund dieser Antworten schließen die AutorInnen auf folgende vier primären Kräfte (*powers*) in der Ausübung von *exclusion*: (1) Regulierung (*regulation*), (2) der Markt (*the market*), (3) Kraft/Gewalt (*force*), und schließlich (4) Legitimierung (*legitimation*). Die AutorInnen heben allerdings hervor, dass es keine festen Grenzen zwischen den besagten Kräften gibt, dass sie oft ineinander übergehen und dass vielfach auch andere soziopolitische Kräfte an der Ausübung von *exclusion* beteiligt sind.

Anhand dieser *powers of exclusion* analysieren Hall et al. sechs Schlüsselprozesse, die in Transformationsprozessen um den Zugang zu und Ausschluss von Land in Südostasien eine treibende Rolle spielen. Jedem dieser Schlüsselprozesse widmen die AutorInnen ein Kapitel.

Als ersten Schlüsselprozess identifizieren die AutorInnen *licensed exclusions*, worunter die Titulierung von Land, Landreformen und die Allokation von Land fallen. Sie heben hier die Rolle des Staates mit seiner regulativen Macht als Hauptakteur in den besagten Prozessen hervor und zeigen das beispielsweise an der Formalisierung von Grundbesitz auf Dorfniveau in Laos, wo durch das Programm für Land- und Waldallokation versucht wurde, Grenzen zwischen Wäldern und Agrarland und einem Dorf und dem anderen zu setzen.

Als nächsten Schlüsselprozess führen Hall et al. *ambient exclusions* an, die sich in erster Linie als Landreformen im Namen des Umweltschutzes manifestieren. In Südostasien sind Diskurse über den Umweltschutz seit den 1990er Jahren allgegenwärtig – in der Tat hat sich Umweltschutz als leitendes Grundprinzip in der Landschafts-

planung etabliert. Hall et al. zeigen, dass dies oftmals auch zum Ausschluss einer großen Anzahl von BewohnerInnen von Land führt, denn durch die Konzipierung einer Landschaft als Umweltschutzgebiet – ein an sich durchaus lobenswerter und notwendiger Prozess – werden wiederum zahllose Ortsansässige von der agrarischen Nutzung dieser Gebiete ausgeschlossen.

Die durch *crop booms* verursachten Änderungen im Zugang zu und Ausschluss von Land beschreiben die AutorInnen als *volatile exclusions* und zeigen damit ihren dritten Schlüsselprozess auf. *Crop booms* werden durch steigende Warenpreise, neue Anbautechniken und politische Interventionen verursacht und sind ein immer wieder auftauchendes Phänomen in Südostasien. Die drei im Buch untersuchten *boom crops* sind Palmöl in Malaysia, Shrimps in Thailand und Kaffee in Vietnam. Zwar hätten diese Entwicklungen Millionen südostasiatischer Bauern und Bäuerinnen Erfolg und Wohlstand gebracht, eine ähnlich hohe Anzahl an BürgerInnen bliebe allerdings von den Vorteilen, die *crop booms* bringen, ausgeschlossen.

Als vierten Schlüsselprozess sehen die AutorInnen *post-agrarian exclusions,* im Rahmen derer große landwirtschaftliche Flächen in nicht-landwirtschaftlich genutztes Land umgewandelt werden. Hall et al. analysieren, wie jene Menschen, die die konvertierten Länder für agrarische Zwecke genutzt hatten, nun von den konvertierten Ländern und den durch die Konvertierungen neu generierten Profitmöglichkeiten ausgeschlossen werden, bevor sie sich dem fünften Schlüsselprozess – *intimate exclusions* – zuwenden. Diese manifestieren sich dadurch, dass miteinander vertraute BürgerInnen sich gegenseitig zu Zwecken der Kapitalakkumulation den Zugang zu Land verwehren.

