

KNOWLEDGE PRODUCTION, RESOURCE ACCUMULATION, MAINTENANCE AND ACCESS: A SOUTHEAST ASIAN EXPERIENCE

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Abstract

The general argument advanced since the advent of ICT globally is that it has made knowledge more accessible to a wider public in super quick time. While this is true, it is also a fact that the way knowledge is organized is still very much in the mould of nation-states because it is produced and reproduced as well as consumed in the said mould. This essay discusses how, despite the presence of ICT, this still happens in the context of Southeast Asian studies, which is essentially a form of knowledge in itself. The challenges and contradictions this process has produced is discussed and analyzed with examples from a Malaysian experience.

Abstrak

Sejak Teknologi Maklumat dan Komunikasi atau ICT diperkenalkan secara global, akses terhadap ilmu pengetahuan telah berlaku dengan pantas kepada audien yang lebih luas. Walaupun ini benar, fakta juga membuktikan bahawa produksi dan reproduksi serta konsumsi ilmu pengetahuan masih berlaku dalam acuan negara-bangsa. Esei ini membincangkan bagaimana Kajian Asia Tenggara, sebagai satu bentuk ilmu pengetahuan, masih dikongkong oleh ruang negara-bangsa dalam rantau berkenaan. Cabaran dan kontradiksi yang timbul dalam proses ini akan dibincangkan berdasarkan pengalaman Malaysia.

Introduction

This essay is advancing an argument that although ICT has made knowledge in general more accessible to a wider audience in larger volume and quicker than ever before, ironically, its production, especially, in the field of social sciences and humanities, is increasingly trapped in its 'dividedness' because it is organized usually within the 'nation-state' thus giving rise to what could be called 'methodological nationalism', in which universal social issues are studied and elaborated in the micro-context of a nation-state, not as universal social issues unimpeded by the physical and ideational boundaries of historically and artificially constructed nation-states.

We wish to present the case of 'Southeast Asian Studies', as a form of knowledge, and examine briefly how it has been produced and reproduced, methodologically, as well as consumed in contemporary globalized context, hoping to capture some of the contradictions and challenges that it has to cope with and overcome, especially, in the context of ICT-based technologies of globalization. It has implications, too, in the area of resource accumulation and maintenance, especially, in the organizational sphere, and a Malaysian experience shall be presented to provide a brief empirical elaboration.

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Analyzing Southeast Asia as a Form of Knowledge

Society is both real and imagined. It is real through face-to-face contact and imagined when the idea of its existence is mediated through mediums such as printed materials and electronic images, and, in particular, ICT. Therefore, the term society refers simultaneously to a micro unit that we can observe and to a macro one that we can only partially engaged with. We therefore have observable 'societies' within a macro imagined 'society'. Southeast Asia, like other regions in the world, has both (Reid 1993, Tarling 1992). However it is the way that both of these components have been weaved into an enduring complex whole, which seemed to have made Southeast Asia and Southeast Asians thrive and survive even under adverse conditions, such as the recent financial-economic crisis, that has become the source of endless intellectual attraction and academic inquiry to both scholars and others, hence the birth, growth and flourishing of Southeast Asian studies (Evers 1980, SSRC 1999).

Thus Southeast Asian studies, dominated by humanities and the social sciences, have been about the study of the 'society' and 'societies' in the region, in their various dimensions, in the past and at present. The complex plurality of these 'society' and 'societies', or societal forms, that do indeed co-exist, endure and enjoy some functional stability, have made it imperative for researchers to apply an equally diverse set of approaches, some discipline-based (anthropology, sociology, geography, history, political science, etc.) and others thematically-oriented (development studies, gender studies, cultural studies, etc.) in studying Southeast Asian society. In some cases, it even involve disciplines from the natural and applied sciences (Wallace 1869).

The greatest challenge in Southeast Asian studies, and to its experts, has been to keep pace with the major changes that have affected the 'society' and/or 'societies' and then narrate, explain and analyze these changes and present the analysis in a way that is accessible to everyone within and outside the region. The technique of presenting and accessing this knowledge is equally critical, which, by implication, involves the accumulation and

maintenance process of the various research resources. Undoubtedly, framing the analysis is very important, too, in understanding as to how Southeast Asian studies constitute and reproduce itself through the study of 'society' and 'societies' within Southeast Asia. The 'knowledge baseline' approach is useful in making sense of the said framing process.

