A WORD OF WELCOME FROM THE CENTRE HEAD

Welcome to the first issue of Bhinneka, a bulletin of news and short features from the Southeast Asia Centre and the South & West Asia Centre in the Faculty of Asian Studies, Australian National University. “Bhinneka” is an Old Javanese word, ultimately derived from Sanskrit, meaning “diversity”. Bhinneka will report to you on the diverse tuition programs, research projects and outreach activities of the two centres. It will appear three times a year – in April, August and November.


I welcome your feedback. Please email me at southeastasia.centre@anu.edu.au. Should you wish to unsubscribe from this bulletin please send an email to this address.

Students of the two Centres are invited to submit news and first person features for future issues of Bhinneka.

George Quinn

ANU STUDENT JOINS TSUNAMI RELIEF EFFORT

Jemma Parsons, a third-year student of Indonesian in the Southeast Asia Centre, was in the thick of tsunami relief efforts in North Sumatra and Aceh in the first two months after the tragedy. Using her advanced-level Indonesian language skills she worked in Medan to help establish a forum for civil-military aid cooperation. She also assisted with efforts to locate settlements of people displaced by the tsunami. In Banda Aceh she worked as an interpreter for an AusAID health sector assessment team.

Read Jemma’s first-person report on page 3.

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Graduate Students Exchange Research Experience on Thailand, Vietnam and Indonesia

A total of 52 graduate students from around Australia and overseas took part in the Southeast Asia component of the ANU’s annual Asia Pacific Week held last January 31 to February 4. Students followed an intensive program of lectures, seminars, master classes, library visits and consultations in the fields of Thai, Vietnamese and Indonesian studies.

Problems in southern Thailand
Eighteen students enrolled in the Thai program convened by Dr John Funston of the National Thai Studies Centre. The major keynote address – by Professor Uthai from Walailak University - was on problems in Southern Thailand. This provided a major focus for the week’s discussions and was followed by a roundtable on the South by Dr Surin (James Cook University), Professor Des Ball (ANU) and Dr Funston (ANU). The other keynote address came from Dr James Ockey of the University of Canterbury who spoke on Madness, Authoritarianism, and Political Participation: The Curious Case of Cham Jamratnet.

Five interstate academics participated, providing an important opportunity for networking. They also contributed directly to the school either by participation in the roundtable or acting as panel convenors. Student presenters were asked to send papers in advance so that academic specialists could prepare detailed comments. Student presentations covered a diverse range of issues, including healthcare, Buddhism, education, Thai language study, urban development and tourism.

Vietnam’s cultural and biological heritage
Eighteen students took part in the Vietnam program convened by Dr Thai Duy Bao from the Southeast Asia Centre assisted by Mr Rob Hurle. A total of ten ANU academics were involved. Seminars and student presentations ranged over law, linguistics, the economy of Vietnam, Buddhism and the Vietnamese diaspora.

The ANU’s Professor David Marr contributed a seminar on “History, intellectuals, 20th century revolution and warfare” while Professor Ben Kerkvliet spoke on Vietnam’s politics in comparative perspective. A highlight was a session on the protection of Vietnam’s cultural and biological heritage conducted jointly with students in the International Heritage Law program.

Conflict in Aceh
Sixteen students attended the Indonesia program convened by Dr George Quinn. At the commencement of the week students were assigned an initial contact from within the ANU’s community of Indonesia specialists. Each student had a one-on-one interview with that academic, and in the course of the week many also consulted with two or more other academics with relevant expertise.

Among the senior ANU academics who presented seminars were Emeritus Professor Jamie Mackie, Professor James Fox, Professor Hal Hill and Professor Terry Hull. There were two invited, non-ANU academics, Dr Sidney Jones (Head of the Indonesia Office, International Crisis Group) and Professor Barbara Hatley (University of Tasmania). In all there were 13 seminars by academics and 16 student presentations. Each student made a 40-minute illustrated presentation followed by discussion.

