The colloquium on “Decolonizations, Loyalties, and Nations” addressed the issues of loyalty and disidence during the wars of decolonization in Vietnam and Indonesia during the late 1940s and 1950s. Using a comparative approach it attempted to recover some of the diversity of options that were open to individuals who became entangled in the conflict and analysed the post-colonial crystallization of national images in Vietnam, Indonesia, France, and the Netherlands. As the value of national ideologies and historical evaluations superimposed by the central states diminished the destruction of national, monolithic images gained a new relevance.

Report >
Southeast Asia

The first day of the colloquium was devoted to the subject of conflicting loyalties during the decolonization wars. A survivor of the war, General Do Trinh, opened the meeting with a view on the options the Vietnamese had around 1945 when the French returned to reflate their former colony. French scholar Christophe Goscha presented a political economy of the duration of the transition to independence. What was seen as a sideshow at the time, turned out to be an important moment for Dutch and non-Dutch contemporaries to take sides in a belated struggle for decolonization. This easternmost area of the Indonesian archipelago and of the Netherlands East Indies served as an initiating site for discussions on the issues of the Indonesian mental and geographical territory. Hans Meijer (Leiden University/Veteranen Instituut) treated the issue of “mixed blood”, that is: that most Eurasians were torn between their Indo-European and their Asian ties, their attachment to their country of birth, and Indonesians’ growing anti-Colonialism. Their problem was not one of political choice, but of conflicting loyalties.

Nguyen The Anh (École Pratique des Hautes Études, in Paris) nicely illustrated the issue of diminishing choices, giving an excellent overview of the options for Vietnamese politicians experiencing the effects of the power vacuum following the Japanese surrender on 15 August 1945. Nelyca Delanot (American Studies at the University of Paris X) presented insightful views on the fate of Moroccan veterans fighting in the French colonial army. After the war, they returned to their home country to face their own struggle for independence. Frances Gouda (University of Amsterdam) provided an analysis of America’s Cold War interests and its view of national identities in Southeast Asia. Influenced by an increasing anti-communist atmosphere, but also by other global concerns Washington’s decision-making was fairly consistent. While supporting the decolonization of Indonesia, it stood squarely behind the French efforts in Indochina.

Veterans & Deserters

On the first day, post-war interpretations and the highly controversial issues of veterans and deserters were reviewed. Benjamin Stora (Inalco, Paris) discussed French films on Indochina produced during the 1950s and highlighted the atmosphere of isolation and abandonment that surrounded the participants in the conflict. Compared to the war in Algeria, French film-makers encountered little oppo- sition from national censors. The Indonesian anthropologist Budi Susanto (Universitas Sanata Dharma, Yogakarta) gave an analysis of the Indonesian armed forces’ perspectives on the history of the revolu- tion and the unity of the nation, drawing on the “Spirit of ’45”. He illustrated his lecture with well-selected cuttings from newspapers and advertisements, which demonstrated how these views are increasingly being contested. Dutch historian Stefan Scholte (Erasmus University Rotterdam) presented a sharp analysis of Dutch public reactions to the first revelations of war crimes that were disclosed on television in the 1960s.

The symposium concluded with a series of personal rem- iniscences by Vietnamese, Indonesian, Dutch and German veterans, and a debate on “traits and trauma”. Eyewitness accounts were given by General Do Trinh (Vietnam), Franciscus Pang- gida (Indonesia), and Joop Merijn (the Netherlands). His- torian Pierre Brochets pointed out how the Boudarel case in France was not a matter of false memory, but an attempt by the United States to force South Korea to admit its complicity in the Korean War. The panelists concluded that the issue of “traitor” and “traitor” was dealt both with the theoretical issues of “collective memory” and the production of “nationalized” images in the four countries.

Colloquium >

The colloquium was hosted by Maison Descartes, NIOD, the ASIA-group, and the IAS. In addition, photographs taken by the Dutch reporter, Alfred van Sprang, who visited northern Vietnam between 1950 and 1955, were simultaneously exhibited at the Maison Descartes. The workshop concluded on Saturday evening with the screening of two films on the war of independence in Indochina, the original version of Dien Bien Phu made by Nguyen Thien Lai and a later version by the French film-maker Pierre Schoendoerfl.

By John Kleinen & Remco Raben

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Conference on Hideyoshi’s Invasion of Korea

As East Asia (China, Korea, Japan) regains its historical position as a world centre, information about the history of regional relations becomes ever more critical. Because European language studies on regional relations are rare, dated, too broad, or provided for a political or economic agenda, we invited various scholars to prepare papers on Hideyoshi’s invasion of Korea (1592-1598).

