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Fieldwork in a Time of Change: Papers in Honor of Mizuno Kosuke


Introduction

Agung Wicaksono* and Jafar Suryomenggolo**

This special issue is a collection of eight articles presented to Professor Mizuno Kosuke, former director of the Center for Southeast Asian Studies (CSEAS), Kyoto University (2006–10). These articles form a unique Festschrift that has been realized with the contributions and cooperation of a number of colleagues, scholars, and former doctoral students based in various academic and research institutions in Japan, Korea, and Southeast Asia.

In this special issue, we would like to highlight the importance of conducting long-term fieldwork—as Mizuno has done and continues to do—for both quantitative and qualitative research, along with the use of written sources and oral history, as an important data collection method. Data can be collected systematically and scientifically, but for area study researchers fieldwork consists of more than data accumulation (Faubion and Marcus 2009). A researcher may organize their fieldwork thoroughly, but it is fieldwork that would define the researcher as part of their personal and reflexive experiences (Jammes and King 2021). And this is especially pertinent in Southeast Asia, a region that is undergoing significant changes. For the last forty years, Southeast Asia has been enjoying peace; there have been some geopolitical skirmishes between neighbors from time to time but never a major war. Although this peace is under the regional hegemony of the US hub-and-spoke alliance system, countries in the region have been actively pursuing their paths to modernization. The region’s political stability has also allowed it to escape from the stagnation that once characterized the “Asian Drama” (Myrdal 1968) and to achieve exceptional economic growth, which has brought prosperity and social and

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economic welfare to the general population in the region. Fieldwork today is gratifying for researchers, as it was in the past. However, when conducting fieldwork today researchers must engage with and respond to various new challenges, including issues related to climate change and the global pandemic. Mizuno's life as an engaged scholar during this time of change provides an inspiration for present and future generations to study and understand the fast transformations of Southeast Asia.

A Scholar's Life between Rural Development and Institutional Change

As a "barefoot economist," Mizuno has been conducting field research for more than forty years on the transformations of land, labor, and livelihoods in Southeast Asia, particularly Indonesia. He has a lifelong relationship with Indonesia, having lived and worked there for extended periods. He has traveled to many parts of the country but regularly to West Java and more recently to Riau (East Sumatra).

Mizuno was born on September 15, 1953 in Seto (Aichi Prefecture), one of Japan's most prosperous ceramic-manufacturing regions.¹⁾ His first trip to Southeast Asia was in July 1974, at the age of twenty, as a first-year student of economics at Kyoto University. He was keen to observe the significance of dependency theory in the context of Southeast Asia's rapid economic development at the time. He first went to Malaysia for a few days, because his father was stationed in Port Klang, Selangor, as a factory manager of a tile-manufacturing company. After that, he and his father went to Indonesia for two weeks. His father had earlier been stationed in Bandung and Belitung for eight years as a ceramics expert (1960–68).²⁾

The duo traveled to Jakarta, Bandung, Surabaya, and Tretes (Prigen). It is worth noting that a few months earlier, in January 1974, Jakarta had been ravaged by lootings and anti-Chinese riots following a demonstration by university students during a state visit by Japanese Prime Minister Tanaka Kakuei. The protests were against the corruption and inequality believed to be a result of massive Japanese foreign investment.³⁾ In response to the student demonstration, the New Order regime took stern action by implementing a policy of depoliticization of campus life and stringent press censorship. Mizuno's first trip to Indonesia during that particular time left a deep impression on

1) The ceramics industry in Seto has a long history: it supplied roof tiles for Todaiji Temple in Nara (founded in the eighth century).

2) In Bandung, his father was stationed at Balai Penyelidikan Keramik (Ceramic Laboratory), established in 1922.

3) A student newspaper made a derogatory remark about Japan investing in Indonesia as the "yellow Yankee."

him—he noticed the general resilience of the local people under the regime’s repressive policies. Upon returning to Kyoto, he attended a lecture by Nagazumi Akira (University of Tokyo) on the history of Indonesia, which inspired him to study Dutch colonial agricultural policy in Java. He also started learning Indonesian.⁴ In September–December 1976, he spent ten weeks in Indonesia (Jakarta, Bogor, Ciawi, Bandung, Yogyakarta, Sidoarjo, Surabaya, Tanjung Karang, Bukit Tinggi, Medan, and Asahan) as he was now determined to study various aspects of the archipelago.