The 'Knowledge Baseline' in Southeast Asian studies

Social scientific knowledge -- humanities included -- on Southeast Asia has a clear knowledge baseline, meaning a continuous and inter-related intellectual-cum-conceptual basis, which emerged from its own history and has, in turn, inspired the construction, organization and consumption process of this knowledge. The two popular concepts that have been used frequently to characterize Southeast Asia are 'plurality' and 'plural society', both of which are social scientific constructs that emerged from empirical studies conducted within Southeast Asia by scholars from outside the region.

In historical terms, or during the 'proto-globalisation' era, 'plurality' characterizes Southeast Asia before the Europeans came and who, subsequently, divided the region into a community of 'plural societies'. Plurality here signifies a free-flowing, natural process not only articulated through the process of migration but also through cultural borrowings and adaptations (Bellwood 1985, Collins 1994). Politically speaking, polity was the society's political order of the day, a flexible non-bureaucratic style of management focusing on management and ceremony by a demonstrative ruler. States, governments and nation-states, which constitute an elaborate system of bureaucratic institutions, did not really exist until Europeans came and dismantled the traditional polities of Southeast Asia and subsequently installed their systems of governance, using 'colonial knowledge', which gave rise to the plural society complex (Tarling 1992).

Historically, therefore, plural society signifies both 'coercion' and 'difference'. It also signifies the introduction of knowledge, social constructs, vocabulary, idioms and institutions hitherto unknown to the

indigenous population (such as maps, census, museums and ethnic categories), the introduction of market-oriented economy and systematized hegemonic politics as well new techniques of presentation (read print capitalism). Modern nation-states, or state-nations, in Southeast Asia have emerged from this plural society context (Brown 1994).

It is not difficult to show that the production of social scientific knowledge on Southeast Asia has moved along this plurality-plural society continuum (Evers 1980). When scholars conduct research and write on pre-European Southeast Asia, they are compelled to respond to the reality of 'proto-globalization' Southeast Asian plurality during that period; a period which saw the region as the meeting place of world civilizations and cultures, where different winds and currents converged bringing together people from all over the world who were interested in 'God, gold and glory', and where indigenous groups moved in various circuits within the region to seek their fortunes. As a result, we have had, in Java, a Hindu king with an Arabic name entertaining European traders. In Champa, we had a Malay raja ruling a predominantly Buddhist populace trading with India, China and the Malay archipelago. Whether we employ the orientalist approach or not, we cannot avoid writing about that period but within a plurality framework, thus emphasizing the region's rich diversity and colourful traditions (Reid, 1988, 1993). In other words, the social reality of the region to a large extent dictates our analytical framework.

However, once colonial rule was established and the plural society was installed in the region, followed later by the formation of nation-states, the analytical frame, also changed. Not only did analysts have to address the reality of the plural society but also the subsequent developments generated by the existence of a community of plural societies in the region. The analytical frame was narrowed to nation-state, ethnic group, inter-nation-state relations, intra-nation-state problems, nationalism and so on. This gave rise to what could be called 'methodological nationalism,' a way of constructing and using knowledge based mainly on the 'territoriality' of the nation-state and not on the notion that social life is a universal and

borderless phenomenon, hence the creation of 'Indonesian studies,' 'Vietnam Studies,' 'Malaysian Studies,' 'Thai Studies' and so on.

With the advent of the Cold War and the modernization effort analysts became further narrowed in their frame of reference. They began to talk of poverty and basic needs in the rural areas of a particular nation, also focusing on resistance and warfare, slums in urban areas, and economic growth of smallholder farmers. The interests of particular disciplines, such as anthropology, became narrower still when it only focuses on particular communities in remote areas, a particular battle in a mountain area, a failed irrigation project in a delta, or gender identity of an ethnic minority in a market town (Steinberg 1987).

In fact, in numerical terms, the number of studies produced on Southeast Asia in the plural society context supersedes many times those produced on Southeast Asia in the plurality context. Admittedly, social scientific studies about Southeast Asia developed much more rapidly after the Second World War. However, the focus became increasingly narrow and compartmentalized not only by academic disciplines but also in accordance to the boundaries of modern postcolonial nations. Hence, social scientific knowledge on Southeast Asia became, to borrow a Javanese term, *kratonized*, or compartmentalized.

