

Biographical Notes

Mary F. Somers Heidhues (b. 1936 -) – Academic/author

Mary Frances Ann Somers Heidhues was born in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, USA, in 1936.¹

Heidhues completed her Bachelor's degree in History and Chinese language at the Trinity College (now Trinity Washington University) in Washington D.C.² In 1958, she entered Cornell University in 1958 as a graduate student in Government and Southeast Asian Studies.³ She was especially interested in the Chinese minority in Indonesia.

Under the supervision of academic George McTurnan Kahin, Heidhues conducted her fieldwork in Indonesia between 1961 to 1963. She was based in Jakarta but travelled to various places where Chinese resided. There, she employed two Indonesian students – Lie Seng Kim and Soe Hok Gie – to help in her research.⁴ The dissertation, *Peranakan Chinese politics in Indonesia*, was submitted in 1965.⁵ It presented an overview of state policies towards the Chinese minority in Indonesia from independence to 1963.⁶

After she completed her PhD, Heidhues continued to research and publish works about Chinese communities in different parts of Indonesia.⁷ She went on to write *Southeast Asia's Chinese Minorities*, published by Longman in 1974.

In the 1980s, Heidhues became interested in the history of the Bangka island in Indonesia. Funding from the Volkswagen Foundation enabled Heidhues to work in several foreign libraries and visit Bangka. This research resulted in the publication, *Bangka tin and mentok pepper*.⁸

Between 1995 to 1997, Heidhues completed research for a book *Golddiggers, farmers and traders in the "Chinese districts" of West Kalimantan, Indonesia*. The book focused on the history of the rural and mining Chinese population on the periphery of Indonesia. Her work was aided by a grant from the German Research Society and for much of the time she was based at the Netherlands Institute of Advanced Study, Wassenaar.⁹

In addition to scholarly works, Heidhues also published a book on Southeast Asia for a general audience entitled *Southeast Asia: a concise history* published by Thames and Hudson in 2000.¹⁰

¹ "Somers Heidhues", NIAS website, retrieved from <https://nias.knaw.nl/fellow/somers-heidhues/>

² Somers, Mary F., *Peranakan Chinese politics in Indonesia*, Jakarta: Equinox Publishing (2009), p. 9.

³ Heidhues, Mary Somers, "Studying the Chinese in Indonesia", *Sojourn: Journal of Social Issues in Southeast Asia*, Vol. 32, No. 3 (Nov 2017), pp. 620-621.

⁴ Heidhues, Mary Somers, *Note to accompany my dissertation materials* (Jan 2017), pp. 2-4.

⁵ Heidhues, Mary Somers, "Bangka in the 1950s: Indonesia authority and Chinese reality", *Indonesia*, Iss.103 (April 2017), p. 2.

⁶ Heidhues, Mary Somers, "Bangka in the 1950s: Indonesian authority and Chinese reality", *Indonesia*, Vol. 103 (April 2017), p. 2.

⁷ Hong Liu, "Review: Golddiggers, farmers, and traders in the 'Chinese Districts' of West Kalimantan, Indonesia", *Journal of Southeast Asian Studies*, Vol.36, Iss. 2 (June 2005), p. 317.

⁸ Heidhues, Mary F. Somers, *Bangka tin and mentok pepper: Chinese settlement on an Indonesia island*, Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies (1992), p. xi.

⁹ Heidhues, Mary Somers, *Golddiggers, farmers and traders in the "Chinese Districts" of West Kalimantan, Indonesia*, Ithaca, New York: Southeast Asia Program Cornell University (2003), p. 9; Hong Liu, "Review: Golddiggers, farmers, and traders in the 'Chinese Districts' of West Kalimantan, Indonesia", p. 317; "Somers Heidhues", NIAS website, retrieved from <https://nias.knaw.nl/fellow/somers-heidhues/>.

¹⁰ Heidhues, "Bangka in the 1950s: Indonesian authority and Chinese reality", p. 1.



Besides research and writing, Heidhues has taught in universities in the United States and Germany. She is currently an independent researcher based in Gottingen, Germany.¹¹

¹¹ Heidhues, Mary F. Somers, *Bangka tin and mentok pepper: Chinese settlement on an Indonesia island*, Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies (1992), p. 270.