

# ACADEMIC JOURNEY

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## ACADEMIC ENCOUNTERS

Upon the completion of mandatory military service (1983-1985) in which I served in the medic corps, I enrolled in the “Department of Indonesian and South Sea Languages” at the University of Hamburg. I chose this university because of its longstanding tradition of Indonesian and Malay studies. My main study programme was “Austronesian Languages and Cultures”, while my two minor subjects were “Political Science”, with a focus on North-South relations, and “Economics”, with a specialization in “Economics of Development”. At our department, lecturers such as the late Drs. Dami N. Toda from Flores, Dr. Peter Pink (later professor in Cologne), and the late Professor Dr. Rainer Carle left an indelible impression on me as they passed down a lot of vital information regarding our field of study, that went beyond the normal instruction.

In 1987, I obtained a one-year scholarship from the DAAD (German Academic Exchange Service) to study at Universitas Gadjah Mada, Yogyakarta, Indonesia. Unfortunately, I fell quite ill after about a semester when I contracted a tropical disease and had to return home early. I recovered after three years and then spent a term at the School of Oriental and African Studies (SOAS) in London, with an ERASMUS scholarship of the European Union. There, I encountered great academic teachers such as Professor E.U. Kratz, Dr. Nigel Philips and Professor Anne Booth. I also enjoyed the library at SOAS which was of immense help to my Magister thesis which I promptly handed in after returning to Hamburg.

This thesis was published in 1995 as a (German-language) book, entitled “The Indonesian rain forest in the process of demystification. A case study of Mochtar Lubis’ literary works” (Der indonesische regenwald im prozess der Entmagisierung. Eine fallstudie anhand des literarischen werks von Mochtar

Lubis). An English summary was published in the same year in the journal *Indonesia Circle* (SOAS), which was the predecessor of today's *Indonesia and the Malay World*. Although it is now more than 20 years later, I find the topic of this book to be still highly relevant. It departs from a theoretical observation by Professor Wahab Ali from Universiti Malaya about a process that he calls "penduniaan" in his article "Dari alam kudus ke alam duniawi: Satu sudut daripada perkembangan prosa Indonesia dan Malaysia" (1987).

The doctoral thesis that I wrote soon after was on something completely different from my Magister topic. This time it was on the rhetoric of Indonesian media commentary, with a methodological case study of the column "Catatan Pinggir" by Goenawan Mohamad. For my study, I chose to apply Muhammad Haji Salleh's deconstruction of the term "literature" and the field of "literary studies" not to Malay texts (since Muhammad Haji Salleh was already active there), but to texts from contemporary Indonesia. More precisely, media texts, and even more precisely, opinion pieces since they are generally attempting to persuade the reader – which makes them similar to speeches, the old main genre studied in rhetoric. Opinion pieces that appear every week over the course of several decades also bring about the challenge of deciding between qualitative and quantitative approaches. In my methodological case study, I therefore examined various mixtures of qualitative and quantitative methods in assessing "Catatan Pinggir".

However, since the initial inspiration for this kind of study originated from Malaysia, I was delighted that Dewan Bahasa dan Pustaka appointed me as fellow (*karyawan tamu*) in 2002 to work on Malay rhetoric. This enabled me to collect materials all over Malaysia (Universiti Utara Malaysia, Universiti Malaysia Sarawak, Universiti Sains Malaysia, Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia, Universiti Malaya, and Perpustakaan Dewan Bahasa dan Pustaka) for my *Bibliografi Retorik Melayu Beranotasi* [Annotated Bibliography of Malay Rhetoric], which was published by Dewan Bahasa dan Pustaka in 2008. I am still grateful for the support that Dewan Bahasa dan Pustaka had provided for this project, including Datuk A. Aziz Deraman, then Head of Dewan Bahasa dan Pustaka, Dr. Awang Sariyan, then Head of the Language Division and Dr. Raja Masittah Raja Ariffin.

