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Alternative Approaches
in Southeast Asian Studies:
Compounding Area Studies and
Cultural Studies

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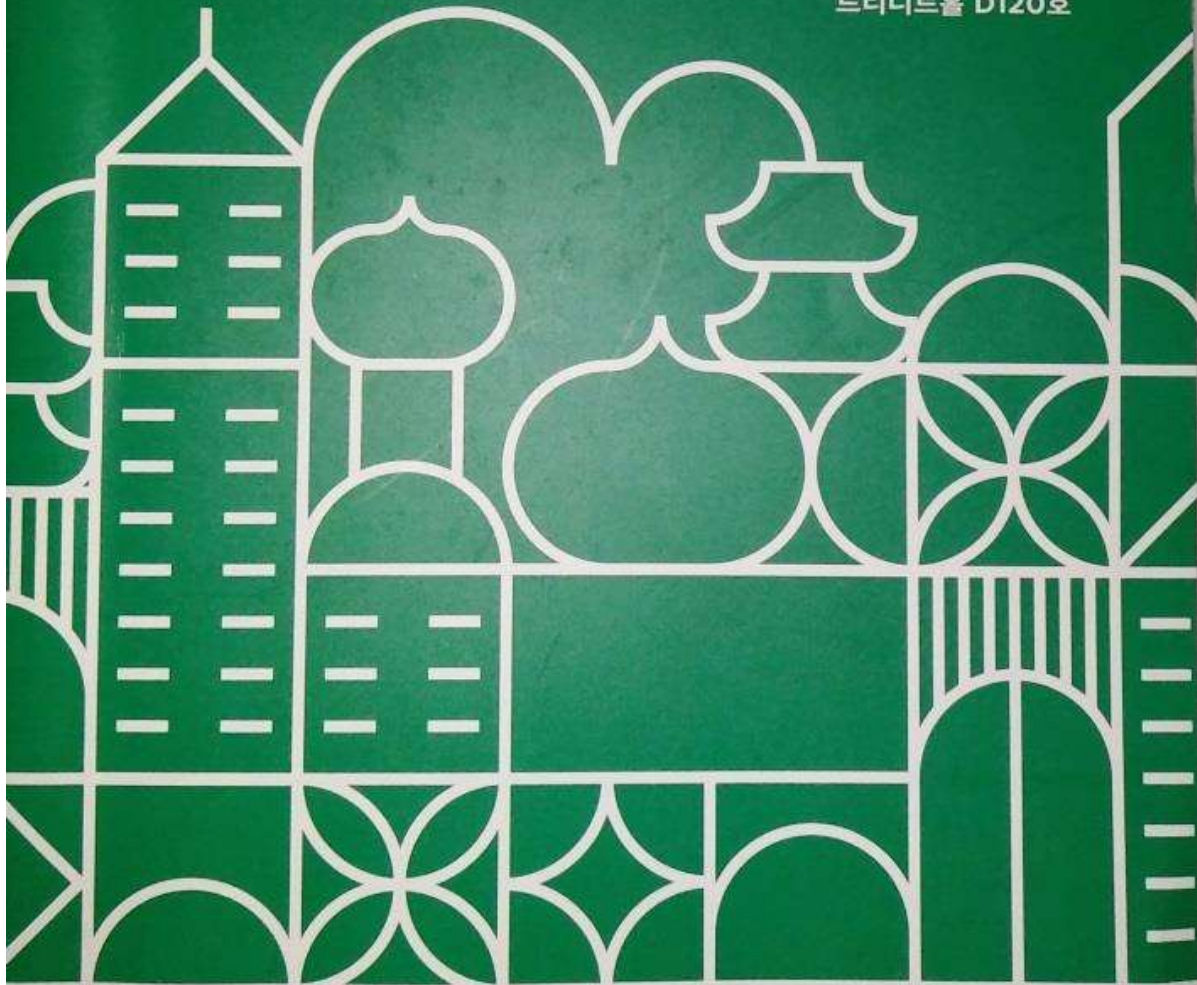
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Cultural Studies in the Border Areas of Southeast Asia: The Case of Indonesia and Malaysia¹