Als sechsten und letzten Schlüsselprozess sehen Hall et al. *counter exclusions*, in denen sich Gruppen mobilisieren, um Land von staatlichen Behörden oder anderen Gruppen zurückzufordern, womit sie auch ihre eigenen Rechte auf Ausschließung anderer fordern. Legitimierung spielt dabei eine zentrale Rolle; besagte Gruppen sichern sich UnterstützerInnen und fordern ihre Rechte auf das Land mittels Argumenten wie beispielsweise ihr Recht auf Lebensunterhalt, soziale Gerechtigkeit oder territoriale Zugehörigkeit ein. Bei der näheren Untersuchung einiger solcher Mobilisierungen kommen Hall et al. zu der Feststellung, „that people want the right to exclude, but don't want to be excluded" (S. 188).

Powers of Exclusion argumentiert durchgehend, dass Ausschluss von Land weder ein neues Phänomen ist, noch eines, das vermieden werden kann, da schließlich jede

produktive Nutzung von Land den Ausschluss anderer Menschen voraussetzt. Bei so rapiden und facettenreichen Landtransformationen, wie sie in den letzten Jahrzehnten in Südostasien stattgefunden haben, ist es von großer Bedeutung, das „wer" und „wie" dieser Veränderungen zu verstehen und zu analysieren, und *Powers of Exclusion* gelingt dies mit größter Sorgfalt und Besonnenheit. Das Buch brilliert durch seine übersichtliche Struktur, die es durchgehend einfach macht, den Überblick zu bewahren. Auch Quantität und Qualität der Fallbeispiele begeistern. Unterschiedliche AkteurInnen werden behandelt, von lokalen DorfbewohnerInnen über staatliche Institutionen, NGOs und soziale Bewegungen bis hin zu Agrarunternehmen. Die vier *powers of exclusion* bewähren sich bei der Analyse der verschiedenen Schlüsselprozesse als treibende Kräfte, wobei oft auch andere Faktoren, wie zum Beispiel technischer Fortschritt oder Umweltveränderungen, eine wichtige Rolle spielen. Die AutorInnen erkennen allerdings auch mehrmals an, dass ihre *powers* weder exklusiv noch isoliert wirken, und im Endeffekt erscheinen diese als logisch und auch außerhalb der untersuchten Regionen anwendbar. Für AkademikerInnen, die sich für Prozesse landschaftlicher Transformation interessieren und dafür, wie durch diese ökologische, ökonomische und soziopolitische Bedingungen neu definiert werden, ist *Powers of Exclusion* durchaus zu empfehlen.

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Jones, Lee (2012).
ASEAN, Sovereignty and Intervention in Southeast Asia.
Houndmills, UK: Palgrave Macmillan. ISBN: 9780230319264. i-xvi + 262 pages.

Citation Amer, R. (2013). Book Review: Jones, L. (2012). ASEAN, sovereignty and intervention in Southeast Asia. *ASEAS - Austrian Journal of South-East Asian Studies, 6*(1), 232-234.

The book by Lee Jones dealing with the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) is a welcomed contribution to the growing literature on ASEAN and on various dimensions of regional collaboration in the Southeast Asian region. The focus of the book on issues such as sovereignty and intervention is very relevant in the context of ASEAN and the region of Southeast Asia. Given the emphasis ASEAN puts on non-interference and on respect for sovereignty within the framework for regional collaboration that the Association promotes in Southeast and also increasingly in the broader Pacific Asia, the book addresses a highly relevant area of research from both scholarly and policy perspectives.

The structure of the book is as follows: The Introduction outlines the purpose and structure of the book (pp. 1-9); Chapter 1 is primarily devoted to theorizing the concepts of sovereignty and intervention (pp. 10-35). Part I is devoted to the Cold War era and is divided into three chapters: Chapter 2 deals with the social foundations of ASEAN and non-interference (pp. 39-57); Chapter 3 is devoted to ASEAN and East Timor (pp. 58-74); Chapter 4 is focused on ASEAN and the Cambodian conflict (pp. 75-91). Part II of the book is devoted to the Post-Cold War Period and is divided into four chapters: Chapter 5 deals with ASEAN after the Cold War with a focus on the crisis of the late 1990s (pp. 95-127); Chapter 6 looks at ASEAN and Cambodia in the Post-Cold War setting (pp. 128-149); Chapter 7 is devoted to ASEAN's response to the East Timor situation of the late 1990s (pp. 150-179); Chapter 8 deals with ASEAN policies towards Burma (pp. 180-210). In the Conclusion the main findings are summarized followed by a final analysis (pp. 211-228). This is followed by the notes (pp. 229-233) and references (pp. 234-252).