## **REFORMASI AND THE COMMODIFICATION OF TEXTS**

After the publication of my doctoral thesis in the form of a book in 1998, I taught Indonesian language at Cornell University for the academic year of

1998-1999, replacing Professor John U. Wolff during his sabbatical. There, I met my future wife, Dr. Amanda Katherine Rath, a scholar of modern and contemporary Indonesian and Malaysian art.<sup>1</sup>

Since my time at Cornell, the commodification of texts and communication in contemporary Southeast Asia is one of my long-standing research topics. Also, my next book (based on my habilitation thesis) was on *Bahasa Reformasi*. Political Rhetoric in Post-Suharto Indonesia (Graf, 2010).

During these years in Hamburg, I also worked as visiting professor at Universitas Islam Negeri Syarif Hidayatullah in Ciputat, Jakarta, in 2004 (partly funded by the DAAD), where I taught a course on “Orientalism and Occidentalism”. The University of La Rochelle, France also invited me as visiting professor in 2005/2006.

As an educator and scholar, I also appreciate and encourage collaboration with students. As a collaborative classroom-project, together with my teaching assistant Johanna Pangestian-Harahap and advanced Indonesian students, we translated humorous texts with an Islamic background from Indonesian into German. This collaboration was then published by Mizan Publishing House in 2005, under the title *Lachen mit Gus Dur. Islamischer Humor aus Indonesien* (Laughing with Gus Dur. Islamic humour from Indonesia).

This motivated me to further my study on the subjects of “Orientalism” and “Occidentalism” including the volume *Orientalism and Conspiracy. Politics and Conspiracy Theory in the Islamic World. Essays in Honour of Sadik al-Azm* (2011), which I co-edited with my colleagues from Hamburg, Schirin Fathi (Islamic Studies) and Ludwig Paul (Iranian Studies). I am particularly glad that my chapter “Orientalist Western framings of “violence in Indonesia” has been included in the syllabus of the postgraduate school of Universitas Gadjah Mada.<sup>2</sup>

Aside from my focus on Javanese and Malay culture, other parts of insular Southeast Asia have been or are still important as objects of my study. This is even more the case with those areas that had to undergo suffering as a result of civil war and conflict, notably the Southern Philippines (the so-called Moro land) as well as Aceh. At the end of my engagement as adjunct lecturer (1995-2005) in Political Science at the University of Gottingen, in 2005, I then organised a workshop on the Moro conflict, from which an edited volume appeared (Graf/Kreuzer/Werning, eds. 2009). Almost at the same time, I edited another volume together with Edwin Wieringa and Susanne Schroeter, on Aceh. *History, Politics, and Culture* (2010). This project was realised after the devastating tsunami of 2004.

## MALAYSIA, MY SECOND ACADEMIC HOME

After my Hamburg years, I was appointed as associate professor in literature at the School of Humanities, Universiti Sains Malaysia from January 2007 on, and as professor in August 2009. It must have been a strange experience for my Malay students and my colleagues to encounter this German lecturer with his Bavarian-Indonesian accent. I am deeply indebted to the warmth and generosity with which students, staff, and colleagues treated me. Content-wise, working at Universiti Sains Malaysia in those years had considerably broadened my horizons. As there were frequent invitations to all sorts of academic workshops, seminars, and conferences, both at the School of Humanities and the School of Communication. A stream of publications soon followed.

Since terms such as “ISI” or “Scopus” were of great importance in my new Malaysian environment, I engaged in studying this phenomenon and in publishing about it. One outcome was the book *Bahasa Melayu and Jurnal Malaysia Bidang Ilmu Kemanusiaan dan Sains Sosial dalam Indeks Antarabangsa* (2010). Another was the article “Indexing a Field: the Case of Indonesian and Malaysian Studies” (2009). I am very grateful to Professor Dato’ Seri Dr. Md. Salleh Yaapar and the then Vice Chancellor of USM, Tan Sri Dato’ Professor Zulkifli Abdul Razak, for giving me the opportunity to share my findings in a general lecture at USM in 2009, before my return to Germany.