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Abstract

Southeast Asia can be considered one social and cultural unit despite there being many aspects of heterogeneity in terms of language, ethnicity, religion and cultural tradition through history and migration processes, which have shaped Southeast Asian countries both on the mainland and the insular areas. Along with the emergence of the modern state in the twentieth century, there are still some problems since not all of the border areas are managed in terms of fixed border regulations. Indeed, there are certain border areas still managed by utilising unfixed border regulations, such as in the border region between Indonesia in North Kalimantan and East Malaysia. In the past, some countries in Southeast Asia only paid attention to the central region while ignoring their border regions. The development of palm oil plantations in the border regions of Kalimantan, Indonesia is a case in point. Though palm oil plantations are located in the border regions, in fact, the local government has no solution on how to manage the local product (palm plantations), so that these palm oil products have to be sent to Malaysia. The central government in Jakarta only successfully focuses on the upstream industries and does not pay much attention to those downstream resulting in a strong dependence of the local people in Kalimantan on the Malaysian side. This is not only experienced by Indonesian border areas but also by other countries where the weak control of the government in the border regions causes crucial problems not only in terms of social and cultural or economic but also in the political aspects. This can be seen in certain cases such as of the Rohingya refugees between Myanmar and Bangladesh, human trafficking and illegal logging between Indonesia and Malaysia and kidnappings between Indonesia and the Philippines. These issues disturb the social, cultural, economic and political stability among countries in the border regions of Southeast Asia. However, despite certain problems in the border regions between Indonesia and Malaysia, the local people continue to have a close relationship especially due to family linkages. It is important to elaborate more on how this close relationship works to understand the local culture in solving certain issues emerging in the border regions of Southeast Asia. There therefore are some pertinent questions that need to be addressed in this paper: Firstly, how can we understand the local cultures which have outstanding universal values which in turn could be used to solve the critical issues in the border regions of Southeast Asia? Secondly, what kinds of lessons can be learnt on historical border conflicts from the local perspective in order to use these as a pattern for pursuing peaceful and stable conditions in the border regions? Thirdly, to what extent can Cultural Studies play a significant role in contributing to solving the critical issues in the border regions? These are some questions that will be discussed in this paper in order to have a better understanding of border regions so that the local

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people can live side by side in peaceful and convenient ways.

Keywords: outstanding universal values, border studies, cultural studies, and Southeast Asia.

I. Introduction

Southeast Asia can be described as one social and cultural unit, influenced by many foreign cultures, namely Indian and Chinese which dominantly created the Southeast Asian culture. For a long time, India and China have affected the region which though located in the same tropical atmosphere has experienced different intensity of their cultural influences. Sometimes it is argued that in the paleo-anthropological perspective, particularly in the glacial times, the insular region of Southeast Asia was not separated from the mainland of Southeast Asia. However, since the end of the glacial times, the islands of Southeast Asia have been separated from the mainland.

It is not surprising, therefore, if there are many arguments saying that the ancestors of the people in Southeast Asia originated from the mainland of Southeast Asia, like South Vietnam, South China and the surrounding regions. This means that there is a belief that they actually came from the same generation and later spread to other regions in Southeast Asia. However, there are no fixed arguments, in relation to what extent this is true. It accordingly needs to be comprehensively discussed. However, from the historical and archeological accounts, it can be said that the cultural contacts amongst Southeast Asian people and with other Asian people has taken place over a long time. They had actually the same ancient cultures and this is a collective memory that has been passed down by the people in Southeast Asia related to their relationship with India and China regarding the process of Indianization or Hinduisation, Chinasation or Buddhism in the early years of the first century.

In other words, due to the Indian and Chinese influences, the Southeast Asian region has become a multicultural society with unique characteristics, where many traditions, cultures, languages, ethnicities and religions have become entwined and contributed to the model of Southeast Asian culture. Therefore, discussion about Cultural Studies in the border regions of Southeast Asia is significantly needed, in terms of how, by applying Cultural Studies, the interdisciplinary approaches amongst social scientists and humanities studies exponents in the regions can be applied in order to answer some questions regarding the recent developments in Southeast Asia in a globalized world. In this case, how the concepts of the social sciences and humanities studies such as from an anthropological and sociological or a political approach can be used to analyze the complexity of society in the regions.

Since the modern states have been introduced in Europe and later in Southeast Asia, the concept of borders has been much discussed. The border regions are recognized as a part of the modern state in the context of its sovereignty. Therefore, the history of the border regions cannot be separated from the beginning or the end of a state (Arsip Nasional Republik Indonesia 2007: 1). One of the crucial issues regarding the recent development in Southeast Asia is about the border regions that are considered to be underdeveloped, located in remote areas.

It can be said that there are some significant issues related to the recent developments in Southeast Asia, particularly in the border regions which can be analyzed using the Cultural Studies approaches regarding illegal logging, human trafficking, trans-border trade, terrorism, border conflicts, etc. As was previously mentioned, there occurred some crucial conflict issues, of which most of the people in Southeast Asia have knowledge through the collective memories that have emerged among them.

By concentrating on these main questions, this analysis will discuss: Firstly, how can we understand the local cultures which have outstanding universal values which in turn could be used to solve the critical issues in the border regions of Southeast Asia? Secondly, what kinds of lessons can be learnt on historical border conflicts from the local perspective in order to use this as a pattern for pursuing peaceful and stable conditions in the border regions? Thirdly, To what extent can Cultural Studies play a significant role in contributing to solve the critical issues in the border regions? These questions will be discussed in this paper in order to have a better understanding of border regions so that the local people can live side by side in peaceful and convenient ways.

II. Ancient Cultures and Outstanding Universal Values

The Southeast Asian region is located in the tropical zone and in terms of administrative matters it consists of 11 countries: Myanmar, Thailand, Laos, Vietnam, Cambodia, Malaysia, Singapore, Indonesia, Brunei Darussalam, the Philippines, and Timor Leste. All of the regions have a similar civilization and culture starting from the prehistoric through classical and modern history. This can be seen in the social and cultural aspects both on the mainland (*Dunia Daratan*) and in insular Southeast Asia (*Dunia Kelautan*).

Most of the people here have tried to look at their common memories in order to understand each other. Therefore, it is not surprising, if the understanding of common knowledge in the regions is significant. This can be seen in how the people look at their ancient culture not only in the past but also at present and in the future. It can be seen in how the local people interpret the idea of democracy that already existed in prehistoric times.