Seminars and student presentations ranged over Indonesian history, politics, education, religion, gender issues, the economy, environmental issues, demographic issues and East Timor. All sessions were open sessions and nearly all of them attracted other (non-enrolled) students, academics and members of the general public. A highlight was the public lecture given by Dr Sidney Jones who spoke on the conflict in Aceh. Professor James Fox hosted a well-attended evening of ethnographic films about Indonesian societies.

For more information on Asia Pacific Week 2005 visit: http://rspas.anu.edu.au/asiapacificweek/
Prestigious Prizes Go To Southeast Asia Centre Students

**Ann Bates Prize for PhD thesis.** Southeast Asia Centre student Deborah Johnson has grabbed the 2004 Ann Bates Prize for her PhD thesis *The Malaysian Intellectual in Thought and Context.* Worth $1,000, the prize is awarded annually for the best PhD on an Indonesian / Malay topic from any location in the ANU.

Adjudicators praised Dr Johnson’s study for the breadth, quantity and diversity of its data, as well as its insightful organisation and analysis. It is, they said, an impeccable macro study providing broad-ranging insights into the character of contemporary Malaysian society in a variety of discourse domains, including the mass media, academia and politics. It establishes a viable, improved methodology for study of ideas in societies such as that of Malaysia.


In 2002 Ms Woinarski completed a well received field assignment written in Indonesian as part of the Year in Indonesia program, a core component of the Bachelor of Asian Studies (Specialist) degree. Titled *Pulau Serangan: Dampak Pembangunan pada Lingkungan dan Masyarakat* (The Island of Serangan: The Impact of Economic Development on Environment and People), the report examines environmental, cultural and economic issues in the lives of poor villagers on the island of Serangan off the south coast of Bali. The paper is available online at:  

**Richard B. Davis Prize.** The annual Richard B. Davis Prize, awarded to a student enrolled in an Asian Studies degree who achieves the best overall average mark in third year Thai courses, went to David Hunter in 2004.

Javanese Explodes

*Modern Javanese A* has started the year 2005 with 25 students. This may be a world record for enrolments in a Javanese-language tuition course for foreign learners, at least in recent times. The course emphasises speaking skills in a contemporary social context concentrating on the variant of Javanese spoken in the Jogjakarta-Solo region of Central Java. Students learn to interact in pithy low Javanese (*ngoko*) as well as in polite high Javanese (*krama*).

The course takes a "theatrical" approach to study of the language, leading students through a specially written play that helps them practise spoken interaction and learn something of Java’s popular theatre culture. Instructors are Dr George Quinn and Mr Urip Sutiyono.

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*Staff and students participate in a gamelan orchestra at The Australian National University*
From Military Vehicles to School Equipment: My Experience in Medan and Banda Aceh After the Tsunami

From the 31st of December until the 15th of January I was contracted by AusAID in Medan. During the first week my primary task was to assist in donor coordination in relation to the use of Australian, US and Singaporean military assets as vehicles for delivery of humanitarian assistance from Jakarta to Medan and Medan to Banda Aceh/Meulaboh.

Situation reports

When I arrived there was as yet no formal process for prioritising loads of assistance onto aircraft. During my two weeks in the AusAID office in Medan I helped to establish a forum for civil-military and aid cooperation (now known as CMAAC) and a simple and effective process for NGOs and other donors to request the use of military assets in delivering aid to Banda Aceh and Meulaboh. Part of this job involved sending nightly situation reports to AusAID Canberra from the AusAID Medan office.

During the second week in Medan I was tasked to begin mapping the locations of internally displaced persons (IDP) settlements and numbers of IDPs in Aceh and North Sumatra by collecting assessment reports from the various NGOs in the field. I gave a power point presentation of this information, using a digital mapping program, at one of the daily CMAAC meetings in Medan. This was later sent on to the United Nations Humanitarian Information Centre (UNHIC) in Banda Aceh which is the main agency in IDP mapping.

