

**BUILDING CONSENSUS FOR MANUSCRIPT PRESERVATION
NATIONALLY AND INTERNATIONALLY: A VIEW FROM
THE FUNDER'S DESK**

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The grant-making process must start with people with good ideas, passion, and dedication who have identified an important problem and a strategy to address it. The problem should be tractable, the strategy should be practical and practicable, and the resources necessary to aid in implementing the strategy should, obviously, not outstrip the availability. Most foundations can't apply their funds to address issues in just any field, either, so the identified problem and planned strategy must somehow fit with the foundation's priorities or areas of interest. As projects often start small, they may lead to more projects, bigger projects, or the foundation may expand its support to several projects with similar goals, so as to broaden or deepen the impact of the funding. It is here that national consensus—or regional consensus if the grant-making extends beyond one country—becomes a crucial issue.

This seems simplistic and obvious when described in the abstract, as if it were a formula. If I refer to the situation of grant-making for library/archival preservation in Southeast Asia, mainly Indonesia, and if I use examples from my own experience with three foundations—the Ford, Japan and Toyota foundations—mainly the first two, the situation may appear more complex and less obvious. I do not intend to describe in detail the projects of the three foundations, however. For further reference, there is the unpublished evaluation report by Roger Tol of a series of Ford Foundation grants for microfilming projects in Indonesia;¹ elsewhere I have already tried to summarize the situation of manuscript preservation in Indonesia.² Because Tol's report is unpublished and my chapter is in a rather expensive book, I will supply photocopies to those who wish them, which should enable me to avoid repetition here. I can also supply a list of Toyota Foundation grants in relevant fields for those who are interested.

¹ Roger Tol, "Acid Irony? Or How to Deal with Negatives Positively: An Evaluation Report of the Microfilming Projects in Indonesia Supported by the Ford Foundation," 15 June-16 July 1998, Unpub. MS.

² Alan Feinstein, "Chapter 15: Preservation of Manuscripts in Indonesia," in *Illuminations: The Writing Traditions of Indonesia*, eds. Ann Kumar and John McGlynn (New York/Tokyo: Weatherhill, 1996), pp. 257-265.

In several of the cases of Indonesian manuscript preservation projects, the “people with good ideas, passion, and dedication who have identified an important problem and a strategy to address it” were non-Indonesians. The role of foreign scholars in articulating needs to (mainly foreign) foundations is one that needs to be acknowledged honestly, however sensitive it may be. I refer you to the brilliant fictional cameos of characters involved in the manuscript-preserving game in Indonesia that Jennifer Lindsay has supplied for this meeting, “The Keepers”. Lindsay’s foreign scholar, Tom, wonders :

what he could do to save this precious knowledge and make it accessible to scholars. As a research student, he was familiar with writing proposals, and might be able to find the money to save these manuscripts. He decided to seek funds from a US philanthropic organisation for a documentation and microfilming project.³

In fact, people such as John Pemberton, Nancy Florida, Jennifer Lindsay, Vivianne Sukanda-Tessier, Tim Behrend, Roger Tol—and I, too, I must disclose—were in a similar position to Tom’s at one time or another over the last few decades. (Lindsay does not hesitate to ascribe to Tom some not entirely selfless scholarly motives: “[He kept the information about the manuscripts] to himself ... until later when he might publish his dissertation and maybe a catalogue of the collection. After all, he was able to read these manuscripts only through a long period of study Let other researchers go through all the work he had to if they also want[ed] this information, at least until all the results [were] published under his name.”) These foreigners did, in fact, play a role in articulating needs and strategies to foreign donors. But, it would have been impossible for them to have done this on their own; in every case, there were concerned local people acutely aware of the problem, desirous of resources, whether human or financial or technical, to attack it, but limited by language, experience, or “access” in their ability to seek and receive those resources. And it was, as in the case of Lindsay’s “Tom” the local teacher or librarian or manuscript who actually *knew* the collection and its contents. Finally, manuscript holders—whether public institutions or private collectors—had to consent and understand and, ideally, be actively involved in any plan concerning the preservation of their holdings.⁴

³ Jennifer Lindsay, “The Keepers,” Paper for the International Meeting on Microform Preservation and Conservation in Southeast Asia: Assessing Current Needs and Evaluating Past Projects, 21-24 February 2000, Chiangmai, Thailand, Unpub. MS., p. 3.

⁴ I agree completely with Lindsay’s point in a complementary paper that “access refers not only to access to the physical manuscript, but also includes ... participation in and access to opportunities to raise discussions of attitudes towards knowledge, cultural heritage, nationalism and internationalism, cooperation, exchange.” See Jennifer Lindsay, “Questions of Written Heritage and Access: Some Points for Discussion,” Paper for the International Meeting on Microform Preservation and Conservation in Southeast Asia: Assessing Current Needs and Evaluating Past Projects, 21-24 February 2000, Chiangmai, Thailand, Unpub. MS., p. 2.