For instance, in Bali in particular, and in the Indonesian archipelago in general, the term God Surya (the Hindu Sun God or *Dewa Surya*) has been interpreted as the God who gives his light to all people without thinking whether they are rich or poor. In other words, this is a way of a democratic society. It is even that the idea of Hinduisation has been absorbed by the Balinese by changing the concept of themselves into the Indian name such as of the God Surya. It is easy also to see how the Indian influence is democratic. This means the God Surya is the God of Justice. It was even so when the spread of Hinduism from the Southern parts of India had its links with local beliefs in Japan. It is argued that the term Sinto as the local religion in Japan, could come from the word Sinta the name of the princess in the Indian epic Ramayana. It can be seen here, that the belief in the God Surya can be seen in other places in Southeast Asia, as of local genius that has developed until the present time. Not only for the Sun as the Surya but also for water, stone and wind all believed to have supernatural powers.

It is significant to see the ancient culture that was rooted in societies in the old times, since these ancient cultures have similarity in those regions, as mentioned by Falyey (2015:vi, and Korte 1999: 526). However, the pertinent question is: How have those cultures lived side by side not only in the traditional, classical times but also in the modern and postmodern times? In other words, the main question is what is the role of the state in order to contribute to the democratic values that already exist in local communities? One important point to answer this question is that we need to understand each other, though we live separately due to the state sovereignty since the emergence of the modern states in Southeast Asia after the end of World War Second.

III. Local Cultures, Nationalism and Historical Border Conflicts

In the past, when we talked about traditional culture in Southeast Asia in particular and Asia in general, it was usually about the relationship between the centre and its periphery. This can be exemplified in the Mataram period, in the eighteenth century when there was the classification of regions between *Negara Agung* (its centre), *Kuta Negara* (in the middle) and *Manca Negara* or *Monco Negro* (the periphery), an idea had been absorbed from the Indian or Indic *Mandala* system. The traditional power in Javanese society paid more attention to the centre and ignored what was happening in the peripheral regions.

This paradigm was absorbed by the later rulers so that it was impossible for the remote areas, namely the border regions to get attention from the government. We can see this paradigm not only in Indonesia but also in certain other areas of Southeast Asia like the borders of Vietnam, Thailand, Myanmar, Cambodia, Laos and the insular islands, the Philippines and other places. Therefore, it is not surprising, if we see strong gaps between what is happening in the centres and border regions.

The relationship between the centre and its periphery became important not only in the traditional times but is so even in the modern times. In the Indonesian case, it is true that after Independence on August 17, 1945, the people submitted their highest consciousness to the Indonesian state with Indonesia claiming its region as *Negara Kepulauan* or Archipelagic State in 1957 (Arsip Nasional Republik Indonesia 2008: 1; and Arsip Nasional Republik Indonesia 2006: 1). It seems that later the state had practically the highest autonomy and slowly, the local people no longer had their local autonomies. However, in the Indonesian State regulation of 1945, the Articles on the peoples' rights already existed. But, in reality, the people never recognized their local rights in the context of the nation-state building, particularly after Indonesian Independence when Indonesia was under Engineer Soekarno, a civilian, as the first Indonesian President, during the Guided Democracy or Old Order Regime (1945–1966) and later under the military figure of General Soeharto, in the New Order Regime (1966–1998).

During the Soekarno period the Indonesian state was in an unstable political situation. At that time, Indonesia had finished its revolutionary period (1945–1950) against Western colonization as also occurred elsewhere in Southeast Asia such as in the Philippines and Vietnam. Those countries were relatively strong against Western imperialism namely Spanish, French and Dutch. It is significant to look at those countries' political experiences, since most of them got their independence through bloody revolution. Soekarno himself, learnt much on his political struggle against the Dutch, especially from the Filipinos particularly from Rizal's political experiences against Spain and the American political controls on the country, which was very different if compared with the Malaysian experience for instance, which achieved its independence without conducting bloody revolution.

This was due to a strongly different political ideology of struggle for independence that had been conducted by the Indonesian and Malaysian regimes. In addition to this, there were certain political conflicts between the Indonesian and Malaysian states in relation to the sovereignty of powers. Not only the conflicts between Indonesia and Malaysia but also between the Malaysian and the Filipino governments regarding the border regions, particularly on the status of Sabah as "critical conflicting areas" between Malaysia and the Philippines in North Borneo. This border conflict has been one of the "unsolved political conflicts" formally until the present time. It can be said that since there were political conflicts between them, each government concentrated its power in its centre with not enough attention paid to the border regions. This was the general picture of the border management in the regions of Southeast Asia.

As happened in other border regions of Southeast Asia the local people from both sides in the border regions namely Indonesia and Malaysia, came from the same ethnicity but, in fact, the political sovereignty in the context of the emergence of modern states and nationalism. As King and Wilder (2003: 198) explain as follows:

“Ethnicity is obviously expressed as a product of the past evoking common origins, social linkages and share cultural values and traits like language and religion. However, the historical dimension of identity also demonstrates that rather than identities being fixed, constant and immutable, they frequently change can be acquired

The local people dominantly affected the creation of different identities amongst the local people in the border regions (Siswandi 2017: 429–430). Therefore, Pisit argues that we need to involve the local people in the context of local development in the countries in Southeast Asia:

Community involvement in conservation at the onset should also be given further importance. Participatory management of the conserved resources is an appropriate means dealing with the local people with regard to their own resources (Charoenwongsa, 2010a, 68).

