

Opening Speech

by

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It is my great pleasure to have this opportunity of presenting some of our important research results related to rice-growing villages in Malaysia and having our modest findings discussed by Malaysian experts whose scrutiny will certainly point out many inadequacies on our part and thereby contribute to an undertaking of the nature, society and people of this great nation.

The Center for Southeast Asian Studies in Kyoto University, where I have been the Director for the past nine years, is a unique institute specializing in area research in Southeast Asia. It is relatively young as it was opened only in 1965. However, prior to its inception, there existed for several years a group of scholars in Kyoto who met to discuss the possibility of undertaking area studies in Southeast Asia. Thanks to a generous grant of the Ford Foundation to support field-works we could obtain some important findings about Southeast Asia in the early stage of our research, this encouraged the Ministry of Education agreed to formalize and institutionalize a new type of research institute at Kyoto University; that is, the Center for Southeast Asian Studies. In undertaking the field-works we have always tried to do research not by Japanese scholars alone but in cooperation with native scholars in Southeast Asia. For example, the Malaysian studies have been organized in cooperation with the staff at the Faculty of Economics and Administration of the University of Malaya. After more than ten years, our efforts have now materialized themselves in the form of some research reports, the most notable one is the study of Malayan villages which was unfortunately published in Japanese but is being translated into English now. It will be published perhaps in early 1979. However, we could not wait until the publication of this volume and wanted to report our major findings to our Malaysian friends. Hence, we took this opportunity to present our results.

Let me mention briefly some of the research projects which are related to the reports which will be presented today. We have studied the rural communities in the various parts of Southeast Asia in order to investigate the impact of industrialization. The one in Indonesia was undertaken by Dr. Koentjaraningrat, the one in Thailand was undertaken by Dr. Yut Sakdejayont, the one in the Philippines by Drs. Santos Cuyugan

and Flores Bonifacio, while the one in Malaysia was undertaken by Dr. Mokhzani himself. We also undertook a comparative study for Thailand and Java to investigate, particularly, the natural environments and their influence on the socio-economic behavior of farmers. We have also studied the impact of climatic change on agricultural production and socio-economic conditions in rice-growing areas in Asia. This project is still going on. We have been studying it in Thailand, Malaysia, Indonesia, India and Sri Lanka. Now we are also interested in the study of the impact of new high yielding varieties of rice on rural development. In particular, we are paying attention to the study in Malaysia and Thailand. Many of the papers reported this afternoon will be related to this project. Simultaneously with this Seminar, we are having a workshop tomorrow with some members of ADIPA (Association of Development Research and Training Institutes of Asia and the Pacific) to promote further studies of this type, namely Green Revolution and Rural Development.

We would like to take this opportunity to express our heartfelt appreciation for the very generous support of the Muda Authority when we undertook the studies in northern Malaysia. It is always problematical for foreigners to study foreign countries by going into the villages and asking embarrassing questions to the farmers. Sometimes our inadequate knowledge of the language does not permit us to express our heartfelt modesty which we could express in Japanese. Nevertheless, to some extent, we have succeeded in bringing out some of the insights and thinking of the Malaysian people or other people in our reports. Now, ladies and gentlemen, you might ask why Japanese scholars are interested in studies of Southeast Asia since many years ago. Well, the intellectual curiosity of the Japanese scholars is one factor. You might also ask why we need to study foreign countries or what is the advantage of the foreign scholars' studies compared with the studies by indigenous scholars. Well, you probably know a little bit about the game of *GO* for which we have several sayings. One is that onlookers often see most of the game better than the players. In the game of *GO*, if someone is weaker than the other side, then he is permitted to put some stones in advance. As a saying goes, onlookers have an advantage of about eight stones. I think we might claim that by remaining onlookers we might have some advantage. At the same time, we have another saying related to chess or *GO*. The poor hands like even better. I do not know how you will understand this. The poor player likes the game better than the good players. Well, that is the situation with us. We like the game of studying Malaysia. Probably we are poor but we like it better. Thank you very much.