

Part III Rediscovery of the Self-Identity and the Importance of Local Education

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The modern era accelerated mobility both within society and between societies. The development of transportation and the establishment of colonial rule stimulated both large scale migration and local travel between town and country. Twentieth century Indonesia and Vietnam show us very interesting examples of how a highly volatile modern situation induced people to reevaluate the importance of kinship relations and traditional education.

The economic development of plantation and mining companies in the Dutch East Indies from the later part of the 19th century attracted more and more migrants from East and West, among whom were Ḥaḍramī *ulamā*, who became one of the most respected figures in Malay and Indonesian society, due to their religious knowledge and Muslim origins. Those who carried the title, *sayyid*, meaning descending from the Prophet of Muḥammad, came into particularly high regard among Southeast Asian Muslims and often intermarried with local royalty. Arai discusses a network that was built by the Ḥaḍramī migrant, ‘Abd Allāh b. Muḥsin al-‘Aṭṭās (1849–1933), who moved to Java at the age of eighteen and died in Bogor. He was engaged in trade in the coastal towns of northern Java, forming a network of kinship and religious connections. He also successfully established firm connections with the Johor royal family through his wife, who had been formerly wed to a member of that family, and his sister-in-law who was a wife of the Johor sultan. Arai shows that after the death of ‘Abd Allāh b. Muḥsin al-‘Aṭṭās, his descendents organized an annual ceremony to commemorate him, resulting in the *sayyid* lineage and its kinship network being reevaluated until the present day.

French colonial rule transformed the Vietnamese educational system by abolishing the Chinese-style civil service examination and introducing a new French school system. Beginning in 1926, the French authorities allowed each village to organize a public elementary school at its own expense. Sakurai describes one such institution, the School of Teacher Xuyên, built at Bách C c Village in Nam Định, northern Vietnam, showing that it provided a curriculum for children of upper and middle class villagers that included French and *quốc ngữ* (Romanized Vietnamese). Although the number of graduates from the school was less than expected, and although it had to be closed in 1947 by a French attack on the village, it nevertheless stimulated local residents to reevaluate the importance of education and to seek access to another type of school called *thầy đồ*, a private school that taught traditional Chinese. This type of school was operated by villagers who paid their tuition

with small presents of agricultural and forest products and small amounts of money. Those children who were unable to go to the School of Teacher Xuyên also often attended the *thầy đồ*, which after the 1930s taught not only traditional Chinese but also *quốc ngữ*. Sakurai shows that those who studied at the *thầy đồ* in Bách Cúc Village later went on to become core members in the cooperatives that characterized the period of collective farming under Vietnam's socialist regime.

The above two cases suggest that both Ḥadramī migrants and Vietnamese villagers from the 1930s on found renewed meaning in their traditional kinship and educational systems in coping with new situations. This third part will hopefully lend to the reader fruitful perspectives into the subject of change and continuity in the transition from early modern to modern times with respect to the grouping of people, reproduction of genealogy and kinship relations, village autonomy, and the role of local leaders.