Md. Salleh Yaapar also asked me to leave something else behind: a joint Malay translation with him of the book *West-oestlicher Divan (West-Eastern Divan, 1814-1819)*, by Johann Wolfgang von Goethe who wrote it based on inspirations after reading various authors from Persia and the Arabic world, including Hafez. Goethe’s *Divan* had been a source of inspiration for Muhammad Iqbal from Kashmir, the great philosopher, especially in his book *Payam-i-Mashriq* (Message from the East, 1923). Md. Salleh Yaapar himself wrote about his perspective on the East-West messages and exchanges between Goethe and Iqbal in his book *Ziarah ke Timur* (Pilgrimage to the East). For future generations of Malay students of this part of world literature, he wanted a Malay translation of the *Divan*. With the support of the Goethe-Institute Kuala Lumpur and the Institut Terjemahan Negara Malaysia, our joint translation of Goethe’s book appeared in 2009 under the title: *Sajak-sajak daripada Divan Barat-Timur (Gedichte aus dem West-oestlichen Divan)*.

The connection with Institut Terjemahan Negara Malaysia (ITNM) also culminated in another translation project, namely my German translation

of Zakaria Ali's novel *Empangan*, which was published under the title *Der Damm* by ITNM in 2010 and was later re-published by the publishing house Abera in Hamburg in 2015.

### **THE FRANKFURT YEARS, 2009-**

On Oct. 1, 2009, I began my new appointment as professor and Chair of the Department of Southeast Asian Studies at Goethe University Frankfurt, succeeding the linguist Professor Dr. Bernd Nothofer. Later, I engaged on a collaborative research project with 40 other colleagues on the new interactions between Africa and Asia (AFRASO = Africa's Asian Options), which is being funded by the German Federal Ministry of Education and Research since 2013.

In the last few years, I hitherto have several publications on Asian-African encounters, including a collective volume that I co-edited with Professor Dr. Azirah Hashim of Universiti Malaya, entitled *African-Asian Encounters. New Cooperations and New Dependencies* (2017).

As well, I have also been publishing on Higher Education in Malaysia, including co-editing with Associate Professor Dr. Monica Lindberg-Falk (Lund University, Sweden) a special issue of the new journal *TRANS* (Cambridge University Press) on "Student Mobility in Southeast Asia", 2016. My own article in this issue is on "Malaysia's Niche in international Higher Education: Targeting Muslim-majority, Commonwealth, and Less-developed Countries".

The collaboration with Universiti Malaya also entailed a visiting professorship at UM'S Centre for Dialogue in 2013. In 2014, I spent a month as visiting professor at the Institute of East Asian Studies at the University of Lyons, France (ENS de Lyon). Currently, my new research initiatives include European and Southeast Asian colleagues looking at a number of exciting new topics.

### **PUBLICATIONS**

#### **Monographs**

- M5. Graf, Arndt. (2010). *Bahasa Reformasi. Political Rhetoric in Post-Suharto Indonesia*. Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 202 p. (Frankfurter Forschungen zu Südostasien, 6).
- M4. Graf, Arndt. 2010. *Bahasa Melayu dan Jurnal dari Malaysia Bidang Ilmu Kemanusiaan dan Sains Sosial dalam Indeks Antarabangsa* [Malay and Journals