This final point may seem obvious, but there are cases where foreign enthusiasm, whether on the part of the outside scholar or the foreign foundation that is backing the project, gets ahead of the local institution's own commitment. I have discussed this issue in a public symposium sponsored by the IFLA-PAC Regional Center in Tokyo last year. There I stated.

I don't wish to jump to the conclusion that all Indonesians are unconcerned or that Indonesian scholars, librarians, and conservators or Indonesian institutions have been idle—far from it. But it is necessary to say that they are a tiny and weak minority. And I think the tendency of foreigners to forget this fact has led or may still lead to the design of interventions (aid projects, consultancies, institutional support) that may end up failing in their end goals as a result.⁵

The self-interested motives that Lindsay trenchantly attributes to foreign scholars like “Tom” in her story may have salutary effects, of course: preservation needs are assessed and articulated; project plans are formulated; funds are raised; materials are described and ordered; texts are transferred to more stable media; the resultant films are copied and stored in multiple locations available to greater numbers of readers dispersed throughout the world; and texts are interpreted, analyzed, published (though often in languages or forms that leave the local “Mr. Pustaka's” behind).

But I think these results—important as they are—are not enough, and many of the foreign scholars and many of those involved in providing foreign funding realize it. “Outsiders can only serve as catalysts, they cannot do the real long-term work of preservation; it has to be locally rooted.”⁶ And foreign funds can only serve as seed money or help to leverage the much larger amounts that are required to tackle the enormous challenge of helping countries like Indonesia in preserving its written heritage. “Projects that do not take into account local realities and attitudes may therefore fail, or may at best be ‘Band-Aid’ solutions to particular symptoms, but not solutions to the larger underlying problem.”⁷

⁵ Alan Feinstein, “Challenges to International Cooperation in Library Preservation: Examples from Indonesia; International Aid, Local Indifference, Cultural Politics,” Paper presented to the 10th Annual Symposium of the IFLA-PAC Regional Center for Asia, November 18, 1999, National Diet Library, Tokyo, Unpub. MS (to be published in the proceedings of that symposium by the Japan Library Association, forthcoming 2000), p.2

⁶ Ibid, p. 5

⁷ Ibid.

That underlying problem—actually a nest of interrelated problems—I and others have rather blithely attributed to a general public indifference in Indonesia to the preservation challenge I mentioned above.⁸ I tried to analyze some of the reasons for that indifference in my paper in Tokyo, not to defend it, but to better understand it. In my paper I noted an ambivalent attitude toward tradition in general, not uncommon or unusual in a modernizing, post-colonial society. I also noted that “there is little career incentive to become a philologist, historian, librarian, or library conservator: these are poorly paid professions and ones with little social prestige attached to them.” I warned that a failure to see the loss of cultural knowledge as a problem had itself complex local cultural roots, despite outsiders’ “universalist” assumptions: there is a kind of clash between an implicit indigenous preservation, which included “loss” as a part of the system, and an explicit, foreign-derived “preservation,” which had other, historicist motives. The canonizing and preserving impulses of colonial scholars helped to implant notions of a fixed tradition, threatened by loss; they led, too, to the creation of institutions like libraries and museums to prevent that loss. But these notions and institutions were exogenous and didn’t always sit well with indigenous notions—for instance, of books as source of power, not to be read by just anyone. The early nationalist period involved tension between adopting European models of progress and advancement, on the one hand, and a nostalgic harking back to indigenous traditions as sources of pride in the independence struggle, on the other. I jumped then to the New Order era of the Soeharto regime, which despite its falsely traditionalist rhetoric of the grandeurs of the Indonesian (or Javanese) past and the need to preserve traditional values, was actually strongly anti-historical, in the nature of authoritarian regimes wishing to cover their own repressive and violent traces and origins. The New Order’s ideology of development also devalued the humanities and history and looked forward to the moment when Indonesia could be as “modern” and wealthy as other nations. Finally, I mentioned the rampant and pervasive corruption in all aspects of Indonesian government and society that was allowed to develop in the Soeharto years. Fields of endeavor that were “dry” (unfruitful as sources of corruption), like libraries or conservation, were implicitly devalued, and the few foreign-funded projects in this field were, not illegitimately, expected at the least to be sources of modest enrichment to meager civil servant wages.

⁸ See inter alia, C. Hooykaas, “La conservation des manuscrits et de la parole parlée en Indonésie,” *Archipel* 6 (1973):33-41; T. E. Behrend and Alan Feinstein, “Preservation of Manuscripts on Microfilm in Indonesia: Notes on Past, Current, and Future Projects,” *Southeast Asian Microfilm Newsletter* 20:1-6; Feinstein, “Chapter 12: Preservation of Manuscripts in Indonesia,” 1996, op. cit.; Achadiati Ikram, “Kata Sambutan” in T.E. Behrend and Titik Pudjiastuti, eds., *Katalog Induk Naskah-naskah Nusantara, Jilid 3-A: Perpustakaan Nasional Republik Indonesia* (Jakarta: Yayasan Obor Indonesia & EFEO, 1997), p. ix; Feinstein, “Challenges to International Cooperation,” 1999, op. cit.

