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Southeast Asia Field School 2006

The objective of the field school is to integrate fieldwork and classroom teaching as part of the Sydney University Senior Geography (Year III) program in human and environmental geography. The main aim of this unit of study is to expose students directly to the human and environmental geography of rural development in Southeast Asia in comparative perspective. Intended outcomes are as follows:

- Basic knowledge of the development geography of mainland Southeast Asia
- Basic understanding of rural processes, emphasising social, economic and ecological linkages and transitions
- Understanding of key environmental issues in mainland Southeast Asia
- Analytical skills in assessing resource management practices at multiple scales in the Southeast Asian context
- Appreciation of the contradictions and complementarities inherent in sustainable development as applied and understood in Southeast Asia

A hallmark of the course is fieldwork experience at the village level to provide in-depth understanding of rural people's experience of development, their livelihoods and their relationship with the environment. A secondary feature is the working arrangement with Vietnamese, Lao and Thai tertiary students, which - apart from being an enjoyable cultural exchange - will facilitate fieldwork, allow you to see life through the eyes of your peers and also give you an idea of some of the contrasts between urban and rural values and experiences of development in each country.

The course focuses on use, management, degradation and conservation of natural resources and the environment in the context of rapid rural change occurring in Southeast Asia. Modular themes are developed in lectures, talks by key actors and agencies, readings and through village-based fieldwork. In some cases, the lecture themes will come ahead of relevant fieldwork; in others, they will draw retrospectively on fieldwork experience. In this way, the course should encourage continuous reflection between ideas/concepts and empirical experience.

Most of the lectures will be given by the Sydney lecturer (Phil Hirsch), and there will also be guest lectures by local academic staff, development specialists, agency representatives and practitioners. Fieldwork will be carried out together with Vietnamese, Lao and Thai staff and students. Fieldwork will be a combination of village-based interviews and observations with broader scale examination of environmental and developmental issues.

Assignment work during the field school will involve short papers and presentations based on readings, key concepts and field-based study. A longer research report will be completed on return to Sydney. This field-based assignment will involve comparative method, drawing on fieldwork carried out in Thailand, Laos and Vietnam. The field school approach thus involves a juxtaposition of field- and classroom-based learning.

3. FIELD SCHOOL ITINERARY

| | | | |
|----|--------|-------------------|---|
| W | 23 Dec | Sydney University | Final briefing and introductory lecture at Sydney University 2-4pm |
| F | 6 Jan | Sydney Airport | Meet at Thai check-in desk 20:00; Fly 22:30 |
| Sa | 7 Jan | BKK/HCMC/CTU | Arrive BKK early am; transit to Vietnam; arrive Can Tho mid-afternoon |
| S | 8 Jan | Can Tho | Orientation to Can Tho University; field visit to An Binh |
| M | 9 Jan | Can Tho | Lectures at Can Tho University am; to field sites pm |
| Tu | 10 Jan | Can Tho | Village visits in Mekong Delta with CTU students |
| W | 11 Jan | Can Tho | Village visits in Mekong Delta with CTU students; return to CTU pm |
| Th | 12 Jan | Can Tho | Lectures at CTU am; to HCMC pm |
| F | 13 Jan | HCMC | AusAID talk HCMC am; fly to Bangkok 12:30; fly to Udon Thani; bus to VTE |
| Sa | 14 Jan | Vangvieng | NUOL Lecture and Orientation; Village visits with NUOL students |
| S | 15 Jan | Vangvieng | Village visits with NUOL students |
| M | 16 Jan | Vangvieng | Village visits with NUOL students |
| Tu | 17 Jan | Vientiane | Free day in Vientiane |
| W | 18 Jan | Vientiane | Lectures around Vientiane; Embassy, MRC, Land Titling |
| Th | 19 Jan | THPC | Travel to Theun-Hinboun; pm site visits |
| F | 20 Jan | THPC | Visit affected villages; overnight |
| Sa | 21 Jan | Travel to Pakse | am: THPC; pm travel to Pakse |
| S | 22 Jan | Pakse | Free day in Pakse; Ubon students arrive p.m. |
| M | 23 Jan | SNSB | Lectures at PSAC am; Overnight to SNSB villages w/ UBP and PSAC students |
| Tu | 24 Jan | SNSB | To Pakse pm (Ubon students stay at Khong Jiam to get new border pass) |
| W | 25 Jan | Khone Falls | Trip to Vat Phou, Khone Falls for lunch; stay at Don Khone |
| Th | 26 Jan | Khone Falls | Don Khone: participatory tourism day |
| F | 27 Jan | Ubon | Leave Don Khone Village; Isan village visits with UBP and PSAC students |
| Sa | 28 Jan | Ubon | Village visits with UBP and PSAC students; to Ubon pm |
| S | 29 Jan | Ubon | Lectures and debriefing at Ubon am; free afternoon ; evening train to BKK 18:15-05:20 |
| M | 30 Jan | Ubon | Arrive Nakorn Pathom am; Lectures at Silpakorn |
| Tu | 31 Jan | Nakorn Pathom | Report preparation day |
| W | 1 Feb | Nakorn Pathom | Free day in Nakhon Pathom |
| Th | 2 Feb | Nakorn Pathom | Travel to Uthathani, Nong Nae with Silpakorn Students |
| F | 3 Feb | Nong Nae | Fieldwork day in the village |
| Sa | 4 Feb | Nong Nae | Village visits with Silpakorn students; party with villagers pm |
| S | 5 Feb | Nong Nae | Village visits with Silpakorn students; to Nakorn Pathom pm |
| M | 6 Feb | Nong Nae | Lecture, Student presentations at Silpakorn University, Finale! |

