

Summary of the panel 2

“Hidden hands of the Great Powers in Indonesia: Critical examinations of US Academia in the Cold War”

Kochi Kaoru
(Kanda University of International Studies)

During the Cold War, the United States did not only engage in direct political and military intervention in Southeast Asia, but also exercised indirect influence over various Southeast Asian nations through exploitation of American and local academics. Financial support for research from several foundations, especially the Ford Foundation and the Rockefeller Foundation, both reflected the intentions of the US government and intelligence agencies and shaped field research conducted by American researchers. US-based research on Southeast Asia was sometimes uncoordinated, occasionally resulting in conflicts between university-based projects and government projects. In any case, this government-academic cooperation was so common and almost-but-not-quite invisible, that it could be said to carry the force of nature. On the other hand, in Indonesia, one of the primary focuses of research, the Indonesian Army made use of US aid to involve local academics and institutions in development of the Army's socio-political function.

This panel will examine various aspects of American academia's entanglement with governmental power, engagement with and interference in Indonesia by the US and its academics, the (re)actions of Indonesians themselves, as well as to critically inquire into the broader issue of political involvement of academia.

The first presentation by Kaoru Kochi will focus on Maj. Gen. Soewarto, a key figure with close relations to the CIA and RAND Corporation, and discuss the military-academia network he built in the Indonesian Army Command and General Staff College (SESKOAD) in the 1950s and 1960s

In the second presentation, William Bradley Horton will explore Harry Benda's translation project on The Japanese Military Administration in Indonesia (Waseda Univ., 1959). His Yale University-based project conducted in coordination with researchers at Waseda University, was frustrated by publication of the translation of the same book by JPRS. Horton will examine this case and its results.

The final presentation by Mayumi Yamamoto will critically explore the Indonesia Field Project of MIT-CIS, known as the Mojokuto Project, which was the launching point for several American anthropologists specializing on Indonesia. Naturally, the MIT-CIS research center, supported generously by the CIA and the Ford Foundation, liberally supported this project. She will discuss the close, but invisible ties between anthropologists and US government money in such projects.

Presentation 1

“Army – Academia Relation in Indonesia: Soewarto and SESKOAD as a cradle for the New Order”

Kaoru Kochi
(Kanda University of International Studies)

Major General Soewarto is remembered as formulator of the “territorial warfare” theory in the military context, and in another context sometimes mentioned as a true designer of the New Order government. However, in spite of such roles, neither his contribution to the formation of the New Order nor his life are widely known. Similarly they have not been examined academically.

Recently some researchers have noted Soewarto’s role in the formation of New Order historiography of the September 30 Movement, since it was at his initiative that historian Nugroho Notosusanto and Ismail Saleh wrote *The Coup Attempt of the September 30 Movement in Indonesia* at the RAND Corporation, a CIA-affiliated institute. However, his contribution to the New Order regime is not limited to that point. He built close relations to RAND on his visits to the United States in the late 1950s and 1960s. In particular, his closest friend in RAND was Guy J. Pauker, a scholar of Indonesian and Southeast Asian politics and concurrently an agent of RAND. Pauker, as an expert of Indonesian politics, infiltrated and built an academic network in the Indonesian academia, mainly in the University of Indonesia, among them the so-called Berkeley mafia.

This presentation explores Soewarto’s life and his roles in the formation of New Order regime, through the internal documents and magazines of SESKOAD (Sekolah Staf dan Komando Angkatan Darat, or Indonesian Army Command and General Staff College).

Soewarto was impressed by the consultant function of RAND, and when he was assigned as deputy commander of SESKOAD, he got the idea that the college could be a similar institution. It was precisely coincident with the beginning of Soekarno’s Guided Democracy and the development of Dual-Function ideology of the Indonesian National Forces. As planner of the SESKOAD course curriculum, he was able to drastically change it, and included not merely military subjects but also socio-political subjects: social sciences such as economics, political science and state affairs (tatanegara). In order to advance this agenda, he invited experts from universities to the college. Most of those experts were young and educated in the U.S. Most noticeable were economists, Emil Salim and Widjojo Nitisastro, for example, but there was even a historian, Nugroho, an anthropologist, Selo Soemardjan, and so on. This reform made SESKOAD the most important center of Dual-Function ideology for the Indonesian National Forces, and involved more and more “civilian” researchers in the training courses for higher rank army officers. Intentionally or not, those “civilian” experts formed a team in the first half of 1960s, which would play an active and decisive role later in the New Order.

Soewarto’s management of SESKOAD and its courses was based on the exploitation of young “civilian” intellectuals for the armed forces. Most of these individuals were educated and obtained Ph.D.s in the US, and thus his policy can be seen as an extension of US policy to exercise influence on Indonesian academia, and later economic technocrats. On the other hand, Soewarto did not merely apply the US recipe, but he developed the idea of exploiting intellectuals more freely and widely in the local context.