Jones outlines ASEAN's position on sovereignty and intervention including the primacy of the principle of non-interference and the importance of this principle

within the ASEAN framework for regional collaboration in Southeast Asia. Through empirical case studies taken from the region he then examines how these principles are applied in practice. Jones' empirical case studies display that the principle of non-interference is applied in a more flexible way than one would anticipate given the strong emphasis placed on the respect for sovereignty and non-interference in the internal affairs of the member states within the ASEAN framework. Since the situation during the Cold War period and the two cases of East Timor and Cambodia are addressed first, it can be observed that the first case was viewed as an internal Indonesian issue by ASEAN, while in the second case, besides the fact that Cambodia was not a member of ASEAN, the Association would argue that its policies were in response to Vietnam's military intervention in Cambodia. Thus, these two Cold War cases do not offer any strong evidence to inquire into the practical implementation of ASEAN's principles. The cases of East Timor and Cambodia, respectively, from the Post-Cold War Era are more convincing, and in particular the case of Cambodia. ASEAN even delayed admitting Cambodia as a member in 1997 on the grounds of the domestic developments in that country. This was a clear display of interference in the internal affairs of Cambodia. The case of Burma also offers a convincing example of the flexible implementation of ASEAN's principle of non-interference given that the internal developments in Burma have been scrutinized by ASEAN and by some of its member states.

Jones' findings highlight that ASEAN seems to experience a discrepancy between the stated principles of the Association as agreed upon by its member states and the policies conducted by its member states in practice both through their foreign policies and through ASEAN. This is not a unique situation as this phenomenon can be observed even more evidently in the context of the United Nations and its Charter and the policies conducted by its member states.

If a weakness can be found in the book, it relates to the fact that Jones disregards the legal foundations of the principle of non-interference. The focus of the book is on the international relations dimension. The linkage between the ASEAN principles and the Charter of the United Nations should also have been made more explicit in the book. This would have revealed to the reader how the fundamental principles of the ASEAN framework adhere to international law and to the provisions of the Charter of the United Nations.

To summarize, the book is an interesting contribution to the study of ASEAN and of regional collaboration in Southeast Asia, in particular on core issues such as sovereignty, intervention, and non-interference. Through its approach and originality, it complements existing literature in the field by offering new insights. The book can be recommended to both the scholarly community and policy makers. It is of considerable relevance to those interested in the Southeast Asian region as well as to those interested in regionalism and regional collaboration more broadly, given that issues such as sovereignty and intervention are of relevance in other regions as well. In fact, they are of global relevance.

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Südostasien im Buch

Neuerscheinungen

Kristina Großmann
Gender, Islam, Aktivismus. Handlungsräume muslimischer Aktivistinnen nach dem Tsunami in Aceh.
2013, ISBN 978-3-940132-58-1, 405 Seiten, 29,90 Euro (D)

Gender-spezifische Betrachtungen von Transformationsprozessen gewinnen seit einigen Jahren zunehmend an Bedeutung. Dabei werden nichtstaatliche Akteurinnen vermehrt in ihrer Rolle als „Agentinnen sozialen Wandels" zu Hoffnungsträgerinnen für positive Veränderung. Paradoxerweise erfahren Frauen in sogenannten Demokratisierungsprozessen von Ländern mit muslimischer Mehrheit steigenden Ausschluss und Reglementierungen im öffentlichen Raum. Ähnliche Prozesse sind innerhalb Acehs Transformationsprozess nach der Einführung der Syariat Islam und dem Tsunami zu beobachten.
Kristina Großmanns Ethnografie muslimischer Frauenrechtsaktivistinnen in Aceh zeigt deren Handlungsräume bezüglich der Konzeptionalisierung und Umsetzung ihrer Ziele sowie bezogen auf ihre persönlichen Lebensentwürfe. Durch die Analyse von Biographien, Beweggründen, Handlungsstrategien, Erfolgen und Hindernissen von Aktivistinnen sowie deren Einbettung in historische und politische Kontexte gibt das Buch Aufschluss über die persönlichen und gesellschaftlichen Visionen, die Aktivistinnen für Acehs Zukunft entwickeln, und mit welchen Erfolgen sie ihre Vorstellungen durchsetzen.