It is inevitable that a substantial amount of social scientific knowledge about Southeast Asia itself, paradigmatically, has been generated, produced and contextualized within the plural society framework, because 'nation-state' as an analytical category matters more than, say, the plurality perception of the Penans of Central Borneo, who, like their ancestors centuries ago, move freely between Indonesia and Malaysia to eke out a living along with other tribal groups and outside traders, ignoring the existence of the political boundaries. In fact, anthropologists seem to have found it convenient, for analytical, scientific and academic expedience, to separate the Indonesian Penans from those of Malaysia when, in reality, they are one and the same people.

Therefore, the plurality-plural society continuum is not only a 'knowledge

baseline' but also a real-life social construct that was endowed with a set of ideas and vocabulary, within which people exist day-to-day in Southeast Asia. The presence of ICT does not alter the knowledge baseline. Instead, it has further enhanced the plurality-plural society conceptual-cum-analytic divide because newly-built digital databases have accepted the existing knowledge grid as given. The voluminous empirical material, both published and unpublished, that are now accessible in digital form, either online or offline, have been accumulated, classified, catalogued and maintained, indeed, locked in that grid.

Constituting and Reproducing the Knowledge on Southeast Asia

There are at least four major axes along which the construction, organization and reproduction of social scientific knowledge about Southeast Asia and its societies have taken place.

The first axis is that of *discipline/area studies*. There is an ongoing debate between those who prefer to approach the study of Southeast Asia from a disciplinary perspective, on the one hand, and those who believe that it should be approached from an area studies dimension, employing an inter-disciplinary approach, on the other.

The former prefer to start clearly on a disciplinary footing and treat Southeast Asia as a case study or the site for the application of particular set of theories that could also be applied elsewhere globally. The aim of such an approach is to understand social phenomena found in Southeast Asia and to make comparisons with similar phenomena elsewhere. Those preferring the latter approach see Southeast Asia as possessing particular characteristics and internal dynamics that have to be examined in detail using all available disciplinary approaches with the intention of unravelling and recognizing the indigenous knowledge without necessarily making any comparison with other regions of the world.

The bureaucratic implications of these two approaches can perhaps be clearly discerned in the way social scientific knowledge about Southeast Asia is reproduced through research and

teaching. This brings us to the second axis, namely, the *undergraduate/graduate studies* axis.

Those who favour area studies often believe that Southeast Asian studies can be taught at the undergraduate level hence the establishment of Southeast Asian studies departments or programmes, in a number of universities in Southeast Asia, combining basic skills of various disciplines to examine the internal dynamics of societies within the region. Acquiring proficiency in one or two languages from the region is a must in this case. The problem with this bureaucratic strategy is that these departments have to be located in a particular faculty, say, in the arts, humanities or social science faculty. This denies, for instance, those with a background in the natural sciences the opportunity to study in-depth about Southeast Asia.

Therefore, those discipline-inclined observers would argue that Southeast Asian studies should be taught at the graduate level to allow those grounded in the various disciplines, whether in the social or natural sciences or in other fields of study, to have an opportunity to specialize in Southeast Asian studies. Therefore, a geologist or an engineer who, for instance, is interested in the soil and irrigation systems of Southeast Asia could examine not only the physical make-up of Southeast Asia but also the human-environment relationship. This is particularly relevant at the present time since environmental and ecological issues have become global concerns.

This has made many individuals, institutions and governments carefully study how they should invest their precious time and money when they are requested to support the setting up of a programme, centre or institute of Southeast Asian studies. They often ask whether universities should continue to have the prerogative on the teaching, research and dissemination of knowledge about Southeast Asia and its societies. Why are non-university institutions not given this prerogative?

This takes us to the third axis, namely, the *university/non-university* axis. For many years, we imagined that we could acquire and reproduce knowledge about Southeast Asia, whether approached from the disciplinary or area studies

perspective only at the university. However, many governments and international funding bodies felt that to obtain knowledge about Southeast Asia one need not go to a university, but could acquire it through non-academic but research-oriented institutions established outside the university structure to serve particular purposes. National research bodies such as LIPI (Indonesian Institute of the Sciences) in Jakarta and ISEAS (Institute of Southeast Asian Studies) in Singapore have been playing that role. 'Think-tanks', such as the Center for Strategic Studies (CSIS), Jakarta, or the Institute of Strategic and International Studies (ISIS), Malaysia, have also played the role of the producer and reproducer of knowledge on societies in Southeast Asia outside the university framework. However, there seems to be a division of labour, based on differences in research orientation, in the task of producing and reproducing knowledge between the academic and non-academic institutions.