In Banda Aceh

From the 28th of January until the 9th of February I was in Banda Aceh staying in the AusAID house in an area called Lamlagang which was generally unaffected by the disaster. For the first five days I was contracted as an interpreter for an AusAID health sector assessment team which included a number health professionals from Australia along with Robin Davies, the Indonesian Country Director for AusAID. These five days were largely spent in meetings with a range of Acehnese health sector officials, doctors, nurses, midwives, as well as Acehnese provincial government officials and the Australian Army personnel who are currently working at Zainal Abidin General Hospital, one of the main hospitals in Banda Aceh.

Islamic schools

For the remainder of my time in Banda Aceh I was asked to assist in setting up an Immediate Support Unit for one of AusAIDs educational development projects in Indonesia called LAPIS (Learning Assistance Program for Islamic Schools.) The LAPIS Immediate Support Unit is assisting earthquake and tsunami-affected Islamic Schools throughout Aceh by providing emergency educational supplies. These supplies are intended to equip Islamic schools in order that they may resume classes. I spent time talking with different stakeholders in the Islamic education sub-sector such as officials from the provincial Department of Religion (Kantor Wilayah Departemen Agama – Kanwil Depag) and the rector of the State Institute for Islamic Studies (Institut Agama Islam Negeri or IAIN) in order to understand more about the post-tsunami situation of the many madrasah and pesantren in Aceh. LAPIS now has a combination house, office and warehouse in Banda Aceh.

Today I am back in central Jakarta contracted as the Design Team Researcher for LAPIS.

Jemma Parsons is a third year student enrolled in Bachelor of Asian Studies (Specialist) at the ANU.
Filming the Cow's Mouth at 4000 Metres

Richard Barz, lecturer in Hindi, reports on two pilgrimages to the source of the River Ganga.

In early November of 2001, with funding from the Faculty of Asian Studies, I made my first visit to the source of the Ganga at the Gomukh, Hindi for "cow's mouth", of Gangotri Glacier in northern India. My plan was to film the Hindu pilgrimage route that starts from Haridwar at an elevation of 200 metres where the Ganga comes out of the Himalayan foothills onto the north Indian plain. From this point the pilgrimage route rises to the Gomukh at an altitude of almost 4000 metres. The last 18 kilometres of the route, from Gangotri town and temple to the Gomukh, has to be done on foot over an often primitive and perilous track.

A difficult night

In early November, just before the town of Gangotri and everything is closed and abandoned to the winter snows, the pilgrimage is already quite cold. My colleague Yogendra Yadav who conducts the Faculty of Asian Studies summer Hindi course in India spent the night with me in a tent on the track. We were far too cold to sleep at all. It was easily the most difficult night I have ever spent. I am in awe of the pilgrims who spent that same night with none of the warm clothes and heavy sleeping bags that Yogendra and I had.

In 2003 I again made the pilgrimage, with a grant from the ANU, from Haridwar to the Gomukh for more filming. This time I went in June and the weather was much more pleasant, though still cold in the tent at night. When I returned to Canberra I had three hours of digital tapes of the pilgrimage but absolutely no experience in making a film of it. It is thanks to the unselfish help and endless patience of Patrick Byrnes of the ANU's Scholarly Technology Services that in January those three hours of tape could be teased into a 30 minute DVD with music and English subtitles for the Hindi dialogue.

The DVD will be the first of a series of films that I am planning to make for use in the Hindi courses given by video conferencing to students at the ANU and the University of Sydney.
Western Loanwords in Indonesian

By Tim Hassall, lecturer in Indonesian

Indonesian has thousands of words that resemble English words. Lots of them serve an obvious purpose: they fill a gap in the vocabulary. Examples of these are pistol, helikopter, komputer. There was no word to convey those concepts before those borrowed words came along.

But the more interesting ones are the many that do not fill a gap. Instead they exist alongside a ‘twin’ word – either native to the language or long ago assimilated into it – that means virtually the same. For example, diskusi exists alongside pembicaraan, both meaning “discussion”.

There are hundreds of such pairs: so many that when a speaker or writer consistently chooses western words over their non-western twins it creates a distinctive style. And the number of these pairs is growing all the time.