For example, the same ethnic group in the Indonesian border side is known as the Lun Dayeh and in the Malaysian border side as the Lun Bawan. Before the emergence of the modern state namely Indonesia and Malaysia, there was no border and no separation between them. They lived side by side harmoniously and peacefully and had their-own ways on togetherness: their “own traditional realm” and way of life and also knew how to maintain and preserve their local wisdom, local culture, local language and tradition, that had existed since the ancient times.

However, due to the historical dynamics regarding modern states, separated from each other, the people had to choose whether they would be Indonesian or Malaysian citizens. This choice, of course, brought them to an uncertain situation, in which, due to the modern state, even members of one family were separated from one another, for instance, in the border region, parents became Malaysian citizens and a grandfather and grandmother became Indonesian citizens.

Later on, it was tragic when the Indonesian government under President Soekarno waged war against Malaysia, the *Ganjang Malaysia* (Military Fight against Malaysia) which caused certain political changes between Indonesia and Malaysia. Though that happened, in fact, amongst the local people in the border regions the peaceful and harmonious life continued. However, in certain cases, due to the military provocation of both sides, the life of the people in the border regions was influenced both directly and indirectly. The harmonious and peaceful life no longer could be maintained in the region, due to the military actions. At that time, the Indonesian government under Soekarno, believed that Malaysia was a threat and must be attacked and defeated, since it was seen as a political handicap or “British Puppet” to control the regions between Indonesia and China.

From this picture, it can be said that the confrontation that had been organized by the government, particularly by the military factions, had strongly influenced the dynamics of the local development in the border regions. The local people had become unfriendly towards each other and the Indonesian people even considered the Malaysian people as “enemies” and conversely. Something that commonly occurs in a period of war when no more trust exists among people.

Soeharto replaced Soekarno as the new Indonesian President after the downfall of the Old

Order Regime in 1966. As noted in certain historical books, Soekarno was forced to withdraw his power through a *coup d'état*. This was a new wind of the political change from outward, looking inward in the border development between Indonesia and Malaysia in particular and other Southeast Asian countries in general. However, one year after becoming the second President of Indonesia (1966), Soeharto, with other Prime Ministers and Presidents in Southeast Asia established a new organization for the Southeast Asian region, known as ASEAN (Association of Southeast Asian Nations), in 1967.

This was a new paradigm on how to securely maintain the domestic political condition among the countries in Southeast Asia. The aim was to strengthen and empower the internal networking cooperation, particularly in social, cultural and economic aspects among the regional countries. It was expected that any conflicts that emerged among the countries could be solved by the ASEAN countries. However, in fact, it seems that the idea to solve the critical issues among them is still unresolved, due to the complexities of the problems and the desire not to have a problem among the ASEAN countries.

The strong leadership and successful political strategies of Soeharto when Indonesia was under the New Order regime, brought Indonesia under centralistic and authoritarian power. Therefore, Indonesia became a centralistic state in which the central government in Jakarta played a dominant role. On one side, it was significant to control the stability of the domestic political situation, in which there was no critical border conflict between Indonesia and Malaysia and it was even that Indonesia under Soeharto, was appreciated by its neighbouring states in Southeast Asia, since Indonesia applied freely, active but not interventionist foreign political strategies.

Indonesia under the leadership of Soeharto became a strong state in Southeast Asia, but this did not last, since the new wind of international political changes in Eastern Europe arrived in Indonesia, after the disintegration of the Russian centralistic state against its peripheral states such as Bosnia, Kosovo, Lithuania and other smaller states in 1989-1990s. Certain states in Southeast Asia such as Thailand, Indonesia, the Philippines, etc. suffered from an economic crisis. Fortunately for Thailand, that country could recover from the hit of the crisis but unfortunately Indonesia could not. This initiated the downfall of the New Order Regime under Soeharto after more than 32 years.

The impacts of this economic and political situation affected an increasing number of Indonesian people, particularly the Buginese who looked for jobs in Malaysia with most going to Sabah, the eastern part of Malaysia on the Borneo Island (Maunati 2010a: 101; see also: Maunati and Ardhana 2010b: 3). As already explained above, Sabah is still an unsolved critical issue between Malaysia and the Philippines. Malaysia claims that Sabah is Malaysian. However, the Philippines also claims that Sabah is its own part, since in the Spanish colonial era the former local Islamic Sultanate of Sulu paid tributes to the Philippines.

Until the present time, Sabah is still considered to be an area of conflict between Malaysia and the Philippines. Since Indonesia was a centralistic power and lacking attention to their border regions with Malaysia, it accordingly had some impact on the border regions in terms of the increase of illegal human trafficking and illegal fishing in the maritime region in the border regions between Indonesia and Malaysia. This can be understood since Indonesia in the Soeharto era like the Philippines, did not strongly control their border regions.