Upon graduating from Kyoto University in 1978, Mizuno started working at the Institute for Developing Economies (IDE) in Tokyo, a prominent research institute that also serves as a think tank focused on development issues in Asia, Africa, and Latin America.⁵ As a young economist, he studied Southeast Asia’s rural development while development projects all across the region in the 1970s were changing the rural landscape, especially with respect to issues of landownership and urbanization.⁶ At that time, governments in the region relied on import substitution and inward-oriented industrialization strategies, but these had led to balance of payments difficulties. To overcome this problem, governments shifted to export-oriented strategies to sustain industrial growth by relying on competitive labor costs. This strategy, however, put pressure on the economic and social conditions in rural areas, where the majority of the population lived and worked. Scholars have noted that in emulating the developmental state model, governments in Southeast Asia often prioritized the development of big industries by means of subsidies and protection; and in doing so, they left behind small and medium-sized enterprises to compete on their own. This issue caught Mizuno’s attention. In 1984 he became a visiting research fellow at the Center for Development Studies, Bogor Institute of Agriculture (PSP-IPB), and it was under the supervision of its head, Sajogyo,⁷ that he went the following year for the first time to Majalaya (West Java). Majalaya has been well known since the 1930s as the center of the home weaving industry, especially sarong production. As part of his training, Mizuno mastered Indonesian and Sundanese. This language proficiency helped him during his fieldwork and in his interviews with local informants as key actors. In 1987–91 he was involved in a research project on rural

4) He also participated in seminars of the Japan Society for Southeast Asian History in the Kansai area (東南アジア史学会関西例会), organized by Ishii Yoneo, a professor of Thai history at CSEAS.

5) Established in 1958, IDE focuses on social science research on developing regions. In 1998 it was merged with the Japan External Trade Organization under the Ministry of Economy, Trade, and Industry. A year later it moved its office from Shinjuku, Tokyo, to Makuhari (Chiba Prefecture).

6) He was part of the research group led by Takigawa Tsutomu that studied rural Southeast Asia. During this period, he learned the ropes of fieldwork from Kano Hiroyoshi and Umehara Hiromitsu.

7) Sajogyo was the head of the PSP-IPB (1983–91) after serving as the head of Pusat Lembaga Penelitian Sosiologi Pedesaan (1972–83) and rector of Institut Pertanian Bogor (Bogor Institute of Agriculture; IPB) (1965–66).

non-farm sectors in West Java under the leadership of Benjamin White (Institute of Social Studies, The Netherlands). He also participated in a research project at the Center for Environmental Studies, Bandung Institute of Technology, led by Hasan Poerbo.

Mindful of the limitations of conventional economic models, Mizuno aptly employed historical and sociological methods to enrich his research. He learned Dutch in order to read earlier studies on the economy of the Dutch East Indies by Dutch scholars of the colonial times. This allowed him to understand the policies and the legacy of the colonial economy on present-day Indonesia, and to conduct long-term research on the economic situation at the local level, particularly on sugar plantations in Comal (Central Java) (see Kano 1994).⁸⁾ He did not hesitate to spend long periods in the field observing, living with, and interviewing local community members about their lives and occupational experiences. With colleagues at IDE, he developed a two-year research project on the rural employment structure in Burma, Thailand, Malaysia, the Philippines, and Indonesia; he contributed a chapter on occupational multiplicity and the off-farm sector in West Java (Mizuno 1995).

In 1988 Mizuno enrolled in the doctoral program at the Graduate School of Agriculture, Kyoto University, as a Ronpaku fellow. His research was on the community-based weaving industry in Majalaya. He defended his dissertation in 1994 under the supervision of Nishimura Hiroyuki, an expert on agro-economics and rural development. In his dissertation, Mizuno described the social organization of the rural weaving industry and the diversification of households. He found that community-based weaving, as a small-sized enterprise, managed to survive intense competition in the market despite the lack of government support. He also found that the industry was able to maintain its performance such that its members did not see the need to migrate to cities—as happened in other areas—to become regular wage laborers in factories. He concluded that small-sized industries constantly develop initiatives to diversify their methods and products in order to overcome various hostile conditions in the market. His dissertation was later published as book (Mizuno 1996), which was reviewed the following year:

Mizuno's study provides us with a wealth of data on rural family weaving in a small locality. It is an important contribution to the debate on the survival of family-based industry, and will be of help to synchronic studies of the Majalayan textile industry. (Antlöv 1997, 1173)

Mizuno's dissertation indeed offered an important insight that questioned the government policy in Indonesia (and Southeast Asia in general) of favoring large industries. It was only years later, after the 1997 Asian financial crisis—and partly due to lessons

8) See also Kano *et al.* (1996; 2001).

learned from this crisis—that governments in the region started to develop comprehensive policies to provide and promote a favorable environment for nurturing small and medium-sized enterprises.