Thus, the development of a “preservation consciousness” in such a historical and economic situation in Indonesia was clearly problematic. “Attitudes to historical materials and the libraries and archives that house them, attitudes to the past, attitudes about ‘loss’ and identity, about modernity or being ‘modern’, and economic incentives or the lack of them all entered into the equation. Clearly, this was not fertile ground for developing a ‘preservation consciousness’ in the universalist sense.”⁹

I would argue, therefore, that any attempt to build a national consensus on preservation needs to honestly take into account the negative climate working against it. The role of outsiders—scholars, experts, and funders—then needs to shift from exclusively technical interventions (microfilming alone, for instance) to try to improve the general climate so that such interventions can be sustainable over a longer term. Efforts need to focus on changing public attitudes, and precisely on building a consensus towards that end. The challenge becomes how to empower the small minority of people—scholars, librarians, conservators, those in a position to influence policy, whom Roger Tol refers to as “‘people who care’ in the higher echelons”—and to work through them.

I do not think that is an impossible goal and, in fact, I feel that enormous strides have been made over the past two decades. And I think that, despite many, many shortcomings in the way funders work, that many have “got the point” and can point to successes or to potential successes, at least. It will seem self-serving to mention the work of the very three foundations with which I have been associated in helping to achieve some of these successes, but I do so only because their programs are better known to me. Below, then, I want to categorize a few programmatic strategies to improve the general climate and thereby build national consensus: (a) empowering local scholars through support for research; (b) public awareness-building through publications; (c) the role of training in consensus-building; (d) lobbying and public awareness events; and (e) how networking and inter-institutional collaboration can build national and international consensus.

(a) Empowering local scholars through support for research

The Toyota Foundation, which has been providing funds to individual researchers in Indonesia for more than 20 years, has supported projects involving preservation, such as microfilming per se. But, its approach, though perhaps insufficiently systematized or articulated, has been giving special attention to the need to develop the basic tools of scholarship in the humanities—dictionaries, catalogues, inventories, and local histories, and to support those dedicated

⁹ Feinstein, “Challenges,” 1999, *ibid.*, p. 4

individuals—like Dr. Edi Ekadjati, or Dr. Achadiati Ikram, for instance—in the painstaking process of uncovering materials, listing them, describing them, transliterating and publishing them, even before any technical intervention is undertaken. The support for actual preservation follows a period of support for research. The research brings to the attention of librarians, conservators, and funders the value of the material. Conservation measures flow logically from that first spadework.

(b) Public awareness-building through publications

In the introduction to a new and indispensable guide to Indonesian manuscript collections world-wide, Henri Chambert-Loir notes that “the work accomplished in the field on Indonesian manuscripts during the last twenty years is tremendous.”¹⁰ In his opinion, not only have the accomplished microfilm projects preserved texts, but they have at the same time produced “new catalogues of the relevant collections ... [that are] more and more comprehensive and rigorous. Tol, in his evaluation of the Ford Foundation Jakarta Office’s projects to support microfilm preservation of library materials, also agreed that resultant catalogues have shown an increasing level of scholarship and quality. The *Union Catalogue of Indonesian Manuscripts*, of which five volumes have appeared, soon to be followed by a sixth, “are comprehensive and complete, with extremely useful indices ... and they offer the additional advantage of being written in Indonesian.” The on-going *Union Catalogue*, under the editorship of Tim Behrend, has involved a large number of Indonesian scholars as authors and editors—such distinguished scholars as Dr. Ekadjati and Dr. Mukhlis—and younger scholars who worked with them. The Ford-funded project at the National Library also led to the development of a computerized database of Indonesian manuscripts (DANATARA) that could be a “revolutionary tool for the study of Indonesian manuscripts.”¹¹

There has also been an upsurge in the philological research and publication of the texts themselves. Like Toyota, the Ford Foundation has been supporting for some years a program to encourage precisely this kind of research on primary textual materials, for instance through grants to the University of Indonesia starting in 1989 for a series of fellowship and scholarship awards for research on and publication of primary source materials such as those preserved in the various manuscript microfilming projects. This, in turn, led to the creation of an Indonesian Manuscript Society (MANASSA), which has received grants from

¹⁰ Henri Chambert-Loir and Oman Fathurahman, *Khazanah Naskah: Panduan Koleksi Naskah-naskah Indonesia Sedunia/World Guide to Indonesian Manuscript Collections* (Jakarta: EFEO & Yayasan Obor Indonesia, 1999), p. 24.

¹¹ Chambert-Loir and Oman Fathurahman, *op. cit.*, p. 25.