The Indonesian people did not go only to Malaysia but also to the small islands in the Philippines (Ardhana 2010a: 303). Skilled workers went to cities in Malaysia such as Kuala Lumpur, Kuching and Tawau. However as most Indonesian unskilled workers do not have any formal documents they come across the borders illegally. Since the Filipinos could speak English fluently they worked in the government hospitals and medical clinics and the unskilled Indonesian workers

went to the villages and worked particularly in the palm plantations. Therefore, it can be said that they worked in the remote, underdeveloped economically areas called "the back-yard" of the country. Indonesian job seekers went to the border regions without many risks, since they could be strongly controlled by the Malaysian police and if captured by the Malaysian police, put in jail and sent to their home countries.

Based on the above analysis, it can be said that the border regions between Malaysia and Indonesia in particular, and in Southeast Asia in general, have become more significant. Border regions are not only considered a political and military arena as we can see after the revolutionary period and during the Indonesian confrontation against Malaysia in the 1960s.

Border regions have accordingly a new paradigm as economic growth areas, caused by states in Southeast Asian countries beginning to pay more attention to their border regions. It can be seen in the border region between Thailand and Laos in Savannakhet (Ardhana, 2005), between Laos and Thailand in Nongkhai, between Cambodia and Thailand in Poipet and Aranyaphratet (Ardhana, 2006: 18) and between Myanmar and Thailand in Mae Sae where those border points have become increasingly economic growth areas of the regions and their surroundings.

IV. ASEAN, Cultural Studies and the Border Regions: Empowering the Marginalized People in Southeast Asia

As already mentioned, the Southeast Asian countries established ASEAN in 1967. Many Southeast Asian leaders committed to achieve the ASEAN goals in relation to the increasing modernization and globalization processes taking place in the regions. In addition to this, they have promised to also anticipate and solve any critical problems in Southeast Asian countries.

Due to the increasing process of globalization in this modern and postmodern world, each country is expected to have strong capabilities in the context of regional and international competition. There are many impacts on these developments, not only in terms of social, cultural, economic, educational and legal but also political aspects. In Malaysia, for instance, the government tries to promote Malaysia as having a cultural richness, called "Malaysia, truly Asia". It is supposed that the government wishes to attract more tourists to Malaysia by promoting Southeast Asian culture in particular, and Asian culture in general, to be met and found in the country.

In this context, if a tourist wants to see the Legong Dance he/she does not need to go to Bali, or in the case of a tourist wanting to buy a Batik cloth, he/she does not need to go to Indonesia to buy it. In the concept of "Malaysia, truly Asia", many Asian cultures can be seen in Malaysia. From this perspective, it seems that Malaysia has successfully managed and packaged its tourist promotion by introducing the concept of "Malaysia, truly Asia" both in terms of cultural and eco-tourism by looking at other cultures in Southeast Asia and Asia generally, that can be promoted in Malaysia (Hezri 2016).

In terms of social and cultural aspects, there are many conflicts among the countries. Malaysia for instance, claimed that Batik (traditional Javanese cloth) is its own culture and tour guides even tried to bring tourists across the border regions to see the natural richness of Borneo, namely in the Lun Bawan region, in the Kerayan village on the Indonesian border side, in orchid and other forest plantations.

The local people, called the Lun Dayeh on the Indonesian border, cannot do anything on seeing the tourists coming from the Malaysian side. Why does this happen? This simple question can be answered by looking at the lack of Indonesian government policies in the border region. It seems that in the past, the government ignored the existence of the local people in the border regions (Ardhana,

2004: 144–177, Ardhana 2010: 361), though the regions are rich in socio and cultural assets of value in tourism (Wiratri 2010: 59–60). We can see how the Malaysian government strongly promotes its economic demands to the domestic and international tourists to visit Malaysia. It seems that the Indonesian government needs to learn from the Malaysian government experiences in managing its border regions.

Can we learn something in terms of not only political but also social and cultural aspects of the Southeast Asian culture in the ASEAN communities established in 1967? It seems to me that there are many things since the ASEAN communities have worked and cooperated in terms of government to government or G to G. In the case of border conflicts in Southeast Asia, ASEAN seems not to play a significant role, unlike the role of the International Court that solved a border conflict between Indonesia and Malaysia.

Due to increasing economic development, each country has begun to change its point of view on the concept of a border region from a backyard to a front-yard. In other words, how can it maximize local economic development in the regions? In addition to this, the borders are also considered as a buffer for a state. Therefore, it can be understood why many critical border issues have emerged as we can see in the Chinese government claims on the South China Sea involving many countries such as Malaysia, Vietnam, the Philippines, Singapore and Indonesia. As well, there was the border conflict between Indonesia and Malaysia on Sipadan and Ligitan Islands in the 2000s. As already discussed, the border can be seen as the concept of geographical and socio cultural space. As a concept of geographical space, it is not a big problem, but as a socio cultural space, there are some issues on how the border can be managed well (Sarkawi, 2017: 341; Sulistyani, 2011).

Kundu (2017: 24) refers to Alfred Gerstl and Maria Strasakova's book (2016) title, *Unresolved Border, Land, Maritime Disputes in Southeast Asia* mention that three intra-regional and extra-regional land and maritime border conflicts involving Southeast Asia namely Preah Vihear spat between Thailand and Cambodia, Koh Tral island dispute between Vietnam and Cambodia and row over South China Sea islands, atolls and islet between China and multiple members of the Association of Southeast Asia Nations (ASEAN).

