rima

Review of Indonesian and Malaysian Affairs

volume 43, number 1

2009

The Association for the Publication of Indonesian and Malaysian Studies Inc. acknowledges generous support in many forms from The Australian National University and The University of New South Wales at the Australian Defence Force Academy
Review of Indonesian and Malaysian Affairs
volume 43, number 1, 2009

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perspectives from the Australian academy

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This issue of RIMA has been edited by Jemma Purdey and Campbell
Macknight.

Cover: Herb Feith (1930–2001) who, in his life and work, inspired
many present members of the Australian academy to know
Indonesia and its people. Monash University Archives, IN266.
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Indonesian Studies at the Australian National University: why so late?

Anthony Reid

Keywords: Indonesian studies, Australian National University, Research School of Pacific Studies. JW Davidson, Heinz Arndt

Abstract: The Australian National University was founded in 1948 to develop 'subjects of national importance to Australia'. Its Research School of Pacific Studies was intended specifically to make good the ignorance of the areas to Australia's north which had proved costly during the Pacific War. In Melbourne there were a few people like Herb Feith, mostly students of MacMahon Ball, who immediately saw the challenge of Indonesia. The question that needs answering is why the mandate of ANU did not produce a school or centre of Southeast Asian Studies, or even much significant individual scholarship on Indonesia, until the late 1960s. Why did Australia not build in the twenty years after the war anything remotely comparable to the Centers the Americans established at Cornell, Yale, Michigan, Wisconsin and Berkeley? How, nevertheless, did the ANU gradually find its way to becoming a centre without a Centre.

Southeast Asian Studies is sometimes thought to have been 'invented' for Cold War United States strategic purposes through the American concept of area studies. I find this view outrageously America-centric and unhelpful (see for example Reid 1994; 2003), but the reason for it has something to do with the organisational consistency of Southeast Asian Studies Centers in the United States. Because they need to bid competitively for Federal Title VI funds every three years on the basis of certain criteria, they focus on the same basket of joint appointments with discipline departments, graduate training, language teaching, publications and seminars, all defined in terms of Southeast Asia and coordinated by a single Center. By comparison the rest of the world,

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including Australia, shows a variegated picture which can be seen as
incoherence. Monash University's Centre of Southeast Asian Studies
was virtually the only emulation of such a coherent plan on the
American model. The study of the region is manifestly strong in
Australia by any reckoning, but seemingly without coherent planning
of this or any kind. Government interventions to boost Indonesian
Studies in particular (see below) had patchy results and were not
sustained enough to create a pattern. Over the last 30 years Australia
in general and the Australian National University (ANU) in particular
have happened through random appointments, never planned as
purposefully as the smaller United States Centers. It is difficult to think
of an example elsewhere of such apparently random growth unless it
is the fruitful chaos of Paris, which has a total strength of Southeast
Asian expertise (outside Southeast Asia) probably closest to that of
Canberra. Does this experience of creating 'a centre without a Centre'
have anything to say to the rest of the world?

Opportunities Missed, 1948–60

The ANU was founded in 1948 to develop 'post-graduate research and
study, both generally and in relation to subjects of national importance
to Australia.' Its Research School of Pacific Studies was intended
specifically to make good the ignorance of the areas to Australia's
north which had proved costly during the Pacific War. The earliest
recorded definition of the area of its concern was 'somewhere ranging
from the Americas to India' (in Max Crawford's phrase) to include both
the Pacific Ocean and Asia. The question that appears to need
answering is why this mandate did not produce a school or centre of
Southeast Asian Studies, or even much significant individual
scholarship on Indonesia or adjacent parts of the region area until the
late 1960s. Why did Australia not build in the twenty years after the war
anything remotely comparable to the centres the Americans established
at Cornell, Yale, Michigan, Wisconsin and Berkeley?

The first answer must be connected with the absence of any
Australian Asianist of sufficient stature to be recruited to join the other
three 'wise men' who advised the ANU founders on the establishment

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Indonesian Studies at ANU

of its initial four Research Schools. It is not clear to me why Macmahon
Ball, the closest Australia had to a distinguished scholar with regional
interests, was not involved at all in the founding of ANU. Professor
Ball served after the war as British Commonwealth representative on
the Allied Council for Japan, and in mid-1948 was sent to Indonesia in
an attempt to organise a scholarship scheme for Indonesians (Dorling,
1996:169). He may be the closest to a George Kahin in having
influenced young people like Jamie Mackie, John Legge and Herb Feith
in a sympathetic interest in Indonesia and its emergent
nationalism. Perhaps he was seen by the Canberra planners as less a
scholar than a policy-maker (then); perhaps the founding fathers were
fixated on the idea that the only good Australian scholars were in
Britain.

To advise on what became the Research School of Pacific
Studies (though Asian-Pacific was initially a starter), a New Zealander
was found in Raymond Firth, Professor of Anthropology at the
London School of Economics, who despite his pre-war venture into
Malay ethnography was predominately a small-island Pacific man and
who took a relatively narrow view of what 'Pacific Studies' should
mean. His anthropological perspective suggested that the major field
of research should be the Pacific Island territories for which Australia
was responsible (Foster and Varghese, 1996:40).

