

Southeast Asia Program

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COVER CAPTION

Hedda Morrison

[Four people pulling a boat upriver, Sarawak], 1947-1967

Gelatin silver print

*Hedda Morrison photographs, #4516. Division of Rare and Manuscript
Collections, Cornell University Library*



Letter from the Director

IT IS MY GREAT PRIVILEGE to step in for Abby Cohn as interim director of the Southeast Asia Program. Ever since I first began to explore my interest in Southeast Asia back in the late 1990s, I have thought of Southeast Asian studies at Cornell as something truly special: a community of students, teachers, and scholars who come together to share their common commitment to understanding a region and its people. As we navigate the challenges of the coronavirus (COVID-19) this semester, I'm particularly grateful for the resilience and creativity of the SEAP community as we find ways to stay connected and continue the work of teaching and scholarship.

Of course, Abby and the rest of SEAP's leadership team have left us in a really great position: on the strength of our most recent successful application for funding as a Department of Education Title VI National Resource Center, we will be offering Foreign Language and Area Studies grants for both graduate and undergraduate students this spring. SEAP will also be supporting graduate and undergraduate student research projects through travel grants.

Earlier this month, the Graduate Student Committee hosted the 22nd annual SEAP Graduate Conference. This was a novel "virtual conference" given restrictions on off-campus visitors to Cornell, but our fearless student leaders made the best of a trying situation and the event was a great success nevertheless. This year's theme, *Engendering Migrations*, was particularly timely and aligns with the recently launched Mario Einaudi Center Grand Challenge titled *Migrations: Researching, Teaching, and Building for a World on the Move*. Indeed, things at Cornell are looking up for international studies more broadly, with plans for a new Global Studies certificate and an exciting new set of initiatives from incoming Einaudi Center Director Rachel Riedl, all of which will help to strengthen SEAP as a distinctive part of Cornell's international landscape.

One other initiative that Abby started—and which I find to be a wonderful new part of the calendar—is a Faculty/Graduate Student dinner every semester. The dinner this semester was on February 26, and I saw a range of new faces and was pleased to acknowledge the excellent work of our student leaders Emily Donald, Sarah Meiners, and Bruno Shirley. SEAP graduate students are also playing an instrumental part in the SEAP Histories Project, digitizing photographs and video-taped interviews, and making them publicly accessible.

This past fall was an active one for SEAP. In addition to our busy Gatty Lecture series, the highlight for me was Caroline Hau's dynamite Golay Lecture, which invited us to reflect on the audiences that we choose when we write about our region, as well as our position as scholars in relation to the communities we study. It also, I thought, gently reminded us not to lose sight of the importance of region in the rush to deconstruct the old, stale, externally imposed categories that we use to describe it (see p. 12).

The COVID-19 pandemic unfortunately has led us to postpone some of our most exciting programming for the second half of the Spring semester (normally a flurry of Southeast Asia-related activity). Happily, the latest addition to the Cornell Modern Indonesia Project's series of State of the Field conferences went off without a hitch. Abby Cohn, from linguistics, organized a conference on the State of the Field in Indonesian Languages and Linguistics held in February. In a first for this series, the conference was held in Indonesia, in collaboration with local host Atma Jaya Catholic University and support from Tokyo University of Foreign Studies and University of Maryland. The timing for 2020 could not have been better, as the United Nations designated 2019 as the its International Year of Indigenous Languages, and siting the conference in Indonesia meant that the conference featured substantial participation from Indonesian scholars.

Postponed until next fall, however, is a joint conference run by SEAP in collaboration with the Cornell Institute for European Studies and the Latin American Studies Program on democratic backsliding. Entitled *Global Challenges to Democracy*, this conference will bring together country experts from around the world to address the challenges facing electoral democracy around the world. Southeast Asian cases—the Philippines, Indonesia, and Thailand—play a prominent role in these discussions, and experts from SEAP, including our Faculty Associate in Research Meredith Weiss, will share what experts from the rest of the world can learn from them (see p. 36). In the meantime, an exciting lineup of Thursday lectures organized by the SEAP grad committee promises kept us engaged, with presentations ranging from Berkeley's Penny Edwards on drama and Empire in colonial Burma and our own Keith Taylor on the unacknowledged lessons of the Vietnam War. Although as of current writing the remaining Gatty lectures have been postponed indefinitely, we hope to be able to organize informal discussions to showcase the work of our graduate students Anissa Rahadiningtyas and Hilary Faxon.

As disappointed as we are by the necessity of postponing these events, we are nevertheless looking forward to next fall, as 2020 represents the seventieth anniversary of SEAP. From September 11–13, we will be holding a symposium to commemorate the program's deep and unique history and to celebrate its exciting future (see p. 37). We hope you will join us.

—Tom Pepinsky, Professor of Government

Layers of Cultural History in Monuments of Vientiane, Laos



by Anna Koshcheeva,
PhD student in Asian
studies



*Left: Image 2: the statue of King Chao Anouvong.
Right: Image 1: the Monument of the Unknown Soldier in Vientiane.*



Monuments have fascinated scholars of Southeast Asia for decades.

Benedict Anderson wrote about tombs of unknown soldiers as emblems of national imagining, Maurizio Peleggi studied monuments in Thailand as sites of cultural memory, and Roger Nelson analyzed the monuments in Phnom Penh and Vientiane as symbols of postcolonial nationhood.¹

When travelers go to Laos, they rarely think of sculptures.² They often anticipate seeing a blend of Buddhist and French architecture in Luang Prabang, the old capital of the Kingdom of Million Elephants and now a UNESCO world heritage site.³ Other common tourist attractions include picturesque caves and waterfalls, the ruins of Vat Phou temple, and mysterious stone jars in the Plain of Jars. Yet, when I came to the Lao capital of Vientiane in winter 2018 to do my fieldwork on the contemporary art of Laos, the monuments of Vientiane arrested my imagination. Parallel to running interviews with artists and gallery owners, I found myself pedaling the streets of Vientiane to take photos of urban landmarks or find some information about the construction of various monuments. It was something about these sites' aesthetics, the stories they whispered regarding the past, but, most of all, their attitude to time that made me curious.

Aesthetically, monuments of Vientiane present unexpected combinations of artistic legacies: Buddhist, modernist, and socialist alike. For example, I was stunned to see the Monument of the Unknown Soldier as a stupa-like structure with a communist red five-pointed star at the top (Image 1). In most Eastern Bloc countries, including Russia, where I am from, the communist regime positioned itself as antagonistic to religious beliefs. It seemed impossible to me to imagine communist symbols superimposed on religious form in architecture, such as a stupa. The Lao communist regime, however, developed a more complex than simply hostile relationship with the Lao Sangha, or Buddhist monastic order. Furthermore, as the Monument of the Unknown Soldier demonstrates, the articulation of the new socialist order in Laos became expressed through Buddhist architectural symbols of cosmology.

