

## **SESSION 4: POLICIES AND POLITICS**

### **Paper 1 Students' Movement and Political Participation: Research on the Association of Islamic Student in Indonesia**

*Ismail Suardi Wekke & Sidratahta Mukhtar*  
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Indonesian student movement engages in political participation since Budi Oetomo declared Kebangkitan Nasional (national awakening) in 1908 to nowadays called reformation era. It proves that student activities in Indonesia a part of political process as "an extra parlement". One of the student movements is Himpunan Mahasiswa Islam (HMI – The Association of Islamic University Students), a student movement shaped by Islamic value system. This paper tries to examine the practices of HMI in performance. Thus study was conducted in Himpunan Mahasiswa Islam, data were collected purposively in Jakarta. Interview with Pengurus Besar (National Board), non-participant observation and documentation study were arranged. The research shows that HMI (sixty years involvement) since 1947 is an instrumental part on Indonesian educational and political activities progress in enhancing and developing the potency of youth generation. Furthermore, this paper will give an example of activities that were designed not only to develop the student's skills of knowledge but also to raise awareness of political activities and how this relates to Islamic belief. Through involvement in wide range activity is one way to increase awareness among students of the possibilities to learn about and practice management and leadership skills. After graduation from the universities many students chair political party activities and appoint in various positions within government institutions. As a result, those activities allow them participate in Indonesia development and contribute to national progress that direct by Islamic belief, value and culture.

**Paper 2 Inequitable Land Usage in East Java (1971-2005): Impact on the Socio-Cultural Livelihood of Farmers**

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There has been a dramatic change in the agricultural sector during the last 34 years (1971-2005) in Indonesia. The contribution of the agricultural sector to the Gross National Product (GNP) has decreased drastically. Conversely, the industrial sector's contribution to the GNP significantly increased. In 1971, the agricultural sector's contribution to the GNP was 44.8% which constituted almost half of the GNP. In that year, the industrial sector only contributed 8.4% to the GNP. In contrast, in 2005, there has been a drastic reduction in the agricultural sector's contribution to the GNP to 13.4% of the GNP. On the other hand, the industrial sector's contribution to the GNP increased to 29.0%. So, it could be argued that during the past 34 years, the Indonesian government's development policies gave more favor to the industrial sector and marginalized the agricultural sector.

This was caused by an annual decrease in the allocation of land for agricultural purposes and an increase in the rate of agricultural land conversion to estates and industrial areas. The process of land conversion increased instability in the agricultural sector, which was the main source of farmers' bread and butter. The result of this was that farmers were marginalized since they had lost most of or all their land, which was their means to earn money to support their families. This dramatically increased instability in the agriculture sector and violated the harmony of farmers' lives. Therefore the main objective of this paper is to examine how this has led to a decrease in the living standard of farmers and how all of this has affected the farmers' pattern of employment, their values, traditions and resultant social structures.

### **Paper 3      Southeast Asia in the New Cold War: A Socialist Analysis**

*Eugene Jones  
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Southeast Asia was the battleground for the longest and most sustained conflicts of the first cold war. Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia actually saw American invasions while Malaysia, the Philippines, Thailand and Indonesia had active insurgencies. According to Noam Chomsky, this cold war occurred because the USA will not allow any country to succeed in an alternate route to development. Now with the retreat of Communism, the US has gotten afraid of another ideology that might seek another route to development that would prove capitalism inadequate. While many Muslim countries are capitalistic, there are provisions in Islam that prohibit some of the most brutal practices of capitalism; usury, exploitation of labor, profiting without adding value and the use of capital to make money. Because of this and because it needs an enemy, the US, with its client states have created a new cold war against Islam. Using Australia as its client in the region, the Americans are fomenting conflict, insurrection and ethnic liberation to maintain control. Again Southeast Asia is a major battleground.

In addition to doing the bidding of its suzerain, America, Australia has imperialistic intentions of its own. Now with its control of the economy and political system of East Timor, its military control of the Indonesian military, its involvement in the Muslim insurgencies in Thailand and the Philippines, Australia is in a position to gain control of the oil and other resources of Southeast Asia. While this is happening, they are building up their military and gladly accepting the role of regional “sheriff” for the American empire.

In this paper, using a Socialist analysis, I will argue that the real enemy of Southeast Asia is Australia with its American overlord and that the Muslim insurgencies play into the hands of these new imperialists.