This final axis is *academic/policy-oriented research* axis. While academic endeavours pursued within the context of Southeast Asian studies in the universities are motivated by interest in basic research, which is by definition scholarly, those pursued outside the universities are often perceived as not being scholarly enough because they are essentially applied or policy-oriented in nature and serving rather narrow, often political, interests of the powers that be in Southeast Asia.

It is argued that the critical difference between these two approaches is that the academic approach is always open to stringent peer-group evaluation as a form of quality control, but the applied approach is not always assessed academically. The latter is often highly confidential and political in nature, thus denying it to be vetted by the peer groups. The basic research-based academic endeavours are therefore seen as highly scholarly, whereas the non-academic ones are not perceived as scholarly works and are not considered to contribute to the accumulation of knowledge on Southeast Asia societies.

However, research institutes like ISEAS in Singapore would argue that, even though it is essentially a policy-oriented research institute mainly serving the interests of the Singapore government,

it still produces scholarly work of high quality and encourages basic research to be conducted by its research fellows either on an individual or a group basis. In other words, a non-university research institute of Southeast Asian studies, such as ISEAS, could simultaneously conduct applied and basic research without sacrificing the academic and scholarly qualities of its final product; or put in another way, it is 'policy-oriented yet scholarly'.

Without doubt, the availability of ICT has helped tremendously the building of a more efficient and user-friendly system of accumulation and management of the knowledge, in terms of storage, retrieval and access. Graduate students would easily vouch that the exercise of literature review is much less arduous than before. The numerous databases on Southeast Asian Studies available, both within and outside the region, would probably render inter-library loan an activity of the past.

The moot question is who are really the consumers of knowledge on Southeast Asian societies, hence Southeast Asian studies; the Southeast Asians or outsiders?

Consuming the Knowledge on Southeast Asia

It could be argued that social scientific knowledge about Southeast Asia and its societies is a commodity with a market value. Often the 'market rationale', and not the 'intellectual rationale,' prevails in matters such as the setting-up of a Southeast Asian studies programme, centre or institute, even in the government-funded academic institutions. However, the funding of research on Southeast Asian studies has often been dictated not by idealistic, philanthropic motives but by quite crass utilitarian desires, mainly political or economic ones. There are at least three important 'sectors' within which knowledge on Southeast Asia societies has been consumed: the public, the private and intellectual sectors.

Since the governments in Southeast Asia have been the biggest public sector investors in education, through public-funded educational institutions, they have been the largest employment provider. They have set their own preferences and priorities, in

accordance to their general framework of manpower planning, in deciding what type of graduates and in which fields of specialization they want to employ them. The pattern in Southeast Asian countries has been well-established. There is a higher demand for science graduates than social science and humanities graduates especially those who specialize in Southeast Asian studies. However, there seems to be a significant demand for the inclusion of the Southeast Asian studies content in all the non-natural science courses at the undergraduate level in most of the government-funded academic institutions in Southeast Asia. This is related to the fact that the awareness about ASEAN as a community amongst the public, hence the need for a more informed description on the different countries and societies within ASEAN (read Southeast Asia).

Outside Southeast Asia, such as in Japan and the United States of America, specialization in Southeast Asian studies, or its components has very rarely been considered highly desired in the job market of the public sector. A graduate-level qualification in Southeast Asian studies is perhaps more marketable in the public sector especially in government and semi-government bodies that deal with diplomatic relations or intelligence.

In the private sector, the demand for Southeast Asian studies as a form of knowledge and the demand for a potential employee who possesses that knowledge are both limited and rather specific. However, the number could increase depending on how large is the investment and production outfit a particular company has in Southeast Asia, which is particularly relevant to large transnational corporations with multi-sited production locations. Since some of the demand for the knowledge is rather short-term, often specific but detailed, and has to be customized to the needs of a company, 'think-tanks' or 'consultant companies' have often become the main supplier of such tailored knowledge. Many of such organizations are actually dependent on 'freelance' Southeast Asianists or academics doing such jobs on a part-time, unofficial basis.