In addition to this, it is important to note that land and maritime border conflicts in Southeast Asia represent the remnants of the colonial legacy in the past time of Southeast Asia history. The European rulers who ruled most of the present day Southeast Asia for centuries in the past time were not careful about the ethnic and linguistics lineages of the local people. It also divided the region based on their own convenience and power sharing agreements and treaties as mentioned by Kundu who refers to Gerstl and Strasakova (Kundu, 2017: 24).

It is even argued also that before the arrival of the colonial powers, the concept of border was unknown in the region of Southeast Asia. However, the colonial powers divided the seas and oceans which were commonly used freely by the local populace for trading and transportation purposes. It was accordingly, the creation of artificial borders in the region have resulted in numerous economic and political conflicts, namely the one in Preah Vihear and the Koh Tral dispute. In addition to this, the increasingly influences of the domestic political situation practice determine the contemporary characteristics of these conflicts. The result is that territorial border conflicts are used in Cambodian political scenario to strongly influence the voters during the election campaigns. Therefore, it can be understood that land is treated as a matter of national prestige in Cambodia (Kundu, 2017: 24).

When the conflict emerged between Indonesia and Malaysia, it was not solved in the ASEAN forum but in the International Court in The Hague (Den Haag) in the Netherlands, in Europe, on December 18, 2002, when Indonesia was defeated by Malaysia for the two islands Sipadan and Ligitan

(Arsip Nasional Republik Indonesia 2009: 5; cf. Sarkawi, 2017: 341). In the colonial era, there were different management strategies between the Dutch and the British in their colonies. The British in Malaysia directly managed their colonies and collaborated with the local people in accordance with the lands of the local people against the rubber plantation owners.

In addition to this, the British also encouraged and preserved the local community customary laws as we can see in the Iban ethnic community. The Dutch applied different strategies, managing their colonies in indirect ways, without any direct physical contacts. It can also be said that the British collaborated in accommodative ways with their colonies, while the Dutch considered the local communities in the border regions as intruders or destroyers that could threaten their existence in the regions (Arsip Nasional Republik Indonesia, 2006: 11). It is also important to note that when Malaysia was under the British rule, it built lighthouses on certain border points such as in the Sipadan and Ligitan Islands. The Indonesian government that claimed those two islands did not have lighthouses such as the British rule built on the two islands making it one reason why the International Court granted the Malaysian government Sipadan and Ligitan Islands.

Talking about the border conflicts in Southeast Asia actually began from this point of view. However, it does not mean that the conflicts amongst them are ongoing conflicts, since a harmonious and peaceful situation can be created by looking at their ancient culture, rooted in the prehistoric, classical, modern and even post-modern times.

We need to arrange a new paradigm on how the people of Southeast Asia should understand each other in a globalized world. Since most of the ASEAN meetings are G to G, therefore, in the context of social sciences and humanities studies we need to have more cooperation and networking in terms of community to community (C to C) and not G to G. By introducing this concept of cooperation and collaboration, it is expected to have better understanding of the social and cultural relationships of the people in Southeast Asia. The meaning of community to community is the encouragement of the scholars to improve their roles in the context of scholar communities, particularly in terms of the social sciences and humanities studies; the study about social sciences and humanities studies related to the development of Cultural Studies that already developed everywhere in the 1950s.

Discussing Cultural Studies actually looks at and studies the marginalized people and underdeveloped communities due to the impacts of globalization. How can we understand the local people in the remote areas far away from the glorious life of a city, a metropolis or a mega city? The people in the border areas should be paid more attention, not to change their life styles but to maintain and preserve their local cultures. In the modern world or even in the postmodern times, it is assumed that the local people need to be modernized. This paradigm is not true, since the local people from the anthropological perspectives have already their own world, in which the good relationship between man and nature is a must in terms of sustainable community development. This means that they do not want to accept the idea of progress as already implemented in the western countries.

The culturalists who study local people should be careful in promoting the people and their local culture. Those local people are actually already satisfied with their life styles and the surrounding environments. The significant question is how can we improve their lives in terms of prosperity, good education and maintenance of the togetherness amongst the local people in the neighbouring regions? Since they were actually of the same ethnicity they do not care about the political conflict situation in the context of modern and global worlds. In this context, it does not mean that the local people should not only be aware and careful about the impacts of the global world but also to interpret their own cultural traditions that affect their lives, so that they do not become a marginalized group in the global

context.

Therefore, it is considered as very significant for the scholars, particularly those who specialize in Cultural Studies to make certain plans regarding how they should play a major role in the context of the social sciences and humanities studies development. From the historical context, it is noted that there are very limited references to local people and their cultures in the border regions of Southeast Asia. The only thing that we can understand is that the local people in Southeast Asia who live in the border regions indeed have their ancient cultures. These ancient cultures range everywhere in the borders of Southeast Asia and have through the prehistoric, classical, modern and post-modern times. In the prehistoric times, we can see how the people lived side by side in a harmonious and peaceful way. They have their common memories that have existed from the past until the present time.

