

Short Training Course on Research Methods in Vietnam

The National Center for Social Sciences and Humanities of Vietnam held its second short training course on research methods in Hanoi from July 28 to August 5, 1997, with a fiscal 1996 international grant from the Toyota Foundation. The first such course, funded by a fiscal 1995 international grant, was held in 1996; coordinated by Yumio Sakurai, a professor at the University of Tokyo, it addressed issues in fieldwork methods. The theme of the second course was methods for the study of modern Japanese culture, society, and foreign relations. Lectures were delivered by Toru Haga, a professor at Taisho University (professor emeritus of the University of Tokyo and the International Research Center for Japanese Studies); Yuzo Kato, a professor at Yokohama City University; and me, who also served as program coordinator.

Lectures on early modern Japan

Professor Haga discussed the political, social, and cultural situation in the Tokugawa period (1603–

1867) and the Iwakura Mission, which visited the United States and Europe from 1871 to 1873. Professor Kato presented a detailed description of the international situation in East Asia in the mid-nineteenth century, around the time the Tokugawa shogunate abandoned its national seclusion policy, and discussed industrialization policy in the Meiji era (1868–1912). They were followed by my lecture on Japan's relations with its Asian neighbors from the middle of the Meiji era until World War II, with reference to relations among the major powers. All three lectures followed syllabuses that had been distributed in advance. Professor Haga's delineation of the Iwakura Mission and Professor Kato's explanation of the background of negotiations between the Tokugawa shogunate and Commodore Matthew Perry of the United States were highlights of the course. Both scholars did a fine job of relating events in early modern Japan to the situation in Vietnam today.

The lecturers explained their research methods in the course of discussing their careers as researchers. All three had initially intended to study the history and culture of other countries but had then become interested in Japan and during lengthy sojourns abroad had found opportunities to reevaluate their

own country, so that by coincidence their approaches to research had much in common. I used part of the time allotted to me to point out the importance of understanding from the viewpoint of the object of the research and to stress the need for methods that uncover the intrinsic value of the object of the research.

The lectures delivered in Japanese by Professors Haga and Kato were interpreted by Ho Hoang Hoa of the National Center's International Cooperation Department. Professor Haga's half-day



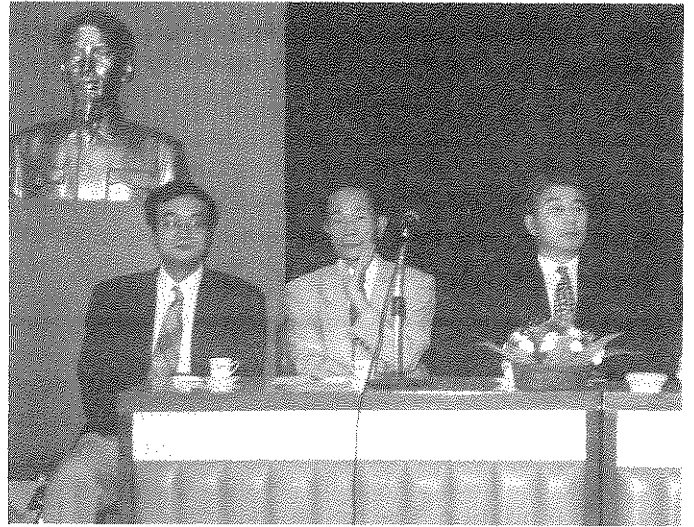
Young Vietnamese researchers listening attentively to a lecture

English lecture introducing the English translation of the Iwakura Mission's journals was interpreted by Do Duc Dinh of the Institute of World Economy. I delivered my lecture in Vietnamese, with Ms. Hoa occasionally coming to my rescue.

Enthusiastic students

Of the 39 students in the training course, 7 were from the National Center's Center for Japanese Studies, with 1 or 2 from each of the other research institutions affiliated with the National Center. In addition, 11 students were from unaffiliated research and educational institutions in Hanoi, Hue, Ho Chi Minh City, and Bien Hoa. All completed the course, concentrating earnestly throughout. Particularly impressive was the way Professor Chuong Thau of the Institute of History, Professor Nguyen Van Lich, director of the Department of Oriental Studies of the University of Social Sciences in Ho Chi Minh City, and Dr. Ha Van Luong, director of the Faculty of Philology of Hue University, joined the young researchers in attending all the lectures and taking notes.