It has been observed that the Japanese seems to be a regular consumer of knowledge on Southeast Asia. This is hardly surprising because they have

massive investments in Southeast Asia. There is therefore a constant need to know what is happening in the region. Research foundations from Japan, in particular the Toyota Foundation, has been very active in the last decade, in promoting 'Southeast Asian studies for Southeast Asians,' and supporting other research and exchange programmes. Taiwan and Korea are the two other Asian countries having their own Southeast Asian studies research centres, besides United States, United Kingdom, France and The Netherlands, former colonial powers in Southeast Asia. Perhaps after September 11, the demand in the USA has increased substantially parallel to the increase in its military interest and operation in the region.

A more generalized demand for knowledge on Southeast Asian societies relates to marketing and this trend must not be underrated with the recent expansion of the middle class in the region. As the market and clients in Southeast Asia become more sophisticated the need for in-depth knowledge on sectors of the Southeast Asian societies has increased. This in turn has increased the demand for graduates who have followed courses relating to Southeast Asian studies.

In the intellectual sector, knowledge on Southeast Asia has been consumed generally by the NGOs, namely, those that are national-based as well as those that have regional networks. Since most of the NGOs are issue-specific based interest group, such as environmental protection, abused housewives, social justice and the like, and often seeking funds for their activities from the governments and NGOs in developed countries, they find it more advantageous to operate on a regional basis because they get more attention and funding from these sources. The strength and success of their operation is very much dependent on the amount of knowledge they have about Southeast Asian societies in general as well as the specific issue that they are focusing on as a cause in their struggle.

With the popularity of the Internet and its increased usage around the world and within Southeast Asia, it has now become an important medium through which academic and popular knowledge on Southeast Asian societies has become available. The source of the knowledge could be located outside or within the

region but are now much more accessible for commercial and non-commercial purposes. An interesting development in the latter is in the realm of 'democratic politics'. Put simply, the presence of ICT has enabled the various aspects of knowledge on Southeast Asian society and politics to be utilised for political purposes. Beyond that the Internet has also become an effective and popular alternative source of information and news to the opposition, anti-establishment as well as minority groups. Indeed, the Internet has become a new medium of producing and reproducing knowledge on Southeast Asian people, politics and society.

It could be said that Southeast Asian studies and what it constitutes is, first and foremost, a knowledge construct that represents only part of the region's social reality. In spite of this, it is the most important element, amongst the many, that gives Southeast Asia, the geo-physical region as well as its people and environment, its history, territory and society. Due to the co-existence of different societal forms in the region, the unevenness of the tempo of social life in the region and the speed of social change also differs from one community to the other and from one area within the region to another. The understanding and analysis are complicated by the persistence of 'methodological nationalism'. Therefore, only a poly-disciplinary approach could capture these complexities embedded in the societies of Southeast Asia. Increasingly, ICT has played the critical role of weaving the complex of information and knowledge, available from all corners of the globe on the region, into a coherent storageable, retrievable and accessible whole.

The Institute of the Malay World and Civilization (ATMA), Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia, can testify to that. With a collection of some 50,000 single-text articles, written in a number of languages, located in the newly-constructed ATMA's Malay World Studies Database, another 11,000 Malay *pantuns* in the ATMA's Collection of Pantun Baba Cina Database and ATMA's Kamus Peribahasa that holds about 20,000 Malay proverbs, ATMA's portal (www.malaycivilization.com) is slowly making its presence felt thus establishing its own niche in the global knowledge

sphere (Shamsul, Rumaizah & Haslindawati 2002).

With the increase in importance on the region in the globalizing world, both generalist and specialist knowledge about Southeast Asia have become critical to the world and the region itself. Southeast Asian studies as a knowledge construct, is transforming itself into a lived reality, especially for the Southeast Asians themselves. This knowledge therefore becomes indispensable both to those who study Southeast Asia and its society as well as to the Southeast Asian themselves. However, the struggle against 'methodological nationalism' would still be the biggest challenge for such an endeavour.

