Douglas Kammen (National University of Singapore)

Before the publication of *Imagined Communities*, Benedict Anderson was best known for his dissertation, published as *Java in a Time of Revolution*, and a co-authored, preliminary analysis, circulated to a small circle of friends, on a fateful military putsch in Jakarta in 1965 that paved the way for counter-revolution. While his name has become synonymous with nationalism, the key analytical problem for Anderson was the relationship between nation and state. This presentation will use the story of how the unpublished analysis of October 1, 1965, became the notorious ‘Cornell Paper’ as a starting point to consider the role of the state in Anderson’s thinking and writing on Indonesia.

“Benedict Anderson in Unlikely Environs: Imagined Communities and Spectres of Comparison in Forests and Other Agrarian Environments of Southeast Asia”
Nancy Lee Peluso (UC Berkeley)

Benedict Anderson did not concern himself with environmental politics but his key notions of ‘imagined communities’ and ‘spectres’ of comparison were deployed by many scholars and students of critical human geography, environmental sociology and anthropology, and political ecology. The ‘communities’ part of his imagined communities became part of contentious and important debates on whether the term accurately depicted or obfuscated the social relations and forms of social differentiation that characterize forest, mining, and other sorts of resource based communities in Southeast Asia and particularly in Indonesia. The concept was pulled out of the realm of discourse, ideas, and ideologies and inserted into the messy politics of everyday life in both Javanese communities long known to be highly differentiated and ‘adat’ communities of Borneo and Sumatra, where differentiation was less obvious. Resource politics and political ecologies also depend on comparison across similar socio-natural spaces, but Anderson’s ‘spectres’ are a much more nuanced species than a term like “comparative politics” implies. In my short talk I will give a few examples of how these ideas fit into the fields mentioned above, in which my own work falls.

“Noticing the Other Others: “The Plural Society, Revisited” and the Things That Don’t Fit”
Danilyn Rutherford (UC Santa Cruz)

Amongst the spate of links that circulated in the wake of Benedict Anderson’s recent death, one brings up a 1994 interview aired on Dutch television in which he explained, in sly equanimity, that nationalism is all about love. As Anderson spoke, the interviewer nodded, as if relieved. It’s easy to boil *Imagined Communities* down to a simple message: nations are imagined as bands of brothers. It’s also easy to read Anderson’s masterpiece as suppressing
differences in tracing a history in which a cultural model born in South America gives shape to political struggles throughout the world. In this paper, I suggest that these readings, and the criticisms they have spawned, miss something critical in Anderson’s scholarship: his passion for the peculiar. I take as my starting point “The Plural Society, Revisited,” a course that Anderson taught at Cornell in 1991, which focused on colonial census categories. In this course, Anderson asked students to take an interest in how colonial officials attempted to divide populations into an exhaustive series of figures. He also asked us to take an interest in the “other others” spawned by this project: from the spectral primitives who peopled Indonesian depictions of Irian Jaya to the denizens of Batavia and Manila’s mestizo worlds. I explore how Anderson’s taste for the anomalous guides his writings on topics ranging from the nature of charisma to the colonial roots of postcolonial states. I then turn to some recent work in anthropology that partakes of this penchant in illuminating the unexpected forms national publics can take. In the long run, Anderson’s most important legacy may be his curiosity – his art of noticing what others might miss – and the commitments that sprang from it. Benedict Anderson taught us how to think about the order of things – and to care about the things that don’t fit.

The Cultures of Area Studies
11:30 a.m. – 12:40 p.m.

"Benedict Anderson, the Journal Indonesia and the Culture of Southeast Asian Area Studies.”
Peter Zinoman  (UC Berkeley)

Discussions of Benedict Anderson’s contribution to Southeast Asian studies rightly dwell upon the impact of his writing, his activism and his unusually generous mentoring of graduate students. But like his brother Perry, Anderson also founded and ran an idiosyncratic and influential journal that profoundly shaped the intellectual field in which he worked. This paper considers how the journal Indonesia - now in its 50th year - modeled and promoted Anderson’s unique vision for Southeast Asian area-studies.