Ford and Toyota, and has organized regular seminars on Indonesian manuscripts, carried out research, and plans its own publications. A number of textbooks on issues in Indonesian philology by Indonesian scholars have been published, and in 1996, with funds from Ford, the Lontar Foundation produced the magnificent illustrated volume on Indonesian traditional literature, *Illuminations: The Writing Traditions of Indonesia* (an Indonesian-language edition of which is to follow), which attracted considerable critical and public interest. Together with Lontar's earlier co-publication with the British Library of *Golden Letters: Writing Traditions of Indonesia/Surat Emas: Budaya Tulis di Indonesia*, the *Illuminations* volume, sumptuously illustrated with photographs of some of the finest specimens of the calligraphic art of Indonesian copyists and illustrators, has helped to make better known the treasures that Indonesia's libraries hold. Public exhibitions held in conjunction with the *Golden Letters* and *Illuminations* book launches also brought useful attention to these materials.

(c) *The role of training in consensus-building*

A large number of people have been trained, both abroad and in situ on-the-job at the several libraries and universities where projects have taken place. It is beyond my topic here to characterize and evaluate the large range of training efforts, supported by many donors and involving staff of numerous institutions. There have been many problems in matching training to need, and in making sure that those trained actually come to use their skills in their institutional work. Nevertheless, despite the problems, I just wish to point out that having a critical mass of people who understand the scholarly, technical, and management issues associated with library and archives preservation is a crucial step in helping to influence institutional and government policy and in affecting public opinion in general. I should mention here, too, a point that has been made by John Dean in a paper at the last IFLA Congress and in his presentation to the present meeting, and by Helen Jarvis in her paper for this meeting, too:¹² training programs in preservation management should also include within them strategic planning, needs assessment, and, specifically, effective strategies for fund-raising, such as project proposal writing.

¹² John Dean, "Collection care and preservation of Southeast Asian materials," *International Preservation News* 20 (1999):14; John Dean, "National and regional preservation planning: background to the establishment of cooperative programs," Paper for the International Meeting on Microform Preservation and Conservation in Southeast Asia: Assessing Current Needs and Evaluating Past Projects, 21-24 February 2000, Chiangmai, Thailand, Unpub. MS., pp. 5-6; Helen Jarvis, "Providing effective management training," Paper for the International Meeting on Microform Preservation and Conservation in Southeast Asia: Assessing Current Needs and Evaluating Past Projects, 21-24 February 2000, Chiangmai, Thailand, Unpub. MS., pp. 3-4.

(d) Lobbying and public awareness efforts

Some attempts were made in the late 1980s and early 1990s to raise public attention to issues of library conservation more generally and to influence public policy in Indonesia. In 1989, for instance, the Ford Foundation gave a grant to the Indonesian Institute of Sciences (LIPI), acting for a consortium of national-level institutions concerned with book and archival preservation, to carry out a range of activities in public education and training of librarians. One of the outputs of the consortium was the translation, publication, and distribution by the National Library of the International Federation of Library Association's *Principles for the Preservation and Conservation of Library Materials*. Two Indonesian conservators, both trained abroad with Ford grant funds, also published books on preventive conservation and rudimentary book conservation techniques for librarians. It is not clear, however, what the actual impact of these efforts, which were not noticeably followed up by the institutions concerned, actually was.

More recently, the Jakarta Office of Ford has sponsored public festival, seminars, and exhibitions of Indonesian culture, including several activities focusing on the textual tradition, which took place in various parts of the archipelago. On-going, too, is a project that involves research and public activities to focus public attention on the threatened state of Indonesia's many regional languages. These include publications in regional languages and linguistic mapping.

(e) How networking and inter-institutional collaboration can build consensus

The above-mentioned cultural festivals and other activities involved a healthy collaboration among several Ford grantees. The LIPI-based consortium on library conservation, also mentioned above, seemed to have been short-lived, and in general cooperative efforts, pooling of resources, and sharing of facilities among the three leading library and archival institutions—the National Library, the National Archives, and LIPI—remains woefully inadequate. Tol's report on the sad state of the microfilms stored in the National Library and National Archives notes that the LIPI library, PDII, experimented successfully with the storage of microforms in individual vacuum-packed Mylar pouches, a practice it continues to date, with notable results, but that neither the Library nor the Archives seems to have taken up the technique or to have learned from LIPI's experience.

There has been some coordination of effort, collaboration, and networking among foreign donor organizations concerned with cultural preservation (foreign embassies, foreign research institutes, foreign library associations, private foundations) but it has tended to be sporadic and unsystematic. A positive exception from the late 1980s was the convening of an International Review Team on Conservation and Preservation (IRT) that involved experts from the US (New

York State Library and Library of Congress); the UK (Public Records Office); Japan (National Diet Library); The Netherlands (Royal Library and Leiden University); and Australia (National Library) with funds from the Ford Foundation; British Council; the Toyota and Japan Foundations; the Royal Institute of Anthropology and Linguistics and the Dutch Embassy; and the International Development Program of Australian Universities and Colleges, respectively. The IRT members were resident in Indonesia for five weeks and produced a voluminous report that laid out specific short- and long-term recommendations for the National Library on the necessary elements of a preservation policy, the organization of a preservation center; on conservation and preservation procedures; and on education and training needs. They also included recommendations in several other areas of library service, particularly regarding collection development and automation. A summary was presented at a public forum with many high-level policy-makers from relevant ministries and members of the press in attendance and it set out broad lines of policy that the National Library should adopt if it is to take up its role as a truly national institution.