- from Malaysia from the Humanities and Social Sciences in International Indexes]. Penang: Universiti Sains Malaysia Press, 88 p.
- M3. Graf, Arndt. (2008). *Bibliografi Retorik Melayu Beranotasi* [Annotated Bibliography of Malay Rhetoric]. Kuala Lumpur: Dewan Bahasa dan Pustaka, 311 p.
- M2. Graf, Arndt. (1998). *Indonesische Medienrhetorik. Eine methodologische Fallstudie anhand der Kommentarkolumne "Catatan Pinggir" von Goenawan Mohamad* [The Rhetoric of Indonesian Media: A Methodological Case Study of Goenawan Mohamad's Column "Catatan Pinggir"]. Berlin: Reimer, 192 p. (Publications of the Department of Indonesian and Pacific Languages of the University of Hamburg; 22).
- M1. Graf, Arndt. 1995. Der indonesische Regenwald im Prozeß der Entmagisierung. Zum Wandel eines literarischen Topos' bei Mochtar Lubis [The Changing Topos of the Indonesian Rain Forest in the Literary Works of Mochtar Lubis]. Münster/Hamburg: Lit, 120 p. (Austronesiana. Studies on Austronesian Southeast Asia and Oceania; 3).

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- EV11. Van der Putten, Jan; Monika Arnez, Edwin Wieringa; Arndt Graf (eds). (2017). *Traditions redirecting contemporary Indonesian cultural productions*. Cambridge: Cambridge Scholars Publishing.
- EV10. Graf, Arndt and Azirah Hashim (eds). (2017). *African-Asian Encounters. New cooperations and new dependencies*. Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press (Global Asia 7).
- EV9. Graf, Arndt and Monica Lindberg-Falk (Guest Editors). (January 2016). Student mobility in Southeast Asia. *Special Issue of TRaNS: Trans -Regional and -National Studies of Southeast Asia*, 4 (01). Cambridge University Press.
- EV8. Thomas M. Bohn, Thomas Feldhoff, Lisette Gebhardt, Arndt Graf (eds.). (2015). *The impact of disaster. Social and cultural approaches to Fukushima and Chernobyl*. Berlin: EB (German Studies on Japanese Literature and Culture, 9).
- EV7. Mohamad Rashidi Pakri and Arndt Graf, eds. 2012. *Fiction and faction in the Malay World*. Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 260 p.
- EV6. Graf, Arndt (Guest Editor): 2012. Trade and finance in the Malay World. Special Issue of the *Asian Journal of Social Science* (40).
- EV5. Graf, Arndt, Schirin Fathi, and Ludwig Paul (eds.). (2011). *Orientalism and conspiracy. Politics and conspiracy theory in the Islamic world*. Essays in Honour of Sadik J. Al-Azm. London: I.B. Tauris, 257 p. (Library of Modern Middle East Studies, 92).
- EV4. Graf, Arndt, Susanne Schroeter, and Edwin Wieringa (eds.). (2010). *Aceh. history, politics, culture*. Singapore: ISEAS, 386 p.
- EV3. Graf, Arndt, Peter Kreuzer, and Rainer Werning (eds.). (2009). *Conflict in*

- Moro land: Prospects for peace*. Penang, Malaysia: Universiti Sains Malaysia Press, 229 p.
- EV2. Graf, Arndt and Chua Beng-Huat (eds.). (2009). *Port cities in Asia and Europe*. London. New York: Routledge, 240 p. (Routledge Studies in the Modern History of Asia).
- EV1. Bormann, Annett, Arndt Graf, Michaela Meyer, and Marcus Voss, eds. 1995. *Südostasien und wir. Grundsatzdiskussion und fachbeiträge. Tagung des arbeitskreises Südostasien und Ozeanien, Hamburg 1993* [Southeast Asia and us: Principle discussion and contributions from the disciplines. Conference on Southeast Asia and Oceania]. Münster; Hamburg: Lit, 241 p. (Austronesiana; 1).