Presentation 2

“A cautionary tale of arrogance: The Harry Benda translation of *Japanese Military Administration in Indonesia and the US*”

William Bradley Horton
(Akita University)

In the course of research in the Hoover Institution archive related to the Rumanian-born political scientist and Rand Corporation analyst Guy Pauker, I discovered a letter by Harry J. Benda, the famous historian of Indonesia. This letter related to the Waseda University study of Japanese Military Administration of Indonesia written by a team of researchers led by Koichi Kishi and Shigetada Nishijima and the possibility of an English translation of this work. In his letter, Harry apologizes to Guy for possibly stepping on his toes, as he had not been aware of Guy’s interest in this book, and inquiring if he intended to continue, or if they could work together.

Examining the files at Yale, it quickly was apparent that Benda subsequently had done the hard work of preparing a translation for publication in conjunction with the Rockefeller Foundation, the original authors, and translators. I then found another document—a short letter from the director of Yale University Press. The basic information was clear: publication of a translation with Yale University Press was being abandoned by Benda. But why was there “no point going on with the project”? What did the words of sympathy, and the reference to “a crushing blow” mean?

On November 22, 1963, Benda discovered that JPRS had published their translation and immediately telephoned the JPRS office, accusing them of copyright infringement. The JPRS head legalistically defended their decision; Benda sarcastically agreed with them. How had the US government’s JPRS come to initiate this unethical translation project, and what were its effects? Much remains hidden to the eyes of historians, but the impact on Benda was tremendous, and the impact on non-Japanese scholarship on the wartime period substantial as well, as this inferior, quick translation was subsequently the only version available to future generations of scholars.

Other questions also remain, such as whether there was any influence on the feelings of Japanese scholars towards the US. Shigetada Nishijima, an old Indonesia-hand from the prewar and wartime periods and another young Waseda-based scholar mentioned in Benda’s correspondence, Ato Masuda, had come from different leftist streams of thought. Such an obvious injustice at the hands of the American government would presumably not have been appreciated. Or would they merely rejoice in its publication? Would the publication have left a critical feeling towards American scholars, perhaps even those unrelated to the original book?

Because one of the “victims” in this case was a US-based academic, records remain of this case of arrogance in the space between production of academic knowledge and the US government at the peak of US imperial power. This case allows us to imagine how many other cases may have existed, and of the impact on the individuals and institutions, whether citizens and institutions of a US ally and former enemy like Japan, or those of less influential enemy nations.

Presentation 3

“Academic Money Laundering during the Cold War: The Case of MIT Indonesia Project”

Yamamoto Mayumi
(Miyagi University)

In September 1951, around the time of the long summer break of US universities, six graduate students from Harvard University and Radcliff College were called in a small room at Harvard for orientation for the Indonesia field project which subsequently became famous as the Mojokuto Project. All of these students had just finished the first year of graduate school; Clifford Geertz and his wife, Hildred Geertz, were among them. Initially, all of them did not know even where Indonesia is, however they were given nearly a full year of training in Indonesian, Dutch, and Indonesian studies as a preparation for fieldwork. The Mojokuto Project was not designed by these graduate students, but bestowed on them by the Center for International Studies at MIT, which was backed with plentiful funds from the CIA and the Ford Foundation.

In October 1952, after finishing Indonesian studies training in the Netherlands, they departed for Indonesia. The place where they settled into for the fieldwork was Pare--Mojokuto was a pseudonym. That was the site selected and prepared by their Indonesian counterparts; rather these graduate students selected the site themselves despite facing tension and stress in their relationship with their Indonesian “host” scholars. Coincidentally, Pare was one of the hardest hit areas during the post-1965 social turmoil, according to Clifford Geertz himself.

During the cold war, particularly during the early 1950s, MIT-CIS had number of projects which could be appreciated by the US government. The Indonesia Field Project was one of these. The Mojokuto Project was one of the most successful projects due to naïve graduate students, like Geertz. Later, the fast writer and the most “successful” graduate student, Clifford Geertz continued to conduct and research in Indonesia, notably in Bali and northeastern Sumatra, with support from MIT-CIS as well as the Ford Foundation.

In the 1970s and 1980s, both American and British anthropologists criticized the close relations between anthropological research and government/politics during the colonial period, as well as wartime involvement. This could be even described as the dominant discourse in this period for the anthropological association. Bronislaw Malinowski was one of the most targeted scholars due to his attitudes in the field and his willingness to give train colonial bureaucrats. However, in this period of criticism of past anthropologists’ work for governments, American anthropologists rarely pointed out the field work of their colleagues and teachers.

Through this presentation, I would like to explore the close ties between anthropological work in Indonesia and US government money during the Cold War. I also discuss the problem of US hegemony and elite culture in the Indonesian context.