

SOUTHEAST ASIA PROGRAM

AT CORNELL UNIVERSITY

BULLETIN 2009-2010



Cornell University

Indonesian, Lombok
Pair of male and female *buraq*
Painted wood, pierced hide, mirrors, and colored cloth
Herbert F. Johnson Museum of Art/Cornell University
Gift of Tom Cooper
2007.069.001-002



In Muslim communities of Lombok, traditional ceremonial processions held on special occasions, such as weddings, communal circumcisions or the welcoming of distinguished visitors, involved carrying the principal human participants on litters or palanquins outfitted with a decorative seat or mount. Several types of brightly painted and adorned mounts were used, including the *buraq*, the female-headed steed that carried Muhammad to heaven. In wedding processions the bride is carried on the *buraq* by a group of four dancers, followed by a gamelan orchestra. Every week after Friday prayers during the month of the Prophet's birthday, processions through some villages featured young boys riding a pair of male and female *buraq*, and a pair of *jaran* wooden horses, also carried by dancers and followed by a gamelan.

Cover photos by Julie Magura/Herbert F. Johnson Museum of Art

FEATURE ARTICLES

- 4 Thak
- 8 The Pilgrimage to Mecca From Southeast Asia: Oral Histories of Devotion
- 12 Karsts, Rivers, and Crocodiles: The Spread of Tai Languages into Southeast Asia
- 18 Burmese FAQs
- 24 The Art of Not Being Governed: Hill Peoples and Valley Kingdoms

SEAP NEWS

- 28 Sharp Prize
- 29 Dissertation Grants and Degrees Awarded
- 30 SEAP Student Committee
- 32 The Echols Collection
- 32 SEAP Publications
- 34 SEAP Outreach
- 36 Faculty Associates in Research
- 37 Faculty in the News
- 38 SEAP Faculty Directory

SEAP DIRECTORY

Bulletin 2009-2010

SEAP ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICE

180 Uris Hall, Cornell University
Ithaca, New York 14853
tel: (607) 255-2378
fax: (607) 254-5000
SEAP@cornell.edu
listserv: SEAP-L@cornell.edu

Thak Chaloeintiarana
Director
tc17@cornell.edu

Nancy Loncto
Associate Director for Administration
njs6@cornell.edu

Wendy Treat
Administrative Assistant
wgt2@cornell.edu

KAHIN CENTER FOR ADVANCED RESEARCH ON SOUTHEAST ASIA

640 Stewart Avenue
Ithaca, New York 14850
tel: (607) 255-3619
fax: (607) 277-1836

Jonathan Perry, *Building Coordinator*
jp36@cornell.edu
Room 104
tel: (607) 272-1925
fax: (607) 277-1904

SEAP OUTREACH

SEAP-out@cornell.edu

Thamora Fishel, *Outreach Coordinator*
tf14@cornell.edu
Room 117
tel: (607) 275-9452
fax: (607) 275-9452

SEAP PUBLICATIONS

www.einaudi.cornell.edu/bookstore/seap

EDITORIAL OFFICE
Kahin Center, Room 215
tel: (607) 255-4359
fax: (607) 277-1904

Deborah Homsher, *Managing Editor*
dlh10@cornell.edu

Fred Conner, *Assistant Editor*
flc2@cornell.edu

BUSINESS OFFICE
SEAP-pubs@cornell.edu
95 Brown Road, Box 1004
241 Langmuir Lab
Ithaca, New York 14850
tel: (607) 255-8038
fax: (607) 255-7534

Patty Horne, *Business Manager*
peh42@cornell.edu

I am certain that most of you have heard about the campaign to “re-imagine” Cornell with curtailed resources. Cornell is not alone among the national elite universities to see its endowment reduced significantly this past year. The economic crisis and the possibility of future hiccups have prompted universities to take a hard look at their general state of affairs. The bottom line is that universities walk a precarious line between generating revenues and maintaining current lavish expenditures that support a broad range of academic programs. A new normal will prevail even if the economy recovers. Although it is not my purpose to tell you about every proposal that is being considered, I can tell you that this new normal will attempt to maintain a quality education, but with fewer staff, smaller faculty, and streamlined services. It appears that solutions to a budget shortfall may include a larger intake of undergraduates, faculty teaching larger lecture courses, and more punitive measures for non-productive members of the professoriate. Every unit from colleges, departments, programs, central administration, libraries, down to student services has been subjected to reflective reviews and budget savings proposals. Although there have been many public discussions of proposed reorganizations ranging from closing of units to the collapsing of departments into divisions, no decisions have yet been made. We will have a better idea about a re-imagined Cornell at the end of spring 2010.

In light of the current financial situation and following last year’s external review report submitted by Mary Steedly (Harvard) and Al McCoy (Wisconsin), the SEAP faculty has met several times to discuss a strategic plan for the next four years. This strategic plan also coincides with our new four year National Resource Center proposal that will be submitted at the end of March. This new proposal, being written by Tamara Loos our incoming director, promises to be more exciting and filled with new energy compared to past proposals.

Following the suggestions of the external reviewers and anticipating a re-imagined Cornell, we have settled on several initiatives that will frame our activities for the next four years. We have decided that the theme that will guide our activities will be “Re-imagining new geographies and networks.” Top on our list is the revitalization of the Cornell Modern Indonesia Project (CMIP) founded by George Kahin to promote research and publication of monographs and field reports on social, political and economic aspects of Indonesia. Although major funding for the CMIP ended in the early 1970’s CMIP has continued to publish the journal *Indonesia*, and several recent mono-

graphs. To help lead CMIP, Eric Tagliacozzo has agreed to serve as director, and Tom Pepinsky as associate director.

Already, the Indonesianists have met at a long retreat and have proposed a four-pronged plan of action. The first is to organize a conference to examine and to discuss the state of the field of Indonesian studies, and to reach out to colleagues at other institutions. Following this initial conference, smaller workshops focused on disciplinary questions or themes will take place each of the next three years. Two workshops have already been suggested: Islam and politics; corporate social responsibility. It is anticipated that publications will result from these workshops. The second proposal is to design a team-taught undergraduate and graduate course on Indonesia. This course is already taking shape as I write. Thirdly, serious attempts will be made to reach out to col-

leagues in the sciences and professional schools who have research interests in Indonesia. In line with this suggestion, the SEAP faculty has also decided to include this project as a major initiative to revitalize traditional links with upper campus colleagues. To implement this plan we will invite colleagues in the sciences, especially those interested in tropical biodiversity, to share their research findings with members of SEAP as part of our regular Brown Bag lecture series. The fourth initiative is to establish a Cornell-led research center in Indonesia. Marty Hatch is spear-heading this initiative by working with Mary Ellen Lane, director of the Council of American Overseas Research Centers in Washington.

Southeast Asia, we will invite speakers to give Brown Bag lectures on their research about the Bay of Bengal that relates to Southeast Asia. We will also establish new networks among scholars of South and Southeast Asia to address common interest on the subject of inalienable possessions in law, sovereignty, and religious landscapes. Finally, to celebrate the opening of the Johnson Museum’s new wing, Kaja McGowan and Chris Miller will organize a lecture series and exhibitions on textiles and the *wayang* that will include a performance to be led by a famous Indonesian *dalang* puppet master.

SEAP outreach will continue its efforts to support teachers who work with Karen and other refugees from Burma, expanding its workshops to Syracuse, Rochester and other upstate communities. SEAP will also be part of a collaborative Rural Schools Initiative that will bring after school lan-

LETTER FROM THE DIRECTOR



guage and culture classes to rural schools and will target rural teachers and school districts for teacher training on Global Food Cultures. Two new outreach initiatives are also planned for the faculty. The first is the establishment of a clearing house for SEAP faculty course syllabi. This web-based archive will allow teachers and university colleagues to view course syllabi and reading lists that may be of use in their own teaching. A second initiative is a media training/strategic planning workshop for the faculty. The workshop will help prepare the faculty for media interviews, and to establish a strategic plan that will improve SEAP’s media presence, a point that was raised in the Steedly-McCoy report.

As you can see, a lot of energy is being generated for the next four years. And even though I will be observing all this activity from my cozy office at the Kahin Center, I am sure that I will be unable to resist participating in some, if not all, of these exciting programs. You do have my word that this missive will be my absolute last as director. I am determined as ever to retire at the end of the spring semester. But I plan to remain active as a member of the graduate school, free from regular teaching, free from committee work, and free from administrative responsibilities.

With best wishes,

With best wishes,

George Kahin

With best wishes,



left: Thak, Ben and SEAP colleagues at 102 West Ave. during the SEAP Advisory Council Meeting, Oct. '91
 center: Thak and family at Taughannock Park in spring '69
 top right: Thak and John Mapes in 102 West Avenue, March '71
 lower right: Thak (seated in the center in a tie) serves as TA for the Thai class taught by R.B. Jones circa '70

THAK



by **Benedict Anderson**,
 Aaron L. Binenkorb Professor
 Emeritus of International
 Studies, government and
 Asian Studies

When Thak and I get together for a comfy beer or scotch and start to reminisce, one or other of us will recall to mutual laughter our first encounter some time in the winter of 1967-8. Sitting in my pokey little office at the now legendary 102 West Avenue—ex-rotting fraternity—Cornell Modern Indonesia Project building, I was astounded when a young, tall, handsome “Asian,” dressed sleekly in an expensive sharkskin suit, knocked at the door. Given that this year was at the height of the “60s,” when the de rigueur dress for male students and activists was bellbottoms, hand-dyed T-shirts, scruffy beards and moustaches, and floppy sandals – I could only wonder who this fellow could be? “Must be selling something, and got lost!” I said to myself. On the other hand, Thak, looking at my ratty clothes, unshaven chin, and the hideous piles of paper all over the place, to say nothing of the heavy stink of tobacco smoke pervading everything, had somehow to convince himself that the seedy figure in the room was really a beginning professor of government and Asian studies. No chance of a historic “Dr. Livingstone, I presume!” encounter.

above center: Thak and Ben
 in the spring of '85
 lower left: Presenting to K-12
 teachers during an outreach work-
 shop circa '95
 lower right: Thak and Sui-ling
 in January '69 during
 an Ithaca winter





*left: Making his regular appearance on electric guitar at SEAP spring banquet circa '00
center: Thak with Helen Swank at the spring '10 SEAP banquet
right: In Cornell red academic robes with faculty colleagues at Thammasat University, Bangkok in '75*

These days, when I think about this episode I am nearly sure that it was a prankish set-up by Charnvit Kasetsiri (he joined the Program in the fall of 1967), who kept quiet about the sharkskin suit when he praised Thak to me as a “great guy,” who had been with him at the then most expensive college in America, namely Occidental College in LA; he also concealed from Thak my repulsive youthful habits and daily appearance.

As Thak and I began to converse, I realized that he and Charnvit were made to be close friends in the style of “opposites attract.” Where Charnvit was high-strung, romantic, rather rebellious, and from an upwardly mobile small town family, Thak was serene, practical, amused-amusing, and from an upper class lineage in the Siamese capital. What Thak told me of his background genuinely amazed me – a senior Thai diplomat’s son who went to a high school in Hong Kong (he became fluent in Cantonese) and was then packed off to the University of the Philippines for four years, where—was it possible?—he had studied bahasa Indonesia! It wasn’t an idle hobby, since his MA at Occidental College was on the notorious and momentous October 1, 1965 coup d’état in Jakarta. We had never had a Southeast Asian student with this cosmopolitan experience and these cross-national interests. No wonder that Thak, also a born joker, quickly became the unrivalled emcee at SEA Program festivities.

What should he do at Cornell besides emceeing? In those green days, recruitment of Southeast Asian students tended to mirror the interests of faculty members in different departments. Many Filipinos did economics under Frank Golay, many Thai did anthropology-sociology as well as history under Lauri Sharp and David Wyatt, while Indonesians tended to gather under the kindly wing of George Kahin, and worked on politics and political history. As I

recall it, George thought that it would be a pity to “waste” Thak on Indonesian politics, since a large number of his existing students were Indonesianists and Indonesians, whereas, aside from now-graduated David Wilson, Cornell had no one with the skills to handle Thai politics. Since George was by then immersed academically and politically in criticizing the growing disaster of the Vietnam War, he asked me “take on” this very promising young Thai and urge him to shift from Indonesian to Thai politics. But in fact he needed no urging.

The year he started studying at Cornell was the annus mirabilis

What Thak told me of his background genuinely amazed me – a senior Thai diplomat’s son who went to a high school in Hong Kong (he became fluent in Cantonese) and was then packed off to the University of the Philippines for four years, where—was it possible?—he had studied bahasa Indonesia!

of 1968: the Anti-Vietnam War Movement in the U.S., and parallel “uprisings” of youth in Mexico, Western Europe, Japan, the Philippines, and parts of South America. Siam, ruled by generals since 1947, a loyal satellite of the American Empire and founding member of SEATO, was increasingly and directly involved in the Vietnam War, which would soon engulf Laos and Cambodia. In that year, the country “hosted” 48,000 U.S. troops, and provided the launching pad for endless U.S. carpet-bombing in Indochina. Thai students in the U.S. were immediately exposed to information still largely unavailable to their age-mates back home – where the military regime exerted an effective censorship. CIA exposures, the historic, critical hearings held by Senator Fulbright’s Foreign Relations Committee on the War, to say nothing of newspapers, magazines,

Thak's stewardship of the Southeast Asia Program since 1998 has enabled a sea-change in the composition and direction of the program. Respectfully, and with great affection, we highlight below just a few of the many gifts he has given to us—the individual SEAP faculty members, staff, and students—throughout his extraordinary tenure as director of our program.

Thak's unremitting attention to the replenishing of our faculty ranks and effective diplomacy with Cornell's other departments and administration regarding retirements has

ensured a strong new generation of SEAP faculty—twelve hires and five faculty recruitments to SEAP since 1998. His diplomacy borders on enchantment, for his leadership has engendered the warm collegiality, high morale, and intellectual energy that prevail among and between SEAP faculty, graduate students, and staff. His vision for the program has encouraged the inclusion of faculty and graduate students from Cornell's many professional schools and from fields and specialties that traverse normative geographic understandings of Southeast Asia.



Paying tribute to George Kahin at the memorial celebration in '00

Although his responsibilities as director for twelve years often meant Thak sacrificed his own intellectual agenda, he resourcefully created countless opportunities to support the scholarship of faculty and graduate students not just at Cornell

but in the field more broadly. His leadership made possible the establishment of the AAS Kahin Prize for an outstanding Southeast Asian scholar's second book. He has also provided vital support to institutionalize the Golay lecture

and television, were always at hand. At Cornell, George Kahin had been a pioneer of the anti-War movement, and had huge enrolments in his undergraduate class on American Foreign Policy in Asia. Many of his graduate students also joined in. It so happened that the Thai grad student contingent at Cornell was unusually large and capable—aside from Thak, there were Charnvit Kasetsiri, Warin Wonghanchao, Boonsanong Punyodyana, Pranee Jeraditharporn, Pramote Nakornthab, M.R. Akin Rabibhadana, Shaladchai Ramitanondh and others. A good number of them began sending back clippings, articles and books on the War as well as on the U.S.-backed military regimes in Southeast Asia. Some were even brave enough to send their own signed articles. By class background and temperament, Thak was not at all a radical, but he was affected by the environment in the U.S. and by the deepening crisis in Indochina. His intervention thus took the form of a Ph.D. thesis, completed in 1974, which analyzed the person and policies of Marshal Sarit, absolute dictator of Siam from 1959 to his death from cirrhosis of the liver in 1963. It was a clever choice, since Sarit was dead, while his subordinates, Marshal Thanom and General Praphat, were still in power (till October 1973). Furthermore, after Sarit's death, lurid revelations of his ravenous sexlife and corruption had appeared in the Thai newspapers. Besides, he was an interesting brute, unlike his successors. Once a published book, this thesis has stayed in print (in updated versions) and has become a classic. I think it was the first important academic study of Thai politics by a citizen of Siam.

The work is by no means a tirade against the tyrant. Thak was really curious about the man's background, rise to power, alliance with a fragile monarchy, ideology, economic and foreign policies, vices, and legacy. In a typically Thak manner, he went out of his way to be fair to Sarit as a creature of his time and society, but his analysis was also a quiet undermining of the authority of Thanom and

Praphat.

Back in Bangkok soon after the huge popular demonstrations that helped bring down the duumvirate in late 1973, Thak settled down in Thammasat University's Political Science Faculty. Living in Bangkok myself in 1974-5, I took the opportunity to watch him "in action." He had the students in the hollow of his hand because, somehow, he managed to combine the role of a gifted academic with that of...the reader will immediately guess: humorous, not to say mugging, emcee! This was something new in Thai academic life.