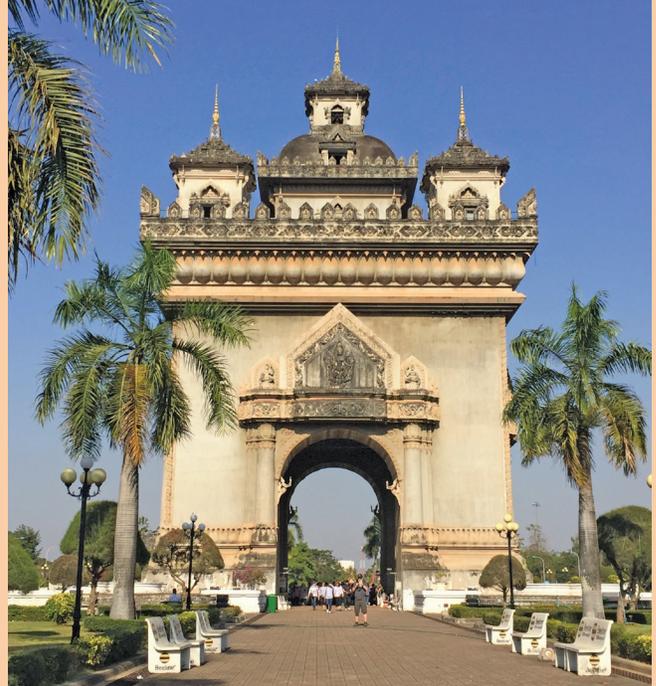
When it comes to the history of Laos, the monuments of Vientiane make coded statements. For example, the statue

of Chao Anouvong on the bank of the Mekong River doesn't overlook the city (Image 2). Instead, it faces Thailand. Chao Anouvong was the last warrior-king of Vientiane, who mounted a rebellious but fatal campaign against his Siamese masters. His defeat caused the destruction of Vientiane in 1828 and the massive forced relocation of Lao people to Northeast Thailand.⁴ Notwithstanding, Anouvong's uprising is seen as a heroic act central to modern Lao nationalism, argues Grant Evans, the preeminent historian of Laos.⁵ Now, Anouvong's statue stands on the bank of the Mekong, extending an arm toward its Thai neighbor in an ambiguous gesture open to viewers' interpretations.

Monuments of Vientiane have fascinating stories of their own as well. For instance, the statue of King Sisavang Vong was gifted by the Soviet Union in the early 1970s (Image 3). Yet, it was presented not to the Lao communist leaders, but to the Royal Lao Government (1953-1975). As a gift of fraternal USSR, the king's statue was kept in socialist Laos after 1975, despite the significance it had of celebrating the monarchy and its unsurpassed achievement of granting the constitution to Lao people.⁶ Moreover, the statue was executed in two identical versions, one installed in Vientiane and the other in Luang Prabang.

Arguably, the most iconic architectural site in Laos is the Pha That Luang stupa (Image 4). King Setthathirath, one of the greatest kings of Lane Xang, established the site in the sixteenth century on the older religious structure. He envisioned Pha That Luang to be the merit center of his kingdom and a symbol of its virtue. Nowadays, the iconography of modern Laos treats Pha That Luang as a national sight. The stupa graces national banknotes, stamps, and tourist posters. Notably, since 1991, or in other words since the fall of post-socialism, Pha That Luang replaced the Soviet red star and hammer and sickle as the national emblem of the Lao People's Democratic Republic (PDR).

The most ambitious secular monument in Laos is the Anousavaly Monument, or as it is better known in modern days, Patuxai⁷ (Image 5). Established in 1957, Anousavaly commemorated the independence of Laos from France.⁸ It did



Clockwise from bottom left: Image 4: Pha That Luang stupa; Image 3: The statue of King Sisavang Vong; Image 5: Patuxai or Anousavaly Monument.

so, however, by appropriating the symbol of French military achievements, the Arc de Triomphe, doubling it in width and placing structures resembling Buddhist temple gates on top of it. Doubling the base of Anousavaly allowed it to adopt the square floor plan common for Lao stupas. In this sense, it is possible to read the design of Anousavaly as a manifestation of the cosmology of modern decolonizing Laos. This cosmology is literally based on the icon of French modernity, yet it carries Lao cultural and religious symbols above it.

In that same year of 1957, when the construction of Anousavaly commenced, the statue of King Setthathirath was erected in front of the Pha That Luang stupa.⁹ The statue celebrated the leadership of the Kingdom of Lane Xang in its golden age, and did so through the modern medium of secular sculpture. In this sense, the monument embodied both the historical narrative of past glory and a modern motivation to establish the national ancestry of the newly independent and decolonizing kingdom.

Interestingly, the process of producing statues of heroic kings of the past was revived in the post-socialist period (ca. 1989–91 until now). Since the 1990s, the earlier-mentioned statue of Chao Anouvong was built alongside the statue of King Fa Ngum, founder of Lane Xang kingdom.¹⁰ Moreover, besides the king-warriors of Lane Xang, the statues of communist party leaders and monuments celebrating the union of soldiers, workers, and peasants were produced in the last three decades. One of them is placed in front of the Army Museum in Vientiane (Image 6). The inspiration for this monument came from the famous Soviet statue *The Worker and the Kolkhoz Woman*, designed by architect Vera Mukhina.¹¹ While references to Soviet visuality are obvious in the Lao monument, it also has unique local features. For instance, the Lao kolkhoz (collective farm) woman holds a stack of rice in her left hand and graces a rifle on her back. Also, the central character of the statue and the addition to





Image 6: the statue at the Army Museum. Image: Author.



Image 7: one of the statues at the Kaysone Phomvihane Museum. Image: Author.

the worker-peasant union in the Lao version is a soldier with full ammunition. These elements potentially point to the long history of revolutionary struggle in Laos but also may hint at the militant nature of its regime.

More elaborate imagining of the modern post-socialist Lao nation can be seen in the duplet of monuments flanking the entryway to the museum of Kayson Phomvihane, the first prime minister of Lao PDR (Image 7). These monuments deploy aesthetics of socialist realism (the recognizable style often associated with the visual art of the Soviet Union) to render Lao soldiers, peasants, teachers, textile weavers, players of traditional musical instruments, et cetera. Bringing together the socialist legacy and the cultural heritage of Laos, the monuments echo the new official narrative of post-socialist Laos. The “post” in this case refers to the emphasis on cultural protection and revival instead of the socialist party’s promise to build a socialist future for its people.

As I visited the Lao capital, a peculiar visual landscape unfolded before me. The monuments of Vientiane embody an image of a modern nation, yet an image characterized by

temporal loops. With each monument heralding the ascent of another new era in the history of the nation, the icons and concepts pertaining to the past are erected. Motivated by a desire to imagine the new, the statues and structures in Vientiane simultaneously betray it, producing instead a temporal palimpsest. At once radical, retrospective, and respectful, the monuments of Vientiane compress and preserve the layers of cultural history, rebuilding it over and over again. Lao independence (1953) is celebrated as Buddhist post-coloniality; the socialist order (1975–ca. 1991) is constructed through an architecture of Buddhist cosmology; and the post-socialist regime (from ca. 1991) is legitimized as an heir to both heroic kings of a historical past and the fathers of Lao communism.