## **SESSION 5: LANGUAGE IN ASEAN**

### **Paper 1     Searching Harmony in ASEAN Relationship with Civil Society**

*Yuyun Wahyuningrum  
Mahidol University*

The history of modern society is the history of the interaction between state and civil societies within international, regional and national context. However, civil society is a concept which is bound to the emergence of common problem and the way society interpret it based on their relations to the state and their historical, political and sociological realities. Therefore there is no monolithic form to define civil society, especially in Southeast Asia Region. Currently there are more than 700,000 organizations in this region but only 55 non-government organizations from 10 countries are accredited by the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) per May 2006. Despite the fact that Southeast Asia's civil society has proved their capabilities to engage within the discourses building and become pivotal actors in human rights and human development, their voices and presence are still marginalized and doubted. This paper argues that as long as ASEAN refuses to acknowledge the role of civil society in policy making, harmony will far from being achieved.

**Paper 2      Language and Ethnic Relations – A Case Study on Reverse  
Situations: Thais, A Minority in Kedah, Malaysia and Malays a  
Minority in Pathum Thani, Thailand**

*Umaiyah binti Haji Umar  
University of Malaya*

The author developed an understanding of the Kedah-Thai communities during her research on Thai Kedah dialects spoken in Kedah, Malaysia. How they co-exist as a minority group maintaining religious and cultural practices within the dominant Malay and Muslim society.

Several years later, the author undertook a reverse study on the Bangkok-Melayu communities living in and around greater Bangkok and reporting on their assimilation.

This paper attempts to relate how a minority, the Thai and Malay communities, lives alongside the dominant group from the perspective of language and ethnic relations.

**Paper 3      Maintaining Harmony at Work: The Role of the Judge in the Malaysian Courtroom**

*Noraini Ibrahim*  
*Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia*

Courtroom discourse is generally high-stake and the adversarial legal system that is practised in Malaysia (often) results in an atmosphere of hostility between the contesting parties. During cross-examinations for instance, an adversarial counsel will test the accuracy and credibility of the evidence with questions that are designed to contention. Within certain limits therefore, there will be contestations and struggle as both sides attempt to claim and reclaim control over the discourse. Such instances thus require the presence of an overarching body to regulate the interactions and the climate of the courtroom. In the Malaysian courtroom, this power resides in the most powerful participant in the setting, the judge, as all interactions are directed to him. This paper is based on a prolonged *in-situ* case study of a criminal trial in a High Court Malaysia. Adhering to the qualitative paradigm of "Ask, observe and collect" (Saville-Troike, 1982), ethnographic courtroom observations of that intrinsic case and informal interviews were conducted out over a period of two years and three months. Perusal of related documents to triangulate the data was also conducted. By emphasizes on the locus of power, emergent themes were identified and through a process of redundancy, several important findings were arrived at. This paper will thus discuss several ways in which the judge controls the other speaking participants, namely the defence and prosecuting counsels, as well as the witnesses, in the effort to control and maintain harmony in the courtroom. The paper will firstly look at how the judge employs intertexuality to bring into effect the provisions expressed in the High Court Rules of Practice and Procedure. Secondly, the paper will discuss several linguistic strategies adopted by the judge as manifested in his linguistic behaviour. Finally, this paper will attempt to suggest some reasons that promote such judicial behaviour.

## **SESSION 6: EDUCATION AND YOUTH**

### **Paper 1 Pedagogical Thoughts: Education, Critical Literacy, and Cultural Identity in a Democratic Society**

*Dale Rorex  
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Diverse pedagogical thoughts competing within the cultural milieu of Thailand influence the processes of becoming and being literate. This article is organized around three assumptions. First, it argues that the current crisis of education is symptomatic of a broader crisis in the meaning and practice of democracy. Second, it analyzes the critical relationship between literacy and cultural identity in a multicultural, multiethnic society. Third, it calls for educators to rethink leadership vis-à-vis expanding and deepening cultural democracy. In short, critical literacy is a culturally defined construct; therefore, it follows that it should have close links to cultural identity.