The euphoria of October '73 did not last very long. The Thai political sky darkened in late 1975 and early 1976, as the U.S. was defeated in Indochina and Communist parties took control of Laos,

Living in Bangkok myself in 1974-5, I took the opportunity to watch him "in action." He had the students in the hollow of his hand because, somehow, he managed to combine the role of a gifted academic with that of...the reader will immediately guess: humorous, not to say mugging, emcee! This was something new in Thai academic life.

Cambodia, and Southern Vietnam. In reaction, sizeable numbers of so-named "leftists" were assassinated with impunity including Thak's Cornell comrade Boonsanong who had meantime become secretary-general of the new Socialist Party of Thailand. The end came on October 6, 1976 with the gruesome public murders of many Thammasat students and the reimposition of a military dictatorship thinly veiled under the premiership of royal favorite and loony-rightwing Judge Thanin Kraivixien. (Thak was horrified by what had happened, but could do nothing.)

Hundreds of students were fleeing to the guerrilla zones controlled by the Communist Party of Thailand. The future looked very gloomy. But Siam then had two pieces of "luck," which rapidly changed the situation. First, another military coup brought the intel-

series, the annual graduate student symposium, the Sharp Prize, and the Barnett Fellowship.

Thak has been key in actively soliciting faculty and language lecturer research funds and supporting SEAP Publications. He also has ensured that the Kahin Center will remain available as community space where aspiring, visiting, current, and emeritus scholars can convene and exchange ideas. Thak is a pillar of the program's intellectual and social life: who can imagine a Brown Bag lecture without Thak asking the first incisive

question or a SEAP banquet without his smooth hosting and live performances?

In a less public role, Thak has borne substantial administrative burdens unfailingly and cheerfully since 1998. His has successfully written three Title VI proposals, which have ensured that Southeast Asian language teaching, FLAS fellowships, library acquisitions and staffing, and outreach are sustained in their current breadth and depth. He has twice weathered the relocation of SEAP, first into and then out of Cornell's Arts and Sciences College, and assisted staff in dealing with the

labyrinthine structural changes.

In all, Thak's leadership has cleared a wonderful space within which debate, differences, collaborations, and new

projects have been nurtured. His dedication and talents have earned him loyalty and deep respect from all of us—staff, faculty, lecturers, and students.



In animated conversation with Tamara Loos circa '04

ligent, hard-drinking, and likeable General Kriangsak Chomanon to power. Second, the uniquely bizarre triangular wars between the communist regimes in Phnom Penh, Hanoi and Peking broke out in 1978-79. Vietnam succeeded in toppling Pol Pot, and at the same time blocked Peking's unenthusiastic soldiery from a successful invasion of the Red River delta. The Communist Party of Thailand, led largely by elderly Sino-Thai, foolishly backed Peking, whereupon Vietnam-controlled Cambodia as well as Laos cut their ties to the Thai leftists and stopped providing refuges and military supplies. Kriangsak opened relations with Hanoi, and invited Teng Hsiao-p'ing to Bangkok and made a deal by which China closed the powerful CPT radio station in Yunnan, and reduced other forms of help to the now beleaguered guerrillas. In turn, Kriangsak offered a complete amnesty (provided arms were laid down) to those in the jungle. Disillusioned ex-students flowed back to families and universities, and the party itself started to disintegrate. Kriangsak even had the courage to invite the Bangkok 18 (students imprisoned for *lèse majesté* after October 6, 1976) to his home where he was publicly photographed in an apron cooking noodles for the youngsters. Not too surprisingly, all this was too much for the palace and dominant conservative groups. In early 1980, Kriangsak was forced to resign, to be replaced by the strongly monarchist General Prem Tinsulanond, who presided over a cabinet based largely on revived conservative civilian political parties. Prem continued Kriangsak's policy on amnesty, however, and furthered the slow process of domestic political normalization.

It was at this moment that Thak, to his own surprise, was invited to become deputy spokesman of the first Prem cabinet. He thus became, I later mused, the only one of my students from Southeast Asia ever to hold high political office. Why did he accept the offer? I think that perhaps he regarded the "constitutional" rule of Prem (which lasted eight years) as the best option for the restoration of the democratizing process and for political stability in the country. I am sure he was also curious to see from the inside how Thai cabinets actually functioned. Quickly disillusioned by what he

observed, he resigned.

Then came the momentous decision to leave his country and move to the U.S.. His wife, Siu-ling, had never been happy in Bangkok and was eager to be close to her parents who had settled in Ithaca. Thak himself had no high opinion of the quality of Thai elementary and high school education, and was convinced it would be better for his two children to be raised in America. But the move certainly cost him—a career as a stellar professor in Bangkok, as well as separation from friends, colleagues and relatives. But for us at Cornell it was a huge pleasure to have him back. At that moment there was no professorial post available to him so he took an important position in the office of Cornell's Dean of Arts and Sciences, where he served for over 15 years.

During this time, he discovered his gifts for efficient management and acquired a wide, amused knowledge of campus politics. The experience honed his talent for diplomacy in an environment often overloaded with big egos and short tempers, and his gift for realistic, undemonstrative, but determined leadership. All of these blessings he brought with him when he became the longest-serving and most effective of all our Program's leaders. But Thak the scholar and much-loved teacher did not disappear, nor did his role as emcee. Few things have made me happier than seeing him re-emerge as a pioneering scholar, now not of Thai politics as such, but rather of the unexplored origins of modern Thai literature. Thak has always been where he is needed. Except in my seedy office and in a sharkskin suit, of course!

One non-accidental, Occidental irony. In Ithaca, Thak Chaloeontiarana rescued the Cornell SEA Program in its darkest hours—brought about by post-Vietnam War trauma, financial cutbacks, retirement of its most prominent scholars, the general turn-away from area studies in favor of disciplined disciplines, etc. At the same time, in Bangkok, Charnvit Kasetsiri has built over the past ten years the most successful and innovative SEA Program in Southeast Asia. As people used to say long, long ago: Hats Off! 🌀

the pilgrimage to Mecca from Southeast Asia

The Hajj, or pilgrimage to Mecca, is the central religious event in the lives of millions of Southeast Asian Muslims who are required to try to make this spiritual journey at least once in their lifetimes. Southeast Asians have been performing the Hajj since time immemorial, and the colonial-era records alone on this voyage could keep a scholar busy for an entire career, and perhaps many careers.



Eric Tagliacozzo
Associate Professor
of history and
Asian studies

But archival research is not the same as knowing the Hajj “from the inside” – and this is especially so in the case of the pilgrimage to Mecca, because the Holy Cities of Mecca and Medina are forbidden to non-Muslims. For roughly the past six years, therefore, I have been episodically putting on a rucksack and spending weeks and sometimes months traveling all over Islamic Southeast Asia speaking to scores of Muslims about the nature of their pilgrimages to Mecca. I usually stay in small, cheap hotels all over the region, and I have performed these interviews in mosques, at bus stops, on docks, and in people’s homes. The language of almost all of the interviews was Indonesian (or Malay), though English was spoken in the Southern Philippines and in a few other interviews (mostly in Singapore). Men and women were questioned, old people and young people, rich people and poor people, Muslims living in towns and cities of various sizes as well as in rural areas. These journeys have taken me to the Muslim provinces of Southern Thailand, all over Malaysia (to Penang, Melaka, Kuala Lumpur, Kuala Terengganu, Kota Kinabalu), to the Sultanate of Brunei, to Mindanao and Manila in the Philippines, to the high-rise HDB flats of Singapore, and through several islands and river- or sea-ports in Indonesia (Palembang, South Sumatra; Banjarmasin, South Borneo; Makassar, Sulawesi; Mataram, Lombok; and to Jakarta). Several weeks spent at the Universiti Islam Antarabangsa, in Kuala Lumpur, allowed me to speak to many more Muslims who had been on the Hajj from various other parts of Southeast Asia that I was not able to visit myself. In all, I have been able to interview close to one hundred Hajjis and Hajjas, who have performed their pilgrimages to the Hejaz anytime from a week prior to our discussions to some half a century ago.

What do pilgrims remember about their Hajj? What aspects of this incredible journey, which used to take months in a passage by sea, but now takes hours in a voyage by air, are worth remembering, and what is forgotten? How do Southeast Asians organize their experiences in their memories, what is sifted as crucial to a Muslim life well-lived, and what is incidental? Are material circumstances remembered as vividly as spiritual obligations, and what do various pilgrims’ memories have in common? Perhaps most importantly, how do Southeast Asian Muslims explain the Hajj to others and to themselves in the act of narrating experience? Is this process different from writ-



oral histories of devotion

Cambodian River Mosque

ing a memoir of the pilgrimage, which many Hajjis indeed have done as an act of devotion? In the pages that follow, I convey some of the memories of pilgrims as to the physical circumstances of their journeys, spanning travel, health, residence, and living in the Hejaz. Other parts of my work has dealt with the spiritual dimensions of these journeys, but for our purposes here I will focus only on the “material life” of the Hajj – and what these memories have meant to Muslims who have undertaken this longest of journeys.

As I traveled around Muslim Southeast Asia from 2003 to 2009 with my rucksack, staying for three days here, four days there, jumping from town to town, province to province, and country to country, I have heard many similar stories of the impact of the Hajj on local peoples’ lives. This kind of multi-sited interviewing has allowed me to hear the opinions of quite a wide range of people, both geographically, ethnically, and nationally, as well as in terms of gender, class, and age. The pilgrimage is the central event of many Muslims’ religious experience in the world: more capital, both financial and spiritual, is spent in performing the Hajj than in most other activities of one’s religious life. The Hajj therefore becomes symbolic of one’s connection with Islam, and how important the religion will be in carrying out one’s journey on earth. Pilgrims spoke to me in interviews ranging from half an hour to whole afternoons or evenings, depending on the time they had available, the feeling of trust shared between us, and the intensity of the memories and conversation. Some interviews were difficult or uneasy, and sometimes even unsatisfying; most, however, were fascinating and substantive and held me spellbound for hours at a time. I came with a menu of questions I wanted to ask, and tried to conform to it to get a similar spectrum of opinions that I thought were important. But I also let the conversations go where they would on many occasions, if someone had something particularly interesting to say. In this way, I heard about issues that seemed crucial to me as a researcher, but I also ended up hearing about things that I had not thought were important to ask, or had never thought of in the first place, period.

One of the most important initial memories of the material world of the Hajj that I heard about involved the dynamics and mechanics of the long trip out to Mecca itself. Most flights from Southeast Asia to the Hejaz are now undertaken by a carefully managed system of national air carriers working together with the Saudi authorities. Flights are sometimes chartered, but they usually fly directly from various Southeast Asian cities directly to Jeddah, carrying a load of passengers on board who are partly or wholly composed of pilgrims. All of this is fairly recent, however. An elderly Malaysian Hajjah with whom I spoke remembered performing her first Hajj by steamer in the 1950s: her entire family, including herself as a ten year old girl, left via Penang’s docks in 1951. Half way across the Indian Ocean two elderly passengers died, and the captain summoned all of the pilgrims on deck to pay their respects before the two bodies, covered in canvas, were lowered by ropes into the deep. Pilgrims who have made the journey in more recent years also told of new arrangements. A Thai Hajji with whom I spoke informed me that for over a century, Thai pilgrims have usually made their way down to Malaya or Malaysia in order to attach themselves to the much larger numbers of Muslims going on Hajj from that country. But recently, he said, Malay pilgrims were coming north across the border, some of them illegally, to go with the Thai contingent so that they would not have to wait on the Tabung Hajji’s long lines. These flights now leave directly from Haatyai or even Phuket, in Thailand’s southern provinces. A hereditary Filipina princess from Sulu in the Southern Philippines told of new gendered arrangements as well: because of her high status, she led a contingent of two thousand Filipino Muslims on Hajj several years ago, the only woman heading a delegation from anywhere in the world that year. It is extremely rare for a woman to be given this honor, she explained. All of these arrangements show how the actual journeying of the Hajj mutates and adapts over time, as circumstances change in the wider world.

When the pilgrims arrive in the Holy Cities, they are confronted by the spectacle of all of humanity’s cultures and colors all thrown

together in one very crowded place. Many if not most Southeast Asian Hajjis have never come across people from so many different countries before, and are absolutely fascinated by what they see. A Filipina Hajjah spoke of coming into contact with a young Chinese man who had hiked from the arid provinces of Western China all the way to Pakistan; the journey took him three months, and from there he was able to join a Pakistani pilgrim group. When he arrived in Mecca, however, he was officially “illegal” and was not allowed to join the Chinese delegation, so the Filipino woman and her companions took him in and fed him, as he had not eaten for several days. A Hajji from Palembang, South Sumatra, told me that he almost got into serious trouble while performing his Hajj as a nineteen year old adolescent: the lure of seeing so many new and strange people almost landed him in jail. He had never seen Indians before, and some of the women who were en route to Mecca from Jeddah were



Kuala Lumpur “Friday Mosque”

not yet covered in their *ihram* garments, but rather had their midriffs exposed in their saris. A Saudi policeman noticed him ogling the women and yelled at him to back away, or that he would be hauled off to prison. And the same older Malay Hajjah mentioned previously, who had remembered the death of two elderly pilgrims on her Indian Ocean steamer crossing some half-century ago as a ten year-old girl, also remembered seeing Africans for the first time on that pilgrimage. She had never seen groove scars on people’s cheeks before, and she was fascinated by these marks of West African beauty, as well as by the incredibly colorful clothes of the women from Niger. All of these descriptions of “first contact” are also part of the experience of the Hajj, and the memories are often recounted by pilgrims in a mix of joy and awe.

I wondered if this incredible transfusion of humanity – white, black, brown, and many shades in between – ever gave way to racism or ethnocentrism, as the sheer numbers of pilgrims, it seemed to me, had to engender difficulties of many kinds. When I asked this question, I was almost always met with a similar response: the feeling of goodwill and fraternity in the Holy Cities during the Hajj season is

such that there is no racism or troubles based on ethnicity at all. But when I pressed, and tried to ask pilgrims to remember their actual experiences while performing the seven proscribed circumambulations of the Ka’ba, for example, I did eventually end up hearing different stories. Several Southeast Asian women, urban, cosmopolitan, and living lives where they mingled with many different kinds of people all the time, told me that Southeast Asians were simply physically smaller than Hajjis from many other nations, and thus they often were trampled and shoved to the side in the eagerness of pilgrims to perform the required rituals in heavy pedestrian traffic. A few of them hastened to add that such *kasar* (‘coarse’) actions were only seen as such by Southeast Asians, and that perhaps this was normal to other, particular cultures. A female Javanese pilgrim was less understanding of such cultural differences, however, and expressed her disapproval of how some people treated women while upon Hajj. “We do better in Southeast Asia,” she told me, “and no man should ever be allowed to treat his wives or sisters in that way – he should be shamed.” Another pilgrim, a Muslim from Manila, told of meeting a young Afghan with a long beard while he was in Mecca: the man was smiling at him, and they embraced as brothers and spoke in halting English together about the seriousness of the war there. These kinds of cross-cultural conversations are a big part of undertaking the Hajj, and the disparate friendships made on pilgrimage can sometimes last entire lifetimes. This mirrors the accounts of colonial-era pilgrimages a century ago as well, as news, fraternity, and friendship are exchanged in the Holy Cities, traveling back to distant Muslim lands and affecting local societies.

Yet it was indeed the question of communication that seemed among the most important issues to understand in studying the Hajj: how do all of these people speak to one another, when they come from not only eleven different Southeast Asian societies, but scores of global nationalities as well? Is Arabic the most common *lingua franca*, or English, or Malay, or some combination of the three? Pilgrims had different answers for this question, depending on their own experiences. Thai Hajjis, for example, expressed some real difficulty being able to navigate Saudi society satisfactorily while they were there upon Hajj. Most Thai Muslims can speak some Malay, but their Malay is a regional dialect, and is not so close to standard Malay that it can automatically be understood. Most certainly do not speak English, or French, two other important languages (at least numerically) of the pilgrimage. But there are actually many Thai Muslims resident in Saudi Arabia, where they work as cooks, drivers, and go to religious schools as students, so that there is a built-in community of diasporic Thais who are in-country to help the Thai pilgrims with everyday needs. An Indonesian student pointed out that since Indonesia has the largest global delegation each year to Mecca, it is in the interest of shopkeepers and businesspeople in the Hejaz – regardless of their own ethnicity – to learn some Indonesian in order to be able to sell their goods. Even if they cannot speak eloquently, many Saudis and Muslims working in the kingdom can speak enough of this Southeast Asian *lingua franca* to help pilgrims get around. Yet it was the comment of a blind Malay Hajji, a Chinese man from Johor who had converted to Islam some years ago, whose answer made the most sense to me. Deprived of his eyes, he was absolutely dependent on his ears when he performed his Hajj as a young man, walking stick in hand. This man mentioned that he heard an array of languages constantly overlapping in the



Mosque in Ternate, Maluku, Eastern Indonesia

Holy Cities, pressed up against one another in subtle gradations of distance from his ears. Malay, Urdu, English, French, and Arabic, alongside many other languages, all co-exist in the Hejaz, therefore, though people often have to use sign-language to get their thoughts across when they meet each other in the street.