This elasticity of visual temporality fascinated me. The desire to have the past in the present, to see the history in the future, seemed to me different from the love of the new characteristic of many countries in Southeast Asia. Monuments of Vientiane conjure non-linear, palimpsest quality of national time where the Lao nation dwells in a temporal phantasm. ๑

¹ Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (London: Verso, 2006), 50. Maurizio Peleggi, *Monastery, Monument, Museum: Sites and Artifacts of Thai Cultural Memory* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2017). Roger Nelson, “Phnom Penh’s Independence Monument and Vientiane’s Patuxai: Complex Symbols of Postcolonial Nationhood in Cold War-Era Southeast Asia,” in *Monument Culture: International Perspectives on the Future of Monuments in a Changing World*, ed. Laura A. Macaluso (London: Rowman and Littlefield, 2019), 35–48.

² The official name of Laos is the Lao People’s Democratic Republic.

³ The Kingdom of Lane Xang or the Kingdom of Million Elephants (1353–1707) the predecessor of modern Laos.

⁴ Marc Askew, William Logan, and Colin Long, *Vientiane: Transformations of a Lao Landscape* (New York: Routledge, 2010), 63–70.

⁵ Grant Evans, *A Short History of Laos: The Land in Between* (Chiang Mai, Thailand: Silkworm Books, 2012), 25.

⁶ Grant Evans, “Immobile memories. Statues in Thailand and Laos,” *Cultural Crisis and Social Memory: Modernity and Identity in Thailand and Laos*, ed. Shigeharu Tanabe and Charles F. Keyes (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2002), 160–61.

⁷ Anousavaly, a monument in the Lao language. Patuxai, a victory gate in the Lao language.

⁸ Although not completed until 1968. See Roger Nelson, “Phnom Penh’s Independence Monument and Vientiane’s Patuxai,” in *Monument Culture*.

⁹ Askew, Logan, and Long, *Vientiane*, 206.

¹⁰ Oliver Tappe, “Shaping the National Topography: The Party-State, National Imageries, and Questions of Political Authority in Lao PDR,” *Changing Lives in Laos: Society, Politics, and Culture in a Post-socialist State*, ed. Vanina Bouté and Vatthana Pholsena (Singapore: NUS, 2017), 60.

¹¹ Bantueggan padidsathan hubpan anusavali chao anuvong pi 2010 [The records of the establishing of the statue of Chao Anouvong in the year of 2010] (Vientiane: State Publishing House, 2014), 69.

PRESERVING THE

Past and Future

OF THE PENAN





by KAR,
undergraduate in
Environment and
Sustainability

Participating in the Global Citizenship and Sustainability program in Borneo during winter break 2019 brought me to welcome in the new year in Kuching, Sarawak, Malaysia. Flying into Borneo, I saw winding rivers meandering through the landscape and waves breaking off the coast. I was struck by the palm oil plantations that were encroaching on the rainforest, threatening the way of life for the indigenous communities whom I would soon meet.

Borneo has one of the world's last surviving virgin rainforest. As the Western world looks for alternatives to fossil fuels, palm oil has increased in demand. Malaysia and Indonesia (two of the three countries on Borneo) are some of the biggest producers of palm oil, and the rainforest is burning to make room for this burgeoning industry. In conversations on my flight with a Malay family, I learned of the complexity of the struggle of seeing palm oil as a renewable solution to fossil fuels and a financially lucrative enterprise for developing the Malay economy. I heard of the desire to find more sustainable forms of agriculture for palm oil that would increase production and reduce land use. This natural resource is an export primarily to the Western world looking to wean itself off fossil fuel dependency, but at the price of some of the last remaining virgin rainforest and the indigenous peoples whose way of life is intertwined with their habitat.

While primarily a Muslim country, Malaysia celebrates many cultures, most notably in the diversity of foods and religions. The flavors and beliefs of China, Indonesia, India, Thailand, and the Philippines (to name a few) are intermingled with a history of British colonialism. New Year's celebrations in Kuching flourish along the River-

The village of Long Lamai the first settlement of the Penan in Borneo (Sarawak, Malaysia).



Above: Richard Jengan hunting with poison darts and blowpipe.

Below: Cornell Students lead by the Penan elders and Professor Shorna Broussard Allred hiking into virgin rainforest.

walk, where milk tea is served in every way and flavor imaginable, along with scrumptious street foods, music, and a brilliant firework display.

Cornell Associate Professor of Natural Resources Shorna Broussard Allred and Associate Director at the Public Service Center Amy Somchanhmvong taught us invaluable knowledge throughout the fall semester in our pre-departure course preparing us for the community-based indigenous research. Our team met up at Universiti Malaysia Sarawak (UNIMAS), where we bonded with UNIMAS students and faculty over traditional homemade meals and tea. Our partner and host department at UNIMAS was the Institute of Social Informatics and Technological Innovations (ISITI), which encourages and fosters interdisciplinary applied research projects with a very large and diverse indigenous population throughout Malaysia. We received a breadth of knowledge through presentations from ISITI professors and researchers and toured the incredible campus located outside of the city center near wilderness areas. Meditating at sunrise at the lake on campus, I was greeted by an array of birds and even a dragon.

Our Cornell cohort was composed of two teams parting ways in Kuching to different communities. After small planes brought us into the central interior rainforest, members of the Penan community greeted us. We boarded their handmade, long motorboats.

The Penan are a formerly nomadic peoples and one of the last surviving communities of hunters and gatherers. Their first settlement is in Long Lamai, which has no roads and is reached by boat via the river that runs through it. The Penan of Long Lamai have chosen not to have a road, as they have

observed how this infrastructure has allowed accessibility to logging companies in other parts of the rainforest that has led to deforestation. This is one small example of the immense wisdom of community decision making of the Penan of Long Lamai, who seek out knowledge and, before applying it collectively, determine if it is good for the future of their community. When they do determine the knowledge or technology is beneficial, they become experts, as is seen in their adoption and adaptation of boating and boatmaking since they settled in Long Lamai.





*Above: Franklin George creating Oroo, a forest sign language uniquely Penan.
Right: Lukas Etat Nyatomaking sago in front of a newly built Lamin Toro.
Below: Boat maker sealing the carved wood with fire.*



In entering Long Lamai, we were welcomed as part of the tight knit and loving Penan community who cared for our safety and well being. They nourished us with wisdom, hospitality, and delicacies of their agricultural harvest, the river, and the forest. The Penan community desires to pass on knowledge of nomadic life to the next generation, who live and study at schools in nearby cities after completing elementary school in Long Lamai, and Cornell students are assisting with this project. With their direction we conducted numerous interviews with elders of the community to collect knowledge of nomadic life. We learned of the history of the first settlements and how the Penan came to Long Lamai. Blow pipes and poison darts are precisely and expertly crafted for the hunt of animals in the rainforest, with wild boar being a prized catch. The musical instruments that are hand crafted from materials in the forest are uniquely Penan and are used to communicate heartfelt emotions.

To know the Penan one must know the rainforest. The Penan are an integral part of the rainforest, and hikes were organized to bring the collected stories to life. Observing their way of being in the rainforest, we learned

how resourceful the Penan are and how the rainforest provides for all of their needs. As the rainforest provides for the Penan, the Penan care for the rainforest. To be Penan one must know Oroo, a special language communicated through signs made of plants. We hiked up to the virgin rainforest to observe and document knowledge of nomadic life. Our photographs, videos, and collected interviews are being used to create educational books and films to pass on the nomadic knowledge to future Penan generations. We inherited the previous Cornell classes' research work with the Penan and pass on to the class of this year our research in order to continue to honor the request of the community.