### **Paper 2 Maintaining Harmony in Online Chats**

*Tan Kim Hua  
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With the advent of the electronic media into mainstream communication, one of the developments taking place within the Internet environment has been a shift from face-to-face communication to online chats. Shortis (2001:92) called this genre "interactive written discourse" This discourse or real-time chat, sometimes referred to as 'instant messaging', is synchronous and offers users the ability to communicate with each other instantly. Although similar to face-to-face talk in terms of spontaneity of response, online chats lack many of the physical cues found in face-to-face communication. This paper examines the nature of coping strategies among *undergraduates in maintaining and sustaining harmony in online chats* at Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia. Coping strategies adopted in maintaining a harmonious environment in online chats are analysed and the motivations of such adoption of strategies are also investigated. The findings have implications on the development of online communication skills among undergraduates as online chat sessions, once regarded as a simple social communication device, have now gained a significant position particularly in universities, where most undergraduates are known to spend a large part of their time, both formally and informally, in online communication

### **Paper 3 Competing Views of Higher Education**

*Lynken Ghose  
Mahidol University*

My presentation will represent a study of the ways in which people are being educated here in Thailand, particularly at the undergraduate and graduate level. My main thesis argument is that Western ways of approaching different areas of studies are being adopted “wholesale” without proper reflection upon the veracity and usefulness of these methods. In fact, sometimes these Western methods and ideas contain fallacies in basic common sense logic which, at the very least, should render them as non-authoritative. Non Western countries could add more to Academia by taking Western models and adding their own particular innovations instead of assuming that the Western ideas are authoritative.

### **Paper 4 Cultural Globalization in Thailand: The Impact of the Farang on Thai Identity**

*Ninja Weissinger  
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Cultural Globalization leads to new forms of cultures and identities, melting both global and local elements into new hybrid forms. The process of hybridization is supported by stereotyping other cultural forms and referring to them as cultural “Others”. This paper shows how this applies to contemporary Thailand, starting with an overview over postcolonial approaches to cultural globalization, and following that analyzing Thai society under the influence of globalization. In this respect, it identifies the white Westerner, called “Farang”, as a constitutive outside for an increasing part of the Thai population, describes the attributes ascribed to the Farang and explains how the interaction with the Farang both stabilizes and alters Thai identity.

## **SESSION 7: MIGRANT WORKERS**

### **Paper 1 Migrant Worker and Cultural Identity: A Bridge between Culture**

*Ismail Suardi Wekke & Cholichul Hadi*

*Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia & Universitas Airlangga*

Malaysia and Indonesia share the same roots of culture in many forms. On the other hand, it is easy to find differences in term of uniqueness and group's plurality of identities. The new challenges are arising from dialogue and interaction to express identity, culture and values. This paper investigates how Indonesian worker perceive their cultural identity and how it has affected their social interaction in Malaysia during their placement as domestic worker. In addition, this paper analyzes several activities that has explicit message on bridging cultural values. The study employs depth interview followed focus group session to prove how deeply the identity. The study shows that interact between Indonesian worker and Malaysian society have an important role to increase their understanding between Indonesia and Malaysia related factors. There are two phenomena; first, cultural dialogue and interaction enriched by the study of language nature as a social phenomena (language awareness). Second, the study of language world in turn to combined with a study of culture (cultural awareness). In addition, the existence of migrant worker is a process of cultural adding new knowledge to what workers already know. If they are unable to effectively communicate through culture, participation in the domestic work is problematic in almost every time. Finally, it recommends a need to enhance Indonesian migrant workers' cultural knowledge to ensure that during placement they have cultural understanding.

**Paper 2     Hidden Inbetween-ness: An Exploration of Taiwanese Transnational Identity in Contemporary Japan**

*Petchun Han  
Waseda University*

This working paper examines cultural identity and discourse of one particular transmigrant group, the “newcomer” Taiwanese, in contemporary Japan. This group of Taiwanese came to Japan after the conclusion of WWII. They have experienced complex transitions in recognition of legal status and of self-identification. Presented as a legacy of Japanese colonial rule, the newcomer Taiwanese constantly negotiate and redefine their bewildered identities and thus constitute a distinctive case within the population of overseas ethnic Chinese.

Japan, widely considered to be a society of racial and cultural homogeneity, faces an increasing influx of transmigrants, in particular those from East Asia. Migration thus leads to a broad range of concerns in the contemporary Japanese society. While previous literatures of the Chinese and Korean Diaspora are widely researched, those on the Taiwanese Diaspora are far left behind in the associated scholarship. This study investigates the Taiwanese transmigrants’ cultural adaptation and socialization under the Japanese discourse through literature reviews and field study. This paper argues that the newcomer Taiwanese have constructed a hybridized identity, which serves to be one of the most significant characteristics of migrants in the multicultural era in the globe. The embedded hybrid of Chinese-ness and Japanese-ness in their identity is constructed through daily work, life practice and social networking.