Initially the question-and-answer sessions flagged, probably because the participants were tense and somewhat overwhelmed, but as the course progressed, questions and comments became numerous. Reflecting the situation in Vietnam, many questions dealt with such issues as the role of culture in industrialization, the relationship between modernization and Confucianism, and the maintenance of traditional culture in the face of modernization. The lecturers found it difficult to reply adequately to



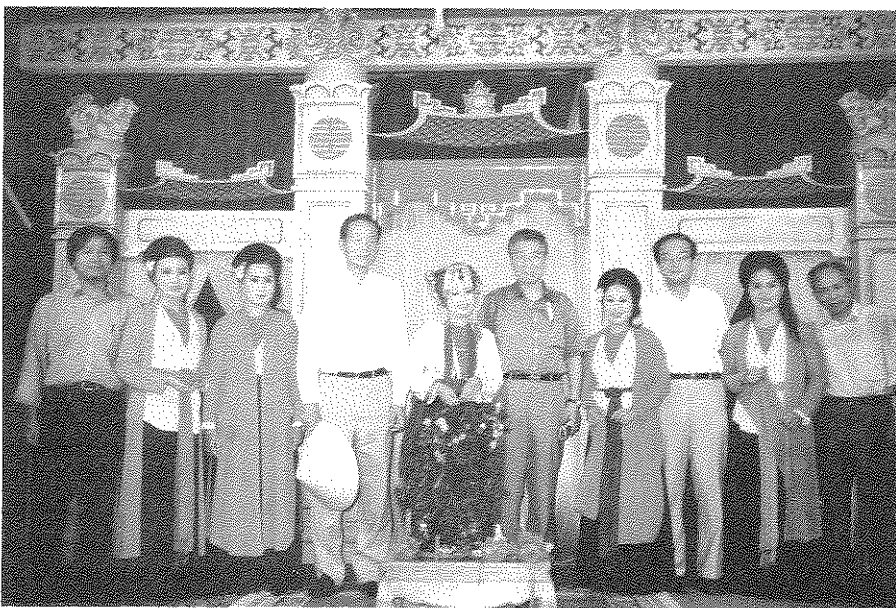
From left, Professors Shiraishi, Kato, and Haga

all such questions. There seems to be a gap between matters of interest in the Japanese academic world and what interests Vietnamese researchers, who seek practical solutions to problems that relate directly to policy issues.

Ideas for future courses

Under the leadership of Acting Director Nguyen Van Ku, the National Center's International Cooperation Department went all out to organize and administer the course and provide support for the three lecturers. In addition to arranging the meeting place and taking care of behind-the-scenes details, the department organized a visit to the Center for Japanese Studies, tours of rural communities near Hanoi and a museum in the city, and performances of a water puppet show and classical performing arts. Professors Haga and Kato were visiting Hanoi for the first time, and brief though their stay was, I think it gave them a good opportunity to come into contact with Vietnamese culture and society.

Training-course participants felt strongly that they wanted to learn more and wished the course had been longer. Many participants also indicated that they would like similar programs to be held more frequently, on an ongoing basis. Among the many things Vietnamese researchers hope to learn more



The lecturers enjoying their contact with Vietnamese culture

about in the future are the methods of specific social-science disciplines, such as sociology, the study of religion, and cultural anthropology. They are also extremely interested in various issues concerning Japanese studies.

More than a one-way transmission of information from Japan to Vietnam, this program is a valuable arena for deepening dialogue and exchange. Professors Haga and Kato, who had had little previous contact with Vietnam, seem to have been transformed into keen fans of the country. I feel strongly that the accumulation of this sort of steady effort is what is most needed now. (*Masaya Shiraiishi, Professor, Yokohama City University*)

International Symposium on Sustainable Use of Central Asian Natural Resources

A symposium on the sustainable use of the natural resources of Central Asia, focusing on the environmental problems of the Aral Sea and surrounding areas, was held in Almaty, Kazakhstan, September 9–11, 1997. The meeting was organized by the Japanese Research Association of Kazakhstan, headed by Norio Ishida, an associate professor at Kyoto University, and a counterpart group in Kazakhstan.