“What Nation Did Benedict Anderson Imagine? Language, Translation, Area Studies, and Reflections on the Spread of Imagined Communities”
Thongchai Winichakul (University of Wisconsin-Madison)

*Imagined Communities*, a masterpiece on nationalism, was written by a great scholar who did not, and probably cannot, have a nation to belong to. If so, what nation did Anderson imagine? Or what (nation?) inspires him to write on a nation? Perhaps it was not a nation but an ideal of a nation, i.e. a nation forever in the process of being imagined. Such a nation perhaps exists only in his meditation on language and on how it mediates ideas and idealism across different political cultures. In other words, his imagined nation is conceivable in the process of translation and comparison across different cultures – an intellectual enterprise formally known as “area studies”. *Imagined Communities* itself, as Anderson tells us (2006 edition), spreads across the globe in translation. The book and its ideas cannot avoid being understood in local languages and the local appropriations including to promote the local desire for good nationalism.
Cosmos and World  
2:00 – 3:10 p.m.

"Juxtapositions - Reading Benedict Anderson, Literary Astronomer"
Hendrik Maier (UC Riverside)

"Benedict Anderson's Cosmopolitan Leanings"
Pheng Cheah (UC Berkeley)

As a passionate defender of nationalism, Benedict Anderson was predictably skeptical of cosmopolitanism and postnationalism. The "cosmopolitan" hybridity of diasporic subjectivities in a globalized world, he argued, is a form of collective subjectivity that lacks universality and often leads to a form of long-distance ethnic nationalism with deplorable political consequences. This paper focuses on the curious turn to cosmopolitanism in Anderson's later writings, where he reformulates the structural openness of the nation qua community of language as a demotic cosmopolitanism grounded in the porosity of languages and their tendency toward hybridization. What type of collective consciousness does this generate and what are some of its political consequences and limits?

Nation and Comparison  
3:30 - 5:50 p.m.

"Benedict Anderson, Language and India: A Missed Opportunity"
Sanjay Subrahmanyam (UCLA)

Benedict Anderson’s work came to be known to most Indian historians and social scientists only in the 1980s, and because of *Imagined Communities* (1983). His earlier work that centered on Southeast Asia, and the analysis of political language, was almost entirely ignored by his Indian audience. In this presentation, I argue that this was a great missed opportunity; for had that encounter with Anderson (but also James Siegel and others) happened, the analysis of politics in the Indian past and present could have taken a different, and far more productive, turn, rather than belatedly and half-heartedly coming to Skinner, Koselleck, etc. in the 1990s.

"Memory and Forgetting in Auto/Biographies of Cambodia and Diaspora"
Penny Edwards (UC Berkeley)

The publication of Benedict Anderson's *Imagined Communities* in 1983 closely followed the launch, in Paris, of Soth Polin's semi-autobiographical novel *L'anarchiste* and Pierra Nora's project, *Lieux de memoire*. Anderson has attributed the inspiration of *Imagined Communities*, his most oft-cited and translated work, to the “sacral continuity” of a nation inscribed in Angkor and mobilized by leaders ranging from Sihanouk to Saloth Sar (Pol Pot). While the impact of *Imagined Communities* on histories of nationalism and identity in Southeast Asia is widely recognized, its influence on memory studies, now a burgeoning field globally, is less explicitly acknowledged. Taking his final chapter "Memory and Forgetting," and the "birth" of the People’s Republic of Kampuchea on 7 January 1979 as my starting point, this paper will explore the obituaries of revolution and auto/biographies of nation fashioned in stone, bone, print and plastic media in the doubly “post-socialist” regimes of the People’s Republic of Kampuchea and the State of Cambodia, and in the Royal Kingdom of Cambodia and in diaspora, from 1981 to the present, while assessing the continuing relevance of Anderson’s
seminal work to the growing corpus of scholarship on memory, memoir and memorial in Cambodia and diaspora.

"Comparative Advantages: In Appreciation of Benedict Anderson"
Rebecca Karl (New York University)

I will discuss the advantages of co-eval comparison as an approach to historical inquiry, a method Anderson opened up and elaborated most clearly in his scholarly practice.

“Contingency and Comparison: Recalling Benedict Anderson”
Vicente L. Rafael (University of Washington)

Benedict Anderson thrived on contingency as the basis for comparison. In this paper, I inquire into the connection between the two as they emerge from his autobiographical accounts. I take my cue from his various tales of unexpected encounters and accidental events, tracing the cracks and shock effects that these generated. I inquire as to how fortuitous meetings and unexpected conjunctions came to inform much of Anderson’s thinking. I then ask how contingency opened the way to another key feature of Anderson’s work: comparison. In what way did comparison function less as a method as what he called a discursive strategy, stimulated by a keen awareness of “strangeness and absence”? How and why did this discourse of comparison prove so generative? And how did Anderson’s approach to comparison predicated on contingency allow us, whoever we might be, to see the world differently, to imagine yet again the history of futures yet to come?

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