This group of Taiwanese migrants in postwar Japan struggle with surveillance, assimilation, resistance and identity confusions. To balance between a survival strategy overseas and a primordial attachment to the motherland, their identity of group boundaries may shift in various directions in accordance with the dynamic situations. Focusing on the patterns of migrants’ settlement and network, this study suggests that the newcomer Taiwanese had developed a certain model that features cultural mixture captured in their intra- and inter-ethnic interactions.

**Keywords:** Cross-border Identity, Diaspora, Multiculturalism, Taiwanese/Chinese Overseas, Postcolonial Japan-Taiwan Relations, Japanese Homogeneity, Cross-strait Relations.

**Paper 3 Legal Protection, Integration and Development for Migrant Worker in GMS**

*Jan Tahir Babar  
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To deliberate on the theme of Legal Protection, Integration and Development for Migrant Worker, as it impinges on human rights and security of lives of migrant workers, network promoting, advocating, and upholding the rights and dignity of migrants.

For mobilizing support and advocating for the ratification of the 1990 UN Convention on the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families and the ILO Convention 97 and 143; placing at center stage of the international arena the discourse of international labor migration, concern over the growing racism and xenophobia and recognizing the pioneering efforts on migrants' reintegration in their home countries through mobilizing remittances.

This discussion based on Migration and Immigration policies through national legislation to admit and recognize migrant as regular workers and raising migrant issues as national concern. Therefore, having focused discussions on migration and development, globalization and sustainable development, the supremacy of human security over national security, human trafficking and migration, feminization of migration, gender issues in migration, informalisation of labour, reintegration and remittances, migrants' health and well being, and international human rights standards, we the participants call for:

- The repeal of laws discriminating against migrant workers;
- The recognition and regularization of undocumented migrant;
- The recognition of foreign domestic workers and entertainers as workers and to be protected under labor laws and to give proper value to their work;
- The respecting and upholding of the full dignity of migrant workers, including the right to be with their families, the right to marry and start families, the right to health care and social services for all migrant workers and their families, and all other rights and protections of migrant workers and their families as enshrined in the UN Convention on the Protection of the Rights of all Migrant Workers and Members of their Families;
- The establishment of Memoranda of Understanding (MOUs), bi-lateral and multilateral agreements by sending and receiving countries that ensure the protection of migrant workers' rights, including the right to association, the right to form or become members of existing unions, and the right of suffrage for migrant workers;
- The prevention of all forms of trafficking, ensuring the rights of the victims of trafficking, including regulation and monitoring of recruitment agencies;
- The right to equal wages for equal work without any form of discrimination, including gender and racial discrimination;

- The implementation of training, savings programs for alternative investments for sustainable development and reintegration programs when migrant workers return to their home countries, at all stages of the migration process;
- The universal ratification and effective implementation of the 1990 UN Convention on the Protection of the Rights of all Migrant Workers and Members of their Families, to advocate adoption of ILO Conventions and other relevant international instruments;
- An immediate end to the deportation of undocumented migrant workers.
- The regional bodies such as ASEAN, APEC and SAARC to implement policies, guidelines and agreements for the protection of the rights of all migrant workers and their families.

## **SESSION 8: GENDER ISSUES**

### **Paper 1      Women's Leadership Styles in Promoting Community Development**

- Zaharah Hassan  
*Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia*

Traditionally, community affairs and administration has been the domain of men. This is evident from the gender imbalance of leaders and office bearers across community/local council/associations. Women, on the other hand, have not been active in local politics and are relatively inactive in public processes due to institutional, socio-economic and cultural constraints. However, times are changing. There is now a comprehension and (grudging acceptance) that women can and do play a vital role in community affairs, particularly in contributing to the achievement of security, development and progress. These are vital ingredients to harmonious community. How do women leaders strive to achieve this? This paper documents the experiences of three female leaders in their quest to unite and lead their peers in the betterment of their communities. This qualitative research employs various techniques such as in-depth interviews, observations and document analysis. Specifically, this paper explores the leadership styles and strategies employed by these women leaders. Is a "masculine" or "feminine" style more dominant? What are the means used by women leaders to reach out to all segments of the community? How are the leadership styles manifested by these three women different from that of their male counterparts?