A final aspect of pilgrims' memories of the material world of the Hajj has to do with housing and health, the latter being partially related to the kinds of domiciles available to pilgrims. Hajjis from Southeast Asia stay in a broad range of housing in the Hejaz, from five-star hotels right outside the main mosques in Mecca and Medina to shabby rented apartment blocks, located miles from the center of each city. These options represent the differences in wealth

Deprived of his eyes, he was absolutely dependent on his ears when he performed his Hajj as a young man ... he heard an array of languages constantly overlapping in the Holy Cities ... Malay, Urdu, English, French, and Arabic, alongside many other languages, all co-exist in the Hejaz, therefore, though people often have to use sign-language to get their thoughts across when they meet each other in the street.

that are characteristic of the Southeast Asian pilgrimage: Singaporean and Brunei Hajjis, for example, mostly stay in extremely comfortable surroundings, while the pilgrims from the region's poorer nations (usually Thailand, the Philippines, and Indonesia, not to mention the small numbers who come from Cambodia or Vietnam) stay in considerably less august circumstances. These differences in abode then also translate, to some extent, into differences in health while in the Hejaz. A Cham Cambodian Hajji, for example, told me that there was a large amount of airborne disease in his group, because 45 of them were bunking together on the floor of an apartment bloc located at some distance from the main mosques. An Acehese confirmed this, stating that flu went around the compounds regularly and that the Hajj rituals themselves are demanding and very tiring, so that extra miles

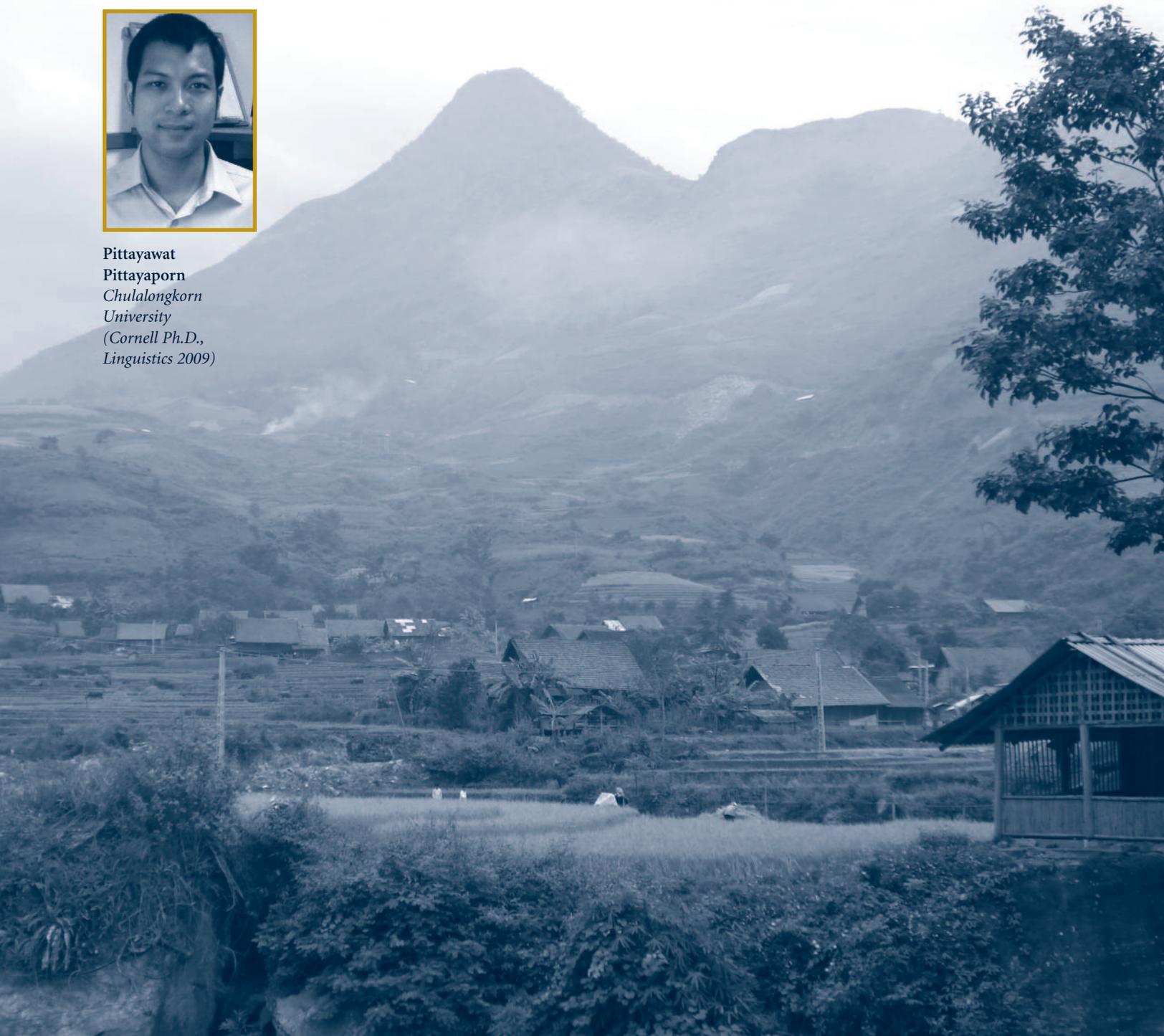
to walk and extra people sleeping on one's floor only meant a greater chance that the pilgrim would find himself sick at some point of the journey. Yet Singaporean Hajjis described the rooms at the Hilton and the Swissotel in Mecca and Medina as exceedingly comfortable, and managed according to international standards by very accommodating staffs. The Singaporean and Brunei governments oversee these arrangements, and Hajjis from both of these countries are virtually assured of plenty of rest and more than adequate food and health measures when they are out on the road performing their religious obligations. These differences in experience suggest that the Hajj, though meant as an egalitarian experience for human beings no matter what their earthly power or station before God, may not always be so. Spiritually, this may indeed be the case. Yet there are discernable differences in the material circumstances of pilgrims that are readily available for all to see.

These were the kinds of conversations that I had in a several thousand mile-long arc of regional Muslim lands over the past six years. In this short essay I have only alluded to the physical manifestations of the Hajj, and how these circumstances are related to others through the lived memories of scores of Southeast Asian pilgrims. The spiritual dimensions of these travels I have written about elsewhere. Yet through the material realities of the Hajj one gets a sense of the vast complexity of this journey, and how Southeast Asian pilgrims are both bound together and inevitably separated by the day to day manifestations of their travels in fascinating ways. From the journey out to the Middle East to the living arrangements of millions of pilgrims in the diverse quarters of Jeddah, this story is a varied one, and one reflective of many different kinds of lived experience. There is no one archetypal pilgrimage to Mecca from the monsoon countries of Southeast Asia, from the lands "beneath the winds". I still feel very fortunate to have been able to hear of the contours of these voyages, the sum of which comprise – now, as many centuries previously – the single largest annual movement of human beings anywhere on the planet. 🌀

Karsts, Rivers and Crocodiles



Pittayawat
Pittayaporn
Chulalongkorn
University
(Cornell Ph.D.,
Linguistics 2009)



...the spread of Tai languages into Southeast Asia

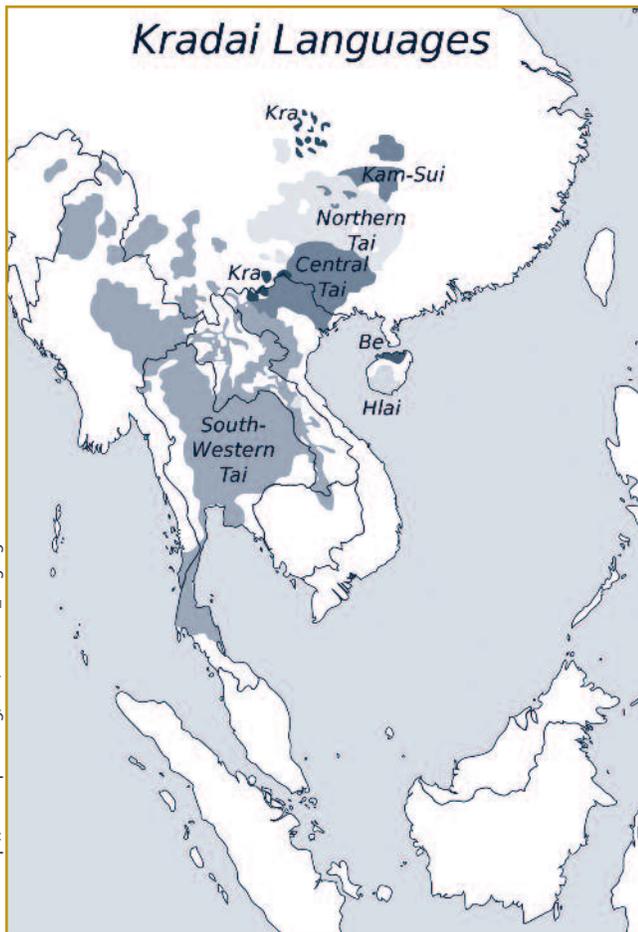
I was on a bus heading down from my field site in Jinxiu County in the mountainous east of Guangxi Zhuang Autonomous Prefecture to Guilin, a Chinese provincial town best known for its scenic beauty. Fantastically shaped limestone hills surged out of the bright green land criss-crossed by wide, lazy rivers. My memory of misty mornings in the northern Vietnamese province Lao Cai was very different from what my eyes beheld this fine morning. The long rivers that travelled past the sculpted limestone terrain contrasted sharply with the skinny creeks that ran through the deep valleys and high mountains in northern Vietnam just across the southern border.

My research on the historical development of the sound systems of Tai languages of Southeast Asia and China was bringing me to places in the Sino-Vietnamese border areas, where people speak languages quite different from my mother tongue Thai, yet recognizably ones that came from a common source. Thinking of the fieldwork I had done and the research I had yet to do before I went back to Ithaca, one question kept popping up. Where did the Tai of languages in Southeast Asia come from? My mind was wandering between Vietnam and China, trying to make sense of the experience. The road started to feel longer and longer, and then came a sudden revelation; the answer to my question was visible in the landscape of Guangxi.

Metaphorically, Tai languages are usually thought of as relatives. They form a family of languages that descended from the same ancestor, labelled Proto-Tai. Knowledge about Proto-Tai is growing thanks to comparative study of modern Tai languages. This family consists of a number of smaller branches. Even though linguists still disagree on the family structure of the Tai family, we usually recognize three primary branches: Northern Tai, Central Tai, and Southwestern Tai (Li 1977). One striking thing is that the Tai languages that dominate Mainland Southeast Asia belong to the Southwestern branch: Siamese, Shan, Tai Yuan (Northern Thai),

Lao, Lue, Black Tai, White Tai etc. Only a small number of populations on the Southeast Asian peninsula speak Central or Northern Tai languages; almost all of these live near Vietnam's northern border with China. To locate the origin of the Tai languages spoken in Southeast Asia, we must thus locate where Southwestern Tai was first spoken. In our time, Tai languages are spoken in a vast territory stretching from Vietnam in the east to Assam in the west, from Yunnan and Guangxi in the north to Malaysia in the South. This was not true several centuries ago. Tai languages most likely originated in southern China in the Xi River system, extending to the northern tributaries of the Red River in Vietnam. However, we do not have a clear picture of what happened in the thousand years between the time of Proto-Tai and the period when Southwestern Tai began to penetrate the Southeast Asian mainland (perhaps in the 10th century) (Diller 2000). (See Figures 1 and 2.)

One way to locate the cradle of Southwestern Tai is to look for the area of greatest diversity. To do this we need to know the structure of the Southwestern Tai branch. That is, we have to know which languages are more closely related to each other. Imagine your own family tree. You are grouped together with your siblings to form a small family. Then your nuclear family and the families of your parent's siblings form a bigger unit. This extended family is then



CREDIT: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tai-Kadai_languages

Figure 1: Major divisions of the Tai languages and related languages

grouped together with other extended families to form a complete family tree. A language family can be visualized in the same way. A group of most closely related languages form a subgroup. The subgroup is put together with its closest kin into a bigger subgroup. This bigger subgroup is put together with its closest relatives into yet a bigger subgroup. For Southwestern Tai, quite a few researchers (for example, Chamberlain 1975, Kullavanijaya and L-Thongkum 2000, and Pittayaporn 2007) have put forward proposals for its subgroup structure. By comparing the different proposals, at least six groups can be identified. Unfortunately, it is still a mystery how these subgroups are related to each other. (See Figure 3.)

The geographical area where the greatest number of subgroups is represented is a good candidate for the area where the language group originated. Because there is no consensus on the structure of the Southwestern Tai branch, it is difficult to identify the area of greatest diversity. However, we can get a rough idea from looking at the distribution of the six subgroups. The area of greatest diversity seems to be in the region connecting southeastern Yunnan, northern Vietnam, and northern Laos. Four out of the six subgroups are found in this area. The different Shan dialects found in Yunnan's southwestern corner and Myanmar's Shan State, most notably Tai Nüa, belong to this subgroup. Lao, and Phuan dialects in the north and northeastern part of Lao PDR are included in the second group, while Lue dialects of Sipsongpanna, Laos, and northern Vietnam

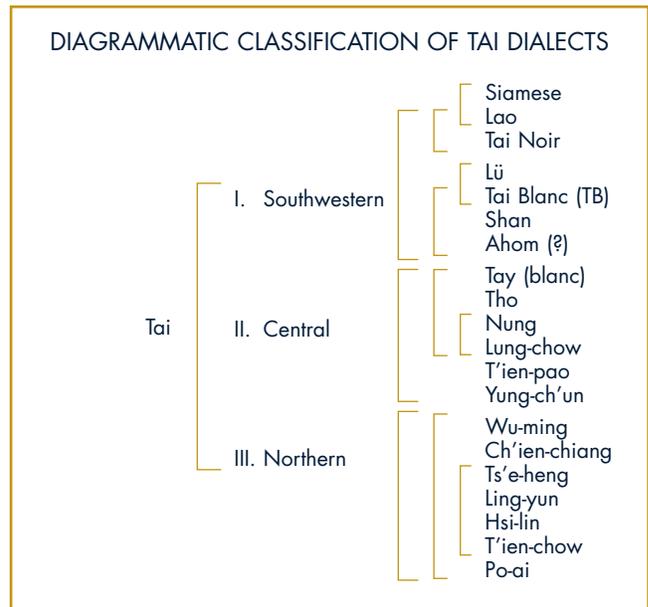


Figure 2: Three major branches of Tai (from Li 1960)

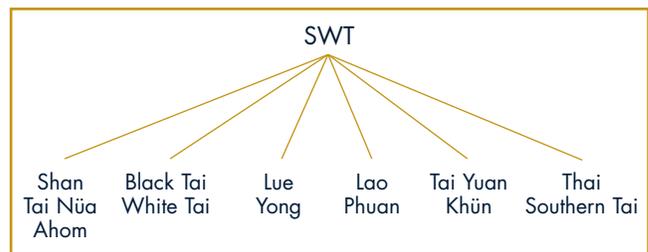


Figure 3: Six Southwestern Tai (SWT) subgroups

belong to the third group. Lastly, Black Tai and White Tai dialects from southeastern Yunnan and northern Vietnam belong to another group. The concentration of subgroups in the northern tip of Southeast Asia suggests that it is the cradle of Southwestern Tai languages. In other words, the Southwestern Tai languages seem to have spread into the peninsula from the area connecting Yunnan and mainland Southeast Asia to the west of the Red River.

Because we still do not have a clear picture of how the six subgroups are related to each other, we cannot be sure if this area is indeed the original Southwestern Tai-speaking area. However, the contrast between the landscapes of northern Vietnam and Guangxi reassures me of the plausibility of the hypothesis. Vocabulary in a language reflects the environment in which it is spoken. Changes in the vocabulary thus suggest changes in the physical environment, the culture, and the society the speakers find themselves in. The history of geographical terms in Southwestern Tai thus provides clues to the history of Tai languages.