Firth's own relations with Australia were problematic, and by
early 1949 he had decided he and his wife were too much 'Europeans'
to be able to live in the colonies. But he remained the critical voice in
the first crucial appointments in History and Anthropology;
respectively Jim Davidson, with whom he had worked closely in Naval
Intelligence during the war, and SF Nadel, an Austrian-born British
anthropologist who joined Firth's Department after the war. Davidson
was a colonial historian specialising on Samoa, and beyond that the
other colonial administrations in the Pacific Islands; and Nadel an
African ethnographer. The third professor in place by 1950, Australian
WR Crocker, had colonial, military and (in 1945-8) United Nations
experience, and had written some books though not an academic. He
was nominated by fellow-Australian Keith Hancock at a time when it
was thought the Pacific and Social Science Schools might combine, but
hit it off with Australian (though also New Zealand born and bred) economist Douglas Copland, the ANU’s first vice-chancellor. Crocker was appointed as Professor of International Affairs in the hope of bringing his African and United Nations experience to bear on problems of international governance in the small Pacific colonies and Trusteeships (Foster and Varghese, 1996:51–2).

Jim Davidson’s appointment, in particular, would be crucial in keeping the focus on small-island Pacific rather than Southeast Asia for some time. Davidson was emphatic that there should not be a Department of Political Science, since he believed his own Pacific History Department should be free to embrace the contemporary (Foster and Varghese, 1996:51–2). Only after his death in 1973 were moves successfully made towards forming something like a Political Science Department, though named Political and Social Change to avoid what was felt to be excessive engagement with theory. Regionally, Davidson thought his mandate should cover the whole area of the School, which he came to believe should to some extent extend into Asia, but he was tentative in moving beyond the Anglophone colonial territories he felt comfortable with. His initial appointments and PhD recruitments all specialised on the Pacific Islands.

Sephardic Singaporean Emma (‘Emily’) Sadka was the first Southeast Asian recruited as a PhD student, coming from Oxford in 1954. She got on well with Jim, and must have encouraged him to go further. In 1955, following the Australian Government’s initiative to fund Indonesian Studies (see below) he began to plan his first visit to Malaya and Indonesia. In the notes accompanying an advertisement at this time he defined his Department as concerned with ‘problems of Western expansion and its impact on non-European peoples in the Pacific & South-East Asian areas’ (Davidson 1955a). At the end of 1955 he responded warmly to an overtune from John Bastin of the University of Queensland, Australia’s first trained Oxford and Leiden Indonesianist: ‘I fully agree with your plea for the study of Indonesian history in Australia.’ (Davidson 1955b).

Davidson’s visit to Indonesia and Malaya in January-February 1956 was a success, including a visit to Tony Johns in Bukittinggi, whose appointment to the Canberra College was being considered. On his return he wrote again to John Bastin to say that ‘the time is ripe’ to develop Indonesian history in Australia, and that he was contemplating two appointments — a modern historian and someone with ‘training in Oriental languages’ (Davidson 1956). In May 1956 Davidson had organised a (tenured) Fellowship for Bastin, who was in place at ANU by the end of the year. The correspondence shows an enthusiastic John Bastin ordering mountains of microfilms, pioneering work in the Archiv National in Jakarta and travelling all around Java and Sumatra, genially supported in all by Davidson. Up till the time in April 1959 when Bastin left to become the foundation professor of History in Kuala Lumpur there is no trace of evidence of later coolness.

At any event Jim Davidson’s enthusiasm for Indonesian history faltered, and it would be a decade before he appointed another specialist for it. Political scientist Herb Feith (1960–62), and his own student in Malay history, Emily Sadka, were appointed to Research Fellowships in 1959. I presume it was around this time that Jim was corresponding with Harry Benda about coming to fill the gap, but Jim Davidson was too hesitant to commit to so forceful an Indonesianist.

The tentativeness of Davidson’s sorties into Southeast Asia can be seen in the British colonial focus, which was true of virtually all the early appointments in the Research School of Pacific Studies. People were available who had taught in the colonial universities, and the British colonial world was comfortably familiar to those who had taught or studied it. A comparison with the Melbourne people with a similar background who nevertheless took the plunge into Indonesia nevertheless makes one wonder what might have happened if one of these had been in charge. John Legge, in particular, was a regionally-oriented young historian who like Davidson had done his thesis work using English-language material on the British colonies, but who went to Cornell and Indonesia during his sabbatical leave of 1956 to take up the difficult challenge of a new field.

Jim’s first Southeast Asian student, Emily Sadka, became a research fellow in 1960, and got tenure as a fellow two years later. As portrayed by Blanche d’Alpuget, she was Bob Hawke’s moral muse in University House — the one who kept him from going off the rails emotionally and ethically (d’Alpuget, 1982:70–1). Sadka was a solid co-

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supervisor with Jim Davidson for a number of good theses on Malaya in the 1960s, by Chiang Hai Ding (1963), Chris Wake (1966), and most successfully Bill Roff (1965). Roff was the first of the historians to learn and use a Southeast Asian language, possibly more through Tony Johns’ encouragement than his own Department’s.