**Paper 2 Linguistic Sexism and Gender Role Stereotyping in Malaysian English Language Textbooks**

*Bahiyah Dato' Hj. Abdul Hamid, Mohd Subakir Mohd Yasin, Kesumawati Abu Bakar, Yuen Chee Keong & Azhar Jalaluddin  
Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia*

Sexist language and gender stereotyping do not only disparage, but can also lower the dignity of one group of people, usually women/girls. If left unchecked, these negative norms of behavior and attitude could be institutionalized and gradually become part of our social and cultural code. Recent research findings indicate a strong presence of gender bias and linguistic sexism in the language and content of educational materials such as textbook and practice books. This paper addresses linguistic sexism and gender role stereotyping in Malaysian English language school textbooks. Specifically, it looks at: If sexism is inculcated very early in life, how is it inculcated and what is inculcated? Are our school textbooks indirectly and unconsciously functioning as a conduit for the indoctrination and enforcement of sexism and sex role conformity among young Malaysians? This paper presents the preliminary findings of an on-going research study that documents the extent of gender bias and linguistic sexism in selected Malaysian primary and secondary school English language textbooks.

**Paper 3 Women and Political Development in Malaysia: New Millennium, New Politics**

*Rashila Ramli & Saliha Hassan*  
*Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia*

As we enter the new millennium, Southeast Asia experienced many events that affected the political development of the region as a whole. In the late 1990s, the region was mired in a financial crisis that changed its political landscape. Under these politically trying times, women political empowerment continues unabated. In the case of Malaysia, women have participated in the political process since the first election of 1955 (prior to Independence of 1957). Thus, in fifty years, it might appear that women have broken through the institutional barrier and perhaps, the glass ceiling and finally are accorded their rightful place in the political arena. The state of affairs, however, is not all that rosy. The success of Malaysian women in electoral politics is less than encouraging. In the 2004 elections, women representatives account for only 10.5% of seats won in parliamentary constituencies. This paper examines the evolution of Malaysian women's (especially Malay women) participation in politics from the early 1950s to 2005. It looks at how Malaysian women face up to new challenges and to optimize opportunities within the Malaysian socio-political environment, which is in turn, shaped by globalization and developmentalism. By optimizing the opportunities, it is expected that there will be a higher level of harmony within the pluralistic society in Malaysia. What are the political changes that have taken place in the 1990s compared to with the 1950s? How have these changes impacted women's political participation? What are the strategies employed by women leaders to craft a foothold in a predominantly male-centric polity without disrupting social harmony?

**Paper 4      Harmonizing Personal and Social Perspectives: An Understanding of Women's Entrepreneurship in Malaysia**

*Sivapalan Selvadurai, Chan Kim Ling @ Geraldine  
Noor Rahmah Hj. Abu Bakar & Bahiyah  
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This paper attempts to present an alternative theoretical perspective, i.e., the personal-social dynamic perspective to understand women's entrepreneurship, especially in unconventional business sectors in Malaysia. Women's entrepreneurship is, traditionally, understood from the perspective of business start-up, sustenance and growth. This alternative approach serves to complement existing conventional understanding that normally explains women's entrepreneurship from the psychological dimension of personal traits and concentrates on individual level analysis. According to this school of thought, the development of women's entrepreneurial traits occurs in an isolated and particularized manner independently of the wider social domain within which the entrepreneurs are situated in. In simple terms, the role of social actors for example, in birth and development of entrepreneurial traits at the individual level is negligible, if not invisible. The traits are argued as in-born. On the contrary, the alternative model we are suggesting integrates the dynamic component of personal characteristics with the wider social environment, embracing both economic and institutional social processes. This alternative perspective is an outcome of a research conducted on women entrepreneurs in unconventional business sectors in Malaysia. The research finding demonstrates that some women entrepreneurial traits have indeed been developed within the social-institutional context. It was also found that the women's personal characteristics to a certain extent influenced their social context, e.g., social relations. As such, it appears women entrepreneurship is in part formed by a process of harmonizing personal and social domains.

## **SESSION 9: TRADITION AND FAMILY**

**Paper 1      The Beliefs in the Medical Treatment According to the Folk Rituals:  
A Case Study of the Folk Medical Doctors in the Utong District,  
Supanburi**

*Wariya Chinwanno  
Mahidol University*

The research entitled “The Beliefs in the Medical Treatment According to the Folk Rituals: A Case Study of the Folk Medical Doctors in the Utong District, Supanburi” focuses on two main objectives: 1) to study the beliefs in the medical treatment according to the folk rituals among the folk medical doctors in the Utong District, Supanburi and 2) to collect the information regarding the folk rituals of the folk medical doctors in the Utong District, Supanburi which should be considered one of the most valuable Thai heritages.