In April 1996 Mizuno moved to CSEAS as he continued his research on economic development in Southeast Asia (Mizuno and Shigetomi 1997). He became involved in two research projects: “Handicraft and Industrial Development in Southeast Asia” (1997–99) with Sekimoto Teruo (University of Tokyo), and “Culturo-ecological Structure of Network Society in Wallacea” (1995–97) with Tanaka Koji (Kyoto University). His book on Indonesia’s local industry (Mizuno 1999) won the Developing Countries Research Award in 2000. Aside from research, Mizuno—now working at one of Japan’s leading universities—had the opportunity to teach and nurture students of economics, particularly on rural development in Asia.⁹ From 1996 to 2019 he supervised 18 doctoral students, which makes him one of the most dedicated professors in shaping the future generation of area specialists in Japan.

As a specialist on Indonesia, Mizuno observed the institutional changes that deposed authoritarianism and promoted democratic values with the 1998 Reformasi. To study these institutional changes as part of Indonesia’s democratization and decentralization to support economic growth, Mizuno became the principal investigator in two important research projects funded by Grants-in-Aid for Scientific Research:¹⁰ “Changing Local Politics in Democratized Indonesia” (2002–4), which examined the rapid increase in local parliamentarians from the business sector; and “Changing Local Politico-economic Structure in the Democratizing and Decentralizing Indonesia” (2005–7), which analyzed institutional changes in the local head election system from an indirect to a direct one from 2004. These research projects allowed Mizuno to analyze institutional change in Indonesia as a case study of economic development in low- and middle-income countries.¹¹

9) From 1981, CSEAS offered graduate education (at its Graduate School of Agriculture and Graduate School of Human and Environmental Studies). In 1996 it began to prepare for the establishment of the Graduate School of Asian and African Area Studies, which was set up in 1998.

10) Grants-in-Aid for Scientific Research (Kakenhi) are competitive research funds. Selection of recipients is based on a peer review system under Japan’s Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science, and Technology and the Japan Society for the Promotion of Science. It is the largest competitive research funds scheme in Japan.

11) Mizuno was also involved in six research projects: “Anthropological Study on Local Societies in Post-Suharto Indonesia” (2001–3) with Sugishima Takashi; “Comparative Study of Safety-Network in Southeast Asia, in Special Reference to Human Aging” (2002–4) with Kono Yasuyuki; “Regionalization and Middle Class in East Asia: Americanization, Cinesization, Japanization” (2003–5) with Shiraiishi Takashi; “Natural Resource Management and Socio-economic Transformation under the Decentralization in Indonesia: Toward Sulawesi Area Studies” (2004–6) with Tanaka Koji; “Comparative Study of Human Aging” (2005–7) with Matsubayashi Kozo; and “Development of Area Informatics with Emphasis on Southeast Asia” (2005–9) with Shibayama Mamoru.

The main research products from these projects are his co-edited volumes on labor union movement in Indonesia (Mizuno *et al.* 2007) and on populism in Asia (Mizuno and Pasuk 2009).

Mizuno served as the director of CSEAS for two consecutive terms, April 2006 to March 2008 and April 2008 to March 2010.¹²⁾ During his tenure, CSEAS extended its international programs¹³⁾ and became a world-class hub for Southeast Asian studies. In April 2007, with a number of collaborating institutions, CSEAS started the Global COE program “In Search of Sustainable Humanosphere in Asia and Africa (2007–2012)” headed by Sugihara Kaoru. In April 2009 CSEAS was awarded the status of Joint Usage/Research Centers by Japan’s Ministry of Education, Culture, Sport, Science and Technology in acknowledgment of its years of leadership in the field of Southeast Asian studies. It was under Mizuno’s directorship that CSEAS developed regional networks with the Korean Association of Southeast Studies (KASEAS),¹⁴⁾ Academia Sinica (Taiwan), and numerous universities in the region.¹⁵⁾