Though the Malayan background had given Sadka a Southeast Asian dimension intellectually (she had taught Southeast Asian history in Wellington before the ANU appointment), she was certainly not a fieldworker or an adventurer into indigenous history. Her appointment was closely followed by Paul van der Veur in 1961, who was an Indonesianist but was appointed only on condition that he work on Dutch New Guinea. Canberra boy Chris Penders did use his native Dutch to do the first PhD in the Department on Indonesia, in 1968. In the same year, following the departure of van der Veur and the tragically early death of Emma Sadka, a Research Fellowship was awarded to Christine Dobbin, a Sydney and Oxford-trained Indian historian whom Jim expected to do Malayan history, but who eventually produced a great book on the Padri war in Sumatra (no doubt again with some influence from Tony Johns). These moves suggest to me that he had lost the early desire to get seriously into Southeast Asia, beyond his main concern with the colonial impact on small societies, though acknowledging that there was a potential flow of Malayan students who needed supervision. Up until his death the department’s self-definition remained strangely out of touch with the changing reality, especially for someone purportedly interested in ‘autonomous history’.

The Department of Pacific History is concerned with the study of historical situations involving contact between western and non-western cultures, with a particular emphasis on contacts of a ‘colonial’ type in which Europeans have occupied positions of political and economic dominance.9

A Department of Geography was established in the Research School with the appointment of Oskar Spate to a chair in 1951. The only one of the founding fathers with experience in Southeast Asia (having taught briefly in the pre-war Rangoon University), one might have expected Spate to be the one professor who would move confidently into the area. He was more concerned, however, with the undermournished state of Geography as a whole in Australia, and therefore sought to cover all the major sub-disciplines more energetically than covering all the regions. Perhaps influenced by Jim Davidson he threw himself into work on the British Pacific, but showed no further interest in Southeast Asia himself. As he described his policy later, most of the department’s work concentrated on Australia for the ‘opportunistic’ reasons that it was easy to attract students (Foster and Varghese, 1996:107–8). Not until 1965 did Spate appoint somebody to work on Southeast Asia, going the usual Malayanser route by bringing Bobby Ho in from the University of Malaya as Senior Fellow. Ho was another to die tragically early, whereupon he was replaced as Senior Fellow by Terry McGee, from New Zealand and Malaya.

1960–70: Crawford and Johns initiatives: The ‘Malayans’

These 1960s students on Malayan history were paralleled by more adventurous students in Anthropology (Donald Tugby) and Donald Hindley, who had also taken the plunge into Indonesia. With the work of Tugby and his wife on Mandailing (1960; 1962), Jasp on Rejang (1965) and Masri Singarimbun on Karo, together with the early work of David Penny (from 1965), Christine Dobbin (from 1968) and myself (from 1970), one might indeed have said that Sumatra was the ANU’s main research focus in Indonesia until the arrival of Jim Fox who switched the balance further to the East. Whether Tugby was influential in bringing Jasp to Canberra I don’t know; Jasp certainly was influential in bringing Masri. For the most part the research focus seemed thoroughly haphazard, with Derek Freeman the only senior anthropologist with Southeast Asian experience, in Sarawak.

Economics was the only department in the Research School prior to the 1970s which had a real plan to focus on Southeast Asia, and to have done it rather successfully. Economics was not part of the original plans for the School, but came in as a result of John Crawford’s agreeing to become the School’s first Director in 1960. Because the School had been for so long without a Director, and perhaps because
in Crawford it had a leader who was not only Australian but a preeminent Australian policy-maker, his tenure marked a distinct lurch into Southeast Asia. He brought the Department of International Relations back to the School and encouraged a professorial appointment to it in Bruce Miller (1962). He insisted that a Department of Economics be created under him, with the specific task of studying 'underdeveloped and primitive economics, with emphasis on the building up of a systematic empirical knowledge of the Pacific and South East Asia'. Tom Silcock was immediately brought from the University of Malaya (then in Singapore) as Visiting Fellow, and it was therefore the same comfortable Malaysian focus as with the historians that began the entry into Southeast Asia. Fred Fisk arrived from the University of Malaya in 1960 and Rick Shand in 1961.

Crawford did recruit Ken Thomas to go and work in South Sumatra in 1963, but his bigger step was to ask Heinz Arndt to move from the Canberra College in 1963 to take the Economics chair in the Research School which Crawford himself no longer had time for. Heinz convinced himself, notably during his first visit to Indonesia in 1964, that his Department should mount a major project on Indonesia, as in effect its highest priority. He recruited agricultural economist David Penny whom he met on that trip, and began his contacts with the Universitas Indonesia economists (the Berkeley mafia) just before their ascent to power. He bravely began the Bulletin of Indonesian Economic Studies in June 1965, when conditions in Indonesia were at their darkest, especially from an economist's viewpoint. John Crawford secured a major grant from the Ford Foundation to make the BIES possible through the hiring of Ruth Darusman as editor, and for nine years this sustained what was the ANU's first major externally-funded project on Southeast Asia (Arndt, 1985:52-64). This also gave rise to the Indonesia Study Group which David Penny and Ken Thomas founded in the late 1960s, and which remains perhaps the most visible sign of a cross-disciplinary commitment to Indonesia at the ANU.

Arndt calculated in 1985 that the eight PhD candidates he trained in his first fifteen years, including Hal Hill, Anne Booth and Chris Manning, represented about half of the total economic expertise on Indonesia outside Indonesia. Since 1963 there were always at least two Indonesia specialists in the Department, Penny being replaced in the 1970s by Peter McCawley and Anne Booth, and eventually Hal Hill. This certainly represents the most focussed research concentration ANU has mounted in the Southeast Asian area. It had also embraced Malaysia from the outset, though of course with less intensity, and eventually through the ASEAN project, various consultancies, visitors and so forth, covered in some sense all the countries of Southeast Asia. As the Department defined its area in the Arndt era, it began with 'the countries of Southeast Asia (especially Indonesia), the Pacific Islands (especially Papua New Guinea), and China', clearly in that order.

