Two Alumni Meetings in Ho Chi Minh City and Hanoi

Prof. Dr. Thomas Engelbert, Head of the Vietnamese Studies Section, Department of Languages and Cultures of Southeast Asia at the Asia Africa Institute (AAI), Universität Hamburg, was present at two alumni meetings in Ho Chi Minh City (southern Vietnam) on 12 March 2023, and in Hanoi (northern Vietnam) on 6 April 2023.

In Saigon, there are several former BA and MA students from the University of Hamburg who currently work in different areas. Benjamin Göhring, a former BA student, for example, manages a social café in Bình Thạnh Ward. Our former MA students also have their own career in different fields: Cao Quang Đạt succeeds in working in Vietnam’s booming property business; Châu Khánh will start her own bio-restaurant in the posh Thảo Điền ward of the city; and Trần Trọng Hải Minh works as a journalist at the Tuổi Trẻ newspaper and translates English literature into Vietnamese. Our former PhD students pursue their career paths in academia. For instance, Dr. Trịnh Thị Mai Trinh is a lecturer at Hồng Bàng University. Dr. Trần Tịnh Vy, who is also our DAAD guest lecturer for Summer Semester 2023, currently works at the Department of Literature, National University of Ho Chi Minh City. Julian Huesmann is in the progress of preparing his application for a PhD at the University of Hamburg.

The Hanoi gathering was even more academic. All former alumni from Hamburg work at universities and academic institutions. Dr. Lê Hoài Ân has long been the Director of the German Department of Hanoi National University. Dr. Vũ Đức Liêm currently serves as deputy chair of the Department of History at the National University of Ho Chi Minh City. Julian Huesmann is in the progress of preparing his application for a PhD at the University of Hamburg.

During his stay in Vietnam, Professor Engelbert gave a lecture in Ho Chi Minh City and Hanoi about theories and methods of history, a topic, which is also taught in our own MA classes. The lecture was titled: “What is history?” The special emphasis was on the liberal approach. From around the end of the 19th century historians in Europe no longer contented themselves with collecting and evaluating sources or establishing the historical truth of facts and figures. They wanted to give history an all-encompassing meaning. There must be forces, factors, categories that span over the ages. For Marxists, the problem is simple: those categories are social formation, class struggle and revolution. This ideology even has an ultimate goal of human history: the class-less society, where everybody is cared for, a paradise on earth, an old dream of mankind since the dawn of time and of different civilizations (e.g., the ideas of Jianai, Dadong of Mozi, 470-391 BC). At that turn of the 19th century, there were other academic schools that found the alleged ‘red thread’ of history in national, religious, economic, social or other factors. So, what is history? How history became a science or an academic subject. Is there objectivity in history and what means historical truth? Those are the questions the historiographers of the Hellenistic era have already raised, and historians have always been concerned about, at the latest from the early 19th century onwards, when source criticism has led to the development of historical science as an academic discipline with its own theories and methods.

We cordially congratulate our alumni who have started their promising career paths in different fields. In the upcoming years we aim at organizing other follow-up meetings to which, hopefully, even more graduates and former guest lecturers would attend.
This lecture was presented first at the Department of History, University of Education, Ho Chi Minh City (21 February 2023), where more than one hundred participants, both staff and students, attended. Secondly, it was presented at the Department of History, National University of Education, Hanoi (3 April 2023) and thirdly at the Institute of History, National Centre for Social Sciences and Humanities, Hanoi (4 April 2023).

All three institutions were interested in a continuation and deepening of this subject. Both Vietnamese students and researchers know very well that the Marxist and especially the Marxist-Leninist approach is interesting, but only one method, which is, in addition, based on a specific world-view (Weltanschauung). They want to know more about Western theories and methods.

During his research stay in Vietnam, Professor Thomas Engelbert visited several Vietnamese universities and research institutes. He gave lectures attended by staff and students.

The first lecture was titled: “Millenarism in Indochina’s Highlands: The Sam Bram Movement”. It was about an anti-colonial movement of the peoples who live in the so-called Southern Indochinese Highlands. In 1937/38, the French colonial administration got wind of a millenarian movement among many different native ethnic groups who settled in the highlands of Southern Laos, Northeastern Cambodia, Annam and Cochinchina. The movement started among the Rhade in Darlac, but soon spread to the Jaraiin Pleiku-Kontum and the Mnong Biat in Mondulkiri. It was nipped in the bud. Was it important at all, or only a side-show of history? What were the origins and consequences? How do we assess this particular event in the long duration of highland history?

This lecture was presented first at Fulbright University, Ho Chi Minh City on March 2, 2023, where our former DAAD guest lecturer (2013), Professor Nguyễn Nam, chairs the Department of Vietnamese Studies. Secondly, it was presented at the Department of History, National University of Hanoi on 5 April 2023, where staff and graduate students attended. Professor Engelbert’s approach to the history of that area is different from the writings of Vietnamese specialists on that topic. This stimulated interesting, controversial debates.