The Penan have protected and nurtured the rainforest from generation to generation. This invaluable nomadic wisdom continues on to future Penan generations. Preserving their culture preserves the rainforest and our planet. This way of knowing, this wisdom of applying knowledge for the greatest good for the future of the community, seems the key to addressing the climate crisis. May we follow the lead of the peoples who have successfully protected the earth's remaining virgin rainforests. 🌿



11th Frank H. Golay Memorial Lecture

October 25, 2019



by Caroline S. Hau

FOR WHOM

Are Southeast Asian Studies?

Questions of audience(s) continue to haunt academia. I would like to push the concept of “audience” further by examining the audience(s) conjured by three acknowledged classic texts in Southeast Asian studies: Filipino National Hero José Rizal’s two novels, *Noli me tangere* (1887) and *El filibusterismo* (1891), and Benedict Anderson’s *Imagined Communities* (1983).

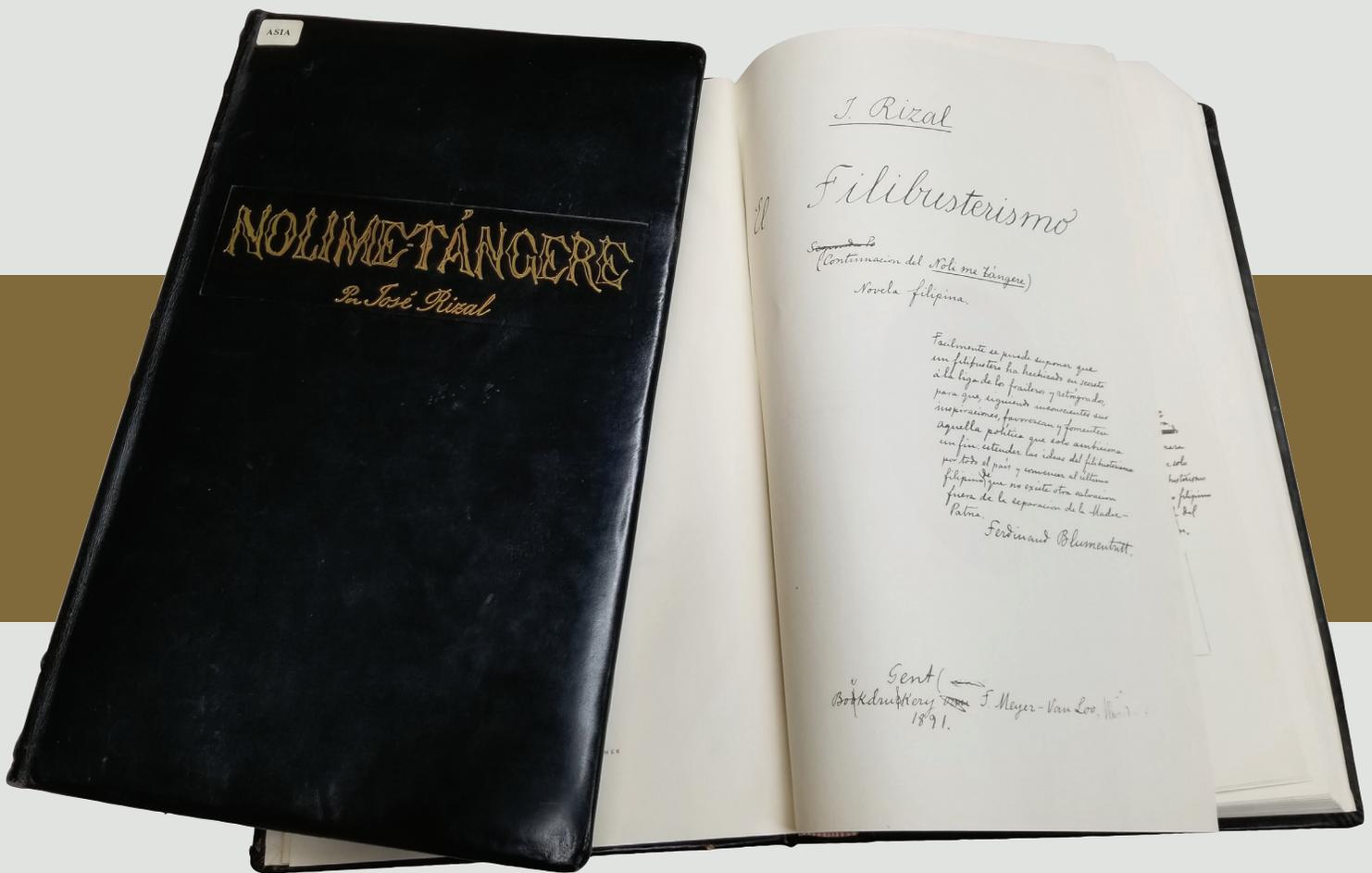
I use the word “conjured” deliberately to emphasize three things: that these texts were written with specific audiences in mind; that upon publication these texts interacted with audiences in ways that exceeded the imagined, hypothetical audience that the authors claimed to address; and that the interaction between the texts and their actual readers, whether intended or unexpected, had lasting effects that arguably account for the influential afterlife of these texts.

Let me first turn to Rizal’s novels. *Noli me tangere* (which Filipinos call the *Noli*) and *El filibusterismo* (the *Fili*) were written in Spanish and published in Berlin, Germany, in 1887 and Ghent, Belgium, in 1891. They are arguably the two most important literary works produced by a Filipino—“foundational fictions” (to use Doris Sommer’s term for analogous novels in Latin America) that have cast a long shadow on Philippine nationalism and shaped Filipino political and social thinking and the development of Philippine literature in Filipino, English, and other Philippine languages.¹

Rizal was clear about the intended audience of his novels. The *Noli*, he wrote in a letter to a fellow reformist, was “written for Filipinos, and it is necessary that it should be read by Filipinos.”² Writing to his Austrian friend Ferdinand Blumentritt, Rizal called the *Noli* “the first impartial and bold book about the life of the Tagalogs. The Filipinos will find in it the history of the last ten years.”³ He went on to say: “Here, I answer all the false conceptions that they [the government and the friars] have written against us and all the insults with which they have humiliated us.”⁴ His goal? “It is better to write for

my countrymen. . . . I must wake from its slumber the spirit of my fatherland. . . . I must first propose to my countrymen an example with which to struggle against their bad qualities and afterwards, when they have reformed, then many writer will rise up who can present my fatherland to proud Europe, as a young damsel enters society after she has completed her education.”⁵ To this effect, “I have told our compatriots of our faults, our voices, our culpable and shameful complacency with these miseries.”⁶

If you are puzzled by Rizal’s explanations of who he imagines the readers of his novels to be, welcome to the club. Rizal says that the *Noli* was “written for Filipinos, and it is necessary that it should be read by Filipinos.” This sounds reasonable, until we remember that by the end of the Spanish colonial period, less than three percent of the Filipino population had a good command of Spanish.⁷ That Rizal was well aware of the dilemma of writing in Spanish is evident in the fact that at different times in his life he had considered writing a novel in French and begun writing one in Tagalog.⁸ He wrote about ten pages in Tagalog, gave up, attempted to write the novel anew in Spanish, gave up; he never completed the third novel. Which language to write in was a dilemma for Rizal. French, the transcontinental lingua franca of the world’s elites (and, in particular, the “proud Europe” Rizal hoped his people would present their country before) at the time, might have brought him more cultural prestige, but doing so would bar most Filipinos and even some Spanish friends and foes from reading his novels. Tagalog might have brought him an audience in



the Philippines, but his novels would not have been read by the majority of Filipinos, including ilustrados, who were non-Tagalogs speaking different Philippine languages.