I was getting closer to my destination. As the bus arrived in Liuzhou, a growing city near Guilin, I was amazed by the tall limestone mountains rising from the plain that gave this southern Chinese province its character and fame. This part of China is well-known for their karsts or stone forests. The most famous of all are, of course, Guilin and Yangshuo, two towns that lure countless tourists to visit Guangxi. (See Figure 4.) Most Tai languages have a

CREDIT: Ericbolz at Wikipedia
(http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Yangshuo_County)

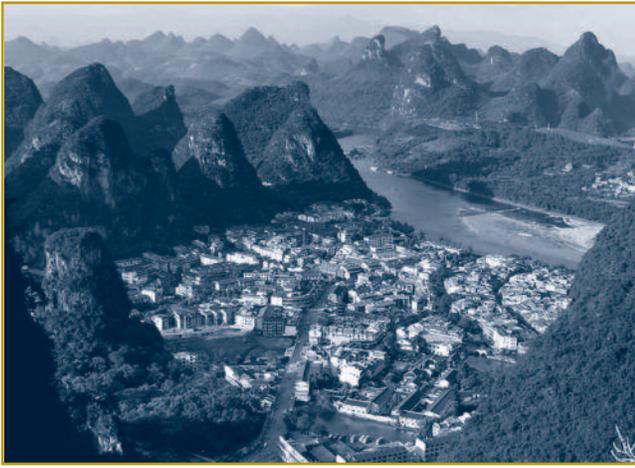


Figure 4: Limestone mountains surrounding the town of Yangshuo, Guangxi

specific word to refer to these limestone mountains. They are called *pla* in the Northern Tai dialects of Wuming and Pingguo, *pja* in Liuzhou, *pra* in Guigang, *pha* in the Central Tai dialect of Shangsi, and also *phja* in the dialects of Debao, Jingxi, and Cao Bang. Revealingly, by contrast, in all Southwestern Tai languages, this word has a mysterious identity. For example, the Thai word *pha*: **ผา** occurs alone. Its meaning given in the Dictionary of the Royal Institute, “mountains, or rock found on mountains,” is rather vague. Moreover, it is found only as parts of fossilized compounds like *naa phaa* **หน้าผา** *d hin pha*: meanin **หินผา** in rock.” Limestone mountains are called by a new compound word *phuukhaw hin* (“mount **ภูเขาหิน** one”) in modern Thai. In other Southwestern Tai dialects, the word is similarly obscured, e.g. Black Tai *na fa* “cliff,” White Tai *pha* “cliff, rock,” and Shan *pha* “cliff, stone,” as in *maak pha* “stone.”

An obsolete word suggests that the object it originally referred to was once central to the life of speakers of the language, but was no longer important at a later point in the development of the language. Therefore, the obsolescence of the specific Tai word for “limestone mountain” in Southwestern Tai suggests that karsts did not dominate the landscape where Southwestern Tai evolved. Limestone mountains must have existed where Proto-Tai originated, i.e. Guangxi. Then, as Proto-Tai transformed into the three main branches, Southwestern Tai must have developed in an area where they were not an important geographical feature. (See Figure 5.) Because limestone mountains were no longer central in the life of the speakers, the specialized term became forgotten. As the word has become obsolete, nowadays the speakers of Southwestern Tai languages no longer know what the word originally meant. Even though limestone mountains exist in some territories where Southwestern Tai languages are spoken, now they are referred to by innovative terms rather than the original Proto-Tai word.

The winding Li River travels past the bustling city of Guilin and through the spectacular countryside near Yangshuo. (See Figures 6a-b.) It is not a unique specimen in this southern province

CREDIT: Pittayawat Pittayaporn



Figure 5: Village in a mountain valley in Lao Cai Province, Vietnam

of China bordering Southeast Asia. Guangxi is nourished by a great number of big rivers, most of them tributaries of the Xi River. By comparison, northern Vietnam is a region of valleys and mountains, with numerous rocky mountain creeks that tumble through the steep terrain. (See Figure 7.) The original Tai word for “river” is still found in most languages in Guangxi and Vietnam. For example, the Northern Tai dialects of Wuming, Pingguo, and Guigang all have *ta* for “river,” while the Central Tai dialects of Shangsi, Debao, Jingxi, and Cao Bang all have *tha* for the same meaning. In contrast, Southwestern Tai languages use the general word for “water” to refer to rivers, e.g. Black Tai *nam* as in *kwaē nam* “branch of river,” White Tai *nam* or *mae nam* (“mother” + “river”), and Shan *nam*. The original Tai word is obsolete. In modern Thai, the original word *thaa* **ท่า** means “river landing.” The form is also found in the fossilized compound *naam thaa* **น้ำท่า** which the Dictionary of the Royal Institute defines as “water from river or canal.” In other

Guangxi is nourished by a great number of big rivers, most of them tributaries of the Xi River. By comparison, northern Vietnam is a region of valleys and mountains, with numerous rocky mountain creeks that tumble through the steep terrain.

Southwestern Tai dialects, *taa* or *thaa* (depending on the dialect), have also come to mean “river landing.” Similar to the case of “limestone mountain,” the obsolescence of “river” suggests that the Tai languages arrived in Southeast Asia from a region where big rivers are not prominent geographical features. Thus, although large rivers like the Chao Phraya are common in lowland Southeast Asia, the original Tai word for river is not part of everyday vocabulary.

What part of southern China or the Southeast Asian mainland is characterized by a lack of karsts and big rivers? Not surprisingly, the most outstanding candidate is the area connecting Yunnan and mainland Southeast Asia on the west side of the Red River. This region includes northwestern Vietnam, northern Laos, and south-



CREDIT: <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Guilin>



CREDIT: <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Guilin>

Figures 6a-b: The wide, winding Li River in China

eastern Yunnan. The Red River is the vein that nourishes millions of people who speak different tongues. It starts its journey in the eastern Tibetan plateau and heads south to Vietnam passing through northwestern Vietnam before reaching Hanoi and the Gulf of Tonkin. The river glides through narrow valleys for most of its course until its last stretch which traverses the coastal plains of Vietnam. Its tributaries cover most of northern Vietnam and connect to the Mekong river system (Gupta 2005). If Southwestern Tai

The original Tai word for crocodile was clearly borrowed from Chinese 鱷 “crocodile, alligator.” It is still found in Tai languages in all areas. The word is still used as the name for the crocodile in a number of dialects, e.g. ngək in Shan, and ngük in Shangsi.

languages developed in the upper reaches of the Red River, they could have followed its flow down into Southeast Asia and spread to the rest of the peninsula. Although in principle any upland area would be a possible homeland of Southwestern Tai, none is more likely than the upper reach of the Red River. First of all, it is the area with the greatest Southwestern Tai diversity. It is perhaps not a coincidence that the area suggested by the subgroup structure of Southwestern Tai fits the characterization suggested by the history of the two geographical terms. This area is also one of the earliest

upland areas the speakers of Tai would have encountered on their journey from Guangxi.

Could the cradle of Southwestern Tai languages have been further south in the lower part of the Southeast Asian peninsula? The history of another word seems to suggest against the possibility. Though not a geographical term, the Tai word for “crocodile, alligator” is particularly revealing. The original Tai word for crocodile was clearly borrowed from Chinese 鱷 “crocodile, alligator.” It is still found in Tai languages in all areas. The word is still used as the name for the crocodile in a number of dialects, e.g. *ngək* in Shan, and *ngük* in Shangsi. However, in many Tai languages from the three main branches the word has come to mean a mythical snake-like water creature. For Southwestern Tai, Black Tai has *ngiaq*, and White Tai has *ngë*. In old Thai literature, e.g. Lilit Ongkan Chaeng Nam, the word *ngiak* เงือก rly has this innovative meaning. In present-day Thai, the word has come to mean yet a different kind of water creature, the mermaid, as in *naang ngiak นางเงือก lady* + “mermaid”).

Although crocodylian species do exist in Thailand, the current Thai word for “crocodile, alligator” is a new word of uncertain origin, *choorakhee* จระเข้. While Chinese alligators (*Alligator sinensis*) were historically found only in the lakes and wasteland of the middle-lower Yangtze River Region, the Southeast Asian crocodiles (*Crocodylus porosus*, *Crocodylus siamensis*, and *Tomistoma schlegelii*) ranged the middle and lower parts of the Southeast Asian peninsula. This distribution leaves northern Southeast Asia and southern China crocodile-free. The meaning shift from “crocodile” to “mythical water creature” suggests that the fauna of the Southwestern Tai homeland did not include crocodiles and alligators. The crocodile they had heard of from their ancestors became a mysterious and imaginary creature. When speakers of Southwestern Tai later re-encountered similar reptiles in the lower part of Southeast Asia, they had to adopt a new word to refer to them. This eliminates the possibility of a southerly origin of Southwestern Tai. Thus the area connecting southeastern Yunnan, northern Laos, and northern Vietnam stands as the most probable cradle of Southwestern Tai languages before their spread into Southeast Asia.

I arrived in Guilin after hours on the road from my field site. I was exhausted but my heart was beating in excitement. Of course, I was anticipating a retreat in the spectacular karsts and rivers of Guilin and Yangshuo, but what prompted a cheerful mood was the sense of discovery. On the bus, my mind was running back and forth from the karsts of Guangxi to the high mountains of Vietnam, from wide rivers to narrow mountain creeks, and from crocodiles to mythical water creatures. This journey finally brought me to the conclusion of the lingering question. Tai languages, spreading out



Figure 7: A mountain creek in Lao Cai Province, Vietnam

from Guangxi, arrived in northern Southeast Asia on the west side of the Red River before bursting out to the rest of the peninsula. Although it was still unclear where the greatest diversity of Southwestern Tai languages was, and even though the etymological evidence was rather anecdotal, I felt the answer I came up with must

not be far from truth. Once again I recalled the vivid picture of northern Vietnam while preparing my backpack for the arrival in the bus terminal. As I was getting off the bus, I felt a deeper appreciation for my fieldwork experience in Vietnam and Guangxi, and realized where linguistics is taking me next. 🌀

REFERENCES

- Chamberlain, James R. (1975). A new look at the history and classification of the Tai dialects. In J. G. Harris & J. R. Chamberlain (Eds.), *Studies in Tai linguistics in honor of William J. Gedney* (pp. 49-60). Bangkok: Central Institute of English Language, Office of State Universities.
- Diller, Anthony. (2000). The Tai language family and the Comparative Method. In S. Burusphat (Ed.), *Proceedings : the International Conference on Tai Studies, July 29-31, 1998*. (pp. 1-32). Nakhon Pathom: Institute of Language and Culture for Rural Development, Mahidol University.
- Gupta, Avijit. (2005). Rivers of Southeast Asia. In A. Gupta (Ed.), *The Physical Geography of Southeast Asia*. (pp. 65-79). New York: Oxford University Press.
- Kullavanijaya, Pranee, & L-Thongkum, Theraphan. (2000). Linguistic criteria for determining Tai ethnic groups: case studies on Central and South-Western Tais. In S. Burusphat (Ed.), *Proceedings : the International Conference on Tai Studies, July 29-31, 1998*. (pp. 273-298). Bangkok: Institute of Language and Culture for Rural Development, Mahidol University.
- Li, Fang-kuei. (1960). A tentative classification of Tai dialects. In S. Diamond (Ed.), *Culture in history: Essays in honor of Paul Radin* (pp. 951-959). New York: Columbia University Press.
- Li, Fang-kuei. (1977). *Handbook of Comparative Tai*. Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press.
- Pittayaporn, Pittayawat. (2007) A chronology-sensitive approach to subgrouping: The case of Southwestern Tai. Paper presented at the 81st Annual Meeting of Linguistics Society of America. Anaheim, California.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I am indebted to the following organizations for all kinds of support: The Southeast Asia Program; the East Asia Program; the Lam Family Foundation for South China Research; the Linguistics Department at Cornell; the Linguistics Department at Chulalongkorn University; the Anandamahidol Foundation; Department of Linguistics, Vietnam National University in Hanoi; Center for Culture and Information, Lao Cai Province; and the School of Foreign Languages, Guangxi University for Nationalities.

My greatest appreciation also goes to the following people: Abigail Cohn, Do Quang Son, Draga Zec, Hoang Thi Cu and family, Hoang Van Ma, John Whitman, John Wolff, M.R. Kalaya Tingsabadh, Pan Khamsaeng Kaew and family, Pichet Saipan, Pranee Kullavanijaya, Prapod Assavavirulhakarn, Qin Xiuhong, Theraphan L-Thongkum, Tran Huu Son, Tran Tri Doi, You Huicai and family, friends, colleagues, and everyone that made my study at Cornell and my field research two of the most wonderful times in my life.



San San Hnin Tun answering a question at the 2007 Workshop on Burma, Border Zones, and the Karen People

Burmese FAQs



San San Hnin Tun
*Senior Lecturer,
Burmese*

While Burmese is obviously the language of the majority in Burma/Myanmar,¹ it is in the minority even among the Less Commonly Taught Languages (LCTLs) overseas: it is often the smallest program among the six Southeast Asian languages offered at Cornell – in terms of enrollment as well as in terms of the language faculty, since my appointment is shared between the Asian Studies and Romance Studies (where I teach French). In the U.S., besides Foreign Service Institute and SEASSI language courses which are available in the summer only, Cornell and Northern Illinois University are the only two academic institutions where Burmese is offered on a regular basis at all levels – beginning to advanced. While a few other academic institutions claim to offer Burmese (e.g. there are 8 on the CARLA² website), the conditions and frequency of these courses are not entirely clear. As such, little is known about Burmese language (instruction) and it arouses the curiosity of many – at Cornell or elsewhere – and various questions and requests often come in my direction, not only about the Burmese language program at Cornell, but also about anything Burmese. Sometimes there are questions that are more than remotely within my area of expertise: for instance I have been asked to find a Burmese name for a Burmese cat, prepare a document detailing 12 steps for Alcoholics Anonymous in Burmese, and so forth. Other questions which are more relevant to my role as a Burmese instructor include finding a private tutor in Myanmar or resources for self-learning of Burmese, possibilities of distance learning, identifying some Burmese scripts found on various artifacts and so on.

Be that as it may, all questions directed to me seem to be indicative of three things:

1. there is an increasing curiosity about Burmese (although there is not a parallel increase in the enrollment numbers);
2. yet, there are still relatively few resources on the internet about Burmese language to satisfy this curiosity; and
3. the existence of Burmese program at Cornell has a strong visibility, especially via internet.

In this article, I shall address some of the most frequently asked questions that have come my way, and in doing so, I hope to give readers a glimpse of the Burmese language program at Cornell.

FAQ: How many levels of Burmese are offered at Cornell? What does each level mean?

Theoretically Burmese is offered at all levels, i.e. from elementary to advanced, with training in all four language skills: speaking, listening, reading and writing. Here it is important to make a brief comment on the complexity of the notion of proficiency levels. For instance, what is considered an advanced language learner varies and depends on one's definition based on the perception of abilities and achievement in a given language. Besides, it is rare that a language learner has achieved the same proficiency level in all four skills at the same time: according to the American Council of Teachers of Foreign Languages³ (ACTFL) there are separate guidelines to define proficiency levels for speaking and writing. Similarly the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages describes what a learner is supposed to be able to do in each skill at each level.⁴ For Burmese, I assume like many other Less Commonly Taught Languages, there have not been well-established proficiency guidelines to date (which calls for a long process of a careful design and testing methodologies). As such, successful completion of advanced Burmese (Burmese 3301-3302) in an academic setting at Cornell means an equivalent of eight semesters of language training. A brief account of the intended language acquisition at the elementary and exit levels provides an overview of what one can achieve from Burmese language instruction at Cornell.

FAQ: What does one learn in a year of Burmese language instruction?

I have been told that one of the reasons Burmese is perceived to be a more difficult language to learn (rather than, say Indonesian or Vietnamese perhaps) is that it involves learning a whole new writing system. Students in Burmese start learning the script from day one. In addition, students of Burmese today are fortunate to have, among others, Okell's thoroughly prepared textbook with ample opportunities for practice to learn the Burmese script,⁵ and various resources on the internet, including a Script animation page at Cornell⁶ and NIU,⁷ which I must add, was not the case when I started teaching Burmese at Cornell in 1989.

By the end of the first semester, students are expected to be able to recognize written texts in Burmese (i.e. to read it as it should sound, even if they are unlikely to understand the meaning of most of the words), except rare characters, which usually come from Pali, which are introduced as appropriate at the subsequent levels. Most basic grammatical structures are introduced during the first semester, along with some common pre-fabricated colloquial expressions, for functions such as greeting and thanking, that need to be memorized as wholes. At the end of the first semester, students are expected to be able to produce and understand simple short sentences and some formulaic expressions, but mainly in subjects that they have encountered.

