

Challenges of the Agrarian Transition in Southeast Asia (ChATSEA)

Paul Kratoska

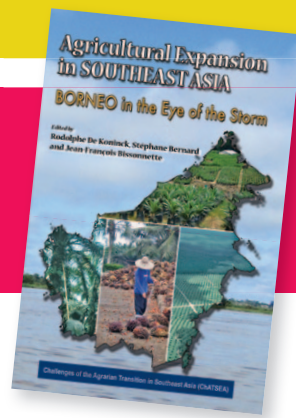
WHEN THE COUNTRIES OF SOUTHEAST ASIA became independent shortly after the end of the Pacific War, their populations were predominantly rural and agricultural, but today the region is rapidly urbanizing, and developing industrial and market-based economies. The ChATSEA project was conceived to study this transformation. Directed by Professor Rodolphe de Koninck, holder of the Canada Chair in Asian Research at the University of Montreal, the original round of research was supported by the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada under its Major Collaborative Research Initiative (MCRI) programme and was implemented over a period of nearly six years, from early 2005 to late 2010. The research team comprised 28 scholars, drawn primarily from economic, cultural and environmental geography but including participants working in history, sociology, anthropology, economics, women's studies, urban studies and planning. The team members, belonging to three generations of scholars, were attached to 21 different universities or research institutions: 10 in Canada, 7 in Southeast Asia, 2 in Europe and 1 in Australia.

Organizing framework

The agrarian transition is one of the most profound changes of the last three centuries. The transformation is largely complete in the wealthier countries of the global North, but in the developing societies of the global South it is still very much under way. The ChATSEA research team defined this transition as the transformation of primarily non-urban populations dependent upon agricultural production and organized through rural social structures to predominantly urbanized, industrialized and market-based societies. Six processes of change were identified as central to this transition, and they became the organizing framework upon which the project was based.

Agricultural intensification and territorial expansion; increasing integration of production into market-based systems of exchange; accelerating processes of urbanisation and industrialisation; heightened mobility of populations both within and across national borders; intensification of regulation, as new forms of private, state and supra-state power are developed and formalized to govern agricultural production and exchange relationships; and processes of environmental change that modify the relationship between society and nature to reflect new human impacts and new valuations of resources.

Geographically the project focused on Southeast Asia, a region that has undergone exceptionally dramatic shifts in its agrarian sector over the last three decades and represents both a role model and a cautionary example for the rest of the developing world. With nearly 600 million people, Southeast Asia is a key arena for global processes of economic growth, poverty reduction, environmental change, ethno-religious conflict and political security.



Conceptual windows

Classic understandings of the agrarian transition have largely drawn examples and approaches from a European context, leaving many questions unanswered when applied to the transition in the developing world. The project sought innovative understandings of this transition by developing a framework that reflected both current circumstances in societies experiencing the transition, and new approaches to social theory. Four perspectives, or conceptual 'windows', provided the integrative theoretical approach that underpinned the research project. They relate to an intensifying process of globalisation through which social processes are integrated across global space; a more complex allocation of resources in the form of livelihoods as issues of sustainability and equity are acknowledged; a reworking of spatiality, as processes of change are understood to be geographically uneven, and accepted spatial categories are reformulated; and, a recognition of the diverse array of institutions and actors that drive social change, as well as the importance of how such actors are subjects with complex and changing identities.

Research carried out under the ChATSEA project has resulted in more than 70 graduate theses (32 PhDs and 41 MAs), a number of peer-reviewed articles, and seven books with titles ranging from *Agricultural Expansion in Southeast Asia: Borneo in the Eye of the Storm* to *Gambling with the Land: The Contemporary Evolution of Southeast Asian Agricultures*. These will form the nucleus of a new publication series. The series will include volumes on related subjects developed outside of the ChATSEA project, the first of which is *Upland Transformations: Opening Boundaries in Vietnam*. For the complete list of publications in the series see <http://www.nus.edu.sg/nuspress/>.

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The Sussex Library of Asian Studies

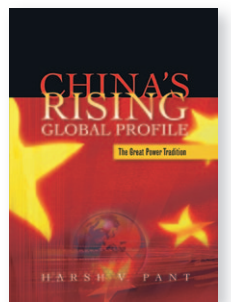
Mina Roces

THE SUSSEX LIBRARY OF ASIAN STUDIES, launched in 2007, is dedicated to the publication of scholarly work under the rubric of Asian studies – focusing on Economics, Education, Religion, History, Politics and Gender. The series gives precedence to emerging topics that demand attention in the Asian context, and it is anticipated that submissions will include interdisciplinary and transnational approaches. The Asian series is part of the *Sussex Libraries of Study*, which include a wide variety of topics. *Library of Study* books support the publishing endeavours of young scholars as well as established authors. The Sussex Academic Press has an enviable record in providing assistance to scholars in the transition from thesis to book and has a deserved reputation for high editorial and production standards. All editorial, production and design takes place in-house, which allows close supervision of books as they progress through the Press to publication.