The seven-year long war (called the Imjin Waeran in Korea) involved China, Korea, Japan, the Ryukyus, Southeast Asia, and Europe. As East Asia (China, Korea, Japan) regains its historical position as a world centre, information about the history of regional relations becomes ever more critical. Because European language studies on regional relations are rare, dated, too broad, or provided for a political or economic agenda, we invited various scholars to prepare papers on Hideyoshi’s invasion of Korea (1592-1598).

The conference “The ‘Imjin Waeran’ – Hideyoshi’s Invasion of Korea: Problems and Perspectives” focused on five themes. The first theme addressed the international and domestic situations of Japan and Korea over the sixteenth century. Dr Han Moon-jong (North Chollia University, Korea) offered “The Korean Domestic, Situation and Relations with Japan on the Eve of the Invasions” that outlined Korean relations with Japan, the Korean political and social economy, and explained the lack of Korean military preparedness. Professor Saeki Kijō (Kyushu University, Japan) presented “The Relationship between China, Korea, and Japan in the 16th Century” that described Japanese relations with China as marred by violent incidents and the slow reappearance of Japanese piracy.

The second theme turned to the war itself and the peace negotiations. Professor Kitajima Manji (Kyoto Kyoiku Women’s University, Japan) gave us *The Imjin Waeran: Contrasting the First and the Second Invasions of Korea* that described a Hideyoshi who set out to conquer China, met with frustration in Korea, and reduced his goals to the per- manent seizure of Korean land. Professor Min Deakkee (Chungyung University, Korea) presented “Chosön: Position and Response to Peace Negotiations during the Imjin Waeran”, which discussed the pragmatic military and diplomatic options of the Chosön court and explained how these concerns conditioned Korea’s eventual acceptance of making peace with Japan. In “The Japan-Ming Negotiations”, Professor Saajima Akiko (Fukuoka Jogakuen University, Japan) examined Japanese-Chinese negotiations and sought to explain to Japanese students how the concept of Japan is influenced by the Chosön severed relationship. The conference took place from 28 to 29 August 2001 in Oxford, UK. The conference was organized by Professor Kuzavon Iji (Kyushu University, Japan), who examined the imposition of particular cultural identities in different literary forms. “Post-war Han Source Material on Hideyoshi’s Invasion of Korea”, presented by Professor Murai Shoosuke (Tokyo University, Japan), introduced and offered an assessment of literature, administration, and army-relations from the mem- ories of ordinary Japanese soldiers. Professor Choon Gwan (Korea University, Korea) presented “Literature on the Imjin War”, outlining the relevant fic- tional and non-fictional genres in Korea and suggesting that these accounts created long-lived chauvinist attitudes in both cultures.

The fifth and final theme considered the Chinese connection. Dr Han Myung-gi (Kyunganggyl, Seoul National University, Korea) offered “Chosön and Chosön-Later Jin Relations in the seventeenth Century”, which identified the ideological and propaganda role of Korean ‘gratitude and dependence’ towards the Ming. “Korea and China after the Imjin War”, presented by Professor Kusavono Iji (Kyushu University, Japan) examined the imposition of particular cultural identities in different literary forms. “Post-war Han Source Material on Hideyoshi’s Invasion of Korea”, presented by Professor Murai Shoosuke (Tokyo University, Japan), introduced and offered an assessment of literature, administration, and army-relations from the mem- ories of ordinary Japanese soldiers. Professor Choon Gwan (Korea University, Korea) presented “Literature on the Imjin War”, outlining the relevant fic- tional and non-fictional genres in Korea and suggesting that these accounts created long-lived chauvinist attitudes in both cultures.

The Drama of Military Aid and Corruption in the Korean War, 1953-1958” that exam- ined the internal conflicts within Chinese geopolitical concerns and offered a Korean view on the burdens of hosting Chinese forces. Commentary was provided by invit- ed discussants from Japan, the Nether- lands, and the USA. Support was pro- vided by The Korea Foundation, The Oriental Institute of the University of Oxford, The Great Britain Sasakawa Foundation, The Japan Foundation, The Northeast Area Council of the Asia Association for Studies (USA), The British Academy, The Daiwa Anglo-Japanese Foundation, The Inter- national Institute for Asian Studies (the Netherlands), Wolfson College (Oxford), and The British Association for Korean Studies, which organized the conference.

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*The Imjin Waeran: Contrasting the First and the Second Invasions of Korea*