

The Wind in the Bamboo: Indigenous People of African Appearance Survive in Asia

Edith Mirante

Author and founder of [Project Maje](#)

Indigenous Asian hunter-gatherers of ancient ancestry, once defined as a separate “Negrito race” due to their African appearance (dark skin, curly hair) survive in the Philippines, Malaysia and India. Author/activist Edith Mirante reveals their contemporary lives and challenges with a slide show based on her new book *The Wind in the Bamboo* about her journeys to meet them.

About the book: *The Wind in the Bamboo: A Journey in Search of Asia’s ‘Negrito’ Indigenous People* reveals the plight of tribal Asians who were classified as a separate race and considered doomed to vanish. Defined as “Negrito” because they physically resemble small Africans, they may be descended from a first wave of migration out of Africa to Asia in prehistoric times. Called “savage pygmies” and “hideous dwarfs,” sold into slavery, exhibited at the 1904 St. Louis World’s Fair, nearly exterminated by disease and a cataclysmic volcano, these extraordinary people now survive as forest hunter gatherers in only a few places: mainland Malaysia, the Philippines and India’s remote Andaman Islands. Some are still armed with spears and blowpipes, a few with cellphones and graduate degrees. They were subjected to the Victorian camera’s eye and the calipers of craniometry, and now strands of their DNA are analyzed for clues to early human migrations.

Edith Mirante has roamed Asia since the early 1980s, collecting information on human rights and environmental issues. In 1986 she founded Project Maje, an independent information project on Burma and she has testified before the US Congress, European Trade Commission and International Labor Organization. She has lectured at United Nations and Amnesty International events. Mirante is the author of “*Burmese Looking Glass: A Human Rights Adventure*” and “*Down the Rat Hole: Adventures Underground on Burma’s Frontiers*” in addition to “*The Wind in the Bamboo*” which she researched with travel in Malaysia, India and the Philippines. She is also the author of reports, book chapters and articles about Southeast Asia, deforestation and refugees. Her Project Maje archive of Burma materials is in the Yale Library Southeast Asia Collection. The LA Times has called her writing “a contribution to the literature of human rights and to the literature of high adventure.”

**Wednesday, November 4, 11:30 A.M.
Sterling Memorial Library Lecture Hall
120 High Street**