A few examples only of such pairs:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>western word</th>
<th>older synonym</th>
<th>meaning</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>berkompetisi</td>
<td>bersaing</td>
<td>to compete</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>diskusi</td>
<td>pembicaraan</td>
<td>discussion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>evaluasi</td>
<td>penilaian</td>
<td>evaluation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>identitas</td>
<td>jati diri</td>
<td>identity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>informasi</td>
<td>keterangan</td>
<td>information</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>kualitas</td>
<td>mutu</td>
<td>quality</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>memprediksi</td>
<td>meramalkan</td>
<td>to predict</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>mengoreksi</td>
<td>membetulkan</td>
<td>to correct</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>opin</td>
<td>pendapat</td>
<td>opinion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>populasi</td>
<td>penduduk</td>
<td>population</td>
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<tr>
<td>respons</td>
<td>tanggapan</td>
<td>response</td>
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<tr>
<td>sensitif</td>
<td>peka</td>
<td>sensitive</td>
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<tr>
<td>situasi</td>
<td>keadaan</td>
<td>situation</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Now I’m not suggesting that the two words in each of these pairs are perfect synonyms. There will be situations where one word in the pair sounds clearly more suitable, so for example where jati diri sounds better than identitas or vice-versa. But all these pairs also have a large area of overlap: situations where either can be used and so where educated speakers can choose between the two.

By the way, the reason I call these words ‘western’ and not simply ‘English’ loanwords is that many of them were originally borrowed from Dutch rather than English. But in many cases you can’t tell which of the two languages it came from, and younger Indonesians today probably regard virtually all of them as borrowed from English.

Attitudes of Indonesians towards them

Indonesians often complain about this invasion of western words that serve no obvious purpose. The Pusat Bahasa or central language planning body condemns them. Members of the public grumble about them too, in letters to the newspapers. But no criticism seems to have any effect: journalists, business and government leaders, and thousands of ordinary educated Indonesians keep coining and using more of them all the time.

Why do Indonesians use them?

One major reason is prestige. English carries very high status in Indonesia, and so when a speaker uses words that sound English, a certain prestige may attach to him or her as a result. The speaker can sound – or hope to sound – modern, sophisticated, and highly educated.

But that is not the only reason people use them. In a modern setting a western loanword often sounds more suitable than its older twin. This is because the older words acquired their meanings in more traditional settings, so when they are used to refer to modern ideas they can sound a little out of place. For example, the word penilaian is a perfectly good word meaning ‘evaluation,’ but if high school teachers or students are talking about evaluation of academic performance they tend not to use it. Instead, they will talk about evaluasi. The current western-style school system in Indonesia was inherited
from the Dutch, and the western word sounds natural in that context.

**What about Australian learners?**

My strong impression is that Australian students ‘underuse’ these loanwords. That is, in situations where educated Indonesians would tend to use them, they generally do not. And I believe this is largely because they dislike them.

Learners dislike them because they consider them too easy. Learners work hard to become good at Indonesian, are justly proud of their ability, and enjoy exercising it, both to display it to others and for their own satisfaction. But western loanwords don’t show how good you are at Indonesian – the hearer is likely to think that you only know the word because it’s the same as English. Nor do they feel intellectually challenging to retrieve from the memory and produce. And using them feels like a dangerously soft option; students fear that they will fail to learn the ‘real’ words or else forget them.

**What should you do?**

Whether you shun western loanwords or embrace them is largely up to you. If you do want to be able to use them, as educated Indonesians do, then the big challenge is to learn when each one is appropriate. So when you come across one in speech or writing you should note the situation: who is using it to whom, in what setting, and to refer to what? That’s how you start to get a feel for how the word is used: when it might sound pretentious, when it will sound fine, and when it is virtually obligatory.

These are just a few remarks on the topic. However, I hope they help make you more aware of an issue that some learners have strong feelings about and which affects how you come across as a user of Indonesian.