Several of the IRT's recommendations were implemented, and the Library was able to secure additional funding from several of the various donors that funded the IRT for projects like the publication of the IFLA *Principles*, the protective enclosing of thousands of palm-leaf manuscripts in the Library's manuscript collection (through a project supported by the Toyota and Japan foundations in which an expert from the National Diet Library worked side-by-side with local conservation staff for an extended period), and the acquisition of micrographic and conservation laboratory equipment from the Japanese government.

The informal consortium of donors that helped to make the IRT possible went on to expand its membership and widen its scope to become a consortium of international donors working in all areas of culture and the humanities. The group seems to have disbanded in recent years, however.

CONCLUSION

The present meeting, long overdue, provides a unique opportunity for people from various sectors involved over the last decades in the preservation of library and archival materials in Southeast Asia to take stock of the recent past, to assess where the strengths and weaknesses of past and present preservation policies, projects, and planning lie, and to decide what, if anything, can be done collaboratively now and in the future.

I started off by talking about how effective project plans—those that can attract outside donor attention—usually depend on the initiative of “people with good ideas, passion and dedication.” I feel, therefore, that any talk of effective cooperative, intra-regional or international programs, must also start from the premise of identifying those people and helping to empower them in their local contexts. This meeting gathers together a number of such people, who each in turn knows well of other like-minded colleagues in their own countries, and, one would hope, in neighboring regions, too. We need to keep that critical mass of people who “get it” in mind in our discussions, therefore.

We need to face some critical issues head-on, too, such as the role of foreign scholars, foreign libraries, and foreign foundations, I have tried to say. This may require what may seem to be “politically incorrect” bluntness of expression. Any critical comments about the specific cases I have alluded to in Indonesia above should be taken then in a light of constructive criticism. The people who “get the point” have by definition no reason to feel complacent or protected by defensive rhetoric. That is not to deny that there are important political problems and differences that will persist and must be faced. Decisions about how national institutions treat their library and archival heritage must be considered the right of each country to make, and there are good historical reasons for being sceptical about outside intervention that may be intrusive or inappropriate. And, as was pointed out above and by others, the motives of outsiders may not always be selfless, disinterested, or neutral. The challenge then is how to find commonalities among the interests of those parties concerned, and to exploit for common benefit those common interests, while not sacrificing local interests and pride.

It would be “preaching to the converted” to emphasize the dire situation faced by many of the less economically advantaged of the Southeast Asian countries in addressing their preservation challenge. It is something we can all agree on. We should also be able to agree that the time has come to assess problems and solutions—those already attempted and those in the planning stage—in some larger comparative framework. There has been far too much “reinventing of the wheel” in projects carried out within one country, not to mention across countries, by institutions that seem to be competing, though that competition is ultimately self-destructive. Outside funders and other concerned outside institutions and individuals themselves have often not met the challenge of encouraging cross-learning among projects—whether among projects they themselves are supporting, among projects they and others are supporting, or among projects in one country and another. They have not been active enough in encouraging the partnerships between sectors either—between scholars, librarians, conservators, the donor community, government policy makers, and those who influence public awareness

or policy, such as those in the media. It is, or should be, part of the mandate of such bodies to keep national and international consensus-building central to their grant-making goals, if they have any hope of sustainable impact through their funding programs.

This meeting was convened as an attempt to redress the problem of insufficient sharing of project experience, and, having realistically assessed the problems, to attempt some collaborative plan of attack. The role of outside funders (and other outsiders) will continue to be crucial into the foreseeable future. At the same time, one senses that, with respect to the handful of outside funders that have been working in the field of library preservation in the region over the past two decades, there has set in a sense of “fatigue”, a questioning of whether this is a really a fruitful field for the kind of “social investment” that philanthropic foundations hope will pay off in some tangible impact. (For example, the Ford Foundation’s Jakarta office, a key funder in the Indonesia case, is no longer playing the same kind of role it did in the 1980-1995 period.) There is a very legitimate questioning of whether the time, effort, and funds expended have really paid off in any reasonable way. This fact, too, must be taken into account by those here and “back home” who are planning future projects and will need support well into the foreseeable future. I would like to think, though, that if there were some solid and articulate assessment of the past and status quo, and if an articulate and efficient plan could be agreed upon through consensus by an international, inter-sectoral group (like those gathered here), that donor interest could continue to be attracted.

As a final note, I should admit that I have neglected to some extent to specify just *how* local governments and budget policy-makers can be influenced and convinced of the urgency of the preservation problem. Successful outside fundraising can have the salutary effect of leveraging more long-term support of government budgets. It can also lead to a complacency on the part of governments—“we needn’t spend precious government funds on this kind of thing, since outside foundations and libraries can pick up the tab” might summarize simplistically such an attitude. For some countries with severe economic and social challenges—Indonesia, Cambodia, Laos, Myanmar, Vietnam presumably fall into this category—the day of complete local self-sufficiency in library preservation, even given the most enlightened of public policies, is still far into the future. Perhaps a viable articulate intra-regional plan of action that would include not only training, possible collective storage, cooperative off-site filming and treatment of materials, but also public awareness events, publications and translations, lobbying efforts, and formalized networking, might help then not only to interest foreign donors, but also help in the vital effort to make governments and others to “get the point,” too.