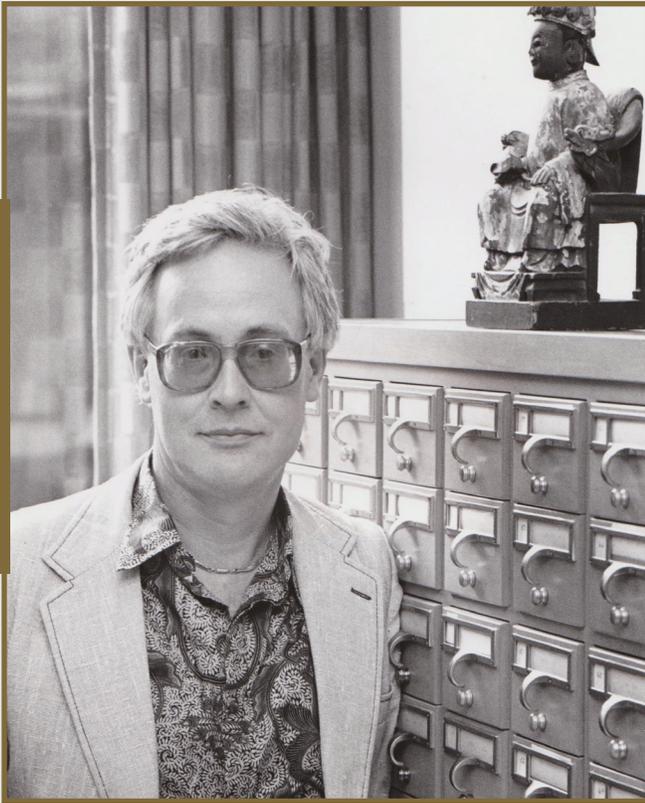
Even though the language in which these novels were written set limits on who were able to read them, the novels take as their theme the presence, communicative power, and incalculable effects of crowds of people. The novels attempt to provide cues on how they should be read, even as the play of reticence and revelation open them to interpretation and appropriation. Gossip, rumors, fake news, private conversations, public speeches, town hall debates, quarrels, newspaper accounts, letters—the *Noli* reports them all to the reader, who occupies a privileged position as the one who is in the best position to make sense of the occurrences in the novel, to sort out the truths from the lies, to sift the wheat of fact from the chaff of speculation.

Who were Rizal's imputed readers? His novels set up the ideal reader as adjudicator. The imputed reader of these novels is a highly select, literate, and cosmopolitan sort who is able to recognize and appreciate the allusions and epigraphs inlaid in the novel. Rizal's presumed readership is made up of an elite cohort of "friends and foes," literate in Spanish, residing in the Philippines or abroad, and well versed in the milieu of these places. This ideal reader must be privileged enough to have had sufficient Western-style education to recognize classical, Christian, and European references (names like Bécquer, Berzelius, Boussuet, Champollion, Cicero, Lope de Vega, Delaroché, Galen, Gay-Lussac, Heine, Schiller, Secchi, Sulla,

and Voltaire). At the same time, the ideal reader understands, and delights in, the novel's strategic use and explanation of local (Tagalog) vocabulary and local references. The ideal reader, in other words, would be someone from within Rizal's own small circle of fellow (male, if not Tagalog) ilustrados and the Spanish-speaking, educated reading public in and beyond Filipinas.

The actual impact of the two novels far exceeded Rizal's expectations, but this is not because they became bestsellers and were widely read. On the contrary: only two thousand copies of the *Noli* were printed, and owing to strict censorship, only a small number of copies found their way into Filipino hands. We can surmise that at best the novel was read by a small number of people, mostly Spaniards and Spanish-literate Filipinos. And yet, the controversy aroused by these novels, which were impounded by the government and condemned by religious authorities, enabled the circulation and transmission of the *Noli*'s content. This relaying of the novel's message took the principal form of gossip and rumors and was therefore crucially mediated by the perspectives of the various readers who interpreted the novels, and their author, according to their own languages, interests, and agenda. In fact, the close attention accorded by Rizal to depicting crowds—people from all walks of society, moving and acting and, just as important, talking and commenting on unfolding events—had the conjuring effect of calling forth a revolution.

By questioning the foundations of colonial authority, Rizal and his novels gave rise to images, thoughts, and fantasies



Revolution made and unmade was an abiding preoccupation for Benedict R. O'G. Anderson.

among their readers and audiences that exceeded Rizal's own stated political intentions, engendering political effects that Rizal could neither have foreseen nor forestalled.

While the *Fili* imagined a failed revolution led by a Creole, a reference to the abortive Creole revolutions in the Philippines that were inspired by the revolutions in Latin America, Rizal's novels were actually being read, rumor-mongered, interpreted, and acted upon by other social groups: the urban middle sector and municipal elites, that is, the people who came from the same social background as his fictional Elías. The urban middle sector would in fact seize the initiative to establish the revolutionary secret society, the Katipunan, and municipal elites would join the Philippine Revolution that broke out a few years later.⁹ The Katipunan used Rizal's name as a rallying cry. Although Rizal claimed he had been misinterpreted and adamantly denied authorship of the 1896 Philippine Revolution, he would nonetheless pay the ultimate penalty for being "el verbo," the Word Incarnate, of *Filibusterismo*. Here, then, is a case in which writing two novels inspired their audiences to act in two ways: wage an anticolonial revolution, the first of its kind in Asia, and get the author executed, despite Rizal's insistence that he had not supported the Katipunan-led revolution.