During the second semester students have more exposure to strengthen their knowledge of the writing system, while enriching their vocabulary with more meanings attached to the words, and broadening their mastery of more complex sentence structures. Furthermore students are introduced to Literary Burmese (see discussion below), during the second semester. In general, after one

year of language instruction, students can mostly produce and read simple Burmese using basic sentence patterns, and understand familiar language that they listen to. Needless to say, this is a very basic level and the amount of success depends on the learner's effort as well as his/her personality and attitude. One needs to be sufficiently adventurous trying out the acquired knowledge and language skills at every opportunity that arises, while being realistic about one's limitations and accepting that making mistakes is a part of the learning process and does not automatically reflect on his/her own intellectual ability.

FAQ: What can one achieve at the end of Burmese language training at Cornell?

Throughout the intermediate levels (at Cornell there are four semesters of Intermediate, namely 2201-2202 and 2203-2204 sequences), language training is aimed at strengthening all four language skills, mostly based on readings in a variety of genres and topics selected from authentic⁸ texts, and some experimental language learning materials that I have created myself to develop listening skills, also based on authentic audio/video materials.⁹

Beyond a beginning level, measuring acquired proficiency in a concrete manner becomes more complex. For the past few years, there has been increasing encouragement from the U.S. government, a major funding source of the LCTLs at Cornell, to develop proficiency-based language instruction, along with corresponding proficiency exams. However designing a proper proficiency test requires a long process, and such tests, like any standardized test, are controversial in terms of accuracy in measuring true acquisition. Moreover, given the limited number of Burmese courses available each semester, as well as the students' need to maximize their language training while they are at Cornell, students with varying differences in their background training and level are often placed together in the same class. Fortunately, it is also easier to tend to the students' individual needs in small classes.

I think the kind of achievement one can reach at the exit level from Cornell shall best be illustrated with a few testimonies from students:¹⁰

[After 6 semesters]: "...I ... can now converse with family in their native language...it is clear that Cornell's Burmese language program provided a solid foundation on which my Burmese skills are still growing."



Ethnomusicology student Heather MacLachlan presenting at the 2007 Workshop on Burma, Border Zones, and the Karen People

[After 7 semesters]: "...I cannot say that I have now mastered Burmese, but – to my own amazement – I can speak well enough to be understood by Burmese people. Moreover, I can read and write at a basic level.... I used ...skills (that I acquired from Burmese language training) to conduct interview with Burmese musicians, gathering invaluable ethnographic data that would have been unavailable had I not been able to ask questions and understand the answers."

[After Burmese 3302, i.e. equivalent of 8 semesters]:
 "...It is really exciting now that I can begin to speak and write about the same kinds of topics I would pursue in English. I have also been able to do some translations that are really helpful for my research."
 "...I'm at a stage where I can read news articles fairly easily, and write essays about relatively complex issues... At the end ... I feel that I can walk away confident of my foundations."

In sum what these testimonies show is that after a period of 6-8 semesters of Burmese language training at Cornell, it is absolutely possible to achieve a level of proficiency which allows one to communicate with native speakers, and to conduct research comfortably in Burmese. In Spring 2009 two students in Burmese 3302 wrote articles that were published in a popular magazine in the country –



Chika Watanabe's article in Teen Magazine #81, July 2009

a rewarding experience indeed. Needless to say, like it is often stated in the fine print of certain advertisements, "results may vary" –depending on effort and incentive. Nevertheless this first-time achievement has certainly set an inspiring precedent for future students, and perhaps serves as a consolation prize for students of Burmese who do not have the opportunity, like other Southeast Asian language students, to benefit from a study abroad program in the host country.

FAQ: What is Literary Burmese? Do students really need to learn Literary Burmese?

Historically, if spoken Burmese belongs to the Tibeto-Burman language family, of which Burmese, along with Tibetan, is one of the major language groups, written Burmese is derived from the Brahmi script of ancient India. Burmese has been written since at least the 12th century, and over time, spoken Burmese has evolved greatly but the written norms did not keep up with changes in the spoken language. For instance, pronunciation of many words has changed whereas the word order and grammatical categories remain relatively stable, and so does the spelling. As a result, modern Burmese



Rosalie Metro's article in Teen Magazine #82, August 2009

is quite different in its spoken form or colloquial style from its written form or literary style, and there are discrepancies between the orthography and pronunciation, which are more significant in Burmese than in English.

Colloquial and literary Burmese, also known as informal and formal, or spoken and written Burmese respectively, are two styles of Burmese. Unlike English where the differences between the spoken and written forms are largely stylistic, distinguishing linguistic features are a lot more prominent in Burmese. As a result, while the choice between the two styles is often intuitive for native speakers, colloquial and literary Burmese can seem like two different languages for non-native speakers, at least initially.

Generally speaking, literary Burmese is reserved for formal speech, academic prose, and most communication for official/administrative purposes; colloquial Burmese is typically used in spontaneous and informal discourse. Personal letters – even between family members or close friends – used to be written in literary Burmese, but the trend is shifting more and more to colloquial style. While newspapers, especially those sponsored by the government, commonly use literary style, broadcast news, non-government newspapers, and popular magazines are likely to use colloquial Burmese, or a mixture of both. The difference between the two styles involves a routine choice of lexical items, especially in the choice of particles, which are words that do not always have one-to-one equivalent in English, and many of them serve grammatical functions. This very difference between the two styles or registers of Burmese is at the basis of one of the FAQs, which I shall address below.

FAQ: Is the country called Burma or Myanmar now?

The term Burma is an anglicized version of *ba-ma* in colloquial Burmese, for which its literary equivalent is *Myanma*. In Burmese these two words are typically followed by another word, or more precisely by a noun such as *lu-myo* for nationality or ethnic group, *pyi* or *pyay* for country, *za-ga* for spoken language and *za* for written language, and so forth, as illustrated in the examples below.

Colloquial Burmese	Literary Burmese	Meaning
ba-ma lu-myo	myan-ma lu-myo	the Burmese (people)
ba-ma pyi	myan-ma pyi	Burma (country)
ba-ma za-ga	myan-ma za-ga	Burmese (spoken) language
ba-ma za	myan-ma za	Burmese (written) language

As such, for a native Burmese speaker the choice is essentially stylistic and contextual. However, since the current Burmese government changed its official name from Burma to Myanmar in 1989, the choice has evoked many debates, but mainly for English speakers. Linguistically there has not been a consensus for an appropriate form of adjective for Myanmar: for instance, should it be *Myanmarese* or *Myanmarian*? More importantly, it has become a complex political issue both inside and outside Burma; even in the country the choice became more semantically loaded for Burmese speakers because of the political implications imposed by the gov-

ernment. For instance the new law dictates that the terms *ba-ma* and *myan-ma* should be assigned different meanings: *ba-ma* to be restricted to refer only to the ethnic Burmans, as opposed to other ethnic groups such as Shan, Karen, etc. The country as a whole, its citizens of all races, and its language, should be called *Myan-ma* in all contexts.¹¹ I suspect, however, that the use of either term or their (lack of) signification still remains unchanged for many others in everyday casual spoken Burmese.

From my perspective as a language instructor, this is in fact a kind of cultural note that I try to incorporate in my teaching cur-

The recent case of John Yettaw, (an American who caused the prolongation of house arrest for Aung San Suu Kyi by swimming across Inya lake and taking shelter at her house) is a good, though extreme, example of risks one could run by not being careful with local laws in present day Myanmar.

riculum – culture as embedded in the language use, rather than the traditions and customs of Myanmar, which they can study, more in depth, in other courses such as Anthropology, History, Political Sciences, and so forth. In the same vein, while I may offer my personal opinions for any given issue, care is taken in order not to promote any personal political or religious beliefs in the Burmese language instruction. Rather, guidance is given to help students successfully express their own opinions. On the other hand students who are conducting research in Myanmar should take every care not to make gaffes in any politically sensitive issues, purposely or inadvertently, which may not only put at risk their own opportunities for further research in the country, but also the life of many local Burmese. The recent case of John Yettaw, (an American who caused the prolongation of house arrest for Aung San Suu Kyi by swimming across Inya lake and taking shelter at her house) is a good, though extreme, example of risks one could run by not being careful with local laws in present day Myanmar.

FAQ: Who studies Burmese at Cornell? What can one do with Burmese?

Most students who come to study Burmese are graduate students in various fields, such as anthropology, education, ethnomusicology, history, political science, and religious studies. Undergraduates are relatively few in the Burmese program, and most of them are heritage students. Here heritage students are defined loosely as students who come from a family of one or both Burmese parents, and therefore have been exposed to Burmese language and/or culture in their homes or communities from a young age. It should be noted however, that many of them who come to Cornell do not speak or understand any Burmese, except for a handful of very basic expressions.

Among the undergraduate heritage students at Cornell, I find it admirable that many tend to have career goals that involve working in Myanmar or with Burmese communities. One of them expressed appreciation that learning Burmese at Cornell helped her develop her own sense of Burmese identity, exposed her to Burmese culture



Karen refugees in Ithaca participate in the 2007 workshop at the Kahin Center

in Burma as well as in the US, and gave her the opportunity to serve as an interpreter for the local Burmese refugees. She ended up forming a Cornell Burmese Students Association, and is now continuing her studies in medicine, and hopes to work one day in Myanmar. Another one claims that “participating in SEAP’s Burmese language program was one of my most rewarding experiences at Cornell” and he is now taking Burmese (with a special arrangement through Yale) as a part of his graduate school program in international law.

In spite of the many restrictions that have long been a trademark of Burma, nowadays many graduate students have been able to carry out their field work in the country. Some have recently worked with local NGOs, some have interviewed artists from the local entertainment industry, to cite a few. Although Burma has a long history of resistance to the presence of foreigners in the country’s infrastructure (for example, it is one of the few countries where Peace Corps volunteers are not officially accepted), in recent years, as the country has opened up, there has been an increasing interest in recruiting foreigners who can teach courses (from English language courses to seminars in research methodologies, for example) mostly in/through

In spite of the many restrictions that have long been a trademark of Burma, nowadays many graduate students have been able to carry out their field work in the country.

private organizations. Universities are often closed for long periods of time, and are generally off-limits to foreigners, and university and national archives are not easily accessible. However, like many places in the world, with the right connections and the right strategic approach, it is not impossible to overcome such obstacles. Furthermore, those involved in Burma studies tend to be helpful with each other in sharing information and practical tips, ranging from

inexpensive accommodation to applying for an appropriate visa and possibilities of networking. Generally speaking the possibilities for conducting research in Myanmar have been multiplying.

In a different vein, with a growing number of refugees from Myanmar, there has been an increasing demand for interpreters in Ithaca. Cornell also has a Translator-Interpreter Program (TIP) through the Cornell Public Service Center. In the past, a couple of heritage students at a higher proficiency level volunteered to serve at TIP. Now that they have left Cornell, I recently have started training two graduate students in Burmese 3302 for interpreting services in local communities, which has proved to be an invaluable and rewarding experience for them. In fact they have expressed interest in continuing the training and experience wherever and whenever opportunities arise in the future.

FAQ: Is Burmese offered through Distance Learning?

Cornell has been approached a couple of times to offer a distance-learning course in Burmese. The first time was by the University of Washington in Seattle for one of their FLAS recipients. After consultation among various parties involved, including the Language Resource Center at Cornell, we decided to carry out the plan as an experiment beginning in the Fall 06. The idea was to have the student participate in an existing intermediate course at Cornell through video conferencing, which we thought was the least costly and the most immediately feasible plan. In the end, however, the plan was not carried out for some administrative reasons at the University of Washington’s end. In fact each time we have been approached, we were all ready to go at our end, but the plan fell through at the last minute, either for administrative or financial reasons at the other end. Nonetheless it is our hope to try it again in the near future.

FAQ: How has the Burmese language program changed at Cornell?

Looking back the last two decades of my experience with the Burmese program, I can see that things are getting better. Physically when I started at Cornell, the classroom situation was less than ideal, with four to five people crammed into Julian Wheatley’s¹² small office (Julian occasionally joined the class, sitting on the floor or on a waste basket). We, the lecturers, shared space with five or six other language instructors in a big common office, and classroom requests had to be done in advance, which was impossible for Burmese since I never knew who would show up to take Burmese until the beginning of the semester. Now I still don’t know in advance if and who will show up for Burmese (with an exception of continuing students), but the classroom situation has improved significantly. Given a small number of students, we teach our classes in our own offices. And the enrollment has been rather positive with a relatively stable number of students ranging from five to nine (compared to two to three when I first came in 1989).

As for language learning materials, since 1994-95 there have been good, easily available language learning materials for first year Burmese. I myself have developed some CALL (Computer-Assisted

Language Learning) materials using the technological advances and support – financial as well as technological and pedagogical – provided by SEAP, Department of Asian Studies, Language Resource Center and the exchange of ideas with fellow language teachers from various departments at Cornell. In addition, students today can also benefit, to a large extent, from a host of authentic materials in Burmese available on the internet, and better opportunities to interact with native Burmese speakers in the US as well as in the country. In Ithaca, there is a growing number of refugees and other immigrants coming from Myanmar. For instance students can easily go to Wegmans (our local grocery store) where they meet and chat with the Burmese sushi chefs, who often generously give discounts for those who speak some Burmese. At a more serious level, with an influx of Burmese refugee families in town, there is a demand for help with schoolwork for children who cannot yet communicate sufficiently well in English. It is heart-warming that many students have come forward to volunteer their services, although sometimes it turns out that the children do not speak Burmese either, since they come from a different ethnic background such as Karen.

Concluding remarks

In sum, interest in learning Burmese seems to be growing and the language program at Cornell has been well equipped with continuing support from various funding bodies and increasingly available resource materials. Future plans for improvement include establishing proficiency guidelines along with appropriate and efficient assessment tools, probably in collaboration with other colleagues involved in teaching Burmese, developing more language learning materials for intermediate levels and beyond, and continuing systematic research on Burmese language as it is actually used, among others. Furthermore, thanks to constant technological advances, the possibility of distance learning is in the picture, and possibilities of doing research in the country seem to be multiplying. Perhaps we can be hopeful that Burmese language instruction may one day no longer have minority status among Less Commonly Taught Language programs in the future. 🌸



Peggy Robinson facilitates a Q&A session on Education in Burma and in the refugee camps



The Paw Family Singers perform at the closing of the 2007 workshop

REFERENCES

- 1 In a population of approximately 50 million, there are an estimated 32 million speakers of Burmese. See Ethnologue, PhraseBase.com, Encyclopedia of Linguistics Vol. 1 for the number of speakers; and Wikipedia, Encyclopedia Britannica, AisanInfo.org, CIA World Fact Book, www.guideformyanmar.com, for the total population.
- 2 Center for Advanced Research on Language Acquisition <http://db.carla.umn.edu/lctl/FMPro>.
- 3 <http://www.actfl.org/i4a/pages/index.cfm?pageid=4236>
- 4 CEFR distinguishes 3 different levels, namely Basic language user, Independent language user, and Proficient language user, http://www.coe.int/T/DG4/Linguistic/CADRE_EN.asp.
- 5 Okell, J. 1994. *Burmese : An introduction to the script*. Dekalb, IL. NIU.
- 6 <http://lrc.cornell.edu/asian/courses/bu/materials/scriptanime>.
- 7 http://seasite.niu.edu/Burmese/script/script_index.htm
- 8 Authentic materials are those originally intended for a Burmese audience, as opposed to texts – spoken or written – prepared for foreign learners of the language.
- 9 Currently there is a CD with various language activities based on a feature film *Thayyan Moe* (Rains of Water Festival), and a few WAL (Web Audio Lab) materials using radio plays and news broadcasts in Myanmar, available upon request through Cornell’s Language Resource Center.
- 10 N.B. Some of the students had, in addition to Cornell, language instruction outside such as SEASSI.
- 11 Callahan, Mary P. 2003. “Language Policy in Modern Burma”, pp. 143-175 in Michael E. Brown and Sumit Ganguly, eds. *Fighting words : Language Policy and Ethnic Relations in Asia*. Cambridge (MA): MIT Press.
- 12 Julian Wheatley, my de facto supervisor in 1989, happens to be one of the few Burmese linguists and a perpetual learner of everything in life. He is a polyglot who has experience teaching more than one language, and I have been grateful for the opportunity to have many interesting discussions with him.