**Sources**


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**The Tomb of Ibrahim Asmorokondi, Java’s Saint from Samarkand**

From a guide to pilgrimage places in Java and Madura currently being written by George Quinn

_Sheik Maolana_ Ibrahim Asmorokondi (a name often shortened to Ibrahim Asmoro or Ibrahim Asmara) is honoured as a key figure in the dissemination of Islam in 15th century Southeast Asia. Three of the Nine Saints (*wali sanga*) of early Islam in Java – _Sunan Ampel, Sunan Bonang_ and _Sunan Drajat_ – are said to be his descendants. He is also thought to have converted the previously Hindu-Buddhist Cham people of Indo-China, although scholarly research suggests that there were Muslims in Champa before he settled there, and it was not until well after his departure that a majority of Chams embraced Islam.

Many believe that Ibrahim Asmorokondi came from the city of Samarkand in what today is the Republic of Uzbekistan.

Unfortunately the only piece of evidence that really supports this is the Sheik’s resonant name _Asmorokondi_. This seems to be a Javanese transformation of the Arabic _as-Samarkandi_ – “the man from Samarkand”. The words _asmara_ (usually pronounced “asmoro”) and _kandi_ both carry rich echoes of characters and places in Java’s shadow plays and traditional romances. _Asmara_ is also a poetic Javanese word for “love”. It would appear that Java’s fixation on romance, magic and mystery overwhelmed the prosaic _as-Samarkandi_ turning it into the much more suggestive _Asmorokondi_. Nevertheless _as-Samarkandi_ has not entirely disappeared.
Across the arch of the big roadside entry gate to his tomb near Tuban in East Java an Arabic inscription identifies the place as the tomb of “the man from Samarkand” (Maqam ash-Shaikh Maulana Ibrahim as-Samarqandi).

It is plausible, though not demonstrated by reliable evidence, that some time in the early 1400s Ibrahim Asmorokondi left behind the towers of Samarkand and travelled the vast length of the Silk Road into China, ultimately heading for Southeast Asia. It is also possible he went south across Afghanistan and India, taking a sea route into Southeast Asia. It may even be possible that the Sheik was of Southeast Asian origin and had journeyed to Samarkand to study in the city’s famed madrassahs before returning to his homeland. Whatever the case, Javanese tradition records that a holy cleric, known by various names, came from somewhere in Central Asia and settled among the Cham people of Indo-China.

But references to him are ultra-short. The Javanese historical chronicle, the Babad Tanah Jawi, says only....

A foreigner named Makdum Brahim Asmara came to Champa from a distant land. He addressed the king, asking him to convert to Islam. The king did so and was followed by all the people of the kingdom – everyone embraced Islam. In addition the king gave his only remaining unmarried daughter in marriage to Makdum Brahim Asmara. She bore him two sons. [...] The elder was Raden Rahmat and the younger Raden Santri. (Babad Tanah Jawi: 18, 20)

There is a another even shorter passage in the Babad Tanah Jawi that, when unravelled, may also yield a reference to Ibrahim Asmorokondi.

A dervish came to Java from the lands above the wind. His name was Sheik Rahidin and he settled at Ampeldenta. After a time he resumed his travels. When he died he was buried at Pemalang. (Babad Tanah Jawi: 21)

In Indonesia the phrase “lands above the wind” normally refers to countries to the west – across the Indian Ocean – and “dervish” probably means a follower of Persian or Central Asian sufism. According to the passage, the sheik settled for a time at Ampeldenta, the place in Surabaya where tradition says his son, Raden Rahmat (later called Sunan Ampel), headed a vigorous community of Muslims. He is said to have been buried in Pemalang. Removing the infix em from this name we are left with Palang, the modern name of the district where today Ibrahim Asmorokondi lies buried. In short, the passage could be a terse reference to the Central Asian origins of Sheik Ibrahim Asmorokondi.