Deterioration of the Aral Sea

The Aral Sea, which covers an area the size of the northern Japanese island of Hokkaido, is rapidly shrinking, and has been drawing worldwide attention as a typical case of large-scale environmental change. Human factors are to blame. Under Soviet economic planning, extensive irrigation projects were carried out to promote cotton production in the basins of the Amu Darya and Syr Darya, two major rivers that flow into the Aral. At one time the enormous cotton-growing region that resulted was presented to the world as a

triumph of economic planning. At the same time, however, this project triggered large-scale environmental destruction that robbed the Aral of most of the water from the rivers that feed it.

The shrinking of the Aral has destroyed its ecosystem, not only bringing about the demise of its fishing industry but also leading to soil salinization, which is endangering cotton production. Extensive irrigation without adequate drainage has caused evaporation to push salts in the soil to the surface, leading to a gradual decline in the size of harvests.

The research group led by Professor Ishida has been endeavoring to elucidate the environmental changes that have taken place in the Aral Sea and surrounding areas. In the process, it has become clear that despite the global attention focused on this alteration of the environment, data that would facilitate scientific reconstruction of what has happened are practically nonexistent. Faced with this state of affairs, the group has spent eight years in field studies, accumulating data from a wide variety of angles, including geology, hydrology, and agricultural production. The Toyota Foundation provided grants for this research in fiscal 1992 and 1993.

Summary of the symposium

The international symposium at Almaty aimed to gain as comprehensive a picture as is currently fea-



The Academy of Sciences of Kazakhstan, venue of the Aral Sea symposium



Umirzak Sultangazin of the Academy of Sciences of Kazakhstan coordinating the general discussion on the final day of the symposium

sible of Aral Sea environmental problems by focusing on the results achieved by this group and pooling data accumulated by local scientists. Because the Kazakh researchers' findings are published in Russian, they rarely receive significant attention at international meetings. Thus another aim of the symposium was to provide local researchers with an opportunity to present their findings and, if possible, have them translated into English and circulated in the international community.

The three-day symposium was held at the Academy of Sciences of Kazakhstan. Keynote speakers included Umirzak Sultangazin, vice-president of the academy, and Professor Nikolai Aladin of the Russian Zoological Institute. Some 60 or 70 people attended, including leading scientists from research institutes in Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan and a few representatives of local NGOs. Hidekata Mitsuhashi, the Japanese ambassador to Kazakhstan, also addressed the symposium, conveying a message from Prime Minister Ryutaro Hashimoto. This courtesy seems to have been interpreted as indicating the strength of Japanese interest in the meeting.

On the second day the symposium split into four subsessions, which dealt with agricultural production and land degradation, water resource conserva-

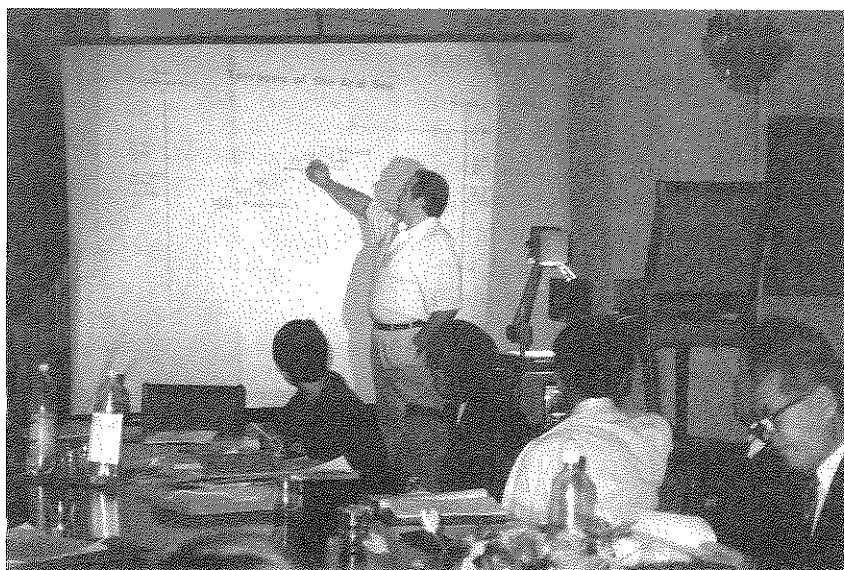
tion, biodiversity conservation, and pollution and human health. The ratio of reports was about eight local to two Japanese.