Sixty years after Rizal's execution, the Philippine state would pass a bill to include the national hero's life and works (including unexpurgated editions of the two novels) in the official curricula of public and private schools, colleges, and universities. The Catholic Church would undermine this

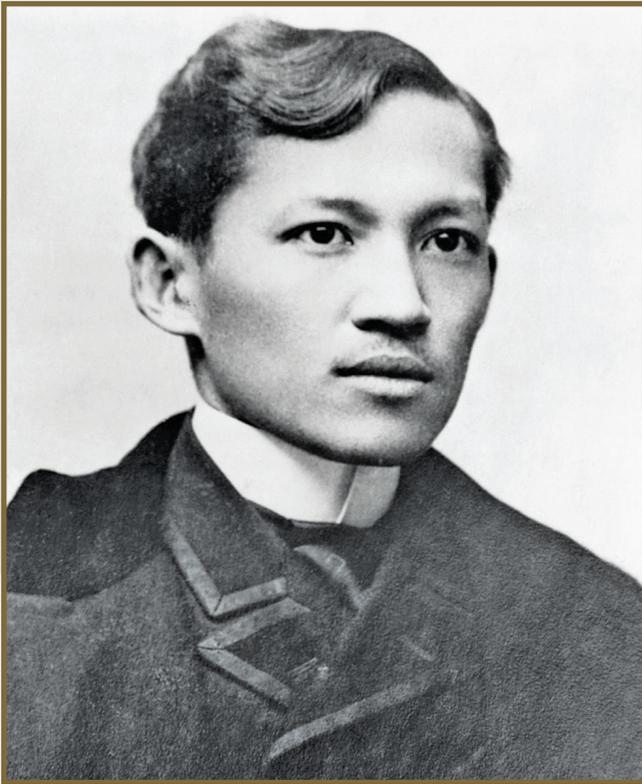
bill by forcing a compromise that exempted students from reading the novels "for reasons of religious belief." Translations of Rizal into various Philippine languages, including English, would shape readers' experiences of these novels. One hard-hitting analysis by a Southeast Asianist of Leon Ma. Guerrero's influential 1961 English translation of the *Noli* lays bare the linguistic and textual strategies by which the Guerrero translation, produced in the era of official nationalism, works to stifle the subversiveness of Rizal's laughter, entomb the novels in the "antique past," sanitize their earthy and radical content, and cut the reader off from the local references (most of them in Tagalog) and European allusions.¹⁰ The Guerrero translation, in effect, turns Rizal into a "silent waxwork martyr," effaces the hybrid histories and cultures of the Filipino elite, renders unimaginable Rizal's world, and depicts the *Noli* as boring and irrelevant to contemporary readers.¹¹ That hard-hitting analysis was written by Benedict Anderson, who taught himself Spanish in order to read Rizal in the original, and who would play a crucial role in bringing Rizal before a larger international audience. A polyglot expatriate who carried an Irish passport all his life and was deeply aware of his own country's fraught history of anticolonial struggle against the British, Anderson had an affinity with Rizal, and would fondly refer to him as "Lolo José" (Grandfather José).

This brings me to my second case study, Benedict Anderson's *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (1990). *Imagined Communities* is arguably the most-cited English-language book produced by a self-professed Southeast Asianist. As of June 5, 2019, it is the fourth most cited social science book, after Thomas Kuhn's *Structure of Scientific Revolution* (112,072, philosophy, 1962), Everett Rogers' *Diffusion of Innovation* (104,240, sociology, 1962), and Michael E. Porter's *Competitive Strategy* (96,819, economics, 1980). In the humanities, not even Edward Said's *Orientalism* (1979), Jacques Derrida's *Of Grammatology* (1976, 2016), or Michel Foucault's *Discipline and Punish* (1977) come close.

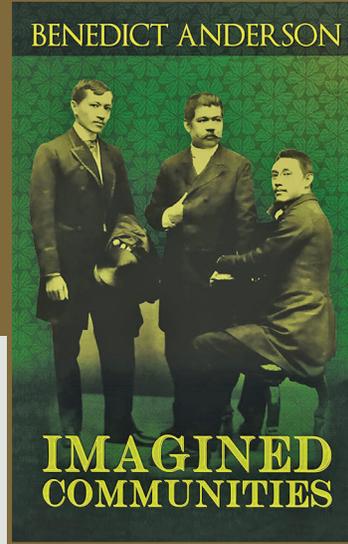
Anderson had originally written the book with a specific intended audience in mind: the intelligentsia of the United Kingdom. Here is Anderson's account of the making of his book:

This is why the book contains so many quotations from, and allusions to, English poetry, essays, histories, legends, etc. that do not have to be explained to English readers, but which are likely to be unfamiliar to others. There are also jokes and sarcasms only the English would find amusing or annoying. For fun I always titled British rulers as if they were ordinary people, e.g. Charles Stuart for Charles I, but used the standard format for foreign kings (Louis XIV). A radical English feminist once wrote to complain about this "discrimination." Of course I was pleased.¹²

Anderson also left the German and French quotations untranslated, intending this as a "rebuke to American academic culture, also U.K. to a lesser degree. But the book was aimed at a British public, not an American one (on the whole), and I knew very well that at least older U.K. intellectuals would feel patronized if I translated the French and German."¹³



Above: Filipino National Hero José Rizal's two novels, *Noli me tangere* and *El filibusterismo*, are required readings for Filipino students at the elementary, high school, and college levels. Middle: The Philippine edition of *Imagined Communities*.



Above: Rizal was executed by firing squad on December 30, 1896, just four months after the outbreak of the Philippine Revolution.

Anderson's targets, as it were, included "Eurocentrism, traditional Marxism, and liberalism."¹⁴ His style differed from the standard comparisons undertaken in comparative politics. Comparisons, which Anderson thought of not as a method or academic technique but rather a "discursive strategy," were meant to "surprise" readers and also to "globalize" the history of nationalism.¹⁵ They required the reader to "leap back and forth" between "Naples, Tokyo, Manila, Barcelona, Paris, Rio de Janeiro, Brussels, St. Petersburg, Tampa and London," and to "think about one's own circumstances, class position, gender, level and type of education, mother language, etc., when doing comparisons."¹⁶

Anderson also gave freedom to his Japanese translators to substitute "appropriate Japanese quotations, allusions, jokes."¹⁷ The Japanese translation of *Imagined Communities* by Takashi and Saya Shiraishi would go on to be the biggest selling translation edition of the book and required reading for Japanese college students.¹⁸ In this process of collaboration, reinterpretation, appropriation, and multiple authorship by author, translator, and reader, *Imagined Communities* has circulated in more than thirty languages. Rebecca Walkowitz's argument that *Imagined Communities* is a "born-translated" work analogous to the novel works only because the book ended up being widely translated, not because Anderson had originally conceived *Imagined Communities* to be translated into so many languages.¹⁹

In the United Kingdom, the book was warmly received by reviewers such as Edmund Leach, Conan Cruise O' Brien, and

Winston James, who wrote for the so-called "quality press."²⁰ The academic reception of *Imagined Communities* in America was less straightforward. Although Anthony Reid had written a favorable and balanced review of the book in 1985, here is how Anderson recounts the general reception of the book in his memoir *A Life Beyond Boundaries*:

In the U.S., the book was almost completely ignored. In a way, this was fair enough, since I hadn't written the book for Americans in the first place. Besides, in the US, nation-wide quality presses are not common. However, one old European emigré political scientist, writing for the *American Political Science Review*, did review it, and deemed it worthless apart from its catchy title.²¹

This situation changed rapidly at the end of the 1980s, with the end of the Cold War and the collapse of the Soviet Union. Like all empires, the American empire needs enemies. "Dangerous nationalism" (which of course did not include American nationalism) emerged to fill the vacuum left by the evaporation of "the communist threat."²²

* * * *

A second factor was that, mainly by word of mouth, *Imagined Communities* had caught on in departments of history, sociology, anthropology, and, strangely enough, English and comparative literature, and was being widely used as a graduate-level textbook.