The Art of Not Being Governed: *Hill Peoples and Valley Kingdoms — Mainland Southeast Asia*



James Scott
Sterling professor of
political science,
anthropology, and
Director of the Agrar-
ian Studies Program,
Yale University

James Scott takes a new look at the old topic of highland/lowland divisions in mainland Southeast Asia. While many scholars of the region – especially those working in the mountainous areas in Laos or Burma – might be familiar with the stunning cultural variety present in the Southeast Asian massif, earlier scholarship has dealt with the highlands in fragmented form, choosing either a “people” (e.g. the Hmong, the Akha, the Wa) or a national policy towards highlanders as a basis of study. Scott, on the other hand, looks at general trends amongst peoples in the massif and the close relationship between high and low, especially at the already tense relationships between lowlanders (now coalesced into ethnic nation-states) and the previously state-avoiding (in Scott’s characterization) highlanders.

In the Golay lecture at Cornell and in his new book, an excerpt of which is included below, Scott challenges the idea that highland populations are relics of a past way of being, suddenly caught in the beacon of modernity. Rather, Scott sees the highlands as being a zone of “popular freedom,” where those making active decisions to flee the lowland states might take refuge. The resulting cleavage is not absolute: upland populations exist in dialectic with lowland populations, offering an ungovernable terrain and set of cultural features designed, in Scott’s formulation, to resist governance.

[Excerpt to follow]

From *The Art of Not Being Governed...*

Once we entertain the possibility that the “barbarians” are not just “there” as a residue but may well have chosen their location, their subsistence practices, and their social structure to maintain their autonomy, the standard civilizational story of social evolution collapses utterly. The temporal, civilizational series: from foraging to swiddening [elsewhere, to pastoralism], to sedentary grain cultivation, to irrigated wet-rice farming and its near-twin, the series: from roving forest bands to small clearings, to hamlets, to villages, to towns, to court-centers; these are the underpinning of the valley-state’s sense of superiority. What if the presumptive “stages” of these series were, in fact, an array of social options, each of which represented a distinctive positioning vis-à-vis the state? And what if, over considerable periods of time, many groups have moved strategically among these options toward more presumptively “primitive” forms in order to keep the state at arms length? On this view, the civilizational discourse of the valley states—and not a few earlier theorists of social evolution—is not much more than a self-inflating way of confounding the status of state-subject with civilization and that of self-governing peoples with primitivism.

....

Most, if not all, the characteristics that appear to stigmatize hill peoples: their location at the margins, their physical mobility, their swidden agriculture, their flexible social structure, their religious heterodoxy, their egalitarianism, and even the non-literate, oral cultures, far from being the mark or primitives left behind by civilization, are better seen on a long view, as adaptations designed to evade both state “capture” and state-formation. They are, in other words, political adaptations of non-state peoples to a world of states that are, at once, attractive and threatening.

....

The hegemony, in this last century, of the nation state as the standard and nearly exclusive unit of sovereignty has proven profoundly inimical to non-state peoples. State power, in this conception, is the state’s monopoly of coercive force that must, in principle, be fully projected to the very edge

of its territory where it meets, again in principle, another sovereign power projecting its command to its own adjacent frontier. Gone, in principle, are the large areas of no sovereignty or mutually cancelling weak sovereignties. Gone too, of course, are peoples under no particular sovereignty. As a practical matter, most nation states have tried, insofar as they had the means, to give substance to this vision, establishing armed

ing and forestry techniques, vernacular religion, etc. The attempt to bring the periphery into line is read by representatives of the sponsoring state as bringing civilization and progress where progress is, in turn, read as the intrusive propagation of the linguistic, agricultural and religious practices of the dominant ethnic group: e.g. the Han, the Kinh, the Burman, the Thai.¹ Thus it is difficult or inaccessible terrain, regardless of ele-

School children in Wa country, 2006



Photo by Magnus Fiskesjö

border posts, moving loyal populations to the frontier and relocating or driving away “disloyal” populations, clearing frontier lands for sedentary agriculture, building roads to the borders, and registering hitherto fugitive peoples.

...

One way of appreciating the effect of this colonization is to view it as a massive reduction of vernaculars of all kinds: of vernacular languages, minority peoples, vernacular cultivation techniques, vernacular land tenure systems, vernacular hunting, gather-

vation, that presents great obstacles to state control. As we shall see at great length, such places have often served as havens of refuge for peoples resisting or fleeing the state.

....

One of the largest, if not the largest remaining non-state space in the world is the vast expanse of uplands, variously termed the Southeast Asian massif and, more recently “Zomia.”² This great mountain realm on the marches of mainland Southeast Asia, China, India, and Bangladesh sprawls across roughly 2.5 mil-

lion square kilometers—an area roughly the size of Europe. ... Zomia is marginal in almost every respect. It lies at a great distance from the main centers of economic activity; it bestrides a contact zone between eight different nation states, several religious traditions and cosmologies. Scholarship organized historically around the classical states and their cultural cores and, more recently, around the nation state is singularly ill-equipped to examine this upland belt as a whole.... Variety, more than uniformity, is its trademark. In the space of a hundred kilometers in the hills one can find more cultural variation—in language, dress, settlement pattern, ethnic identification, economic activity and religious practices—than one would ever find in the lowland river valleys. Zomia may not quite attain the prodigious cultural variety of deeply-fissured New Guinea, but its complex ethnic and linguistic mosaic has presented a bewildering puzzle for ethnographers and historians, not to mention would-be rulers. Scholarly work on the area has been as fragmented and isolated as the terrain itself seemed to be.³

We will argue not only that Zomia qualifies as a region in the strong sense of the term, but also that it is impossible to provide a satisfactory account of the valley

states without understanding the central role played by Zomia in their formation and collapse. The dialectic or co-evolution of hill and valley, as antagonistic but deeply connected spaces is, I believe, the essential point of departure for making sense of historical change in Southeast Asia.

Most of what the hills share as physical and social spaces marks them off fairly sharply from that of the more populous lowland centers. The population of the hills is far more dispersed and culturally diverse than that of the valleys. It is as if the difficulties of terrain and relative isolation have, over many centuries, encouraged a kind of “speciation” of languages, dialects, dress, and cultural practices. The relative availability of forest resources and open, if steep, land has also allowed far more diverse subsistence practices than in the valleys, where wet rice mono-cropping often prevails. Swiddening (or slash-and-burn agriculture) which requires more land and requires clearing new fields and occasionally, shifting settlement sites, as well, is far more common in the hills.

As a general rule, social structure in the hills is both more flexible and more egalitarian than in the hierarchical, codified valley societies. Hybrid identities, movement, and the social fluidity that characterizes many

frontier societies are common. Early colonial officials, taking an inventory of their new possessions in the hills, were confused to encounter hamlets with several “peoples” living side-by-side, hill people who spoke three or four languages, and both individuals and groups whose ethnic identity had shifted, sometimes within a single generation. Aspiring to Linnaean specificity in the classification of peoples as well as flora, territorial administrators were constantly frustrated by the bewildering flux of peoples who refused to stay put. ...

The signal, distinguishing trait of Zomia, vis-à-vis the lowland regions it borders, is that it is, relatively, *stateless*. Historically, of course, there have been states in the hills where a substantial fertile plateau and/or a key node in the overland trade routes made it possible. Nan-cho, Keng-tung, Nan, and Lan-na, were among the best known.⁴ They are the exceptions that prove the rule. While state-making projects have abounded in the hills, it is fair to say that very few have come to fruition. Those would-be kingdoms that did manage to defy the odds did so only for a relatively brief, crisis-strewn period....

The hills, however, are not simply a space of political resistance but also a zone of cultural refusal as well. If it were merely a matter of political authority, one might expect the hill society to resemble valley society culturally except for their altitude and the dispersed settlement that the terrain favors. But the hill populations do not generally resemble the valley centers culturally, religiously, or linguistically. This cultural chasm between the mountains and the plains has been claimed as something of an historical constant in Europe as well, until quite recently.

There is strong evidence that Zomia is not simply a region of resistance to valley states, but a *region of refuge* as well.⁵ By “refuge,” I mean to imply that much of the population in the hills has, for over a millennium and a half, come there to evade the manifold afflictions of state-making projects in the valleys. Far from being “left behind” by the progress of civilization in the valleys, they have, over long periods of time, been choosing to place themselves out of the

Wa village and mountain landscape in Wa country, 2006



Photo by Magnus Fiksesjö

reach of the state. ... There, in regions beyond the states immediate writ and, thus, at some remove from taxes, corvée-labor, conscription, and the more-than-occasional epidemics and crop failures associated with population concentration and mono-cropping, such groups found relative freedom and safety. There, they practiced what I will call “*escape agriculture*”: forms of cultivation designed to thwart state-appropriation. Even their social structure could fairly be called “*escape social structure*” inasmuch as it was designed to aid dispersal and autonomy and to ward off political subordination....

The tremendous linguistic and ethnic fluidity in the hills is itself a crucial social resource for adapting to changing constellations of power, inasmuch as it facilitates remarkable feats of identity shape-shifting. Zomians are not as a rule only linguistically and ethnically amphibious; they are, in their strong inclination to follow charismatic figures who arise among them, capable of nearly instantaneous social change, abandoning their fields and houses to join or form a new community at the behest of a trusted prophet. Their capacity to “turn on a dime” represents the ultimate in “*escape social structure*.” Illiteracy in the hills can, more speculatively, be interpreted in the same fashion. Virtually all hill peoples have legends claiming that they once had writing and either lost it or that it was stolen from

them. Given the considerable advantages in plasticity of oral over written histories and genealogies, it is at least conceivable to see the loss of literacy and of written texts as a more-or-less deliberate adaptation to statelessness. ...

Hill societies in mainland Southeast Asia, then, for all their riotous heterogeneity, have certain characteristics in common, and most of these characteristics distinguish them sharply from their valley neighbors. They encode a pattern of historic flight and, hence, a position of opposition if not resistance. If it is this historical, structural relation that we hope to illuminate, then it makes no sense whatever to confine ourselves to a nation state framework. For much of the period we wish to examine there was no nation state and, when it did come into being late in the game, many hill people continued to conduct their cross border lives as if it didn't exist. The concept of “Zomia” marks an attempt to explore a new genre of “area” studies in which the justification for designating the area has nothing to do with national boundaries (e.g. Laos) or strategic conceptions (e.g. Southeast Asia) but is rather based on certain ecological regularities and structural relationships that do not hesitate to cross national frontiers. If we have our way, the example of “Zomia Studies” will inspire others to follow this experiment elsewhere

and improve on it. ...

I argue further that hill peoples cannot be understood in isolation, say as tribes, but only relationally and positionally vis-à-vis valley kingdoms. Ethnic distinctions and identity in the hills are not only quite variable over time but also usually encode a group's relative position vis-à-vis state authority. There are, I would hazard, hardly “tribes” at all, except in this limited relational sense of the word. The subsistence practices, the choice of crops to grow are, by the same token, selected largely with an eye to how they facilitate or thwart state appropriation. Finally, as noted earlier, even the social structure and residence patterns in the hills may be usefully viewed as political choices vis-à-vis state power. ... Far from being sociological and cultural givens, lineage practices, genealogical reckoning, local leadership patterns, and household structure, and perhaps even the degree of literacy have been calibrated to prevent (and in rare cases to facilitate) incorporation in the state.⁶ A bold case along these lines is subject to many qualifications and exceptions. I venture it, nevertheless, not simply to be provocative but because it seems so much more in keeping with the evidence than the older traditions of relatively self-contained hill-tribes left behind by civilization and progress. 🌀

The complete Frank H. Golay Lecture by James Scott may be streamed via Cornellcast at <http://www.cornell.edu/video?videoID=625&startSecs=0&endSecs=4625>

REFERENCES

- 1 These four groups, each now represented by a nation state, have absorbed all of the many earlier states of the region with the exception of Cambodia and Laos, which have, for their part, incorporated non-state spaces of their own.
- 2 Willem van Schendel, “Geographies of Knowing, Geographies of Ignorance: Southeast Asia from the Fringes,” A paper for the Workshop: “Locating Southeast Asia: Genealogies, Concepts, Comparisons and Prospects,” Amsterdam, 29-31 March, 2001.
- 3 Van Schendel, op.cit., p.10 puts it nicely: “If seas can inspire scholars to construct Braudelian regional worlds, why not the world's largest mountain ranges?” But this did not happen. Instead, excellent studies of various parts of Zomia continued to be done but these did not address an audience of fellow “Zomianists,” nor did they have the ambition to build up a Zomia perspective that could offer a new set of questions and methodologies to the social sciences.
- 4 Nan-chao/Nan-zhuao and its successor, the Dali Kingdom in southern Yunnan, from roughly the 9th century to the 13th; Kengtung/Chaing-tung/Kyaing-tung, a trans-Salween/Nu kingdom in the Eastern Shan States of Burma, independent from roughly the 14th century until its conquest by the Burmese in the 17th century; Nan a small independent kingdom in the Nan River Valley in northern Thailand; Lan-na, near the present site of Chiang Mai in Thailand, and independent from roughly the 13th to the 18th century.. It is diagnostic that each of these kingdoms was dominated by padi-planting, Tai-speaking peoples most frequently associated with state-making in the hills.
- 5 I borrow the term from Gonzalo Aguirre Beltran, who argues that much of the post-conquest indigenous population of Spanish America could be found “in areas that are particularly hostile or inaccessible to human movement” and marginal to the colonial economy. For the most part, he has in mind rugged mountainous areas, although he includes tropical jungles and deserts. Beltran tends to see such areas more as “survivals” of pre-colonial populations rather than areas to which populations fled or were pushed. *Regions of Refuge* (Washington: The Society of Applied Anthropology Monograph Series no.12, 1979), p.23 and passim.
- 6 The stripping down of social structure to simpler, minimal forms, just as the resort to variable and mobile subsistence practices, and fluid identities, has been shown to enhance adaptability to a capricious natural and political environment. See in this connection, Robert E. Ehrenreich,

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Special thanks to Andrew Alan Johnson for excerpting the key points of the lecture from the draft of Chapter One provided by Professor Scott from his new book: *The Art of Not Being Governed: An Anarchist History of Upland Southeast Asia*, Yale University Press, 2009.

Lauriston Sharp Prize 2007 and 2008

The Lauriston Sharp Prize for 2007 and 2008 goes to four remarkable SEAP anthropologists who conducted research in Thailand, Vietnam, Indonesia and on the Thai-Burma border. Congratulations to **Tyrell Haberkorn** and **Nina Hien** who share the prize for 2007, and to **Doreen Lee** and **Jane Ferguson**, the recipients for 2008. Named after the founder of the Southeast Asia Program, this prize represents the highest honor given to the graduating student or students who have contributed the most to scholarship and to the life of the program.

Tyrell Haberkorn's (Ph.D. anthropology, August 2007) dissertation "States of Transgression: Politics, Violence, and Agrarian Transformation in Northern Thailand" is an important and timely study of contemporary Thailand that pushes us beyond our present understandings of this nation as it attempts to democratize and come to grips with its sometimes volatile past. Her research focused on the historical struggles of northern Thai farmers for land

reform and the intensified violence by state and para-state forces against them in the 1970s. Unlike previous studies she integrates the experiences of rural pro-reform farmers with activists and intellectuals who participated in the (in)famous October 14 (1973) and October 6 (1976) "events." She also examines the Thai government's response, focusing not only on the assassinations and arrests, but on the heretofore unstudied arbitrary detention of activists under the guise of "occupational training."

In "Reanimating Vietnam: Icons, Photography and Image Making in Ho Chi Minh City" **Nina Hien** (Ph.D. anthropology, August 2007) develops a sophisticated analysis of visual representations, cultural discourses, and subjectivity in Vietnam. Hien's finely grained ethnography explores how the medium of photography offers alternative forms of representation in a context where "verbal" expressions of political views (or dissent) are largely censored. She uses photography to understand the complex articulations of tradition and modernity in a society under rapid transition to a "market economy."

Doreen Lee's (Ph.D. anthropology, January 2008) dissertation, entitled "The Origins of our Future: Nationalism and Youth in the Indonesian Student Movement," is based on fieldwork among student activists in Jakarta,

Indonesia, and examines the revitalization and mainstreaming of political youth culture through its history under the New Order regime, and in the era of post-Suharto democratic "Reformasi." It discusses how student activists became identified with the *pemuda* myth of nationalist independence struggles after WWII as well as the role of its narrative logic in activist actions, mass mobilization, and violence; and asks what interventions and transgressions are made possible by a middle class student movement marked by the development and educational policies of the authoritarian regime it sought to overthrow.

Jane Ferguson's (Ph.D. anthropology, August 2008) dissertation, "Rocking in Shanland: Histories and Popular Culture Jams at the Thai-Burma Border," is based on fieldwork amongst Shan former insurgent soldiers and stateless migrants. It addresses how concepts of nation and ethnicity encrypted in artifacts of popular culture are meted out and re-signified through the semiotic skills of this group of politicized and/or marginalized Shan people, involving rock music, video production, Buddhist novice ordination rituals, and more; engendering a vision of a Shan nation achieving recognition within a larger cosmo-political order.