On the whole, local researchers used few slides or other visual aids, which sometimes made their presentations difficult for the Japanese participants to follow. But considering that most of the Kazakh researchers' computers are on the level of equipment Japan was using 10 years ago, we must give them credit for a job well done under difficult conditions. Subsession management was left to the discretion of the respective chairs, so presentations differed considerably in length.

On the third day the participants came together again for a general discussion. The subsession chairs

summarized the previous day's proceedings and presented proposals for improving the environment. The discussion was then thrown open to the floor, but no reportable conclusions were reached.

This symposium originated with the idea that scientists should take the lead in creating an arena for bottom-up debate. In this respect, the meeting served as a forum for the exchange of basic information, such as who is doing what kind of research. But the perspectives of the humanities and social sciences on political, economic, and ethnic issues are indispensable to an overall understanding of environmental



Professor Aladin pointing out water-level changes in the Aral Sea

problems in and around the Aral Sea. Because most of the symposium's participants were natural scientists, the human factors remain to be addressed. English-language proceedings are scheduled to be published in 1998. (*Masaaki Kusumi, Program Officer*)

Foundation Grants for Fiscal 1997

At its eighty-second meeting on September 19, 1997, the Board of Directors of the Toyota Foundation approved a total of ¥326.46 million in grants for fiscal 1997. A ceremony to announce the grants was held on October 14, and Foundation Chairman Eiji Toyoda presented project representatives with certificates of the grants. These grants, together with those approved at the board's June meeting, brought the total value of grants for fiscal 1997 to ¥397.15 million. Following is a breakdown by program.

Research Grant Program: As usual, applications for Category A grants (individual research) and Category B grants (joint research) were publicly solicited from April 1 to May 31. Proposals related to the program's key theme, "Creating a Society with Pluralistic Values," and addressed one of four sub-themes: mutual understanding and coexistence of diverse cultures, proposals for a new social system—building a civil society, the global environment and the potential for human survival, and science and technology in the age of civil society. A total of 837 applications were received. These were screened, and 67 projects were selected to receive grants totaling ¥200.4 million. Of these, Category A accounted for 31 grants (¥50.0 million) and Category B for 36 grants (¥150.4 million).

International Grant Program: The Foundation accepts applications year round from Southeast Asian researchers for projects on the theme "Cultural Issues in Contemporary Society." The 403 applications received for fiscal 1997 were screened in July, and the Board of Directors approved 59 grants totaling US\$605,200. By country, 6 were in Cambodia, 10 in Indonesia, 4 in Laos, 2 in Malaysia, 1 in Myanmar, 9 in the Philippines, 3 in Thailand, and 24 in Vietnam.

Incentive Grants for Young Indonesian Researchers Program: This program's two key themes are "Reevalua-

tion of Indigenous Culture and History" and "Scholarly Analysis of Rapidly Changing Society." Four subthemes are given priority—land use and ownership issues, labor issues, changes in religious attitudes, and development of urban culture—but other research for master's degree theses and doctoral dissertations is also eligible. Applications were publicly solicited from March 1 to April 30. The 866 applications were screened in Jakarta in August. The Board of Directors approved 59 grants totaling \$107,000.