4. PARTICIPANTS

Course convenor: Phil Hirsch; Course tutor: Emily Hunter

| | | | | | | | |
|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|---------|----------|
| William | Bennett | Alana | George | Samantha | Kennedy | Neha | Prasad |
| Veronica | Black | Laura | Giltrap | Nerida | Lindsay | Melissa | Ronca |
| Asha | Bradley | Edlyn | Gurney | Iain | McGregor | Rebecca | Williams |
| Tanya | Butow | Thomas | Holyoake | Mary | Nam | Justine | Yates |
| Jenny | Compton | Luke | Jacenko | Nadia | Owen | | |
| Katie | Fletcher | Michaele | Kartun | Amanda | Porter | | |

5. ASSIGNMENTS AND ASSESSMENT

The assessed work for the field school consists of four main parts:

- | | |
|---|-----|
| 1. Participation: small groups and field visit assessment | 10% |
| 2. Short written assignments (along the way) | 20% |
| 3. Major written assignment (due Fri 17March 2006)* | 40% |
| 4. Exam (based on lectures, readings, fieldwork)* | 30% |

*For completion on return to Sydney.

The major written assignment is a field-based scoping exercise and inception report for a (hypothetical) larger study. The field-based component will be supported by appropriate reading and lecture material.

Each student should identify a topic, and refine it down to a more focused research question, in consultation with Phil Hirsch if you wish. It is also important that you consult with Phil Hirsch and Emily Hunter along the way in narrowing down your field topic. A few key criteria might help you - the topic and research question should be:

- Researchable at the field sites we visit
- Able to draw on secondary literature for conceptual and contextual material
- Appropriate for comparative analysis
- Specific enough to provide a focus for questions
- Flexible enough to allow for varied field and translation conditions, ideally allowing for observation as well as interview field method
- Relevant to some of the key themes set out in this course outline

You should email your proposed topic to Phil Hirsch by 16 December 2005.

The structure of your scoping/inception report is up to you, but you may wish to use the following as a guide:

- Introduction
- Literature review:
 - o theory/concepts/comparative material;
 - o contextualisation -global/SE Asia/Mekong/country level
- Methodology
 - o From concepts to field method
 - o Scope and limitations
- Case studies (at least half the report should be based on fieldwork findings)
- Discussion
- Conclusion, including avenues for further research

The assignment should be 2500-3500 words in length and should be comparative in nature, drawing on the experience of rural Vietnam, Laos and Thailand.

FIELD SCHOOL PROGRAM

Lectures and tutorials for the field school will be in eight modules, with supporting readings. These will be interspersed with eight key fieldwork interludes, as follows:

MODULE 1

Theme: Southeast Asian transitions

Date: Wednesday 23 November 2005

Place: School of Geosciences, Sydney University

Timetable:

| <i>Time</i> | <i>Format</i> | <i>Topic/activity</i> | <i>Presenter</i> |
|-------------|---------------|--|------------------|
| 14:00-15:00 | Lecture | Southeast Asian Transitions | Phil Hirsch |
| 15:00-16:00 | Briefing | Fieldwork topics, cultural issues, final logistics,Q&A | |

Field visit 1: An Binh Village

Sunday 8 January 2006

This one day field visit will take us along the canals out of Can Tho town into the rural Mekong Delta hinterland of intensively cultivated fruit orchards, rice farms and fish culture. We will visit An Binh Village, a peri-urban hamlet where staff and students from the Department of Environment and Natural Resource Management at Can Tho University have been working with villagers to establish integrated and sustainable farming and fish culture practices. One of the features of this village is a fish sanctuary. The visit will give us quite a relaxed introduction to rural Vietnam.