After successfully completing the terms of his directorship, Mizuno devoted his time to continuing research on Indonesia’s environmental changes. He was the principal investigator in a research project funded by Grants-in-Aid for Scientific Research, “A Study on Regional Sustainable Humanosphere in Indonesia Based on Long-term Data and Field Work” (2011–13). The project examined socioeconomic changes in rural Indonesia, especially the increase of landless households in Java, the development of non-agricultural sectors, and issues related to forest management since the Dutch colonial times. The main research products from this project are Mizuno’s co-edited volumes on agroforestry

12) During this period, he was involved in five research projects: “Non-traditional Security Issues in Southeast Asia: The Status and Issues in State Capacity and Regional Cooperation” (2007–10) with Patricio Abinales; “New Development of Southeast Asian Local Politics in the Era of Globalization: Capital City, Energy and the Border” (2008–11) with Okamoto Masaaki; “Political Impact of the Asian Economic Crisis: Comparing Political Instability” (2010–12) with Tamada Yoshifumi; “Comprehensive Forest Management Systems in Southeast Asia” (2010–14) with Yanagisawa Masayuki; and “Multi-disciplinary Study of Southeast Asia Planted Forests and Local Societies” (2010–14) with Ishikawa Noboru.

13) Since 2009, CSEAS has organized its Southeast Asia Seminar in English (previously it was in Japanese) with lecturers and participants from Japan, Southeast Asia, Northeast Asia, North America, and Europe.

14) The CSEAS-KASEAS joint conference was first held in 2009 in Jinju. Subsequently, it was organized in 2011 (in Kyoto), 2013 (in Mokpo), 2015 (in Kyoto), 2017 (in Seoul), 2020 (online), 2021 (online), and 2023 (in Kyoto).

15) From 2007 to 2011, CSEAS signed memoranda of understanding with National University of Laos, Sultan Agung Tirtayasa University (Indonesia), Cairo University (Egypt), Institute of Peruvian Studies (Peru), Royal University of Fine Arts and Royal University of Agriculture (Cambodia), Kohn Kaen University (Thailand), and Royal University of Bhutan (see Center for Southeast Asian Studies 2023).



Fig. 1 Fieldwork in Pelalawan, Riau, Indonesia (photo by Retno Kusumaningtyas, May 31, 2010)

in West Java (Mizuno and Siti 2021) and on a sustainable development path for society based on the regeneration of peatlands, especially in the Giam Siak Kecil-Bukit Batu Biosphere Reserve (Kawai *et al.* 2012; Mizuno *et al.* 2016). In a review of the 2016 volume, Peter Boomgaard (2016, 585) noted that “for those (scholars) who are interested in the annual forest conflagrations, in peat swamps forests and their fate, and in suggestions for their regeneration, this book is a must read.”

From 2013 to 2015, Mizuno was involved in two research projects on contemporary Southeast Asia: “Emergence of New Growth Mechanism and Its Political Economy in Southeast Asia” (2013–15) with Mieno Fumiharu, and “The Social Bases of Care in Southeast Asia: Study of the Dynamism of Practice Based on Relatedness” (2013–15) with Hayami Yoko. Later, he served as the leader of a six-year research project titled “Toward the Regeneration of Tropical Peatland Societies: Transformability of Environmentally Vulnerable Societies and Establishment of an International Research Network” (2015–21) at the Research Institute for Humanity and Nature.¹⁶⁾ He was the principal investigator in a research project funded by Grants-in-Aid for Scientific Research, “Land Ownership and Peatland Restoration in Indonesia” (2019–22), which investigated the use of land by local residents and its impact on peatland restoration in Sumatra and Kalimantan. The main research product of this project was a co-edited volume on long-term peatland dynamics (see Mizuno, Kozan and Haris 2023).

16) See Mizuno (2018).



Fig. 2 Mizuno Kosuke and Ami Aminah Meutia (August 2023) (photo courtesy Mizuno Kosuke)

In the course of his career, Mizuno has served in various national scientific organizations: as a member of the executive board of Japan Consortium for Area Studies 地域研究コンソーシアム (April 2006–March 2010), as a member of the executive board of the Japanese Society for Asian Studies アジア研究協会 (April 2006–March 2018),¹⁷⁾ and as an associate member of the Science Council of Japan 日本学術会議 (April 2007–March 2016).¹⁸⁾ Since April 2010 he has been a member of the editorial board of *East Asian Studies*, the journal of the Institute for East Asian Studies, Sogang University (Seoul).¹⁹⁾

Since his retirement from CSEAS in March 2019, Mizuno has been a professor of development studies at the School of Environmental Science, University of Indonesia. He devotes his knowledge and time to supervising Indonesian doctoral students.²⁰⁾ He has completed his research on Indonesia’s labor dispute settlement system (Mizuno

17) See Japanese Society for Asian Studies (2016).