"Know Our Neighbors" Programs: These programs award grants to assist the translation and publication of Southeast and South Asian books in Japanese and of Southeast and South Asian as well as Japanese books in Southeast and South Asian languages. In line with a five-year plan initiated in fiscal 1991, all 6 applications for the Program in Japan were approved, for grants worth a total of ¥15.26 million. Under the Program in Other Asian Countries, 26 applications were received for a total of 49 volumes; of these, 14 grants (17 volumes) totaling \$112,100 were approved.

Other grant-making activities: Foundation initiative grants are not publicly solicited. The Board of Directors approved three such grants totaling ¥12 million. Communications-supplement grants provide for follow-up on projects carried out with earlier Foundation grants. A total of ¥7.6 million was approved for three such grants and reported to the Board of Directors *ex post facto*.

Seventh Citizen Research Contest: The seventh Citizen Research Contest on the theme "Observing the Community Environment," which had been in progress since the public solicitation of applications commenced in October 1993, was concluded in July 1997, when the selection committee screened the final results of the research projects. Awards were approved by the Board of Directors and presented to the recipients at the October 14 ceremony.

The Foundation received 70 applications for the seventh contest. Thirteen teams were awarded grants for preliminary studies to be carried out in 1994 (of these, one team later withdrew). On the basis of the results of the preliminary studies, six teams were chosen to receive grants for two-year main research projects beginning in April 1995. The research period ended in March 1997, and final reports were submitted to the Foundation at the end of May.



Members of the Study Group for Birds on Karasuyama River Walkways receiving the team's award from Chairman Toyoda

During both the preliminary-study and main-research stages, members of the selection committee and the Foundation staff interviewed members of the teams on site. In addition, during both stages meetings were held at which the teams presented progress reports, so the selection committee had a thorough understanding of the process and progress of each team's research.

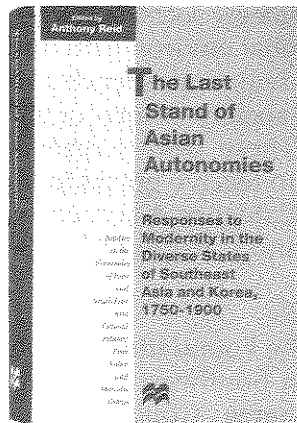
The July 18 meeting at which the teams presented their findings, held at the International House of Japan in Tokyo, enabled the committee members to consider candidates for the most outstanding research and outstanding research awards. Each member had already made an initial evaluation based on the teams' earlier reports, but at this point opinion was split. After the meeting the committee members reevaluated the projects, and the next day they held their final meeting at the Foundation's offices. There was animated debate on which teams should be selected for awards.

The committee agreed unanimously that the Study Group for Birds on Karasuyama River Walkways should receive the most outstanding research award for the high quality of its project, "Bringing Wild Birds Back to the Karasuyama River Landfill Walkways: A Study and Experiment Aimed at the Coexistence of Urban Residents and Wild Birds," as citizen research, including such features as the relationship developed between local government and citizens and the project's broad scope as a citizen ac-

tivity. The selection committee was still divided over which team or teams should receive the outstanding research award. After considerable debate, the members concluded that it should go to one team, the Isahaya Bay Tidal Wetlands Study Group, for "An Empirical Study of the Wise Use of the Isahaya Bay Tidal Wetlands" because of the high quality of the research results achieved.

With regard to the four other projects, committee members agreed that each team had accrued considerable energy during the past two years and was in the process of making new discoveries, but they felt that creative research developments were still in the offing. Two teams, the Study Group for the Restoration of the Railway in Iwamizawa, Hokkaido, and the Medium-Sized Wild Animal Study Group of the Tokyo Wildlife Research Center, were considered to be gaining understanding going beyond the initial scope of their projects. To encourage the further development of these projects it was decided to present the two teams with special incentive awards. (Masaki Kusumi, Program Officer)

Recent Publications Based on Foundation-Supported Research



The Last Stand of Asian Autonomies: Responses to Modernity in the Diverse States of Southeast Asia and Korea, 1759-1900. Anthony Reid, ed. London: Macmillan, 1997. ISBN 0-333-68825-2 (hardcover), 0-333-68826-0 (paperback). New York: St. Martin's Press, 1997. ISBN 0-312-17249-4.