The good news of this empirical concentration was that it achieved something very practical in raising the level of knowledge of and debate on the Indonesian economy, and represented perhaps the most distinctive thing the ANU did on Southeast Asia in global terms. The vulnerable side of the concentration, like that of my own department on the Pacific Islands (though in lesser degree), was of course that the absence of competitors made it difficult to know how to rate the department in the broader economics field. This is always the trade-off, but to my mind it has been outstandingly worthwhile in this case, if not always in others.

Demography, in the Research School of Social Sciences, was the other department in the Research Schools, besides Anthropology and History in Pacific Studies, which gradually expanded into Southeast Asia through Malaysia — or more properly British Southeast Asia. Jack Caldwell was the pioneer when in the late 1950s he decided to write his dissertation on the Malayan population, and when he finished his thesis in 1962 he passed the baton to the young Gavin Jones, whose thesis on Malaysian labour was completed in 1966. Both of these two demographers extended their interests to left and right — in Jones' case throughout Southeast Asia, in Caldwell's largely beyond it. But a more extraordinary step than these predictable moves into Malaysia was Mick Borrie's decision to take on Masri Singarimbun as a Research Fellow in 1966.

Masri was an exceptionally able and innovative Karo Barak who had been lured to ANU by Mervyn Jaspan in 1961, and taken under Derek Freeman's wing. When he finished his dissertation in 1966
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time was a demographer, and a means for the department to get into a vast and challenging field. Not long after, in 1971, Terry and Valerie Hull and Graeme Hugo arrived to write their dissertations on Indonesia, and the Department became probably the most important centre anywhere for the study of Southeast Asian population. When Jack Caldwell became Head of Department in 1975 he encouraged the trend, though never circumscribing Southeast Asia as such as a priority area.

By 1970, therefore, there was substantial work in the Coombs Building, which housed the two Research Schools of Pacific Studies and Social Sciences, on Malaysia: in Economics, Anthropology, History, Geography and Demography. Economics had begun its major assault on Indonesia, where a few other departments also dabbled more tentatively. The appointment of Gehan Wijeyawardene to Anthropology in 1964 and John Girling to International Relations in 1966 provided an accidental bridgehead to Thailand. Despite Crawford and Arndt, there was still no School-wide strategy for work on the region or part of it. The only real coherence of any sort in the School’s strategy was in relation to New Guinea, on which a Davidson-authored report in 1958 decided to focus through the formation of a New Guinea Unit. The synergy of a number of scholars with Malaysian interests did produce one joint-authored book across the disciplines (Silcock and Fisk 1963), while David Penny and Masri Singarimbun formed a fruitful partnership first in Sumatra and then Java. But with the exception of the Economics push from 1960, the first twenty years were interesting chiefly for their failure to act decisively in an area that other Australians could see to be of vital importance.

**Language-based study in the Canberra College**

The fact that the Research School of Pacific Studies had resolutely opted for a research role rather than a training one would always make language study external to it. It would also tend to remove the glue which in most parts of the world makes ‘Southeast Asian Studies’ an academic entity; that is, the need for some structural principle around which to organise education and training. It is therefore no surprise that it took the external intervention of the Federal Government in the other, undergraduate, side of the campus to force the academics of Canberra to go out and hire some professionals.

In 1950, Prime Minister Menzies set up an inquiry into whether the Commonwealth Government should fund a School or Department of Oriental Studies somewhere. In December 1950 it reported that ‘a School of Oriental Languages was a national necessity … and that the School should be established in Canberra.’ The committee thought the big four Asian languages to be studied were not the Chinese, Japanese, Korean, and Indonesian of modern parlance, but Chinese, Japanese, Hindi and Russian, ‘with perhaps subsidiary studies in Indonesian and Malayan languages’ (Brewster and Reid, 1989). In 1952 Hans Bielenstein was appointed to a chair of Oriental Languages at the Canberra University College, and a start was made on Chinese, Japanese and Russian, but not on anything Southeast Asian.

This required a second government intervention, in 1955, when the Australian Commonwealth Office of Education wrote to the Principal of the Canberra College, and to the Universities of Sydney and Melbourne, to offer specifically to fund ‘the teaching of Indonesian and Malayan Studies’. The College had submitted a proposal for Indian Studies, which it continued to prefer, but the Government responded that this should be switched to Indonesian Studies. Bahasa Indonesia was indicated as the major focus of study, with possible provision ‘for teaching something of the culture of the region’.

