

Research Title: Transmigrasi Today: Effects of Movement of Poor from Urban Centers to Less-Populated Regions of Indonesia

SUMMARY

I am applying to the Charles Kao Fund Summer Grant to support an interdisciplinary summer project on the subject of Indonesia's transmigration policy, *Transmigrasi*. My research entails examining the effects of Transmigrasi upon the people who moved from urban centers in the 1980s and 1990s to less populated regions, as well as the resulting effects of this policy upon the natives who have always inhabited these areas. Through my fieldwork, I will investigate what made the immigrants choose to move, looking at a variety of cases, as well as how they have improved their lives, or not, in the years since.

I will address the issue of technology transfer by researching how information, technology, and culture of the immigrants have affected the native peoples in these areas. In many regions the extreme differences in culture, religion, and even ethnicity clashed significantly, which fostered mutual distrust and hatred, as well as prolonged violence, at times. In my future work as a US Army Foreign Area Officer (FAO) to Southeast Asia, I will work together with the military leadership of numerous countries that deal with destitute and displaced people. In order to assist in improving security in these developing countries, I will need to be well versed in policies, issues and decisions that affect security. Thorough understandings of Transmigrasi will significantly enable my comprehension of cultural and political dynamics in Southeast Asia.

THE PROJECT

I will pursue this research in two components. The first involves a six-week, intensive language immersion and home-stay coordinated through the Universitas Pendidikan Indonesia (UPI) in the city of Bandung, West Java, Indonesia. During this six weeks I will focus primarily on improving upon two semesters of Indonesian language I have studied formally here at Yale, and on understanding the Indonesian culture, in general. These skills will prove invaluable as I communicate with those affected by Transmigrasi Policy in the second component.

The second part of my project will entail six weeks of research on the Transmigrasi Policy and its effects upon those who were settled from the Island of Java to the outlying islands, as well as those long-time residents of the islands that received the majority of the incoming settlers between the 1970s and 1990s. I will seek to understand the motivation behind the policy, the policy's impact upon the islands in which most of the settlers inhabited, and the aftermath of the policy. I have discussed various elements of this project with Professor Indriyo Sukmono of the Indonesian Language Department, Dr. Joseph Errington of the Yale Anthropology Department, as well as with Dr. John Gaddis in Yale's History Department. I will continue consultation with them as I further refine my research methodology, and I hope to publish a paper on my findings in an anthropology journal, based on my work this summer.

PROJECT COMPONENTS

1. Six-week, intensive Bahasa Indonesian language immersion courses at Universitas Pendidikan Indonesia in Bandung. During my time at UPI I will focus on the most common dialect of the Indonesian language, Bahasa Indonesian. As I have done in previous language studies, I will work with my instructors to focus my study on useful, relevant vocabulary that will enable effective communication with those former settlers and natives of the islands that have experienced the Transmigrasi Policy. I will use these six weeks to refine my techniques

of talking with native Indonesians, while also developing contacts in the areas I plan to conduct the research in part two.

2. Six-week independent research project on *Transmigrasi Policy* in Indonesia. This will entail field research with Indonesian settlers, as well as with Indonesian natives from the islands of Halmahera, Sulawesi, and Kalimantan. Because of travel restrictions I have as a soldier in the US Army and due to a limited amount of time this summer, I will stay in each of the three villages for two weeks each. I will begin my research by initially looking at the history behind the Transmigrasi Policy under the Dutch, Sukarno, and former President Suharto. I will then focus on the collective experiences of families – of both immigrants and natives – to understand Transmigrasi's successes and failures. I have long-time family friends who operate a medical mission on Halmahera who can provide me with introductions to local villages affected by Transmigrasi once I arrive. In addition, my Indonesian language professor and professors associated with the Southeast Asian Studies Council have already provided invaluable information and contacts to get started. I will draw on each of these resources to enhance the depth of my research this summer.

MY METHODOLOGY

My research will focus on these questions:

What were the economic impacts of Transmigrasi upon the native people of the islands affected? Have natives adopted Javanese technologies, cultural traits, or customs? Have Javanese established solid roots in the years since their transmigration, or is the relationship between the natives and the settlers too tenuous to do so? Has transmigration been happening since the New Order fell in 1998? Were there any religious motives behind moving Javanese off of Java? (ie., primarily Muslims or Christians that moved off of Java; different demographics in each area of Java?) What were the environmental impacts of Transmigrasi?

MY ACADEMIC AND PROFESSIONAL GOALS

My focus for this research is to understand how policy in developing nations is conceived, implemented, and carried out, particularly through research of Transmigrasi. Since I have extensive background in Thailand and Thai language and will conduct research in the near future on displaced persons from neighboring states with more tumultuous regimes, I seek to understand how a country like Indonesia, as late as 2000, displaced its own people with seemingly little study to the long-term effects of such policy. I am taking Dr. Joseph Errington's *Modern Indonesia* course this spring, which provides a solid background of Indonesian history and culture for this endeavor. Additionally, in my future work as a US Army Foreign Area Officer to Southeast Asia, I will be expected to provide in-depth analysis of societal issues and dynamics that affect security in Southeast Asia; a thorough understanding of recent policy initiatives on a grand scale will significantly enhance this understanding of the most populous country in Southeast Asia.

This summer research project will benefit my academic work toward my MA in International Relations at Yale and enhances the effectiveness of my future career. Likewise, working proficiency in the Indonesian language will be of great benefit in the years to come. This summer's experiences will strengthen my acumen for anthropological research, expand my network in greater Southeast Asia, and will contribute greatly to my expertise in policy issues in Indonesia and developing, Southeast Asian countries.