This collection of papers dealing with Southeast Asia and Korea from 1759 to 1900 brings together the work of 17 scholars from Australia, Europe, Japan, Southeast Asia, South Korea, and the United States. Beginning in 1992 the authors met for several study sessions; this book is the outgrowth of their shared perception that even prior to colonization by Western countries and Japan, Southeast Asia and Korea were undergoing social and cultural changes in the direction of mod-

ernization. Traditionally, scholars of the colonial period have considered colonialism to have brought about modernizing reforms in Asia. In part this stance has derived from efforts to justify colonialism and in part from the strong emphasis placed on the role of technological innovation and the industrial revolution in eighteenth-century Europe. Anticolonial and Marxist scholars, too, have considered precolonial Asian kingdoms to be *anciens régimes* ripe for replacement by the more progressive political systems represented by capitalism.

This book, however, makes a careful analysis of materials from the period, demonstrating that shipping and exports in the region grew at a higher rate between 1780 and 1840 than it did after the Suez Canal opened in 1869. It also focuses on the scale of Chinese influence during this period, something Western scholars have thus far overlooked. The authors stress that the era saw the literary and artistic revolutions and heightened self-consciousness and awareness of ethnic identity that are often observed in the germinal stage of modernization.

This work attempts to reinterpret the precolonial period. The authors' stance accords with that of recent studies of Japan's modernization, which see it as an outgrowth of factors present in the Tokugawa period (1603–1867) rather than as a result of the Meiji Restoration of 1868. (*Yumiko Himemoto, Program Officer*)

Bujang Tan Domang: Sastra Lisan Orang Petalangan (Bujang Tan Domang: Oral Literature of the Petalangan People). Tenas Effendy, ed. Yogyakarta: Benteng Budaya, 1997. ISBN 979-8793-37-4.

The Petalangan, a Malay people living in the interior of Riau Province, Sumatra, have a special respect for the Monti Raja clan, which since antiquity has been responsible for passing down the *Nyanyi Panjang*, an epic that forms the basis of the Petalangan oral tradition.

This volume, the product of many years' research by a local historian who has recorded the *Nyanyi Panjang*, has been published as part of the École Française d'Extrême-Orient's Nusantara documents series.

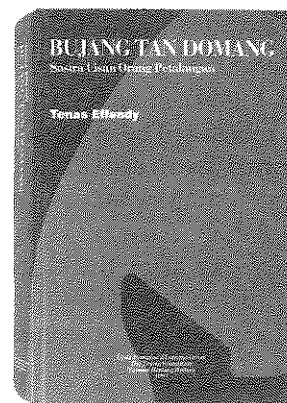
Bujang Tan Domang is the hero revered by the Monti Raja as the founder of their clan. The *Nyanyi Panjang* recounts his birth, his adventures through his marriage and fathering of children, and the establishment of the clan territory. Thus it has served to

legitimize the clan's status. It also describes in detail the moral norms and social rules that have governed life in the clan.

Since upholding the authority of the epic was essential, clan heads designated people whose job was to memorize and recite it accurately, transmitting it unchanged from one generation to the next. Because of the nature of the tale, the editor obtained the cooperation of as many reliable clan elders as possible, and he used what seems to be the most authentic form of the epic in compiling this book.

Not only is the *Nyanyi Panjang* outstanding from a literary perspective, it also has a threefold significance in terms of the outer world: It has historical significance in demonstrating that the Monti Raja clan originated in Johore, legal significance in clarifying the clan's territorial boundaries, and social significance in prescribing relations among the Petalangan themselves and with neighboring peoples. The many behavioral norms recorded in the epic indicate that the Petalangan were highly aware of the ecosystem, demonstrating that criticisms leveled against slash-and-burn agriculture for destroying the environment are not necessarily on target. Nonetheless, under the external pressure of development the Petalangan people's culture and worldview are disappearing, and there is concern that in the near future it will be verifiable only through such records as this.