MODULE 2

Theme: Forests, fish and fields: the agro/aqua-ecology of rural Southeast Asia

Date: Monday 9 January 2006

Place: Can Tho University, Vietnam

Timetable:

| <i>Time</i> | <i>Format</i> | <i>Topic/activity</i> | <i>Presenter</i> |
|-------------|---------------|--|------------------|
| 08:00-09:00 | Lecture | Agro/aqua-ecosystems of mainland Southeast Asia | Philip Hirsch |
| 09:00-10:00 | Lecture | Agro-ecology and environment in the Mekong Delta | Nguyen Huu Chiem |
| 10:30-12:00 | Lecture | Mekong Delta field visits briefing | CTU staff |
| 14:00 | | Depart for Field Visit 2 (3 sites) | |

Field visit 1b: Mekong Delta

Monday 9 – Wednesday 11 January 2006

This two day field visit will see us divided into three groups. The main purpose of the field visit is to look at changing rural conditions and to understand the Mekong Delta as a diverse agro-ecosystem where environmental challenges are also livelihood challenges for the majority of the region's people who are farmers and fishers.

Group 1 will visit Dong Thap Province in the Upper Delta and will stay near the Tram Chim nature reserve / bird sanctuary. This group will look at issues concerned with conservation and livelihood pressures and will also get a first hand account of the recent devastating floods in this part of the Delta.

Group 2 will visit the area of the mid-Delta in Can Tho Province. They will look at issues of change in cultivation systems, impacts of intensified agriculture, water management and agrarian change. While this is one of the more prosperous agricultural areas in the Delta, not all have experienced development in the same way.

Group 3 will visit the lower Delta on Long Hoa Island in Tra Vinh Province. Being at the tail end of the Mekong hydrological system, farmers here are faced with issues of saline intrusion and with the results of various engineering measures to deal with saline / freshwater balances. This province has a large ethnic Khmer population, and these farmers tend to be among the poorest in the Delta.

All three groups will report back on their findings to the other groups during the morning session on Thursday 12 January.

MODULE 3

Theme: Development in Vietnam

Dates: Thursday 12 and Friday 13 January 2006

Place: Can Tho University, Vietnam

Timetable:

| <i>Time</i> | <i>Format</i> | <i>Topic/activity</i> | <i>Presenter</i> |
|----------------------------|----------------------|--|-------------------------|
| Thu 12th | | | |
| 09:00-10:00 | Lecture | Development in Vietnam in its regional context | Philip Hirsch |
| 10:00-10:30 | Break | | |
| 10:30-12:00 | Debrief | Reportback on field visits | Staff |
| Fri 13th | | | |
| 08:30-10:00 | Talk | Australian development assistance to Vietnam | AusAID |

Field visit 3: Vangvieng District, Lao PDR

Saturday 14 – Monday 16 January 2006

On Friday 13th we will cross the Friendship Bridge across the Mekong River about 8pm and stay in Vientiane. On Saturday 14th, we will have an orientation at the National University of Laos with Lao students from the National University of Laos (NUOL) and go straight to Vangvieng District, a mountainous part of upper Vientiane Province about 150 km (3 hours drive) north of the Lao capital Vientiane, on the road north toward the old royal capital of Luang Prabang.

Vangvieng has an interesting development history, having received many refugees during and after the war that ended in 1975. Partly as a result, it is an ethnically diverse district. It is also very scenic, with spectacular jagged limestone scenery and caves. As a result, it has become a significant tourist destination in the last few years, creating opportunities but also headaches for local people and authorities. Both upland and lowland agriculture are practiced here, giving us a chance to see the issues surrounding development and competition for scarce land, water and forest resources typical of many parts of montane mainland Southeast Asia.

We will stay in the Hmong village of Namon Neua on the night of Saturday 14th together with the NUOL students. The afternoon of Saturday 14th and the morning of Sunday 15th will be in the village, both looking at small development projects and their impact, and in individual fieldwork.

On Sunday 15th we will visit and stay overnight in another Hmong village at Nasom, across the beautiful Nam Song River. This is a village that has received very little by way of development assistance and in which tourism has just started to make preliminary inroads. We will return to Vientiane on the afternoon of Monday 16th.