OUTLINE OF PRESENTATION ON EAST ASIAN ARCHIVES

Akira Genba
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1. East Asian Archives in Transition Period
 - Republic of Korea
 - Mongolia
 - Japan
2. Issues of Top Priority in East Asian Archives
3. Specific Programs
 - (a) Archivists Training Programs (on going)
 - (b) Resource Center (under consideration)
4. Comments on International Cooperation
5. Others

General Discussion

Policy Questions:

Topic 1: Forming political support and consensus nationally and institutionally

Paper Presenters

Daw Khin Khin Tun

Alan Feinstein

Akira Genba

Moderator : Peter Arfanis

Moderator

In summary, we heard from Daw Khin Khin Tun about using a national commission with authority to overcome and deal with various powers and hierarchical structures in a country in order to get national support for preservation. We heard from Alan about the need to consider the role of outside funders, and how funding usually starts with people with good ideas, and usually these people can be foreigners who must be aware that their enthusiasm for projects can sometimes be out of step with local capacity and sustainability. It is an issue that I relate to very much being a foreigner working in Cambodia for the last four years. Alan also talked about the need to empower local scholars and create a public awareness, consensus building and networking within the country for the project. We also heard from Akira Genba, who called himself an administrator, who talked about how a country must prepare their own answers to their problems before they go to the donors, and how bureaucracy can not always be a hindrance; it can actually be a vehicle for achieving results, and he used the model of Japan, Mongolia, and Korea. Also, he talked about how libraries and archives can actually support institutions such as the Toyota and other donor institutions as well as individuals working overseas. He also raised the issue that low priority to business archives is not only a problem in Asia, it is also a problem in developed countries, and cooperation can be arranged between the developed and developing countries on that sort of issue. I will open the floor now to questions, and please direct your questions to the speakers.

Blasius Sudarsono

First of all, I am sorry if my question is too strange for you all, or maybe too basic, or maybe too stupid. We are now discussing policy questions. For me, I have a wild idea, maybe. It is a kind of model question. Do we need actually to explicitly define or formulate a certain moral value that we can agree on, that can then give guidance for all our activity?

Jennifer Lindsay

It is a question and a comment, mostly addressed to Alan, and I am speaking also from my experience in the funding world here. Because I think that it is very important to realize that funders are part of the problem, not the answer to the problem, and they have to be seen in that way very much so. I take your point very strongly, and I agree, that foreign funding can indeed help build complacency on the part of the actors in this world of cultural heritage, and can indeed compound the idea that cultural heritage is somebody else's problem from the technical point of view, and it can indeed make things worse. I wonder what we can do about it, because the problem won't go away, it will always be there. There are three things. One major problem is that foreign donors have to give project funds, they have to give funds for things that have a beginning and an end. So, in the world of libraries and museums and many other things, in fact, people are going from project to project to get extra funds to support their institutions. This becomes a problem in itself. Is there anyway that donors could in fact think about changing strategies? If we could give salaries to the cleaners, for example, rather than to the microfilmmers, maybe something would happen. It's a crazy idea, but... I have two other things that maybe we should also look at. One is that perhaps donors need to look in other fields. We are working in the cultural field and we get stuck in this. We should look at where there are successes, for example in the health field. In Indonesia, for example, in the field of reproductive health, there has been a lot of success in empowering local people, local Islamic leaders, to become participants in the campaign for AIDS awareness. We also need to look laterally, I think, and look in other fields to where there are successful programs that do get public awareness and do start to motivate support in a much broader way. The other thing is we also need to look at where there is money and expertise, even in the cultural area. Again, I am sorry it is in Indonesia, because this is also my area, there is certainly money, government money and expertise available for conservation, for library work. Just look at the Suharto Museum. Look at the Museum at Taman Mini, which has huge funds and wonderful facilities, it has a library, it has conservation. The point is that the political will is not there, in the field that we are talking about, and this is where foreign funding also compounds the problem. So even in the countries in which we are speaking, we need to look very carefully at where there are things that are working and why, and I think work from there. Just a couple of points. Thank you.