The management of local or ancient culture in the border regions in Southeast Asia occurs in various ways. In Thailand, for instance, the local government makes use of the existence of the local culture by bringing some indigenous people to certain tourist destinations in Chiang Mae or Chiang Rae in the northern parts of the Thai borders with Laos or Vietnam. In Chiang Rae for instance, the government has changed the status of the previous narcotics buildings, used for the drug trade in the colonial times, to use as the place to promote Thai tourism.

Historically, the place was actually the centre for the drug trade which was infamous in the eighteenth to the nineteenth centuries. It can be said that on one side, the use of the place from drug activities to a tourist destination is a smart idea to improve the prosperity of the indigenous people. However, on the other side, the policies of the Thai government making use of the local people namely the Karens and the Shan in promotion to the tourists whom the government asks to pay in order to see the local people making Thai traditional cloths could be debatable, since the indigenous people do not get the benefits directly from the tourist promotion (Charoenwongsa, 2010b: 93–101).

In the context of Cultural Studies, it accordingly becomes significant to analyze and elaborate this. By using the Cultural Studies approaches, for instance, we can use some theories related to the Cultural Studies issues such as the theory of hegemony, commodification of culture, deconstruction and post-colonialism and post-modernism and the like, we can understand better the problems of the local or indigenous people that have been marginalized by the present governments. In addition to this, in Cultural Studies we can interpret the physical buildings such as traditional buildings and cover their architectural styles, the form of the statues embedded in the shrines, inscriptions and temples with old buildings considered as texts. Therefore, it is important not only to look at the written sources or oral traditions but also to the previous or old buildings that become archeological remains that can bring us important meanings and interpretations in order to be able to analyze the development of people and the ways they were thinking about their culture and civilization.

The people here tried to formulate their own cultural identities by establishing certain ceremonies for plantations and nature as they believed that by maintaining ecological aspects they could live in a sustainable way. They had their own realms, cosmology, cosmogony and way of life. Even, when foreigners come to their villages it is assumed to be a threat to their lives. It can be understood why the local people in the border regions accept the foreigners who enter their villages, very carefully, since the local people staying in the border regions already have their own traditions, based on local culture, sometimes enriched by the development of certain religious and ritual beliefs. Though the local people live in different ways in the border regions, in fact, they have similarities to each other.

The study of Southeast Asia is significant to elaborate more about the differences of life in the regions. We need to expand certain issues related to the development of local people in the border

regions. Each local perspective in region needs to be learnt by other people in the border areas in Southeast Asia. By understanding these similarities, it is expected that the local people in the remote areas in the border regions will understand the lives of the local people in other regions of Southeast Asia, as looking at and understanding this is essential.

Regarding the archeological remains, for instance, it is interesting to look at a particular stone that has been paid attention to by the local or indigenous people for a long time of their history. The stone located in the Long Pasia village in Sabah, East Malaysia, attracts both sides, whether Indonesian or Malaysian people to visit the location to pray in the context of local beliefs. This image is important to elaborate since by understanding this ritual we can understand how the local people try to strengthen their relationship by creating identities for the benefit of both peoples. This cultural situation is far away from the glories of the cities in the modern and post-modern times. However, the local people in the border regions in Long Pasia can enjoy their harmonious and peaceful life without getting any disturbances or threat from outside the regions.

In Long Pasia the indigenous people believe in supernatural powers as shown in the stone. The stone is an archeological remain located in the mountainous area. For Cultural Studies, it is considered that not only the Indonesian but also the Malaysian people believe that the stone can be interpreted as a text. The text has a symbolic meaning that gives certain cultural interpretation to both sides.

In addition to this, the stone gives some message on how the local people should live side by side in a harmonious and peaceful way. This means that the stone is a social and cultural asset that can be appreciated by both sides. Not only in the terms of social cultural aspects, but the stone has also symbolic meaning in the terms of political aspects or as a social cohesion unit that can integrate those people in the border region between Indonesia and Malaysia (Pongtuluran 2013: 544).

Whatever the case, in terms of ritual or *adat* ceremony the people still visit one another to strengthen their social cultural relationship. They try to maintain and preserve their own way of life. In this context, it is important to note that the involvement of the experts particularly not only the academic historians, but also the public historians, to encourage the local people in the border regions is a need (Ardhana 2017; Ardhana 2013 and Masilang 2010: 82), in order to be able to live sustainably. When there emerged the social and political conflicts between the Indonesian and Malaysian governments about their border regions on Sipadan and Ligitan Islands and Ambalat Block in the 1990s and 2000s both sides could live harmoniously without any disturbance from the military provocations from both sides. From this, it can be understood that the indigenous people can create the kinds of philosophical ideas they need to make sure and to preserve their daily lives in the border regions between Indonesia and Malaysia in particular, and in Southeast Asia in general.

This experience shows that the local people will not be disturbed by the political aspects in the context of a modern state, in which the modern state seemingly has its hegemonial power in the centre to pressure the people in the periphery. Therefore, the idea of nation- state building needs to be elaborated in the context of the term of nation or ethnic group which emerged earlier than the modern state. We should try to understand that the existence of a nation is very significant in managing the border conflicts between two or more governments.