MODULE 4

Theme: Development in Lao PDR and the wider Mekong River Basin

Date: Wednesday 18 January 2006

Place: Various venues

Timetable:

| Time | Format | Topic/activity | Presenter |
|--------------------|---------------|---|-----------------------|
| 08:00-09:00 | Lecture | Development and environment issues in Lao PDR | Phil Hirsch |
| 09:00-10:00 | Lecture | Forestry and NRM challenges | Sithong Thongmanivong |
| 10:00-10:30 | Break | | |
| 11:00-13:00 | Talks | Australia's role in Lao PDR | Ambassador, AusAID |
| 13:30-15:00 | Talks | Mekong River Commission | CEO and Program staff |
| 16:00-17:30 | Talks | Land titling program | LEI program manager |

**Field visit 4: Theun-Hinboun Dam and affected villages, Lao PDR
Thursday 19 – Saturday 21 January 2006**

On Thursday 19th we will travel with the NUOL students to Theun-Hinboun Dam in central Laos. We will spend two days at the dam site and in affected villages upstream and downstream of the dam.

Theun-Hinboun has been a controversial project, whose impacts were initially downplayed both by the Environmental Impact Statement and by the Asian Development Bank which funded the dam. Subsequent NGO critique and response to it ultimately led to a process of confrontation, negotiation and program of mitigation and compensation being implemented by the private dam operators. During this visit we will stay near the dam, talk with the project staff, and also visit affected villages. One of our accompanying Field School staff, Ms Nattaya Tubtim, was recently engaged in a review of the Mitigation and Compensation Program.

On Saturday 21st the Sydney students will continue south to Pakse, while the NUOL students will return to Vientiane.

During this visit we will also complete the first short written assignment.

MODULE 5

Theme: Southern Laos: lowlands and fisheries

Date: Monday 23 January 2006

Place: Provincial Agriculture and Forestry Office, Pakse, Lao PDR

Timetable:

| <i>Time</i> | <i>Format</i> | <i>Topic/activity</i> | <i>Presenter</i> |
|-------------|---------------|--|------------------|
| 08:30-09:30 | Lecture | Fisheries in Champassak Province | Prachit Noraseng |
| 09:30-10:30 | Lecture | Transitional economies: the case of Lao PDR | Phil Hirsch |
| 10:30-11:30 | Briefing | Field orientation for village visits | Nattaya Tubtim |
| 11:30-12:30 | Lunch | | |
| 13:00 | | Leave for field visits with UBU, PSAC students | |

**Field visit 5: Farming and fishing in Sansomboun District, Champassak Province
Monday 23 – Tuesday 24 January 2006**

On Monday 23 January, after a morning of lectures at the Provincial Agriculture and Forestry Office with students from the Pakse Southern Agricultural College and Ubonratchathani University (Thailand), we will divide into three groups for an overnight visit to Don Kho, Kaengpho and Khamyaad villages next to the Mekong and the Sedone Rivers in Sansomboun District. Two of these villages have been part of a collaborative participatory fisheries resource management study run by the Provincial Livestock and Fisheries Office and the Australian Mekong Resource Centre at Sydney Uni. These

villages rely on river fishing but also have seasonal backswamps with traditional and changing management systems. While fishing is an important local livelihood, villagers rely primarily on rice agriculture. They will be planting a dry season irrigated rice crop while we are there.

**Field visit 6: Conservation, fisheries and tourism livelihoods at Khone Falls
Wednesday 25 – Friday 27 January 2006**

On Wednesday 25 January, we will leave early to visit Khong District, where many villages have established fishery conservation zones. This area has also become a backpacker tourism destination. We will stop at the ancient Khmer temple of Vat Phou on the way. We will then proceed to the falls area in Khong District, visiting Khone Phapheng. We will spend the nights of 25 and 26 January at Ban Khone, on one of the “four thousand islands” known as Siphandone. On Australia Day we’ll take it easy, engaging ourselves in participatory tourism studies! On Friday 27 January, we’ll head back, and will cross into Thailand at the Chongmek border post by lunchtime. From there, we will divide into three groups for the Isan (NE Thailand) village visits.

**Field visit 7: Villages in Ubonratchathani Province, Northeastern Thailand
Friday 27 to Saturday 28 January 2006**

Isan has for long been the country’s poorest region. Isan is mainly Lao speaking, culturally and linguistically similar to the area we will have visited in Laos. However, the development context is quite different due to the contrasting development histories of the respective countries.