The research was conducted by means of two major methods. First, the documentary research: the researcher collected books and documents about folk medicine and analyzed them in order to find the relations between the beliefs about folk rituals and folk healing behaviors among the folk medical doctors. Second, the in-dept interview: the researcher interviewed 35 medical doctors in the Utong District, Supanburi.

Findings from the research reveal that most of them (66%) were massage doctors. About 30% were folk medical doctors who cured patients having diabetes, cancer, high blood pressure, influenza, coughing, etc. When asked about their beliefs, 58% said they believed that there were gods or sacred beings who helped them in the performance of their duty. Most of them mentioned the name “Chiwaka Komarapat” the famous Indian medical doctor who treated Lord Buddha in the Buddhist time as their teacher. The rest of them (39%) said they did not believe in any gods or sacred being but thought it was their own treatment ability that enabled the patients to relieve from their illnesses while 3% did not answer this question.

**Paper 2    What's Hip What's Hop?: Disharmonized Representations of Gender in Music Videos**

*Fuziah Kartini Hassan Basri  
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Media representations of gender have always been an avenue for contestations in feminist media studies. Feminists have been concerned with how preoccupied the media are with women's appearances and bodies whilst at the same time giving focus to what men do with them. More often than not, the media emit a particular cultural message: men are players and masters while women are objects and subjects. Such a message is abundant in popular music videos consumed by most young people today including those in Malaysia. A content analysis study of three hip-hop music videos that had the highest ratings in the MTV chart during the fourth week of January 2007 - That's That, Dangerous, and Tell Me - discovered various oppressed representations of the female, while men are represented as powerful and central to everything. The hip-hop music videos focus on the female bodies ('hip') and how men behave towards them ('hop'). Such representations belittle the increasing effort of Malaysian policy makers to propagate gender harmony in the home, the workplace and society at large. What are the implications of such media consumption on the gender consciousness and sensitivity of young Malaysians? The paper explores this issue based on a focus group discussion of male and female students at Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia.

**Paper 3      Economic Activities in a Matrilineal Culture: A Case Study of the Travelling Merchant in Minangkabau Villages in Indonesia**

*Delvi Wahyuni & Silfia Hanani*  
*Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia*

The Minangkabau ethnic group is indigenous to the highlands of West Sumatra, in Indonesia. Their culture is matrilineal. There are two prominent effects of this culture. Towards Minangkabau women. Firstly, they have privilege as the heir of "harta pusaka". (Ancestral property). Secondly, Minangkabau women have economic responsibility for the children who live with them. Ideally, "harta pusaka" is fully passed down to women. Recently, there has been a radical change in Minangkabau society with regards to the inheritance system, because that harta pusaka have been made private ownership. As a consequence, Minangkabau women have lost their privilege, yet they are still expected to maintain their role as the main staple of family economics. Being a traveling merchant is one alternative for the Minangkabau women to accommodate to this change and at the same time to fulfill their responsibilities. As traveling merchants, they travel from one traditional market to another, both near their domicile and to areas further away. Consequently, this traveling trade has changed the pattern of raising children and the nature of family interactions. Nevertheless, it is proven that by being travelling merchants, the Minangkabau women are able to increase their families' prosperity. Thus, this paper explores the impact of being trading travelers on the harmony of their families.

## Paper 4 Demographic Representation and Thai Family Values

*Matthew Copeland  
Mahidol University International College*

As a national institution, the “Thai family” is frequently represented in dichotomous and contradictory terms. Often described as “the basic unit of society” and a principal means of assuring cultural continuity, family is also widely held to have undergone a transformation so radical that it is now virtually unable to perform even the most fundamental of tasks – attending to the material needs of its weakest members, the very old and the very young, while producing enough children to meet the economic demands of society as a whole.

The consensus view, one articulated and affirmed in a range of media reports, academic studies and policy papers, is that the traditional family unit is in near-terminal decline, giving rise to a number of closely related social problems. These concerns have in recent years not only served as a pretext for increased governmental scrutiny and intervention into the realm of family life; they have also been a catalyst for the growth of broader family values movement, a public campaign to strengthen the family unit by actively promoting ‘traditional’ family values and practices.

Of particular interest to me here is the extent to which contemporary understandings of the “traditional Thai family” – and the crisis conditions into which it has fallen – are largely a product of demographic – as opposed to historical, anthropological or ethnographic - representation.

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