In Cultural Studies the need to have further studies on nationality should be continuous since many local people have their local wisdom based on the nation or ethnicity. The aim is to have a better understanding on the border conflicts. In Southeast Asia we need not only to understand certain regions like Indonesia and Malaysia but also other countries in the area in order to comprehend other cultural aspects related to family linkages, local regulations or *adat* amongst the local or indigenous people, both on the mainland and in insular Southeast Asia.

By understanding in this context, through Cultural Studies, the study of nation-state building should be done by the scholar communities amongst the scholars in the domain of Southeast Asianists. There is an emphasis on strengthening collaborations with community groups in Southeast Asia to highlight the impacts of changes. (Pillai 2010: 91). Therefore, through this analysis, it is expected that we will have a better understanding on how the local or indigenous people in the border in Southeast Asia can live in a harmonious and peaceful way for sustainable development in the regions.

V. Conclusion

Southeast Asia is a multicultural society in which each country has its own characteristics based on various ethnic groups, traditions, languages and cultures. All of the Southeast Asian countries have committed to integrate into one community, called ASEAN.

In the past of Indonesian history, for instance, the center played a more major role than its periphery. In the recent developments each government in Southeast Asia began to pay attention to its border regions in the periphery. The aim is to encourage the performance of the country as a front-yard rather than a back-yard. However, sometimes there emerge conflicts regarding the relations among those member countries, particularly in the contexts of political issues in the border regions.

However, in the social and cultural perspectives, in which Cultural Studies needs to be developed, there are opportunities for them in how to manage those conflicts, through the social and cultural relationship among them. This means that the role of Cultural Studies could be one choice, in which through them could emerge a greater approach in elaborating many issues in the border regions of Southeast Asia. By strengthening Cultural Studies in the border regions of Southeast Asia it is expected to have more understanding on how to manage the border in a better way for the sustainable development of its people.

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Curriculum Vitae

I Ketut Ardhana is Professor of Asian History in the Faculty of Humanities Studies– Udayana University. He was the former Head of the Southeast Asia Division-Research Center for Regional Resources- the Indonesian Institute of Sciences, Jakarta (PSDR-LIPI), 2001-2009. His research project is on tourism and border studies in the Southeast Asian region, including: Thailand, Cambodia, Laos, Vietnam, Malaysia, Singapore and the Philippines. Previously he took the English course at the School of Oriental and African Studies, (SOAS) - University of London-England (1990), at the University of Belconnen in Canberra-Australia (1992), the Dutch course at Erasmus Huis, Universiteit te Leiden in the Netherlands (1990), and the German course at the Goethe Institute in Mannheim and at Passau University (UP) in Germany (1996-1997).

He studied history in the Faculty of Letters in the Department of History at Udayana University, Denpasar, Bali- and continued his studies to obtain the Drs. (Doctorandus Degree) at the Faculty of Letters – Gadjah Mada University (UGM) in Yogyakarta in 1985. He graduated with his Master's Degree (Master of Arts in Asian Studies) at Southeast Asian Centre-Faculty of Asian Studies, the Australian National University (ANU) in Canberra, Australia in 1994. Then got his PhD degree or Dr. Phil. (Doctor Philosophie) at *Sudostasoenkunde, Philosophische Fakultät, Universität Passau* in Germany with the predicate Magna Cum Laude in 2000. He was granted a Fellowship to carry out research in area studies at the University of Passau in Passau- Germany in 2003 and also a Fellowship in the Centre for Southeast Asian Studies (CSEAS), Kyoto University, Kyoto, Japan, in 2004.

He was a Committee member on the collaborative project between Indonesia and the Netherlands at NIOD (*Nederlandsch Instituut voor Oorlog Dokumentatie* or the Dutch Institute for War Documentation) from 2004 until 2009. He has been a member of IFSSO (International Federation of Social Science Organizations) from 2003 until now and was elected as the first Vice President. In Seijo University in Tokyo, in 2015, he was elected as the second Vice President. He is also a founding member of the World SSH (World Social Sciences and Humanities) and presented his paper in Buenos Aires, Argentine, in 2010. He wrote an article on the "Review of *The Encyclopedia of Indonesia in the Pacific War: In cooperation with the Netherlands Institute for War Documentation*" in the *Journal of Indonesia*, Vol. 91, 2011 published in Cornell, the US and one on "Early Harbours in Eastern Nusa Tenggara", in John N. Miksic and Goh Geok Yian, *Ancient Harbours in Southeast Asia: The Archaeology of Early Harbours and Evidence of Inter-Regional Trade* for the Bangkok SEAMEO SPAFA Regional Centre for Archaeology and Fine Arts in 2013. His other work on "Archeological Sites in the Context of Heritage Cities in Indonesia", in Noel Hidalgo Tan (ed), *Advancing Southeast Asia Archeology 2016, Selected Papers from the Second SEAMEO SPAFA International Conference*

on Asian Archaeology. Bangkok: SEAMEO SPAFA Regional Center for Archaeology and Fine Arts. He was appointed the Head of the Center for Bali Studies at Udayana University in Denpasar, Bali, in 2010, the Head of Postgraduate Program on Cultural Studies, Faculty of Social and Humanities Sciences at Udayana University, and the Director of the Widya Kerthi Foundation in 2017 a position he still holds.