The project to survey and record the epic received Toyota Foundation international grants in fiscal 1987, 1988, and 1989, and publication of the book was supported by an international grant in fiscal 1995. (*Yumiko Himemoto, Program Officer*)

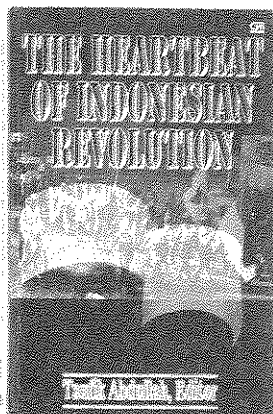


The Heartbeat of Indonesian Revolution: Denyut Nadi Revolusi Indonesia. Taufik Abdullah, ed. Jakarta: Gramedia Pustaka Utama, 1997. ISBN 979-605-723-9.

This volume includes 17 papers presented at an international conference, "National Revolution: Memories, Studies, Reflections," held in Jakarta July 11–14, 1995, to commemorate the fiftieth anniversary of Indonesia's declaration of independence on Au-

gust 17, 1945. They are published in both English and Indonesian.

The work is divided into four parts. The first contains the two keynote lectures, by Indonesian State Secretary Moerdiono and Professor George Kahin of Cornell University, whose *Nationalism and Revolution in Indonesia* is regarded as a classic. The second part comprises recollections by four major actors in the revolution, including Rosihan Anwar, who edited the daily newspaper *Merdeka* after the declaration of independence and founded the daily newspaper *Pedoman* in 1948. He discusses the Indonesian newspaper world in the



years 1945–48. The third part consists of nine papers on postindependence Indonesia by researchers from Japan, Southeast Asia, the United States, and elsewhere. The papers were selected because they provide new thematic and local perspectives on the Indonesian revolution, confirm that popular sovereignty and democracy were already being developed during the struggle for independence, and encourage the spirit of “making peace with history.” The fourth and final part contains two papers that look at the Indonesian revolution from comparative viewpoints.

Interpretations of history inevitably change over time. This work’s attempt to place the Indonesian revolution within a historical context 50 years after independence has considerable significance.

Part of the cost of the conference was defrayed by a Toyota Foundation international grant in fiscal 1994. (Yumiko Himemoto, Program Officer)

About the Foundation

The Toyota Foundation, a private nonprofit, grant-making organization dedicated to the goals of realizing greater human fulfillment and contributing to the development of a human-oriented society, was endowed in October 1974 by the Toyota Motor Corporation.

The Foundation’s total endowment is approximately ¥16.4 billion (roughly \$126 million). Chartered by the Prime Minister’s Office, the Foundation relies on its endowment income. The decision making of the Foundation, governed by its Board of Directors, is independent of the corporate policies of the subscribing corporation or of any other institution.

Through various programs the Foundation provides grants for research and projects related to the human and natural environments, social welfare, education and culture, and other fields. Among these programs is the Research Grant Program, which supports projects that try to identify and solve problems faced by contemporary society and that focus on the following four priority areas: mutual understanding and coexistence of diverse cultures, proposals for a new social system—building a civil society, the global environment and the potential for human

survival, and science and technology in the age of civil society.

The International Grant Program awards grants for projects that address various cultural issues in contemporary Southeast Asian society and are conducted by indigenous researchers. The Southeast Asian Studies Regional Exchange Program provides grants to Southeast Asian researchers in order to cultivate Southeast Asian studies by Southeast Asian researchers. The “Know Our Neighbors” Programs support the translation and publication of Southeast and South Asian works in Japanese and vice versa, and of Southeast and South Asian works in other Southeast and South Asian languages.

The Toyota Foundation welcomes response from readers of the *Occasional Report*. Comments and questions should be addressed to the International Division, The Toyota Foundation, Shinjuku Mitsui Building 37F, 2-1-1 Nishi-Shinjuku, Shinjuku-ku, Tokyo 163-0437, Japan. The articles in the *Occasional Report* reflect the authors’ opinions and do not necessarily represent the opinions of the Foundation.

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