ACCESS AND USAGE OF ICT-BASED KNOWLEDGE: A GLIMPSE OF THE MALAYSIAN EXPERIENCE

Preliminary empirical evidence from the Malay world -- the maritime and riverine complex of Southeast Asia, an integral component of the region -- shows that the distribution of the nation-state-based knowledge, including those that use ICT as a conduit, is very much limited by the dominance of a number of factors, in particular, the larger and dominant social inequality grid articulated by the uneven distribution of infrastructural facilities, such as electricity supply, without which the access to ICT-based knowledge is only a dream.

In our attempt to make the knowledge on the Malay world (originally called the Malay Archipelago by Wallace 1869) available through our digital databases, we have come to realise that the reach or audience is very much limited by a number of factors, such as presence or absence of basic infrastructural items, such as electricity and telephones, habits of Internet users and undoubtedly the state of social inequality in a particular country. We do not have to look very far as the Malaysian case would give us ample evidence to that effect.

To the people in Bario, Sarawak, a place located in the middle of Borneo forest that does not enjoy the taken-for-granted luxuries of electricity, piped-water supply and telephones, a special E-Community pilot project has to be created to find means and ways how the population

in Bario could have access to ICT and be wired to the outside world. It has been a costly project. Whether this could be repeated elsewhere in Malaysia is a moot point. Although the Malaysian government promised that in the next five years there should be one computer in every home, no electricity supply and telephone lines in these homes would render these items useless.

One study conducted, in 1999, by Communications Department, Faculty of Modern Language and Communications, Universiti Putra Malaysia, that involved 2,015 respondents (males and females, urban and rural as well as from the major ethnic groups) indicated that about 95% of Malays have heard the word IT, followed by 85 % Indians and 76 % Chinese. However, the Chinese seems to lead among the ethnic groups in terms of "have used computers" (65%), "have computers at home" (46%), "have computers connected to Internet" (30%), and "have attended computer training courses" (23%). The Malays that have their computers connected to the Internet is only 14%, compared to 30% of Chinese and 22% Indians. The study also showed that in the urban area, "computers connected to Internet" was about 26% and in the rural only 10%.

We can argue endlessly about the validity of these figures and whether or not we can arrive at any useful conclusion from them. These figures simply demonstrate the fact that the basic precondition for the possibility of any form of knowledge being distributed through the ICT is the availability of basic infrastructural facilities, such as electricity supply and telephone lines, the ICT hardware and software, and these have to be connected. The users too, must be computer literate.

To the urban inhabitants of Klang Valley, the majority of whom have access to the basic infrastructural facilities that the people in Bario does not, ownership and usage of computer is common place, if not at home, but at the hundreds of Internet cafes in the region. However, the findings from a number of studies conducted in the Klang Valley, in the last three years, seem to indicate that amongst Internet users, very few actually use the Internet to access knowledge of various kinds, either for personal or other use.

A research, conducted by a group

of researchers from the International Islamic University Malaysia amongst 442 Internet users in the Klang Valley, 56% of whom are students from local institutions of higher learning (private and public), revealed that less than 10% actually use the Internet for activities that could be considered as knowledge seeking, such as for academic assignments. The majority use the Internet for chatting, e-mail and games.

Our point is that even for those who have access to the Internet, the percentage of which, against the total Malaysian population, is very small (not more than 15%), they do not necessarily use it for knowledge enhancement, less so for knowledge production. We would therefore advance the argument that digital-based knowledge located in the numerous web-based databases accessible on-line, although easily available, is not the dominant knowledge source for the majority of the population, especially in the developing countries, like Malaysia. Indeed, we are still dependent on paper-based knowledge and databases.

It brings us to the basic issue of resource accumulation and maintenance. The debate over conservation and preservation of paper-based material versus open access and digitization of all forms of material remains an important one. The trend seems to be favouring the latter -- digitize and digitize and digitize. It is becoming obvious that the different ownerships of softwares and also operating systems do not make the exercise of digitization an easy, cheap and manageable process, as it seems. The issue of the shelf life of a particular software or technology is also a critical one. These issues have never been discussed openly because of the 'digital fetish' that has swept the world over. However, the evidence available to us seems to show that the paper-based materials, with good techniques of preservation, are still surviving well after centuries. The problem is how to store them because they need larger and wider space. This is the unfavourable factor that the present accumulation, storage and maintenance system has vis-à-vis Southeast Asian studies. Being in the tropics does pose a special challenge for the preservation of the paper-based material. The debate goes on.

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