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- A16. Graf, Arndt. (January 2016). "Malaysia's niche in international higher education: Targeting Muslim-majority, Commonwealth, and less-developed countries." *TRaNS: Trans -Regional and -National Studies of Southeast* , 4(01), 5-40. Cambridge University Press.
- A15. Graf, Arndt. (2015). A collection, a collector, a scholar: E. U. Kratz and his library of Malay and Indonesian literature. *Indonesia and the Malay World* 43, 125 (March), 1-5.
- A14. Graf, Arndt. (June 2011). Rhetoric and politics at the international speech competitions in Malay language (PABM). *Indonesia and the Malay World* 39(114), 295-316.
- A13. Graf, Arndt. 2011. "Beyond 2020. Indonesian and Malay in a new linguistic world order." *Kemanusiaan. The Asian Journal for Humanities* 18, 1: 77-100 (online: <http://web.usm.my/kajh/vol%2018.1.2011/KAJH%2018.1.2011%205.pdf>).
- A12. Graf, Arndt. (2010). Researching the humorous in Indonesian Islam. *Orient. German Journal for Politics, Economics and Culture of the Middle East* III/51: 36-42 (revised version of C12).
- A11. Graf, Arndt. (2010). Electronic Orientalism? The afterlife of Syed Hussein Alatas' "The myth of the lazy native" in electronic databases. *New Media and Society* 12(5), 835-854 (online: Online First, 19 Jan. 2010 [DOI: 10.1177/1461444809342739, <http://nms.sagepub.com/cgi/rapidpdf/1461444809342739v1>]).
- A10. Graf, Arndt. (2009). Indexing a field: The case of Indonesian and Malaysian studies. *Rima - Review of Indonesian and Malaysian Affairs* 43(2), 191-221.
- A9. Graf, Arndt. (November 2007). "CyberPram": Perceptions of the literary works of Pramoedya Ananta Toer on the internet." *Indonesia and the Malay World* 35(103), 293-312.

- A8. Graf, Arndt. (Dec. 2007). German works on Malay culture and literature since the nineteenth century." *Journal of the Malaysian Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society* 80(2), 51-65.
- A7a. Graf, Arndt. (2007). Classical Malay persuasion and the question of Sino-Malay rhetoric. A comparative case study of 17th century letters from Banten (West Java). *Jurnal Persatuan Linguistik [Journal of the Linguistic Society of Malaysia]* 8 (April): 21-43.
- A7b. Extended and revised version: Graf, Arndt. (2011). "Malay Politeness" versus "Chinese Bluntness?" Rhetorical strategies of historical letters from West-Java in comparison. *Breaking the Bonds: Unravelling the Myths of Southeast Asian Historiography*, Volker Grabowsky (ed.). Bangkok: River Books, 252-262.
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- A5. Graf, Arndt. (Jan. 2003). Der deutsche beitrag zur internationalen Indonesistik der 1990er jahre: Ein Blick auf die repräsentation in Excerpta Indonesica [German Contributions to International Indonesian Studies in the 1990s: A Look at the Representation in Excerpta Indonesica]. *Asien* 86, 20-31.
- A5a. Graf, Arndt. (2002). The traditional image of Indonesian Islam in German newspapers. *Kultur. Indonesian Journal for Muslim Cultures* 2(1), 23-35.
- A5b. Revised version: The traditional image of Indonesian Islam in German newspapers." *Südostasien Aktuell* 24, 2005: 30-36
- A4. Graf, Arndt. (2002). Strategic data on international Indonesian studies in the 1990s. *The Indonesian Quarterly* 30(1), 77-83. (Reprint: In "A Tale of Excerpta Indonesica", ed. Rahadi S. Karni. Typescript. Leiden, 2002).
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- A1. Graf, Arndt. (1995). Zur entmagisierung des regenwaldes in Indonesien. problemdarstellung und verhaltensmodelle im literarischen werk von Mochtar Lubis [The Demystification of the Rain Forest in Indonesia. Representations of the Problem and Possible Solutions in the Literary Work of Mochtar Lubis]." *Asien* 54 (January): 7-18.

## NOTES

1. I would like to thank Amanda Rath for helping me to edit this article. All remaining errors are of course my own responsibility.
2. <http://digilib.uin-suka.ac.id/12364/1/BAB%20I%2CV%2C%20DAFTAR%20PUSTAKA.pdf>, accessed 19 Sept. 2017.



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