Political science was the one obvious exception, but eventually it had to yield to student demand for courses on nationalism, which, amazingly enough, did not exist almost anywhere in the US. As a result, in my fifties, I found my position completely changed. Suddenly I became a “theorist,” not just an area studies figure. I was even urged to teach a graduate course on the “theory of nationalism,” which I had never previously considered doing. To my amusement, the students who took the course came not only from political science, but from history, anthropology, comparative literature and sociology.²³

Here, then, we have a book that is initially ignored by the disciplinary field of the author but gains traction largely by word of mouth among students before the book is taken up by professors across a range of disciplines in the social sciences and the humanities.

Early in Anderson’s career, when his dissertation came out as a book, *Java in the Time of Revolution* (1972), from Cornell University Press, one senior colleague said to him: “I didn’t finish your book, though it looked well done. Isn’t it just history? Where is the theory?” Anderson had considered himself an “outsider” in the Department of Government. He said, “Later, I heard from students that a gifted senior said to them: ‘Anderson has a good mind, but he is basically an area studies person,’ which meant someone second-class. I didn’t mind this judgment because I too saw myself as basically an area studies person.”²⁴

The “problem of audience” was never far from Anderson’s mind, and he talks at length about this in his memoir, *A Life Beyond Boundaries* (2016). Students, he said, discern key features of their “future readership.” “They are typically told to write for other members of their disciplines, colleagues, editors of disciplinary journals, potential employers, and eventually their own students. Their prose should reveal immediately the guild to which they belong. . . . Writing for a large, generally educated public, so they are often told, inevitably entails simplification, ‘popularization,’ and lack of technical sophistication (that is, it is too easily comprehensible).”²⁵ Books, he said, should be published by university presses rather than commercial presses.²⁶ He compared the process of “disciplining” students to think and write in the academic style to a form of Chinese foot-binding.²⁷

Who would have thought that *Imagined Communities* would inspire Abdullah Ocalan, leader of the Kurdistan Workers Party, to undergo an intellectual conversion that made him open to negotiations with the Turkish state?²⁸ I don’t know whether Anderson ever heard of this news, but if he had, I am sure he would have been pleased.

While much has been made of Anderson’s theoretical contributions to the study of nationalism, it is interesting to note the Latin Americanist reception of *Imagined Communities*’s thesis about the role of newspapers in providing a “national space” on the eve of Latin American independence. While *Imagined Communities* had an enormous impact on Latin American scholars and scholars of Latin America, this impact had little to do with the historical and empirical accu-

racy of Anderson’s arguments concerning Latin America. In fact, Latin Americanist historians and literary scholars argue that the “nation” remained “more aspiration than fact for many decades after gaining independence between 1810 and 1825.”²⁹ Latin Americanists disagree with Anderson’s thesis on the role played by newspapers in fostering national consciousness before the wars of independence, and on the role played by the circulation of creole bureaucrats in setting the territorial definition of what would later become independent states.³⁰ Anderson’s specific arguments about Latin America “have had little impact on Latin American studies. Reference to the chapter on Creole pioneers rarely appears in Latin American citations of Anderson. Instead, Latin Americanists cite *Imagined Communities* and (especially among critics) draw on his theorization of the central role of the print media in imagining national communities.”³¹ Latin Americanists argue that Anderson’s remarks on Latin America are more pertinent to postcolonial Latin America than to pre-independence and revolutionary Latin America.³²

Anderson sought to rescue the “goodness” of the nation from the evils and abuses inflicted on people in its name. For many Southeast Asians, the nation is something they can neither embrace nor repudiate. More than a century ago, Rizal used his novels to explore the possibility of the failure of communication, of belonging, of community even. Far from being unique to a country with a fragile democracy, a weak state, a strong predatory elite, and a diasporic population, the possibility of failure that Rizal tried to map speaks to the more fundamental aporia at the heart of efforts to imagine and make community, and this very issue has returned with a “populist”/“nativist” vengeance to the developed world.

I end not with any definitive statement but a series of questions. For whom are Southeast Asian studies? Who gets to decide? What kinds of audiences, hypothetical and actual, do Southeast Asianists address? How may area studies contribute to progressive politics and address the pressing claims of communities in which “making-doing” belonging is fraught, and not just for the area studies practitioner? What claims do our audience(s) make on us, and what are our scholarly commitments and ethical obligations toward them?

The way to go was already suggested in the late 1990s by Ruth McVey when she delivered the Third Frank Golay Memorial Lecture in the Kahin Center. “We need,” she said, “to emphasize cooperation rather than competition.”³³ She spoke as well of the need “to think more in terms of networks than of institutions and these networks should in principle be global and not just regional or national.”³⁴ Above all, McVey issued this important reminder: “It is not that Southeast Asia is the object of our study, but that Southeast Asians are its subject.”³⁵ McVey’s choice of the word “subject” is telling, not because of the lines it seems to draw between subject and object and between “us” scholars and “them” Southeast Asians, but because of the ambiguity inherent in the idea of the “subject”: at once imbued with agency, yet also conditional, dependent, as likely to do or act as to be acted or imposed upon—both the topic of discussion and the branch of knowledge that is taught in an academic setting. Is this an issue of eschewing Southeast

Asia as a field and addressing Southeast Asians as people, or is it rather an issue of the ethico-political obligations and responsibilities that arise from all such attempts and undertakings? Saying that Southeast Asian studies should include more Southeast Asian perspectives and practitioners does not resolve the issue, for Southeast Asians themselves are not free of these obligations and responsibilities toward people they call their own or consider themselves part of.

What kinds of communities—intellectual, political, cultural, or religious—are Southeast Asian studies capable of conjuring? Can we conceive of audiences not simply as intended

“targets” but also as accidental, unexpected interlocutors, “friends” but also “foes” from near and far? How much freedom can we carve out for ourselves within the constraints of the institutions and countries we work in to imagine and realize the kind of Southeast Asian studies we would like to have and share with our respective communities here and there, in Southeast Asia and the world? 🌏