The 'construct' Asia

Series Editor Mina Roces is keen to commission works on topics not yet investigated in the Asian context and approaches to the study of Asia that are cutting edge and unique. In this way the series will provide a venue for scholars whose research explores new and creative ways to research, write, and talk about the construct 'Asia'. The series accepts both monographs and contributed volumes, which must be based on original research. The first book published in the series was a joint editor and contributor work on the politics of dress in Asia and the Americas. This collection was the first to analyze the politics of dress using case studies from Asia via a transnational perspective, and it also proposed a comparative approach with the countries of the Americas. Up to date information about the series is posted at the Press website at www.sussex-academic.com, under Sussex Libraries of Studies.

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Book series at the Center for Southeast Asian Studies

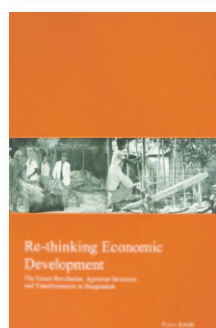
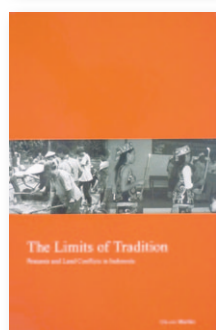
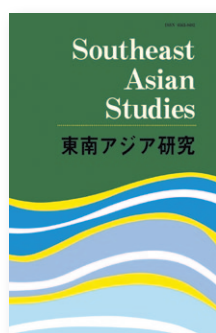
Mario Lopez

THE CENTER FOR SOUTHEAST ASIAN STUDIES (CSEAS), Kyoto University was established in 1963 and has led the way in conducting detailed and empirically valuable studies across a broad multidisciplinary field. Since the inception of the Center, researchers from a variety of disciplinary backgrounds have devoted themselves to the investigation of Southeast Asia within a multidisciplinary framework. CSEAS produces a quarterly journal entitled *Southeast Asian Studies* (SEAS) that has been published continuously since 1963. A bilingual publication, SEAS reflects the CSEAS principle of fieldwork based, multi-disciplinary, and contemporary approaches toward research.

During a period of ongoing dramatic political realignment and global economic integration within and across the region, CSEAS has consistently addressed diverse research agendas and sought to deepen knowledge in changing times. Designated as a Center of excellence in Area Studies, by the Japanese Ministry of Education, CSEAS has a solid history of publication activities that stretches back to the 1960s. In its capacity as one of the Japanese Ministry of Education's Joint Use/Research Centers, CSEAS has also recently launched an International Program of Collaborative Research. It aims to publish world class academic journals and monographs, and offers grants to support publications aimed at an international audience. CSEAS publishes five series, each of which aims to present original cutting edge academic research that contributes to the further development of Southeast Asian Studies.

English and Japanese language series

The first monograph series, which was started in 1966 in conjunction with Hawaii University Press, focused on topics such as tropical forests, rice production, and paddy field cultivation. Manuscripts were initially authored exclusively by faculty, but in 2000 the series was opened up to outside contributors both within and beyond Japan. A second series, *Kyoto Area Studies on Asia* (English), jointly published by Trans Pacific Press and Kyoto



University Press, dealt primarily with topics in the social sciences. Recent titles in this series have dealt with the impact of agrarian development programs on rural class structure in Bangladesh and the discourse of *adat* landownership that played an important role in peasant resistance against Indonesia's state development programs. In 2009, CSEAS launched a new English language series in collaboration with Kyoto University Press and NUS Press. This series was created to deal with the increasing demand for effective outlets of scholarship on Asian Studies by Asian scholars, and aims to provide opportunities for scholars to showcase high quality Asian scholarship that appeals to a worldwide audience.

CSEAS also publishes two Japanese-language series. The *Kyoto Area Studies on Asia* (*Chiiki Kenkyu Soshu*) was succeeded in 1999 by a new series designed to showcase the work of Japanese scholars through the Kyoto University Press. Recent publications include a detailed study of the effects of modernization upon nature and environment under the colonial administration in Java during the first quarter of the 19th century and a powerful analysis of state-military relationships and the power structure of military Burma. Each of these series emphasizes the presentation of empirical data collected through fieldwork to both a specialized and multi-disciplinary academic audience.

CSEAS is constantly looking for new opportunities to expand its publishing activities and hopes to play a central role in developing new questions and paradigms for the 21st century by bringing Southeast Asian Studies to a broader audience over the coming years. For further information, please see http://www.cseas.kyoto-u.ac.jp/edit/index_en.htm Inquiries may be directed to editorial@cseas.kyoto-u.ac.jp

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Colophon

THE INTERNATIONAL Convention of Asia Scholars (ICAS), founded in 1997, is a meeting place for academics from all over the world to discuss new insights in Asia Studies in a multidisciplinary context. It encourages participation from other spheres of civil society in debates, panels, and roundtables at its biennial meetings.

The seventh ICAS conference takes place in the United States. Together with the Association for Asian Studies (Ann Arbor), ICAS organizes a joint meeting in Honolulu, 31 March – 3 April 2011. We expect around 4000 participants from Asia, America, and Europe who will take part in the nearly 800 organized panels. We have no doubt that the AAS-ICAS joint meeting will be an inspiring event for all participants, exhibitors, and visitors.

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