We will join students from the Faculty of Liberal Arts at Ubonratchathani University for two days of field activities in Ubonratchathani Province in three sub-groups, together with Lao students from PSAC. This part of Isan has traditionally been known as one of Thailand’s poorest locales. In recent years, various development projects in the area have had quite mixed results in terms of local livelihoods. In addition to a comparative look at rural livelihoods in general, we will investigate issues around dam construction, tourism and eucalyptus plantations. The focus of the activities will be on conflict and cooperation in natural resource management in the context of changing livelihoods. We will leave the villages on the afternoon of Saturday 28th and proceed to Ubonratchathani,

On Sunday 29th we will have lectures and a debriefing with the Lao and Thai students at Ubonratchathani University in the morning. After completing a short assignment during the afternoon in Ubon, we will catch the overnight sleeper train to Bangkok.

MODULE 6

Theme: Development and inequality: from agrarian change to natural resource conflict

Date: Sunday 29 January 2006

Place: Ubonratchathani University

Timetable:

| <i>Time</i> | <i>Format</i> | <i>Topic/activity</i> | <i>Presenter</i> |
|-------------|---------------|--|-----------------------|
| 08:30-09:00 | Formalities | Introduction and welcome by the Dean | Dr Suchada Thaweessit |
| 09:00-10:00 | Discussion | Reportback from village visits | Students |
| 10:00-10:30 | Break | | |
| 10:30-11:30 | Lecture | Rural development in Isan in historical and comparative perspective | Dr Kanokwan Manorom |
| 11:30-12:30 | Lecture | Agrarian change and resource conflict in NE Thailand and the wider Mekong Region | Phil Hirsch |
| Afternoon | Assignment | Complete writtent assignment 2 | |

MODULE 7

Theme: Key environmental questions in mainland SE Asia

Date: Monday 30 January 2006

Place: Silpakorn University

Timetable:

| <i>Time</i> | <i>Format</i> | <i>Topic/activity</i> | <i>Presenter</i> |
|-------------|---------------|---|------------------|
| 10:00-11:00 | Lecture | Development and environment in Uthaithani | Philip Hirsch |
| 11:00-12:00 | Lecture | NGO talk | tba |
| 12:00-13:00 | Break | Lunch | |
| 13:00-14:30 | Briefing | Fieldwork briefing for Uthaithani | Philip Hirsch |
| 14:30-17:30 | Assignment | Written Assignment 3 | |

Field visit 8: Lan Sak District, Uthaithani Province, western Thailand

Thursday 2 – Sunday 5 January 2006

This will be an extended field visit to Nong Nae Village, Lan Sak District, Uthaithani Province with Silpakorn University students. We will leave Nakorn Pathom at 8am on Thursday 2nd, arrive in Uthaithani around lunchtime and will have a briefing at the Nong Kha Yang Foundation for Rural Development before proceeding to Nong Nae. We will spend three nights in Nong Nae Village with Silpakorn students, returning to Nakhon Pathom on Sunday 5th.

Lan Sak District is a relatively recently settled area that has been progressively cleared of forest over the past three decades. Many facets of “development” are evident at the village level, and villagers have experienced these in both positive and negative ways. Phil Hirsch spent more than a year during 1984-5 doing village level research into social and environmental change in Lan Sak and has done follow-up studies since. Much of his book, “Development Dilemmas in Rural Thailand” is based on this fieldwork. The

nearby Huai Kha Khaeng Wildlife Sanctuary raises important issues of conservation and development, and the Tab Salao Dam is another example of problems of inequitable development and natural resource management.

MODULE 8

Theme: Perspectives on Thai development in its regional context

Date: Monday 6 February 2006

Place: Silpakorn University

Timetable:

| <i>Time</i> | <i>Format</i> | <i>Topic/activity</i> | <i>Presenter</i> |
|--------------------|---------------|--|----------------------|
| 08:30-10:00 | Debrief | Debriefing on Uthaithani | All |
| 10:00-10:30 | Break | | |
| 10:30-12:30 | Presentations | Summaries of field report findings | Sydney Uni Students |
| 12:30-13:30 | Lunch | | |
| 13:30-15:00 | Presentations | Summaries of field report findings | Sydney Uni Students |
| 15:00-15:30 | Break | | |
| 15:30-16:30 | Lecture | Reflections on fieldwork: what we see and what we don't | Utong Prasasvinichai |
| 16:30-17:30 | Lecture | Development, inequality and rural futures in mainland Southeast Asia | Philip Hirsch |
| 17:30 | | FINALE! | |