The facts of his life are maddeningly obscure. In some corners of Java’s vast mansion of hagiographies his very existence is denied. Some say that he and another early missionary of Islam, Maulana Malik Ibrahim (buried in the centre of Gresik near Surabaya), are one and the same person who somehow happens to have found a resting place in two different burial grounds. The two figures bear the same title (maulana), have a personal name in common (Ibrahim), came from distant lands in the West, lived around the same time, and have a common connection with Champa.

But when I visited the tomb of Ibrahim Asmorokondi in 2003 the custodian or juru kunci rejected this, insisting that the Sheik was a unique figure. He advanced two arguments, both of which depend on the authority of a particular genealogy. In the first place, he said, according to the best genealogy Ibrahim Asmorokondi was the son of Sheik Jumadil Kubro who lived in “the Middle East”, whereas Malik Ibrahim was the son of one Barokat Zaenal Alam who lived in Cambodia. Second, everyone knows that Ibrahim Asmorokondi was the father of Raden Rahmat alias Sunan Ampel, whereas no genealogy ever claims (he said) that Malik Ibrahim was the father of Raden Rahmat.

If the saintly Ibrahim Asmorokondi did indeed come from Samarkand, he would have brought with him a whiff of the authority that radiated from one of the great Islamic centres of the day. In the late 1300s Timur the Lame transformed Samarkand into a glittering centre of Muslim arts and learning, famous for its madrassah schools, its monumental architecture and the beauty of its translucent blue ceramic tiles.
In a faint reflection of that distant grandeur Ibrahim Asmorokondi’s tomb is surrounded by a yard paved in glossy, deep blue ceramic tiles. The tomb itself takes the form of a newly built wooden house (cungkup) under a two-tiered, pyramid-shaped tajug roof made of wooden slat-tiles. A broad awning made of corrugated iron and fibreglass protects the burial chamber and the surrounding devotions area. Up a few steps and through a small, narrow door in the cungkup, you enter a dark, close chamber about three by three metres square. There are two graves in it. Ibrahim Asmorokondi’s is on the left, but mystery surrounds the identity of the personage buried in the grave on the right. It could be one of the saint’s followers (sahabat) or possibly his wife. Inside the adjacent mosque there is a well, the murky waters of which are believed to have curative powers. Recent renovations at the site have not erased its several ancient roofed gates, one of which now shelters under the massive new front verandah of the mosque.

Ibrahim Asmorokondi’s tomb under a broad awning.

The site is in the village of Gisikharjo about four kilometres along the main coast road east of Tuban, East Java. Gisikharjo is part of the village district (kecamatan) of Palang. Buses and bemos travelling east from Tuban go right past the entrance. The turn-off from the highway is clearly signposted and marked by a big, vaguely Arabesque arched gate on the roadside. Local custom prohibits vehicles from approaching the site along this main entry road. Rather cars and buses must park at some distance or approach the site along a side road.

Ibrahim Asmorokondi’s grave lies behind (that is, to the west of) an old mosque newly rebuilt in modern Javanese style. Signs at the front of the mosque direct women to the right and men to the left, so that when they emerge at the back of the mosque they are on opposite sides of the saint’s burial chamber. Nevertheless men and women seem to mix in the yard around the chamber, so there is by no means an absolute apartheid of the sexes. Pilgrims sit on the tiled area surrounding the burial chamber praying, reading the Qur’an or collectively chanting tahlil (“There is no God but Allah”). Entry to the chamber itself must be in the company of a juru kunci who addresses prayers to God and the Sheik on behalf of pilgrims.

Pilgrims board a bus outside an ancient roofed gate at Ibrahim Asmorokondi’s tomb.

Pilgrims come to the site from all over Java, but it is especially popular with local people. For them, visiting Ibrahim Asmorokondi is an integral part of local ceremonies and celebrations. The main event in the site’s calendar is the annual commemoration (haul) of the saint’s death which happens on and around the twentieth of Syawwal, three weeks after the end of the fasting month of Ramadhan. At this time pilgrims crowd the mosque and devotions yard, praying for the reposer of the saint’s soul, listening to accounts of his life history and achievements, and hoping that their own lives will be invigorated with a small splash of his residual power.

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