Alan Feinstein

Jennifer's comments are mostly comments, not questions, but I can agree with just about everything that she said. How can donors figure out how to reorient the way they work so that they are not only thinking from project to project, but thinking of things in a more integrated way, and thinking about ways they can change their own rules and procedures about how they give away funds? Very few donors give funds for the infrastructure costs, the running costs, these things

which turn out to be essential. Take the Japanese government, for instance. Although obviously not a private foundation, it is a very important contributor in Southeast Asia in fact, and in other parts of the world, being the largest ODA giver in the world. In the field of libraries and conservation, the Japanese government has been very generous in giving large grants for equipment, for instance. But these grants don't include training, they don't take into account running costs, they don't take into account how these machines will be used and maintained and repaired, how long they are expected to last, how they are expected to be used. This is symptomatic; I don't think that the private foundations are really that much better. The Toyota Foundation focuses only on research, but what happens after the research? The Ford Foundation also has its blinders, and perhaps what I was suggesting here was that if you involve funders as a group in the whole process of designing strategies, maybe there is some way, through educating the funders too, to get them to think in different ways, and to imagine ways that they can use their funds that are not limiting and actually destructive, as you said. It won't be easy, but it is something that obviously we need to be aware of when we are designing a strategy as a group.

Moderator

I would just like to add to that, being a person who has written a number of funding proposals for the National Archives of Cambodia, I am always surprised at how little feedback we get from donors, as we send of a proposal and all we get from them is a yes or a no. We are never given reasons, or how we should approach a proposal the next time, and all those questions about how are you going to look after your machinery, who is going to pay the electricity for your air-con, and all these sort of questions. So I would very much like to see more feedback from donors in regards to project proposals.

John F. Dean

I could just comment on this question of moving from project to program. I think donors really need to look at any proposal in the context of an overall plan. They should require any proposer to submit a long-term plan to show where the particular project fits into that plan. There is a need to see where the transition occurs, it seems to me. The other comment that I had a question really--was that Dr. Khin Tun stresses the vital importance of securing official approval and support, and Alan mentioned the problem of foreign enthusiasts getting ahead of local support. Part of the problem is that frequently, it needs the foreign enthusiasts to push that local support forward. It needs somebody to push the people who are in a position to provide that official support into giving that support. In other words, we can't just wait until the local people decide on these things themselves and ask for help; it is just not going to happen. In some cases we really have to push it from outside. I would like to hear the panel's comments on this. The difficulty is in deciding at what point that push should occur.

Daw Khin Khin Tun

We have mutual trust between the National Commission and the authorities, and we get a great [deal of] help from the central government, and they instruct to help the provincial governments, and we get what we need. The answer will be supported by my chairman, U Thaw Kaung.

Alan Feinstein

I was not at all suggesting that we should wait until local people make their decisions, and then foreigners come in with their expertise, their enthusiasm and their funds. Quite the contrary, I was saying that normally what happens is there are a few people who are weak and in the minority. This is quite different from the case that you have just described, but at least in the case of Indonesia, there are sort of subversive people—subversive obviously not in a dangerous political sense, but subversive in that they are asking questions that go against the grain of what is happening. They are saying, ‘Well, why aren’t we doing something about this? I want to do this, I have a plan. This is a terrible problem, I want to do something.’ But they are just a voice. So, the foundations, I am suggesting, shouldn’t wait until the governments get it, but that the foundations should use their funding and their power to help leverage, to help work through those local people. The partnership with the foreign scholars, experts, and those who are enthusiastic is crucial. As I say, there is a danger of it getting ahead of local [parameters], and it has to understand the local climate. That was my point.

O.P. Agrawal

I fully agree with Mr. Akira when he says that quite often bureaucracy is not a hurdle. Actually, it can be a very good supporter of a project if it is well prepared and is well presented. In my own experience, also in India, I have found that whenever I have approached the bureaucracy with a positive project, with a project that shows signs of success, then they have agreed. Actually, what I have tried to do is not to involve bureaucracy too much. I try to divide it into several sectors. If there is a project that is supposed to do with monasteries, with temples or something, there is no need to approach the bureaucracy at all, unless it is for funding. If I am not approaching the government for funding, then there is absolutely no need to approach a bureaucrat for anything, because then he has to nod his head, and he may not. So I will not approach him in that situation. Now at present I am working with non-governmental organizations, and so I can do it. Even when I was with the governmental organization, the whole project was set up on account of the support that I received from the bureaucracy. Now let me tell you one thing; the bureaucracy is not a monolithic sort of thing. There are bureaucrats of different hues and different nature. Say, like the Secretary of the Department of Culture. He is dependent on the Secretary of the Department of Finance to fund certain things. Quite often I have found the Secretary of Culture, quite apart from me, he will ask if I can rig it up, say, in a newspaper, so he can get support from the Department of Finance. That sort of thing also [occurs] quite often.