### Honorary Lecture by Professor of Thai Studies

Prof. Dr Volker Grabowsky, Head of the Thai Studies Section, Department of Languages and Cultures of Southeast Asia at the Asia Africa Institute (AAI), Universität Hamburg, was invited by the Faculty of Liberal Arts, Mahidol University, Thailand, to give a special lecture (in Thai) titled Significance of Paratexts in the Study of Tai-Lao Manuscript Cultures (see the original Thai title in the flyer). They want to know more about Western theories and methods.

### Workshop Talk by Lecturer of Thai Studies

On 24–25 March 2023 the workshop “The Body of the Spoken Word: The Interconnection of ritual, text, and manuscript in Bon and Naxi traditions” was hosted by the Centre for the Study of Manuscript Cultures (CSMC), Universität Hamburg. Dr Silpsupa Jaengsawang, a postdoctoral researcher and lecturer at the Asia Africa Institute (AAI), gave a lecture titled A ritual leader's manuscript: Manual of interaction prayers. She presented a paper manuscript containing selected prayers written by a senior laywoman from Ban Vat Saen in the peninsular town of Luang Prabang in northern Laos. This laywoman played a prominent role as local ceremonial expert due to a declining willingness among young men to enter monkhood as they are increasingly seeking their own professional careers. The main texts of manuscript and para-contents were discussed. Production, use, setting, and pattern were applied as heuristic tools to get a clearer understanding of the interconnection between manuscripts and religious rituals associated with the copied texts.
Austronesian’s Visiting Doctorate Fellow

Rucitarahma Ristiawan, a PhD student from the Cultural Geography Research Group at Wageningen University Research, The Netherlands, has been working as a visiting research fellow at the Indonesia/Malaysia/Philippines Section of the Department of Languages and Cultures of Southeast Asia, Universität Hamburg. Mr. Ristiawan is working on his doctoral research on landscape commodification and rural gentrification through the cases of Gunungsewu and Ciletuh UNESCO Geoparks, Indonesia. His research explores how the landscape commodifications in Indonesian Geoparks have engendered rent gap creation through particular grassroot patrimonial governance in managing the land tenure system and negotiated displacement. He argues that the roles and impacts of the regional patrimonial governance system should be examined as being mutually co constitutive in opening and closing the rent gap, and determining land valuation. His project aims to provide a theoretical and empirical understanding by showing how patrimonial systems of governance at the regional level contribute to the particular processes of rent gap creation, displacement, and subordinated inclusion through built-to-let gentrification in Indonesian Geopark areas.

In this visiting research program, Mr. Ristiawan, who is also a lecturer at the Department of Geography at the Gajah Mada University, Indonesia, will collaborate on a research project with Prof. Elsa Clavé for three months (April–June 2023). Their research addresses a particular form of subordinated inclusion happening in Gunungsewu and Ciletuh UNESCO Geoparks, Indonesia. In running the tourism development program in geopark areas, practices of governing are often assumed inducing several practices of land grabbing and exclusion towards local communities. While planetary land grabbing activities are reported to threaten local community well-being, Indonesian rural dwellers show tolerance and peaceful acceptance of land grabbing through tourism as destinations develop and/or change. The output of this collaborative project is a research paper, which analyzes this particular case of non-resistance by Indonesian rural dwellers in Geopark areas. Through examining diverse rural community responses to the tourism development in Indonesian geoparks and the perceived socio-economic transformation experienced by rural communities, the paper addresses how terms of inclusion affect the politics of land disposition and exclusion in tourism development.

SoSe 2023 Film Screening

SoSe 2023 Film Screening:
Thursday, 04 May 2023
16:00 – 18:00
ESA-O, R. 221
(Asian Afrika-Institut)
Edmund-Siemers-Allee 1
20146 Hamburg

“Bumi Manusia”

Director: Hengky Kurniawan
Screenplay: Dian Sastro

“Bumi Manusia” is an adaptation of the original novel “Man From Mars” by the Indonesian author Pramoedya Ananta Toer. The novel is about a young man who faces numerous obstacles in his struggle to survive in a society that is dominated by a corrupt elite. The film is a powerful commentary on themes of power, corruption, and resistance.

In this film screening, we will be screening a new Indonesian documentary film titled “Bumi Manusia” which is directed by Hengky Kurniawan. The film tells the story of a young man who is forced to leave his home in search of a better life. The journey is filled with challenges and obstacles, but the young man refuses to give up and continues his journey towards his dream.

The film screening will be followed by a Q&A session with the director and the cast. It is an opportunity for participants to ask questions and engage in a lively discussion about the film and its themes.

Closed captions are available for this event.