18) See, for example, a report by the Science Council of Japan on international cooperation for development and the role of area studies (Science Council of Japan 2008).

19) See *East Asian Studies* (n.d.).

20) From 2020 to 2023, Mizuno supervised six doctoral candidates at the University of Indonesia. He also lectured at an intensive course titled “Perubahan Agraria Abad 21 dan ‘Sawit Rakyat’ Berkelanjutan di Indonesia” (Agrarian transformation of the twenty-first century and sustainable people-based palm oil in Indonesia) organized by the Bandung-based Agrarian Resource Center and University of Padjadjaran, November 19–29, 2019 (Agrarian Resource Center 2019).

2020). He has also co-directed a research project on long-term agrarian, economic, and ecological changes on the northern coast of Java (Mizuno, Semedi, and Nooteboom 2023).

Since July 1992, Mizuno has been married to Ami Aminah Meutia, an engineer and wetland specialist who graduated from the Bandung Institute of Technology (1987) and Waseda University (PhD, 1996). They have three children: Yuji (b. 1993), Aisha (b. 1995), and Ayuna (b. 1997). His family has been the most important part of Mizuno's life. Thanks to their social and emotional support, he has been able to contribute several studies that have illuminated the field with in-depth discussions and interdisciplinary perspectives.

Contents

In Southeast Asia, *Festschriften* are presented mainly to eminent “home scholars” (Thongchai 2005), written in national languages, and—due to budget constraints—published and distributed in limited editions by local university presses.²¹⁾ Meanwhile, *Festschriften* published in the West often lack contributions from Southeast Asian “home scholars,” local researchers, and collaborators, and thus they unintentionally reflect a limited access for intellectuals from the Global South to first-class scholarly resources and international academic networks. This special issue wishes to bridge such social divides by offering an alternate model of a *Festschrift* presented to a region-based scholar such as Mizuno, and with diverse contributors from the region. As any *Festschrift* highlights the collaborations and social networks of its contributors (Richetti 2012), this special issue reflects the links to scholars in Japan, Korea, and Southeast Asia that Mizuno forged as part of his academic network throughout his career.

Mizuno has a broad interest in Southeast Asia's past and present. Although this special issue contains a wide range of studies, it offers a coherent picture that speaks to three enduring themes in Mizuno's research interests: the transformations of land, labor, and livelihoods in Southeast Asia. Rather than situating them in isolation, Mizuno treats these three elements as highly connected forces that dynamically shape the region. Based on his long-term research, Mizuno sees the history of socioeconomic transformation in the region as tied to the conditions of labor, land productivity, and resilient livelihoods of local people. This special issue also reflects the fieldwork-based approach to studying and understanding the complex issue of transformation in the region, as Mizuno has experimented with, built, and directed in his research projects as

21) There are some rare exceptions. Chambert-Loir and Ambary (1999) and Hera (2019) are examples of *Festschriften* presented to foreign scholars and published by local commercial presses.

well as in collaborations with numerous researchers, including young scholars and those from the region.

The transformations of land, labor, and livelihoods in Southeast Asia provide a background for this special issue to focus on fieldwork research with a cross-disciplinary approach. The first three articles contain fieldwork-based research on specific locations, informed by debates in the fields of ecology, anthropology, and political science. Viengrat Nethipo discusses the impact of rubber plantations on the political life of local communities in Northeastern Thailand, especially with respect to electoral politics. Adrian Albano investigates changes in the rural landscape due to the rise of commercial farming in Ifugao, Philippines, which highlights the importance of the conservation of heritage landscapes and environmental sustainability of the local community. Suzuki Haruka examines the residential and migration history of a traditional fishing village in Riau, Indonesia. These articles, taken together, show that for the last two decades successive local governments in Southeast Asia have developed their institutions and instruments to grow the local economy and to accommodate social changes, but they are often unaware of their irreversible impacts on the environment.

The intersection of economic analysis, regional comparative perspective, and local development theories forms an important element in Kambara Kentaro's examination on the progress of Islamic finance in Malaysia and Brunei Darussalam, Je Seong Jeon's discussion on the development of civil society to promote human rights in the region, and Chalernpol Chamchan's analysis on the situation of cross-border migrant children in Thailand. Each paper has its own perspective, but collectively they highlight how various forms of regional cooperation and solidarity, often initiated by non-state actors and later developed together with supportive state institutions, have transformed the social landscape of Southeast Asia beyond what could have been imagined two decades ago.