Yvonne Bach
Frauen in der Arbeitsmigration. Eine ethnographische Studie zu transnationalen Familien zwischen Singapur und Indonesien.
2013, ISBN 978-3-940132-52-9, 402 Seiten, 29,90 Euro (D)

Das Phänomen der transnationalen Familie gewinnt im asiatischen Kontext zunehmend an Bedeutung. So entscheiden sich in Indonesien immer mehr niedrig-qualifizierte Frauen, ihre Familien zu verlassen, um im ökonomisch besser gestellten Singapur im Bereich der Haushalts- und Pflegearbeit tätig zu werden. Bislang ist wenig bekannt darüber, wie die Frauen und ihre Familien miteinander in Kontakt stehen, was innerhalb der Familie ausgetauscht wird und wie sich die Familienstrukturen durch die Migration verändern.
Yvonne Bach folgt in dieser Studie einem multi-perspektivischen ethnographischen Ansatz und beleuchtet anhand von Fallbeschreibungen das Leben der Familienmitglieder in beiden Ländern. Neben einer ausführlichen theoretischen Einordnung zeichnet sie einzelne Migrationsprojekte nach: von der Entscheidung zur Migration, über das Zurechtfinden der Frauen im neuen Länderkontext, ihren Aktivitäten, ihrem Austausch mit der Familie, bis hin zu ihren Zukunftsperspektiven. Das Buch gewährt nicht nur einen spannenden Einblick in die Lebensrealitäten und Familiengefüge indonesischer Migrantinnen in Singapur, sondern eröffnet auch neue Perspektiven für die wissenschaftliche Auseinandersetzung mit dem Phänomen der transnationalen Familie.

Lena Bullerdieck: **Myanmar 2.0**. Eine Studie zum Einfluss neuer Medien auf gesellschaftlichen Wandel.
2013, ISBN 978-3-940132-56-7, 141 Seiten, 19,90 Euro (D)

Michael Waibel (Hrsg.): **Ho Chi Minh MEGA City** (Pazifik Forum Band 14).
2013, ISBN 978-3-940132-55-0, 272 Seiten, 19,90 Euro (D)

Genia Findeisen und Kristina Großmann (Hrsg.) für die Südostasien Informationsstelle:
Gewalt gegen Frauen in Südostasien und China. Rechtslage, Umgang, Lösungsansätze.
2013, ISBN 978-3-940132-54-3, 244 Seiten, 19,90 Euro (D)

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Conflict Dynamics & Transformations

The upcoming issue 7(1) of the *Austrian Journal of South-East Asian Studies* (ASEAS) will feature a focus on "*Conflict Dynamics and Transformations in South-East Asia*" and aims at bringing together researchers from various academic fields in order to gain a comprehensive understanding of this complex topic. In a broader perspective, the term "conflict" refers to the expression of opposing interests that shape complex societal negotiation processes. Although the mode of procedural conflict resolution through legitimate institutions is usually deemed most desirable, the post-colonial states of South-East Asia are still the arena of a significant number of intra-state conflicts that have been carried out violently, some for decades. On the other hand, during the last decade, South-East Asian governments have increasingly started to move from military conflict resolution approaches towards politically negotiated resolutions. To understand these dynamics and assess their implications for future developments in the region, ASEAS welcomes submissions on methodological and theoretical approaches to conflict studies as well as empirical research that illustrate recent trajectories of conflict dynamics and transformations in South-East Asia.

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- Local institutions of conflict mediation, regulation, and resolution

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Guest Editor: GUNNAR STANGE

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