Tyrell, Nina, Doreen, and Jane are well known to many of us as longstanding, active and generous members of the SEAP community during their years at Cornell. Kudos! 🌟



Doreen Lee, Nina Hien, Tyrell Haberkorn, and Jane Ferguson looking sharp at AAS, March 2010.

Photo credit: Richard Ruth

12TH ANNUAL Graduate Student Conference

The 12th Annual Southeast Asian Studies Graduate Conference was held at the Kahin Center for Advanced Research on Southeast Asia on March 12-14, 2010. This year we were honored to have Associate Professor Eric Tagliacozzo (Department of History, Cornell University; Director, Cornell Modern Indonesia Project), as the keynote speaker. He is author of *Secret Trades, Porous Borders: Smuggling and States Along a Southeast Asian Frontier, 1865-1915* (Yale, 2005), which was awarded the Harry J. Benda Prize from the Association of Asian Studies in 2007. He is also the editor of *Southeast Asia and the Middle East: Islam, Movement, and the Longue Duree* (Stanford, 2009) and co-editor of both *The Indonesia Reader: History, Culture, Politics* (Duke, 2009) and *Clio/Anthropos: Exploring the Boundaries Between History and Anthropology* (Stanford, 2009). His next book project is called *The Longest Journey: Southeast Asians and the Pilgrimage to Mecca*. Keynote Speech: "Hajj in the Time of Cholera: Pilgrim Ships and Contagion from Southeast Asia to the Red Sea." 🌀



DISSERTATION FELLOWSHIPS

FULBRIGHT-HAYS DOCTORAL DISSERTATION ABROAD FELLOWSHIPS

Thomas Patton, Ph.D. candidate in Asian Studies-Asian Religions, Burma/Myanmar
"On Saints and Sorcerers: Buddhist Weizza Cults of Contemporary Burma"

SOCIAL SCIENCE RESEARCH COUNCIL INTERNATIONAL DISSERTATION RESEARCH FELLOWSHIP

Chika Watanabe, Ph.D. candidate in anthropology, Burma/Myanmar
"Cultivating Transformation in Burma/Myanmar: Ideals, Knowledge, and Capacity Building Trainings by a Japanese NGO"

MILTON L. BARNETT SCHOLARSHIP

Edmund J.V. Oh, Ph.D. candidate in development sociology,
"Governing for Resilience: Scale and Power in the Co-management of Wetlands in the Mekong Delta, Vietnam"

STUDENT NEWS



2009-2010 SEAP STUDENT COMMITTEE

CO-CHAIRS: Andrew Johnson and Pamela Corey (pictured above)

MEMBERS: Claudine Ang, Sean Fear, Tim Gorman, Inga Gruss, Binh Ngo, Trais Pearson, Ivan Small, Ermita Soenarto, Courtney Work, Mirabelle Yang.

CORNELL UNIVERSITY MASTER'S THESES ON SOUTHEAST ASIA

Degree Granted

Discipline/Chair

MAY 25, 2008

Ang, Claudine Tsu Lyn
"Special – no thesis required"

History
K. Taylor

Flaim, Amanda Leigh (MS)
"Left Out and Left Behind:
The Impact of Legal Status On Educational
Attainment Among Highland Ethnic Minorities
in Northern Thailand"

Dev. Sociology
P. Eloundou-Enyegue

AUGUST 18, 2008

Lim, Samson W.
"Special – no thesis required"

History
T. Loos

JANUARY 19, 2009

Bui, Hong Thúy Thi
"Special – no thesis required"

Anthropology
A. Willford

Liu, Oiyen
"Special – no thesis required"

History
E. Tagliacozzo

Wihardja, Maria
"Special – no thesis required"

Regional Science
I. Azis

MAY 24, 2009

Chan, Leo
"Special – no thesis required"

Industrial & Labor
Relations
S. Kuruvilla

Xie, Zhiguo
"Special – no thesis required"

Linguistics
M. Rooth

AUGUST 17, 2009

Lim, Ee Mae
"Automation And Its Impact on
Women Assemblers In Malaysian
Factories"

Asian Studies
S. Kuruvilla

Somchanhmavong, Sivilyay
"Educational Opportunity Program
(EOP): A Review of The Literature and
Implications for the Disadvantaged"

Education
J. Sipple

Suprajitno, Setefanus
"Special – no thesis required"

Anthropology
M. Welker

CORNELL UNIVERSITY
DOCTORAL DISSERTATIONS ON SOUTHEAST ASIA

Degree Granted

Discipline/Chair

MAY 25, 2008

Larsen, Shannon M. Trophospheric Ozone and its Relationship to U.S. Metropolitan Economic Performance: Is Ozone a Pollutant for the Rich?	City & Regional Planning M. Warner
---	---------------------------------------

AUGUST 18, 2008

Arguillas, Marie Joy Baltazar A Multilevel Anaylsis of Community and Household Determinants of Child Mortality in Metro Cebu, the Philippines	Development Sociology L. Williams
---	--------------------------------------

Ferguson, Jane Martin Rocking in Shanland: Histories and Popular Culture Jams At The Thai-Burma Border	Anthropology A. Willford
---	-----------------------------

Hirankasi, Pimnara Essays on Thai Macroeconomy In Response to External Factors	Regional Science I. Azis
---	-----------------------------

Loicano, Martin Military and Political Roles of Weapons Systems In The Republic Of Viet Nam Armed Forces, 1966-1972	History K. Taylor
---	----------------------

Puttanapong, Nattapong The Computable General Equilibrium (cge) Models With Monte-carlo Simluation for Thailand: An Impact Anaylsis of Baht Appreciation	Regional Science I. Azis
--	-----------------------------

Todzia, Lisa Marie National Longings, National Fears: Malaysian Islam, Family and Youth On the Line	Anthropology J. Siegel
--	---------------------------

JANUARY 19, 2009

Ang, Szewei Forgiveness And The Politics of Violence in South East Asia And Asian America	Comparative Literature N. Melas
--	------------------------------------

Suwankiri, Benjarong Three Essays in Dynamic Political Economy: Migration, Welfare State, Poverty	Economics A. Razin
--	-----------------------

AUGUST 17, 2009

MacLachlan, Heather Mary Revealing The Heart: The Pop Music Industry in Yangon, Burma	Music M. Hatch
--	-------------------

Pittayaporn, Pittayawat The Phonology Of Proto-tai	Linguistics J. Whitman
---	---------------------------

Thongpruksa, Mingkwan Three Essays in Financial Globalization	Regional Science I. Azis
--	-----------------------------

Wihardja, Maria Monica Three Essays on Institutions	Regional Science I. Azis
--	-----------------------------

The Echols Collection

At the same time as the world's newspapers are transitioning from print to electronic, an increasing amount of news and information is born and lives only digitally. In response to this transition, the Echols Collection is working on solutions to systematically harvest and archive news and information from Southeast Asia.

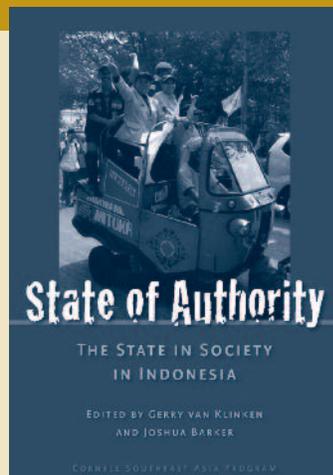
Working closely with the Library of Congress and other librarians in Southeast Asian studies, librarians from the Echols Collection are leading a project that will solve a number of issues we are currently facing.

The need for an online archive stems from two main issues that have been a concern for several years. First, the current system used to receive and archive print newspapers for future research use is unsustainable. Second, there is no current system operating to retrieve and archive information born digitally that would have been selected for inclusion in the Echols Collection had it been published in print.

What this means to the scholar and student in Southeast Asian studies is that a large amount of good research material will be lost if we don't act soon to archive it.

Archiving print newspapers has always been a difficult and expensive process. Beyond the initial cost of subscriptions, the subscribing institution must receive, store, provide access to and reformat newspapers for long term preservation, with each step in the process adding to the total cost. Multiplying that by hundreds of titles means that even the most comprehensive library collection can at best only provide very incomplete coverage of the region's newspapers. Most institutions have com-

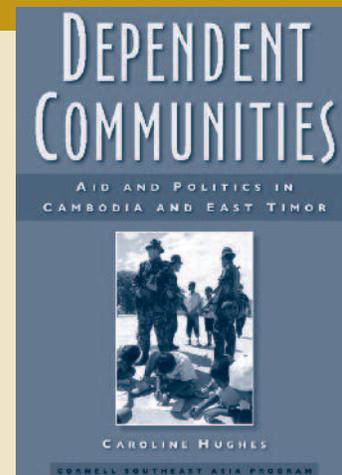
SEAP PUBLICATIONS



State of Authority: The State in Society in Indonesia

ed. Gerry van Klinken
and Joshua Barker

This volume challenges and reinvigorates our understanding of Indonesia's postcolonial state. Based on recent fieldwork in locales throughout the archipelago, these essays bring to life figures of authority — village and district heads, informal slum leaders, parliamentarians, and others — who have sought to carve out positions of power for themselves using legal and illegal means. These analytical portraits demonstrate that the state of Indonesia is not monolithic, but is constituted from the ground up by a host of local negotiations and symbolic practices. SOSEA 50, 220 pp., ISBN 978-0-87727-750-7 (pb)



Dependent Communities: Aid and Politics in Cambodia and East Timor

Caroline Hughes

Dependent Communities investigates the political situations in contemporary Cambodia and East Timor, where powerful international donors intervened following deadly internal conflicts. This comparative analysis critiques international policies that focus on rebuilding state institutions to accommodate the global market. In addition, it explores the dilemmas of politicians in Cambodia and East Timor who struggle to satisfy both wealthy foreign benefactors and constituents at home. SOSEA 48, 265 pp., ISBN 978-0-87727-748-4 (pb)

pletely given up on subscribing to newspapers from Southeast Asia, leaving only one or two copies of each title available in the United States. The goal of the Southeast Asia Digital Newspaper Archive is to overcome many of these issues by acquiring and archiving original electronic files directly from publishers while preserving the look of the print version so long as a print version exists. Having an electronic archive will also allow us to continue collecting news when titles transition to online only.

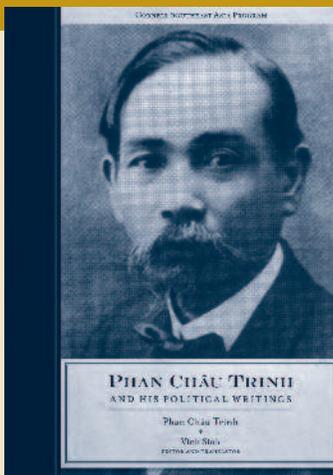
The costs of maintaining the newspaper archive will be covered by reallocating money currently used to pay for shipping, storage, reformatting and processing print newspapers. A second stream of financial support will be created by centralizing costs in one place and allowing other institutions to subscribe to newspaper titles through the

archive. The usual subscription fees will be passed on to publishers while a small amount above the actual subscription fee will be charged and retained by the archive. The result will be that subscribing institutions will save money when compared to what they are currently paying for print newspapers, while at the same time freeing up storage space and getting improved access to the same information.

The second aspect of this two-pronged approach to archiving online information is a system to collect and store PDF files from and about Southeast Asia that are currently available for free on the Internet. Through the use of a web crawler guided by the collective expertise of librarians specializing in the region, the plan is to archive these files for later research access in case they are taken down from their original websites.

While still in its initial planning stages, this project hopes to alleviate the current situation where, when files are taken down from the Internet, they are most likely gone for good.

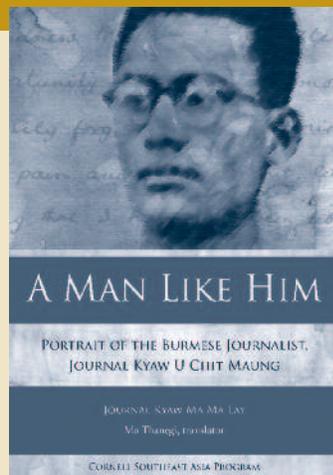
So, when that small NGO in the Philippines published its findings online as a PDF and then disbanded the next year, website and all, did we grab the report before it went down? When that government department in Laos put up its annual report for this year and at the same time deleted last year's to save some server space, did we get it in time? Do we have the latest issues of that small regional newspaper from Indonesia safely archived and available for access at the click of your mouse? Right now the answer is no. Soon, however, we hope to change that answer to yes. 🌀



Phan Châu Trinh and His Political Writings

Phan Châu Trinh,
ed. Sinh Vinh

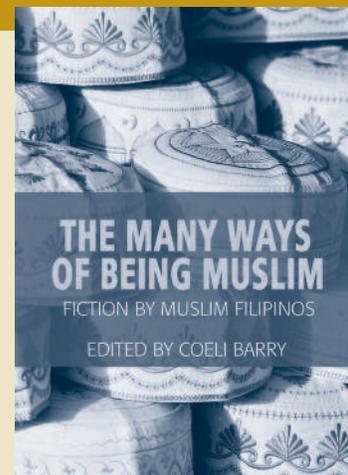
Phan Châu Trinh (1872-1926) was the earliest and most eloquent proponent of democracy and popular rights in Vietnam. His enlightened thought and promotion of gradual progress within the French colonial system set him apart from other patriots of his time. This collection examines Phan's life and offers translations of his significant works, illuminating a key era in modern Vietnamese political and intellectual history. SOSEA 49, 152 pp., ISBN 978-0-87727-749-1 (pb)



A Man Like Him: Portrait of the Burmese Journalist, Journal Kyaw U Chit Maung

by Journal Kyaw Ma Ma Lay,
translated by Ma Thanegi

This book tells the story of eight years in the brief life of Journal Kyaw U Chit Maung, a courageous Burmese journalist and editor. His political analyses helped guide the nation during a turbulent era marked by internal struggles to establish a democracy independent of Britain in the late 1930s and the Japanese Occupation of the 1940s. The memoir is written by U Chit Maung's wife, Journal Kyaw Ma Ma Lay, a resilient woman whose deep admiration and love for her uncompromising husband are captured here. SOSEA 47, ISBN 978-0-87727-747-7 (pb)



The Many Ways of Being Muslim: Fiction by Muslim Filipinos

ed. Coeli Barry
(copublished with Anvil
Publishing Inc., Philippines)

This landmark collection brings together a range of short fiction written by Muslim Filipinos over nearly seven decades, beginning in the 1940s. As these stories reflect, Muslims in the predominantly Catholic Philippines have helped define the contemporary Filipino identity and intellectual life in rich and varied ways. 216 pp., ISBN 978-087727-605-0 (PB)

In 2009-2010
SEAP outreach
engaged the
full span of
Southeast Asian
cultures.

The Burma/Karen project has continued with numerous teacher trainings and student-oriented activities. Thanks to the work of interim Outreach Coordinator Alicia Irwin and several volunteers, we launched the online Karen book project to make children's books in Sgaw Karen more accessible. Our website also features our vastly expanded set of Southeast Asia explorer boxes—traveling kits of material culture for classroom use.

In February 2009, with support from the Cornell Breaking Bread Initiative, the Filipino Rondalla, 14 Strings! and the Cornell Gamelan Ensemble collaborated on a series of workshops exploring the musical and cultural intersections between the Philippines and Indonesia. The two ensembles brought in Priscilla Magdamo, a musician and educator, to teach about kulintang, the music of Filipino Muslims which resembles the gong music of gamelan. The culminating concert featured a stirring arrangement by Chris Miller of one of the best known songs from the kroncong tradition, which, like the Spanish roots of rondalla, originated in music brought to Indonesia by the Portuguese in the 16th century. This fascinating collaboration was on display again in October during the 2009 New York Conference on Asian Studies (NYCAS) which was co-hosted by SEAP around the theme "Asia Plural."

SEAP outreach has also initiated several exciting new collaborative pilot programs including an after school language and culture program, held this year at Enfield Elementary School and the Greater Ithaca Activities Center (GIAC) with classes in Thai, Indonesian, and Vietnamese. SEAP helped Ithaca bring in the year of the Tiger by participating in a community celebration in Center Ithaca. We highlighted the Vietnamese traditions surrounding Tết through crafts, picture books, and a spectacular lion dance. 🌀

Jane Maestro-Scherer of 14 Strings! and Aiden Fishel playing the kulingtang. Visiting artist Priscilla Magdamo (top center) led a kulingtang workshop and played in concert with the Cornell Gamelan Ensemble and 14 Strings! including president Laura Friend (center). Chris Miller (far right top) tuned a 14-stringed instrument before leading the gamelan on drum at the collaborative final concert.