Bielenstein then made a major effort to inform himself about Indonesian studies in the world, travelling to Cornell, Berkeley, Columbia, the School of Oriental and African Studies in London, Cambridge, Leiden and the University of Indonesia in search of advice. Fortunately he ignored the patronising advice of DGE Hall in London, that ‘no foreign scholar would stay in Australia for any considerable length of time’, so that they should send an Australian with first-class honours in classics off to London to learn his stuff.
The College quickly laid siege to Tony Johns, then in Bukittinggi, although he did not arrive until August 1958. Meanwhile teaching in Indonesian had begun with the aid of the Indonesian embassy in 1956, and twenty students enrolled in the initial course compared with three for Chinese and Japanese. Tony was not quite 30, with the advantage of not being intimidated by a stuffy orientalist tradition. He was a breath of fresh air for Oriental Studies, abandoning the classical Malay emphasis of Leiden and London in favour of Bahasa Indonesia and its modern literature. Even more radical was his decision to recruit his staff primarily in Indonesia: Soebardi and Achdiat in 1961, Soewito Santoso in 1964, Yohann Johns in 1965, Supomo in 1970. Soebardi, Soewito Santoso and Supomo all wrote excellent dissertations in the Faculty on Javanese literature (Reid 1997:xix–xxiii). Distinguished students like Heather Sutherland, Ann Kumar, Chris Manning and Lenore Manderson made their way through the undergraduate course. There were over 100 students in the three years of Indonesian by 1966 and 158 in 1974, making this one of ANU’s most successful language departments. By hindsight, this strong language-training Department was, along with the Indonesia operation in Economics, the first world-class success of ANU in Southeast Asian Studies. There may sometimes have been bigger Indonesian language departments elsewhere in the world, but there was none better, and this was a fine basis on which to build other things.

It was some time before the Department of Oriental Civilizations tried to cover the whole of Asia, or at least make an appointment for Southeast Asia. When it did in 1961 hire someone to teach in this area, it was not a handmaiden to the strong Indonesian work but the rather exotic (in Australian terms) Helmut Loofs, a European-trained archeologist with practical (Foreign Legion) experience in Indo-China. He began teaching Southeast Asian history, and in 1967 was joined by another recruit from Indonesia, Dr Sutipjo Wiriyosaparto. Sutipjo unfortunately died four years later, opening the way to one of the first Australian-born and Australian-trained Indonesians in Ann Kumar to take on the teaching of Indonesian history. Gradually other ANU-trained scholars were taken into the Department of Asian Civilizations, as it was in the 1970s — Baas Terwiel on Thailand and

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Ian Proudfoot on the Malay world. What developed here was not yet Southeast Asian Studies in the sense of an interdisciplinary attempt to understand a region, but a gradual expansion from a language base, concentrating on ‘civilizations’, or following the 1978 review, ‘Asian [cultural] History’.

When the Canberra University College joined ANU in 1960, Oriental Studies was still a School within the Faculty of Arts at ANU but it became a separate faculty in 1962 and remained such through subsequent reviews and restructurings when a merger with Arts was threatened. The success of the Faculty in resisting this already makes ANU different from most other places where ‘Southeast Asian Studies’ is established as a means to coordinate teaching and research by people scattered in different discipline departments. The Faculty of Oriental (from 1970 Asian) Studies had its own specialist departments organised around the major languages, as well as the Department of Asian Civilizations (later History) as a handmaiden to language study. Further regional organisation seemed unnecessary.

In the discipline departments of the Faculty of Arts there was also some teaching about Southeast Asia. I believe it was Rosemary Brissenden, Melbourne graduate and Indonesia volunteer in the Mackie/Feith/McKay mould, who began courses in Southeast Asian (or was it Indonesian?) politics in the Political Science Department in 1960, before being cut down by a stroke. Ian Wilson arrived soon after and taught a little Southeast Asian politics to go with his main China focus until a stint at Nanyang University in 1972–4 provided a much stronger commitment. Larry Sternstein completed a Geography PhD on Thailand in 1963 and subsequently taught Southeast Asian courses in the Department of Geography, where Ted Chapman in the 1970s also became steadily more interested in Thailand and Laos. Like Chapman, Geoffrey Fairbairn had essentially South Asian experience when hired into the Department of History in 1961, but as Vietnam hotted up he began teaching his famous course on counter-insurgency in Southeast Asia, where many students cut their polemical teeth. Also in History, Campbell Macknight gradually shifted his focus in the 1970s from working on the ‘Macassans’ in north Australia to an interest in Bugis history.
Professionalisation: the Americans, 1970–85

What happened in the 1970s was a large influx of the first professionals, in the sense of people trained as Southeast Asia specialists in the United States. I cannot resist beginning this new phase in 1970, which coincides not only with the Orientals' Conference in Canberra and the Faculy's change of name to Asian Studies, but with my own arrival. But it may have been a couple of years earlier that it began to occur to people that, collectively, there was a chance for world leadership here. If there was coherent purpose behind this it was probably Jack Crawford's, and if there was one spectacular hire as a result of his efforts it was Wang Gungwu, in 1968. Gungwu was appointed explicitly in the China field and doesn't believe Jack Crawford's pursuit of him owed anything to his Southeast Asian credentials. I myself doubt this a little; I think a Malaysian appointment was attractive to many people, in a way that even a China-born appointee might not have been. He did not do anything in his own Department to boost Southeast Asia until the appointment of Jennifer Cushman in 1975, but everybody knew him, especially in Malaysia, and his prominence gave me a wonderful figurehead to operate behind. An example was the 1976 conference which produced one of the first major successes of my time, and the first important ANU book explicitly to cover all of Southeast Asia, Perceptions of the Past in Southeast Asia (1979).