The historical research carried out by Yamamoto Nobuto and William Horton is also based on fieldwork. For historians of Southeast Asia, the process of searching for and collecting primary data is integral to their fieldwork activities. Yamamoto's discussion on the impacts of the construction of Boven Digoel as an internment camp for political prisoners during the colonial times, and Horton's investigation into the reappearance of the *pasar malam* (night market) in Indonesia during the Japanese occupation (1942–45), are fine examples of research results obtained after a long process of gathering, examining, and analyzing primary sources made possible by the researchers' consistent commitment to fieldwork in the region.

All the articles in this special issue are a result of the researchers' embeddedness with their research subjects and the changing world they deal with, based on fieldwork. Southeast Asia has become more accessible due to increased air transport and infrastruc-

ture development. Yet, the changing requirements for fieldwork caused by the Covid-19 pandemic and the pervasive use of information and communications technologies to gather and analyze data have directly changed how researchers see “the field,” develop research questions, and understand the societies they study—issues that are pertinent to our times of global challenges (see, for example, Peng 2021; Abescat *et al.* 2022).

The current trend of bureaucratization of universities in the Global North has placed restrictions on researchers pursuing field studies, especially in perilous, fragile, and violent areas in the Global South. These restrictions are often founded on potential risks that researchers may encounter during their time in the field, the scope of liability of universities (and funding agencies) in taking on the burden of such risks, and the ethics of conducting research abroad. Furthermore, the weak regulatory framework and unpredictable social setting commonly found in the Global South have provided Global North researchers with reasons to limit (and sometimes abandon) fieldwork and delegate data gathering to a plethora of local partners or interlocutors (“consulting” firms, under-resourced NGOs, precarious journalists, students looking for research experience, etc.). While this practice of outsourcing field research is not yet widespread in Southeast Asia, it highlights the epistemological privilege of fieldwork and the importance of developing real collaborations with home scholars.

As noted elsewhere, home scholars in the Global South are tied down with institutional issues and limited resources to produce and disseminate knowledge but pressed by “bibliometric coloniality” in pursuit of world-class universities (Sawahel 2023). While academic institutions in Southeast Asia have improved over the last two decades, home scholars in the region are striving to improve their scholarly engagement by expanding their regional and international connections—although they sometimes have limited space to decide the direction of academic collaboration with Global North partners. Beyond these limitations, the main consideration is how home and foreign scholars, based on their commitment to long-term fieldwork, bring new research questions, broaden their network, and deepen academic collaborations across and beyond disciplines, in their common objective to understand the region and offer potential solutions to current issues.

Fieldwork has evolved from the traditional ethnographic approach to become the indispensable practice of immersion in the local milieu in order to understand the society under study. For researchers, the field represents the space where primary data is collected for their hypothesis as well as the space where concepts are verified or falsified. The development of information and communications technologies confirms the importance of fieldwork as a contact zone between researchers and various actors to establish direct conversations that often shape the research itself. Across disciplines—whether economics, political science, linguistics, or ecology—fieldwork plays a key role as a source

of knowledge in efforts to foster scholarship and dialogues. As articles in this special issue attest, fieldwork remains a fruitful and important endeavor for conducting research in Southeast Asia in order to comprehend the region's fast transformations and future challenges.

Finally, this special issue illustrates the researchers' intellectual quest and personal orientations in conducting fieldwork in the region. Beyond the debate on access to an emic or insider perspective, long-term fieldwork experiences provide a basis for developing research. And in the end, they shape the contours of production of knowledge about the region. Mizuno often asked us, the editors of this special issue—during our training as his graduate students and later as apprentice researchers—when we last went to the field and what we learned from it, as a reflective discourse to go beyond collecting data for research purposes. While both of us often found ourselves unable to provide any deeper reflections on our respective fieldwork, we came to understand that our fieldwork reflection was part of the long process of ongoing accumulation of research experiences. In the same fashion as we, the editors and authors of the articles in this special issue, have been inspired by Mizuno's work in our own research and academic careers, we hope that the topics discussed in this special issue will benefit scholars of social change, development studies, and rural and agrarian studies who wish to enrich their research and teaching resources on Southeast Asia.

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