Photos by: Thamora Fishel and Jennifer Mellott





Photo by Jennifer Mellott

Above: Lion dancers at the Lunar New Year Celebration at Center Ithaca.

Right: Parents and kids worked together making red tissue paper lanterns for Lunar New Year at a SEAP activity table



The Allure of Refinement

Claire Holt's legacy was celebrated with a series of films, lectures and performances in December 2009 at the New York Public Library for the Performing Arts. Holt, one of the founding members of the Cornell Modern Indonesia Project, came to Cornell in 1962 after studying dance in Indonesia in the 1930s, serving as a research assistant to Margaret Mead, and working for the Office of Strategic Services and the U.S. State Department. Echoing the title of Holt's 1967 book, Kaja McGowan's lecture, "Art in Indonesia: Continuities and Change" focused on the Claire Holt Collection of Indonesian Dance and Related Arts, housed at the New York Public Library for the Performing Arts.

As one SEAP alumna reported, the audience was "very inspired and lively. Kaja presented a deeply insightful analysis of Claire Holt's work pulling out the underlying themes that Claire used to form and structure her ideas. And she managed, as well, to elegantly interweave connections between her own work on dance, textiles and ephemeral architecture with Claire

Holt's biography, fascinating ideas about art and dance, and photographic images, adding some of Ben Anderson's perceptive and brilliant thoughts about Claire and Indonesian art. Kaja always manages to blend the personal with the scholarly so well. After her talk, the audience even persuaded her to show how she uses scarves in dance and then to actually dance a bit."

Christopher J. Miller's presentation, "The Sound of Movement" analyzed gamelan and vocal accompaniment to Javanese dance. Miller drew upon Holt's writings in examining how music reinforces the character of different types of Javanese dance. In certain forms, the connection between music and movement is immediate, with drumming patterns animating displays of feminine grace and knightly courage. In others, such as the refined *bedhaya* and *srimpi* dances of the Central Javanese courts, the musical accompaniment of gamelan and voices is key for creating an atmosphere of "controlled languor." Drawing upon his own theoretical investigations of Javanese music, Miller examined

how the juxtaposition of greatly elongated vocal lines and recurring percussive cycles gives rise to a sense of both stillness and movement.

The traditions of Indonesian music and dance were also explored through performance. Jumay Chu, a senior lecturer in the Department of Theater, Film, and Dance, and six dancers from Cornell premiered "Elisions," an American modern dance perspective on the dance of Indonesia and its significance for Western aesthetics of the body in performance—set to compositions by Christopher J. Miller and recordings of the Cornell Gamelan Ensemble. The final event in the series was a concert by Gamelan Kusuma Laras with guests from the Cornell Gamelan Ensemble. 🌀



Photo: Claire Holt with a dancer from Nias. Uncredited image. Source: Photographs from Indonesia. Jerome Robbins Dance Division of the New York Public Library for the Performing Arts

SEAP WELCOMES FACULTY ASSOCIATES IN RESEARCH



Elise A. DeVido is a 1984 graduate (cum laude) of Cornell University's Department of History. She was fortunate to have taken courses on Asian History and government with Knight Biggerstaff, George McT. Kahin, David Wyatt, J. Victor Koschmann, Charles Peterson, and Sherman Cochran. She obtained her Masters in Regional Studies-East Asia and her doctorate in History and East Asian Languages (modern Chinese history) from Harvard University in 1995. For many years, Dr. DeVido taught History at National Chengchi University and National Taiwan Normal University in Taiwan. She has published articles and has a book, forthcoming in June 2010 (SUNY Press), on Buddhist nuns in Taiwan. Her article on the influence of Chinese Buddhist reformer Taixu on modern Buddhism in Vietnam is forthcoming in the *Journal of Global Buddhism*, and her chapter on the twentieth-century Vietnamese "Buddhist Revival" is published in *Modernity and Re-enchantment: Religion in Post-Revolutionary Vietnam*, edited by Philip Taylor, 2008.

She is currently engaged in two research projects, one on the life, education, and the Lam Te-Chuc Thanh Buddhist lineage of Thich Quang Duc, 1897-1963, the monk who immolated himself in June 1963, and the other on the Nguyen Imperial Household and Buddhism, from the late nineteenth century to 1945.

Dr. DeVido joined the History Department at St. Bonaventure University, New York, in August 2009 and teaches Modern Chinese History, Women in East Asia, and War and Society in Modern East Asia, the latter two courses covering China, Japan, Korea, and Vietnam. 🌀

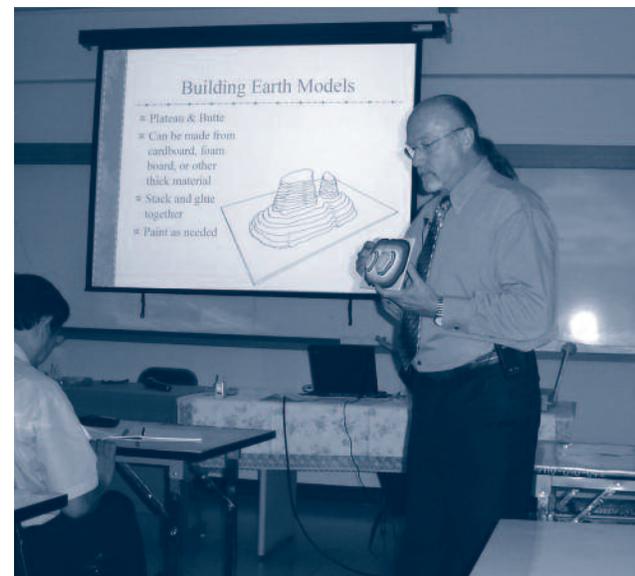
The Faculty Associates in Research (FAR) Program is a network of Southeast Asia scholars in proximity to Cornell who are linked to the SEAP community through participation in lectures, conferences, symposia, and artistic exhibitions. FAR members also have access to the Cornell Library, including the Echols Collection on Southeast Asia. To see a complete listing of FAR members please see our website <http://www.einaudi.cornell.edu/Southeastasia/outreach/far.asp> The website also has information on how to join FAR and an application form you can download.

Orvil L. White spent 21 years in the U.S. Army Special Forces with overseas duty stations including Okinawa, Korea, Japan and the Philippines. He earned his B.S. in Science Education from the University of North Carolina at Pembroke, N.C. and spent three years teaching high school Earth Science at South View High School in Fayetteville, NC. He earned a M.S. in Science Education and a Ph.D. in Curriculum & Instruction, with a minor in Geology at Indiana University in 2007. While at IU he was a director of the Saturday Science: Quest for Kids program and a state funded professional development program called SMIT'N, the Scientific Modeling for Inquiring Teachers Network. Since 2005 he has been working with doctoral students from Srinakharinwirot University in Bangkok, Thailand.

In addition to the student mentor program he has conducted numerous workshops for rural Thai schools and for students, teachers and university personnel in Bangkok. He worked with the Institute for the Promotion of Teaching Science and Technology (IPST) in Bangkok in the development of a new Earth Science curriculum.

He is currently conducting research with Dr. Sumalee Nakprada, at Mahidol University, Salaya, Phutthamonthon District, Nakhon Pathom, Thailand into the study habits of gifted and talented students in science at Mahidol Wittayanusorn School. This research aims to provide insights into the successful habits of students at this prestigious school. The results will guide the training of teachers and other students in making effective use of the limited time available for study each day and how they must structure their study time.

Dr. White is an Assistant Professor of Education at SUNY Cortland and he presented at the teacher workshop on "Education in Asia" at NYCAS 2009, hosted at Cornell. 🌀



New SEAP Faculty

Welcome to Andrew Mertha, associate professor of government, specializing in Chinese and Cambodian politics, particularly on political institutions, the policy process, and the exercise of power. Mertha has been fascinated by Cambodia ever since he wrote an art history term paper on Angkor Wat as a junior in high school in 1982. He is a core faculty member in the Cornell East Asia Program and the Cornell Southeast Asia Program, and sits on the Cornell China and Asia-Pacific Studies/CAPS Advisory Board.

Mertha's Ph.D. (2001) is from the University of Michigan, Ann Arbor. Mertha has written two books, *The Politics of Piracy: Intellectual Property in Contemporary China* (Cornell University Press, 2005) and *China's Water Warriors: Citizen Action and Policy Change* (Cornell University Press, 2008). He has articles appearing in *The China Quarterly*, *Comparative Politics*, *International Organization*, and *Orbis*. He has also contributed chapters to the following edited volumes: *Engaging the Law in China: State, Society and Possibilities for Justice* (edited by Neil Diamant, Stanley Lubman, and Kevin O'Brien, Stanford University Press, 2005); *China's Foreign Trade Policy: the New Constituencies* (edited by Ka Zeng, Routledge, 2007); and *State and Society in 21st Century China*, 2nd Edition (edited by Peter Gries and Stanley Rosen, Routledge, 2010).

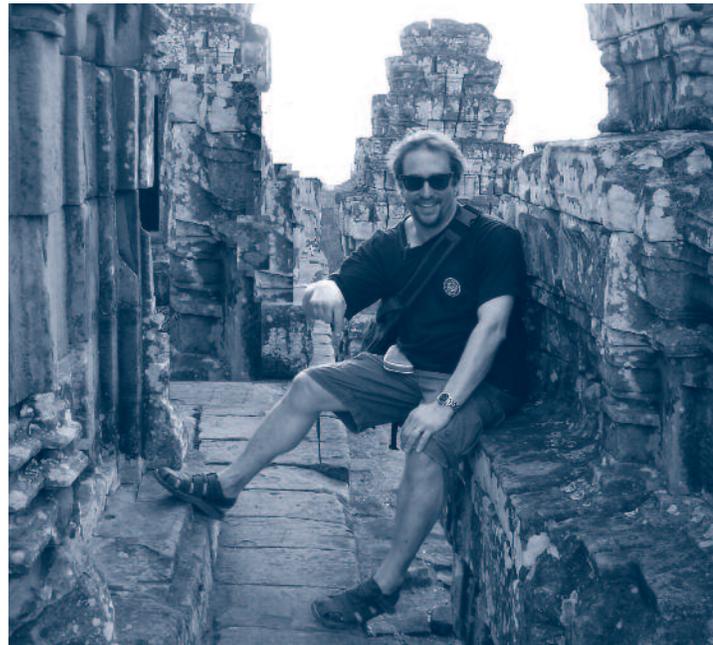
His current project focuses on political rectification, purges, and political indoctrination in China and Cambodia.

Mertha has provided public testimony for the US-China Economic and Security Review Commission, briefed the Congressional-Executive Commission on China, and has accompanied a US congressional staff delegation to Beijing, Xinjiang, and Shanghai to discuss issues of terrorism and narcotics trafficking. He has appeared on National Public Radio, the British Broadcasting Corporation, and Voice of America. Mertha's comments have appeared in *The International Herald Tribune*, *The Wall Street Journal*, *The Associated Press*, *The Los Angeles Times*, *BusinessWeek*, and *The San Francisco Chronicle*.

He is a member of the American Political Science Association, the Association for Asian Studies, and the National Committee on US-China Relations.

Mertha lived in China for seven years as an English teacher (1988-1989), a representative for a toy company (1991-1994, 1995, and 1996), and as a scholar (1998-present); and has conducted archival and field research in Cambodia beginning in 2009.

Mertha grew up on the Upper West Side of New York City, and has resided in Beijing, Shanghai, Chengdu, Chongqing, and Hong Kong. He lives in Ithaca with his wife, Isabelle, and his daughter, Sophie. 🍷



FACULTY AWARDS / KUDOS

Benedict Anderson, Ph.D. '67 has been elected to the American Philosophical Society. Anderson, the Aaron L. Bienkorb Professor Emeritus of International Studies, government and Asian Studies, is best known for his 1983 book *Imagined Communities*, which broke new ground in the study of nationalism. Anderson is the first member of SEAP to have been elected to this prestigious group of scholars.

The American Philosophical Society is the oldest learned society in the United States, founded by Benjamin Franklin in 1743 for the purpose of "promoting useful knowledge." The society supports research, discovery and education through grants and fellowships, lectures, publications, prizes and exhibitions. Its membership has included George Washington, John Adams, Thomas Jefferson, Thomas Paine, John James Audubon, Charles Darwin, Thomas Edison, Louis Pasteur, Albert Einstein and Robert Frost.

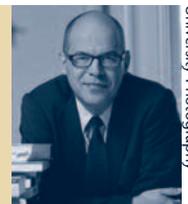
<http://www.news.cornell.edu/stories/May09/AmPhilosophSociety.html>.

Fredrik Logevall,

SEAP core faculty member and professor

of history and the John S. Knight Professor of International Studies, became the Director of the Mario Einaudi Center for International Studies.

Thomas Pepinsky, assistant professor of government has been selected as one of 39 outstanding scholars of Asia to participate in the new National Asia Research Program.



Lindsay France,
University Photography

Benedict R. O. Anderson, Aaron L. Binenkorb Professor Emeritus of International Studies, government and Asian studies
Iwan Azis, professor, city and regional planning
Warren B. Bailey, professor, finance and Asian studies
Randolph Barker, professor emeritus, agricultural economics and Asian studies
Anne Blackburn, associate professor, south Asia and Buddhist studies
Thak Chaloemtiarana, professor, Asian studies; Director of the Cornell University Southeast Asia Program
Abigail Cohn, professor, linguistics and Asian studies
Magnus Fiskesjö, assistant professor, anthropology
Greg Green, curator, Echols Collection on Southeast Asia
Martin F. Hatch, associate professor, music and Asian studies
Ngampit Jagacinski, senior language lecturer, Thai
Sarosh Kuruvilla, professor, industrial and labor relations and Asian studies
Fred Logevall, professor, history; Director of the Mario Einaudi Center for International Studies

SEAP FACULTY 2009–2010

Tamara Lynn Loos, associate professor, history and Asian studies (on leave 2009-2010)
Andrew Mertha, associate professor, government
Kaja M. McGowan, associate professor, art history, archaeology and Asian studies
Stanley J. O'Connor, professor emeritus, art history and Asian studies
Lorraine Paterson, assistant professor, Asian studies
Jolanda Pandin, language lecturer, Indonesian
Thomas Pepinsky, assistant professor, government
Hannah Phan, language lecturer, Khmer
Maria Theresa Savella, senior language lecturer, Tagalog
James T. Siegel, professor emeritus, anthropology and Asian studies
Eric Tagliacozzo, associate professor, history and Asian studies
Keith W. Taylor, professor, Vietnamese cultural studies and Asian studies (on leave 2009-2010)
Erik Thorbecke, H.E. Babcock Professor Emeritus of Food Economics and economics
Thuy Tranviet, senior language lecturer, Vietnamese
San San Hnin Tun, senior language lecturer, Burmese
Marina Welker, assistant professor, anthropology
Andrew Willford, associate professor, anthropology and Asian studies
Lindy Williams, professor, development sociology
John U. Wolff, professor emeritus, linguistics and Asian studies

It is the policy of Cornell University actively to support equality of educational and employment opportunity. No person shall be denied admission to any educational program or activity or be denied employment on the basis of any legally prohibited discrimination involving, but not limited to, such factors as race, color, creed, religion, national or ethnic origin, sex, sexual orientation, age, gender identity or expression, disability or veteran status. The university is committed to the maintenance of affirmative action programs that will assure the continuation of such equality of opportunity. Sexual harassment is an act of discrimination and, as such, will not be tolerated. Inquiries concerning the application of Title IX can be referred to the director of the Office of Workforce Diversity, Equity and Life Quality, Cornell University, 160 Day Hall, Ithaca, NY 14853-2801 (telephone: 607/255-3976; TDD: 607/255-7066).

Requests for information about services for Cornell faculty and staff members, applicants for employment, and visitors with disabilities who have special needs, as well as related questions or requests for special assistance, can be directed to the Office of Workforce Diversity, Equity and Life Quality, Cornell University, 160 Day Hall, Ithaca, NY 14853-2801 (telephone: 607/255-3976; TDD: 607/255-7066). Students with disabilities should contact Student Disability Services, Center for Learning and Teaching, Cornell University, 420 Computing and Communications Center, Ithaca, NY 14853-2601 (telephone: 607/254-4545; TDD 607/255-7665).

Published by the Southeast Asia Program, Cornell University, 180 Uris Hall, Ithaca, NY 14853-7601.

Editor: Thamora Fishel

Design: www.westhillgraphics.com

Cornell is an equal opportunity, affirmative action educator and employer.

Printed on recycled paper.

www.einaudi.cornell.edu/southeastasia



www.einaudi.cornell.edu/southeastasia