I was appointed, I presume, as a replacement for Emma Sadka, the tenured Southeast Asian historian who tragically died in 1968. I found in the ANU files the justification for my appointment which Jim penned in 1969, which ended by stating that 'Since RSFS is giving great emphasis to South-east Asian studies, an appointment such as Reid's is urgent.' Presumably this was with an eye to Crawford and Arndt, and now revealed his department as being pushed in the direction of Southeast Asia rather than leading the charge as fifteen years earlier. Perhaps it did no harm that my background was Wellington and Cambridge, like Jim's but twenty years later. Jim seemed indulgent, and a good patron for a quiet operator like myself. He had arranged a year-long Visiting Fellowship for Peter Burns in 1971, who was perhaps then (but not later) identifiable as the acceptable kind of colonial

Malaya scholar. On the Indonesia front he did not object to my pursuit of Lance Castles, who arrived as a Research Fellow in October 1972, or of John Smail as a year-long visitor in 1972–3. Lance was only the second American-trained Southeast Asianist to be hired by ANU, after Herb Feith's brief stay, but he and Smail began what was to be a real pipeline from Cornell, Yale, Berkeley and Michigan. Some North Americans also arrived as graduate students in the form of Jim Warren and Alfons van der Kraan. The 1970s, at least in History, thereby marked a kind of professionalisation with people who had been through a graduate training specifically in Southeast Asian Studies.

These earliest appointments did not challenge the view of the Pacific core of my department that, if one were to go beyond a British-colonial principle of coherence, it had better be to an Austronesian island principle. The first seven Southeast Asia history appointments (Bastin, Sadka, Feith, Van der Veur, Dobbin, Reid, Castles) were all in the Indonesia/Malaysia area. But the tragic death of Jim Davidson in April 1973 (one of several premature deaths to mark this story) caused a major rethink of what the department was about. Despite my youth I was Acting Head of department at the time, mainly because of the feeding on the Pacific side. More importantly we had an able group of students working on Indonesia, Malaysia and the Philippines. I recall Bob Reece making most of the running for reconstituting the Department of Pacific History rather than simply seeking another Pacific Island person to fill the chair. A meeting of the department in June declared unanimously that the name should be changed to Pacific & Southeast Asian History. In order both to continue the pioneering role of the Department in Pacific History and to cater to the rapid growth in Southeast Asian History, that meeting demanded that two chairs be advertised, one in each field, and that the incumbents should share responsibility (Reid 1973).

The authorities decided to advertise only one chair initially, with a second kept in reserve for when the first had been resolved. The first one went to a second small-island Austronesian specialist, but of a very different kind in Hawaii-trained Gavan Dawes. He accepted the notion of a dualism between two sides of the department, and went along with the Research School's consideration of a senior appointment in

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Southeast Asian history. But when he arrived I was at Yale, and I want to pause a little to wonder what effect this American year had.

I have written elsewhere (1994:256–76, 1999:9–10) about the two traditions which have given rise to Southeast Asian studies as an enterprise in English. (There are different traditions in French, in Chinese, and to a degree in Japanese.) The more widely-acknowledged one is the American area studies pattern of Cornell, Yale, and so on; the other is the universities of Malaysia and Singapore, which developed the undergraduate teaching of ‘Southeast Asia’ courses since the 1950s. I believe this second one should be better acknowledged, since it has produced a large proportion of those who write about Southeast Asia as a coherent entity. I believe it affected the first generation of recruits from Malaysia/Singapore to ANU to some degree — at least Sadka and Ho. I know it greatly affected the second generation, Wang Gungwu, myself and Terry McGee. It was at the University of Malaya that I had been asked to teach Southeast Asian history, and proceeded to try to figure out what it was.

When I first arrived at ANU in February 1970 I not only joined David Penny and Ruth Darusman in keeping the Indonesia Study Group afloat, but I also quickly organised a Southeast Asia lunch group, which tried to meet on the first Monday of each month from late 1970 to my departure for Yale in 1973. There were only nineteen people on my first circulation list, and it offered to focus on Malaysia and Indonesia with extensions to Thailand, Cambodia and the Philippines. In fact we did fairly have John Giding talking on Thailand and Hazel Richter on Burma, as well as Steve Fitzgerald on Chinese policies to the whole of Southeast Asia and lots of talks on Malaysia. By hindsight, perhaps the highlight was the talk to the group by Dr Mahathir during his subsequently notorious August 1971 visit to Australia. Just emerging from the limbo into which his opposition to Tengku Abdul Rahman had cast him, Mahathir had been invited and then dis-invited by the Gorton government, and when subsequently re-invited seemed thoroughly miffed by his treatment. I don’t think we knew this at the time, and he should have been pleased enough with the talk and the dinner we gave him at our place, to which Bill Morrison (Opposition spokesman on Foreign Affairs) dropped in.

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This is to say that it was not the American area studies model that got us started on organising cross-campus things on a Southeast Asia basis. Nevertheless the American model did have some secondary influence on me, and I suppose on others. I had sought out people like George Kahin, Herb Feith and Harry Benda before ever arriving at ANU. And when I went to teach Southeast Asian history at Yale in 1973–4, I clearly found this model very exciting. During my nine months there I attended two of the AAS conferences and visited Southeast Asia Centres at Cornell (twice), Columbia (twice), Wisconsin, Ohio, Northern Illinois, Michigan and Berkeley. I must have been keen.