Another thing was about microforms, and Mrs. Daw mentioned about the monasteries, the large number of manuscripts which are in the monasteries. In India also there are many manuscripts which are with temples and also called *granthakosha* which means the storehouse of knowledge, the storehouse of manuscripts, and they are attached with the temples and they are religious places. One thing, probably we have to keep in mind; quite often, we are disappointed when the temple or monastery head is not so enthusiastic about the microfilming of the manuscripts or of the temple. According to the Asian tradition, Indian tradition most certainly, and I am sure it is in the whole of Asia, the very form of the manuscript is also important. Let me explain in what way. In the Indian state of mind, a manuscript is something which is full of knowledge, and something to be worshipped. I don't know whether you know, but in India there is a particular festival, and I suppose also in Thailand. Suppose I have a sacred manuscript at home, it will be taken out on that occasion, and then offerings will be made, just as we make offerings to a statue. The offering is made to a monk, flowers and rice and other things, at least once a year. This means the same way we worship a statue or an idol, the manuscripts are also worshipped in that fashion. Now we cannot worship a microform. It has to be in the form of a manuscript. It is on account of that, I remember, in Thailand, when the copying was done of a palm-leaf manuscript, or the printing was done, it was the same form that it looked like a big palm-leaf. It looked like a palm-leaf. In a temple, what I am trying to say, when a devotee goes to the temple and wants to read a book, he is not satisfied in reading a microform. He will be satisfied only if it is in the form which he is used to seeing, because for him it is a sacred book. In India, for example, take the Ramayana. The Ramayana is a sacred book. Everyone has that book at home. In a Hindu home, the Ramayana will be there. It is not kept simply on a shelf somewhere, it is kept in the place where the idol is placed. [So I think that conservation and preservation should be] done by volunteers and devotees as an act of merit. It [makes] merit for this life, as well as for the next life. That is something that we have to keep in mind. If the librarian works with the understanding that when he is preparing a microfilm he is earning merit for this life and the next life, I think we will succeed. Thank you.

Dara Kanlaya

I would like to comment or add to Mr. Alan's paper concerning the role of the foreign experts. According to our own experience--I am from Laos--when we started the inventory project with Toyota Foundation's support, I cannot say whom it begins with, but it all comes to the timing, [which] was very good. At that time, I think in the UNESCO National Commission, we were talking about national policy for culture, and we were talking about the preservation of the people's culture. At that time we had a visit from a Toyota Foundation representative. Certainly from the Indonesian experience, she asked us whether we were interested in preserving our palm leaves. That was the question raised by the

foreigners, by the Japanese experts. But [in] the Committee for Culture, the National UNESCO Committee, we started talking, and then it came to the policy makers, the minister of the ministry, and we all decided that we would do it, and that was the starting point. We had six years of inventory under Toyota Foundation support. Later on came the cooperation with Germany, about which I think Dr. Hundius will talk later on. So I think the role of the experts from abroad [is important], especially [when] we started with the Japanese experts, then we had Thai friends and scholars. We were introduced to the Thai scholars, and many of them I can name. Acharn Rujaya was one of the very, very important people who really gave, I would say, a push to our boss, our chief, to our Vice Minister. Not Dr. Kheckeo who is sitting here, but another former Vice Minister who always liked to listen to the speeches and to the narration of the importance of the work that should be done toward the traditional heritage. I am really thankful to all of them, and other experts, from Germany too. This is one of the points that I want to raise.

Another point is after the work has been carried out and we have some success and some weakness, too. But I think I want to add to our colleague from Myanmar about the awareness campaign. I think in preserving our traditional culture, our old manuscripts, we cannot only tell the people to preserve, and to keep, and to see the importance of these manuscripts and of this heritage, but I think it is really to revitalize the old traditions, like we are doing now in Laos. We really support the young monks, the younger generation, to study, to learn how to write on the palm-leaves. No matter what the modern media, the computerized programs that we use for database in our office, in the village, we tell them to learn how to write and read, because if they just read, it is not enough. They have to come back to their own tradition, because that is what they are doing in the remote areas. They have no computer over there so they have to use their own tradition. I think this is also one of the main objectives of our project now, that we really encourage our people to love their own culture.

Ch'ng Kim See

I think one of the most basic and fundamental issues is transparency. Funders, I think you should tell everybody what your targets are, what your programs are, what your policies are, and what you are interested in funding. A lot of times, people do not know where to go to, or how to go about it. Perhaps you might want to develop a template for project proposals to be written out in very rationalized manner, so that you can even have counterpart support from the local government, which I think is very important. How much support are you going to get from the government if you are to ask for this seed money—a two, three, or five-year plan. After that, what happens to the project? A lot of times at the local level we hear of failures of projects. You have your vested interests talking about the bureaucracy not being monolithic. There are lots of other people in the

funding sector who have their own vested interests as well, because they are there to work for the funders, they are there to look for projects, and they want to see success of projects. You never hear of failures of projects, always successes, because it is not to your own interests to later on find out that 5 million dollars [went] down the drain! Where did it go? Nobody knows. No accountability, going back to Mr. Genba's point. Could we take note of that? Advertise and make open your own policies and where you want to fund, and who you are funding. In the Japanese case, we have had one example of a small donation in the early days in one of my career paths. You gave us a printer, and you said you can get this material provided you provide 50% funds. We did; we got the printer. That is the way to go, I think, instead of giving a lot of money and then going back to that culture of 'never mind, it's not our problem, it's the foreigners who are interested.' You want to preserve? They don't preserve, they want to spend the money; let them spend their money. Then a group of people, one generation is gone, the other generation comes in, no money, don't know what to do, other priorities—project down the drain. Thank you.