The two Southeast Asian historians appointed in 1973–4 were both Cornell graduates in Leonard Andaya and Rey Ileto. Rey’s appointment was the first stretching of the bounds of the old Malaysia/Indonesia focus, but still acceptable to Pacific people because of the Austronesian, island and European-impact themes. When I came back to a new department headed by Gavan Daws, having been teaching Southeast Asian history at Yale, it seemed time to advertise across the whole of the region. I was delighted when David Marr applied, and he was appointed a Research Fellow in 1975.

Ruth McVey had expressed interest in the chair advertisement, and at a higher level than mine she was being considered for the second chair on Southeast Asia. She came out as a Visiting Fellow in January–February 1976, and gave a couple of very detailed seminars on the 1965 coup. Whether from our side or hers, it was decided not to proceed with this appointment, and we converted the chair into a Fellowship. David Marr beat some strong competition to get it in 1977. For the next 20 years he and I would be the two tenured Southeast Asian historians. The idea was that the next available tenured slot would be used to again test the water for a chair, but that did not happen until 1988. Nevertheless the years 1975–85 were exciting ones in terms of appointments, intellectual critical mass, and joint projects. There were always between two and four non-tenured posts in Southeast Asian history, and since we then took the view that two years was more sensible than five, the good people kept coming and doing well. Most of them in this period were US-trained and perhaps too many were Americans.
On Malaysia/Indonesia Deliar Noer came in 1975, Barbara Andaya in 1977, Virginia Matheson in 1981, Lenore Manderson in 1983 and Bob Elson 1984. On the Philippines Key Icteto was followed by Mla Guerrero and Al McCoy (arriving late and leaving early) in 1977, Glenn May in 1981 and Norman Owen in 1983. Ben Baison worked on Thailand from late 1977, though there was then a big gap until Craig Reynolds in 1990. Mike Vickery wrote his book on Cambodia in 1979-81, and Nayan Chanda his in 1983-4. Beyond the Department of Pacific and Southeast Asian History, Jennifer Cushman arrived in Far Eastern History in 1975, providing a Thai historian and a necessary link with Craig Reynolds in Sydney. In the Faculty of Asian Studies, Thai began to be taught in 1974, and with Tony Diller's recruitment a few years later it became clear that ANU was an international leader in Thai studies. Bas Terwel and Ian Proudfoot added to the Southeast Asian history strength, while another Cornellian, Tony Milner came to the History department in the Faculty of Arts in 1980. George Miller had been an outstanding recruit to the ANU Library in 1973, and oversaw the extension of library holdings from Indonesia and Malaysia to the Philippines, Thailand and Vietnam. The positive side of all this excitement and building included (in History) a series of good collective books covering Southeast Asia — Perceptions of the Past (Reid and Marr 1979), Japanese Occupation (McCoy 1979), Slavery, Bondage and Dependency (Reid 1983), Disease and Death (Owen 1987) — as well as the usual individual books, of which Icteto's and Marr's were definitely world-beaters. I guess we were leading the world in various ways in this period, and we ran the publications series of the Asian Studies Association of Australia as a means of showing it. On the negative side, not enough of the Research Fellows remained in Australia. Moreover these halcyon days did not produce a group of graduate students commensurate with the academics. History was perhaps already beginning to decline as a magnet for Australian graduate students as politics became a pole of attraction, and increasingly the scholarships were not there to allow foreign students to come. We really had no systematic means to attract graduate students to work with this increasingly stellar group of people, nor much of a plan to do so.

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The excitement of this period was enhanced by the new Department of Political and Social Change in the Research School. I mentioned the strange absence of Politics from the School in the Davidson days. Jack Crawford had brought International Relations back into the School, and JDB Miller, Hedley Bull and John Gilling did supervise students in Southeast Asian politics. But International Relations remained a little uncomfortable dealing with the study of the internal political dynamics, so that both they and Heinz Arndt's economists were convinced a new operation was essential. I seem to recall that it was especially Heinz who feared that a standard Political Science department might lead to theoretical model-building of no great relevance to empirical work. Hence the name Political and Social Change was devised and a search was begun for a political scientist or sociologist who might strike the right empirical note. After several false starts the trail led to Jamie Mackie in 1979. Although Jamie had the best Southeast Asian credentials of anybody in Australia at that point, he made it clear that he wanted to focus research on a more limited area. This ended up being Indonesia, the Philippines, Malaysia and New Guinea.

Within a few years Jamie had built this Department's strength up to seven people, six of them working on Indonesia or the Philippines. He initiated the biggest focussed research project the School had seen, with himself, Bill O'Malley, Ken Young, Colin Brown and Radin Fernando all working on a project which began as a Java-Luzon rural comparison, and ended by looking in historical depth at four rural kabupaten in Java. It seemed a reasonable experiment in using School resources for single major research advance. Its failure ensured the department would turn into a more normal Political Science department thereafter, still empirically oriented but better adjusted to attracting Politics students from quite a broad range. This it has done rather well, and the declining number of staff was compensated for by the high quality with the arrival of Harold Crouch in 1985, and of Ben Kerkvliet as Jamie's replacement in 1989.

**A centre without a Centre**

By the mid-1980s ANU was clearly an international leader, if not the leader, in Southeast Asian studies. It probably has had since then the
largest concentration of academic specialists on the region of any institution outside Southeast Asia — as indeed it should. The arrival of senior figures such as Jim Fox in Anthropology in 1975, together with the Political and Social Change cluster, the economists, the historians, the demographers, the language and literature people, meant there was a rounded strength of expertise that could not be matched elsewhere. The extension of language teaching into Thai and Vietnamese in the Faculty made it a genuinely Southeast Asian centre, with world stature on most of its major countries despite the particular weight on Indonesia.

Despite belonging to so many departments and structures on the whole those working on the same areas got along, and there was cooperation despite the lack of structures for it. Among the major cooperative endeavours were the Indonesia Connection seminars in 1979 and the Torres Strait seminars of a similar period, both producing gargantuan books. Periodically there were initiatives to organise all or at least to list all the Southeast Asianists at ANU, but such attempts at organising were usually defeated by the very variety and numbers of those involved. In my day it often frustrated me that ANU projected its Southeast Asian studies so poorly by comparison with the Americans. More recent experience in the United States has largely removed that cultural cringe. The study of Southeast Asia grew at ANU not because of a specific plan or coherent purpose, but because many individuals in different parts of the University believed an appointment in this area made sense, and increasingly because good candidates were attracted by the presence of other colleagues there. Though slow to develop, and serendipitous at many points, the concentration continues to rest on these factors, which may be more fundamental and secure than on changeable university structures and government initiatives.

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After a long career in many institutions, Anthony Reid is currently a Visiting Fellow in the College of Asia and the Pacific, Australian National University. His email address is: anthony.reid@anu.edu.au. These considerations were first articulated in a farewell talk to ANU's Indonesia Study Group in 1999, which ranged rather more broadly into the gradual development of Southeast Asian studies in the period between 1970 and 1999 when he was first at ANU, and previously.

Notes

2. W McMahon Ball (1901–86) was the founding professor of Political Science at Melbourne University. His familiarity with the region was certainly enhanced by his appointment shortly after Pearl Harbour (December 1941) to head a Short Wave Propaganda Division of Radio Australia. This was intended both to monitor broadcasting in Japanese, Thai, and French, and to transmit propaganda in these languages. His Nationalism and Communism in East Asia (Melbourne University Press for Institute of Pacific Relations, 1952) has some of the same humane sympathy for emergent nationalism as George KAHIN's book of the same year.
3. Raymond Firth (1901–2002), did his early training at Auckland in economics, but switched to anthropology for his PhD at London School of Economics under the influence of Malinowski. This dissertation was published as Primitive Economics of the New Zealand Maori (1929). From 1927 to 1933 he was at the University of Sydney, where he began his long association with the tiny Polynesian society of Tikopia, at the southern extremity of the Solomon Islands. Of many books emphasizing the socio-economic realities (as opposed to normative social systems) of pre-industrial societies, particularly the most influential was perhaps We the Tikopian: A Sociological Study of Kinship in Primitive Polynesia (1936). He returned to teach at the LSE in 1933, where he eventually succeeded Malinowski as Professor of Anthropology in 1944. Meanwhile he had ventured into Southeast Asia in 1939–40, with the fieldwork in Kelantan that became Malay Fishermen: Their Peasant Economy (1946). During the War he led the Naval Intelligence team of which the young fellow-New Zealander Jim Davidson was a member, producing the useful naval handbooks (Firth and others 1943–5).
James Wightman Davidson (1915-1973) was educated in Wellington before doing his PhD at St John's College in Cambridge (1938-42). After his wartime experience helping Firth with the Naval Intelligence volumes he became a Fellow of St John's and University Lecturer in colonial history (1944-50). Notes towards a biography are in Munro 2008.

Note particularly Davidson's letter to Sir Douglas Copland on 7 September 1949, insisting that Sunner's appointment should not diminish the scope of his own chair extending into matters of Pacific government (information from Doug Munro).

Presumably Jan Davidson and John Legge were each aware of the other's initiative at this time. Legge devoted his 1956 sabbatical from the University of Western Australia to Cornell and Indonesia.

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Strangers in the house: Dutch historiography and Anglophone trespassers

Joost Coté

Keywords: Indonesian studies, historiography, Australian academy, Dutch scholarship

Since George McTear Kahin's landmark history of the Indonesian revolution, Australian-American Indonesian historiography has studiously avoided (with a very few notable exceptions) Dutch history writing on Indonesia. Until recently it seems that a rather impenetrable linguistic and what might be loosely termed, postcolonialist, barrier has existed separating the two. The stand-off, if such it is, has been mutual with one venerable Dutch scholar suggesting iconically in a Dutch language publication little over a decade ago that: 'American and Australian historians sometimes demonstrate an insufficient recognition of the problematical aspects of the Indocentric perspective.'

In examining post-war, Dutch language historiography of the colonial-era, this paper aims to provide perspective on the historical gap separating 'post-imperial' and postcolonial writing in these two traditions. It identifies key themes and figures and the role of institutional structures in the perpetuation of Dutch colonialist historiographical traditions that explain its reception of post-war theoretical and substantive Anglphone preoccupations in this field. The article concludes with a consideration of more recent trends in both 'camps' that provides evidence of a growing convergence between the two bodies of historiography and the factors contributing to this more recent mutual reassessment.

The 'loss of the Indies' was and remains a significant moment in Dutch history. Indonesian independence was felt as 'loss' in both a quite intimate sense across a significant proportion of the Dutch population with historical and family connections, and nationally as a possession of which it was felt the Netherlands was unfairly deprived. The 'event'...