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¹ Doris Sommer, *Foundational Fictions: The National Romances of Latin America* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993).
² José Rizal, *Epistolario Rizalino*, vol. 2 (Manila: Bureau of Printing, 1938), 29.
³ Rizal, *Epistolario Rizalino*, vol. 5, 96–97.
⁴ Rizal, *Epistolario Rizalino*, vol. 5, 97.
⁵ Rizal, *Epistolario Rizalino*, vol. 5, 291–92.
⁶ Rizal, *Rizal's Correspondence with Fellow Reformists*, vol. 2, bk. 3 (Manila: National Heroes Commission, 1963), 83–84.
⁷ Bonifacio P. Sibayan and Andrew Gonzalez, “Post-Imperial English in the Philippines,” in *Post-Imperial English: Status Change in Former British and American Colonies, 1940-1990*, ed. Joshua Fishman, Andrew W. Conrad, and Alma Rubal-Lopez (Berlin: Mouton de Gruyter, 1996), 139.
⁸ Ambeth R. Ocampo, *Makamisa: The Search for Rizal's Third Novel* (Pasig City, Philippines: Anvil, 1992).
⁹ Michael Cullinane, *Arenas of Conspiracy and Rebellion in the Late Nineteenth-Century Philippines: The Case of the April 1898 Uprising in Cebu* (Quezon City: Ateneo de Manila University, 2014).
¹⁰ Benedict Anderson, “Hard to Imagine,” in Anderson, *The Spectre of Comparisons: Nationalism, Southeast Asia and the World* (London: Verso, 1998), 239.
¹¹ Anderson, “Hard to Imagine,” in *Spectre*, 253.
¹² Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origins and Spread of Nationalism* (1983; repr. London: Verso, 1990), 125.
¹³ Filomeno V. Aguilar, Caroline Hau, Vicente Rafael, and Teresa Tadem, “Benedict Anderson, Comparatively Speaking: On Area Studies, Theory, and ‘Gentlemanly’ Polemics,” *Philippine Studies* 59, no. 1 (2011): 123.
¹⁴ Anderson, *A Life Beyond Boundaries* (London: Verso, 2016), 126.
¹⁵ Anderson, *A Life*, 129, 127.
¹⁶ Anderson, *A Life*, 129, 131.
¹⁷ Anderson, *A Life*, 125–26.
¹⁸ On the “geo-biography” and translation history of *Imagined Communities*, see Anderson, “Travel and Traffic: On the Geo-biography of *Imagined Communities*,” in *Imagined Communities*, 207–29.
¹⁹ Rebecca Walkowitz, *Born Translated: The Contemporary Novel in the Age of World Literature* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2015).

²⁰ Anderson, *A Life*, 149 (identified).
²¹ Anderson, *A Life*, 150–51. The memoir was first published in Japanese as *Yashigara wan no soto he* (*Out of the Coconut Half-Shell*), 2009. I am unable to track down the negative review of *Imagined Communities* in the *American Political Science Review* that Anderson mentions in his memoir. It is possible that he was referring to the review by Alexander Motyl in 2002 in *Comparative Politics* (vol. 34, no. 2), wherein Motyl stated that *Imagined Communities* “did not really proffer a rigorous, conceptually coherent explanation of a set of phenomena, or a theory” (235), and that Anderson’s “main theoretical contribution to the study of nations and nationalism may be the term ‘imagined communities,’” a term that has “severe conceptual limitations” (235). I thank JPaul Manzanilla for alerting me to the Motyl review.
²² Anderson, *A Life*, 150.
²³ Anderson, *A Life*, 150–51.
²⁴ Anderson, *A Life*, 149.
²⁵ Anderson, *A Life*, 160.
²⁶ Anderson, *A Life*, 160.
²⁷ Anderson, *A Life*, 161.
²⁸ Nick Danforth, “An Imprisoned Nationalist Reads Ben Anderson,” *Dissent*, March 7, 2013, www.dissentmagazine.org/blog/an-imprisoned-nationalist-reads-benedict-anderson.
²⁹ John Charles Chasteen, “Introduction: Beyond Imagined Communities,” in *Beyond Imagined Communities: Reading and Writing the Nation in Nineteenth-Century Latin America*, ed. Sara Castro-Klarén and John Charles Chasteen (Washington, D.C. and Baltimore: Woodrow Wilson Center Press and Johns Hopkins University Press, 2003), xviii.
³⁰ Chasteen, “Introduction: Beyond Imagined Communities,” xix–xx.
³¹ Chasteen, “Introduction: Beyond Imagined Communities,” xxi.
³² Chasteen, “Introduction: Beyond Imagined Communities,” xxiii.
³³ Ruth McVey, “Globalization, Marginalization, and the Study of Southeast Asia,” in Craig J. Reynolds and Ruth McVey, *Southeast Asian Studies: Reorientations* (Ithaca: Cornell University Southeast Asia Program, 1998), 54.
³⁴ McVey, “Globalization,” in *Southeast Asian Studies*, 55.
³⁵ McVey, “Globalization,” in *Southeast Asian Studies*, 53.

Ex-King Still in Exile...



Why the Body of Burma's Last Monarch Still Has Not Come Home



by Kelsey Utne,
PhD candidate in history



The Third Anglo-Burmese War was brief. In two short weeks of November 1885, British forces overtook Mandalay and deposed Burma's last monarch. They swiftly swallowed Thibaw Min's kingdom into colonial India and relocated the young ruler with his family. After a brief stay in Madras, Thibaw, his wives, and young children settled in Ratnagiri on the western coast of India in April 1886. According to historian Sudha Shah, the Bombay presidency village was "well off the beaten track," inaccessible by train and could only be reached by foot or steamer ship. In an effort to control Burma, it was not enough for British forces to simply send Thibaw into exile—they wanted him out of public view and thoroughly difficult to reach. Thibaw never returned to Burma. He died of a heart attack on December 15, 1916, in Ratnagiri.¹

View from above of the tombs of King Thibaw and Queen Supayalay, 2019 photograph by Aniket Konkar, used under CC BY-SA 4.

Existing in a state of near house arrest, the family could not commemorate Thibaw's passing as they had his father's. King Mindon's 1878 funeral had been a grand affair. The entire city shut down, and even other funerals had to wait until the ceremony was over. A massive procession led the way from the palace to the gravesite. The spectacle included "gold-plated towers" atop elephants, soldiers with swords and shields, government officials, musicians, royal personal effects, the rest of the royal family, a richly adorned empty coffin, and finally the body of the king himself. Awash with symbolism and royal protocol, the public rituals included performances of mourning for the dead king and the coronation of the new king, Thibaw.²

We know more about what Thibaw's 1916 funeral was not than about what it was. There were no foreign diplomats in attendance and no heir assumed the throne. No lengthy procession with Burmese officials, musicians, and valuable possessions led the way to his final resting spot. Indeed, there may not have been much of a procession at all to Thibaw's temporary tomb within the meager grounds of the "palace" built for him by the British in Ratnagiri. Unlike his father, who had insisted on not being cremated, Thibaw's body was reduced to ashes. Unable to provide the appropriate Buddhist ceremonies, Thibaw's coffin existed in a sort of stasis. The family believed that eventually they would be able to bring Thibaw's remains to rest among his

ancestors. Perhaps they imagined that the British would consider the deposed king safely dead and no longer a threat to colonial occupation in Burma.³

Colonial officers in Ratnagiri, Bombay, and Burma exchanged frenzied telegrams throughout February 1919. They shared one main objective: relocate the remaining ex-royal family members from Ratnagiri to Rangoon. With one of the princesses already in Calcutta with her husband, the household consisted of his widow, three princesses, their children, and attendants. Among the many necessary preparations, Queen Supayalat requested leave to bring with them the remains of her husband and junior queen Supayalay (who had predeceased Thibaw in 1912). Officials in Burma denied her request, claiming that the repatriation of the remains of the former king would be a "danger to peace of province." Officials in Bombay and Burma scurried to come up with a plan for Thibaw's remains that would minimize potential public backlash in Burma.

The former king's body needed to remain in remote Ratnagiri. In an effort to appease Supayalat, officials intended to reinter Thibaw in a more formal and permanent tomb before the family's departure. They arranged for Buddhist priests to travel for the occasion and hoped that the queen would find a ceremony an adequate substitute for her original request. Unsurprisingly, they were sincerely mistaken. Supayalat sent a lengthy letter to the governor of Bombay appealing for his intervention. She pleaded:

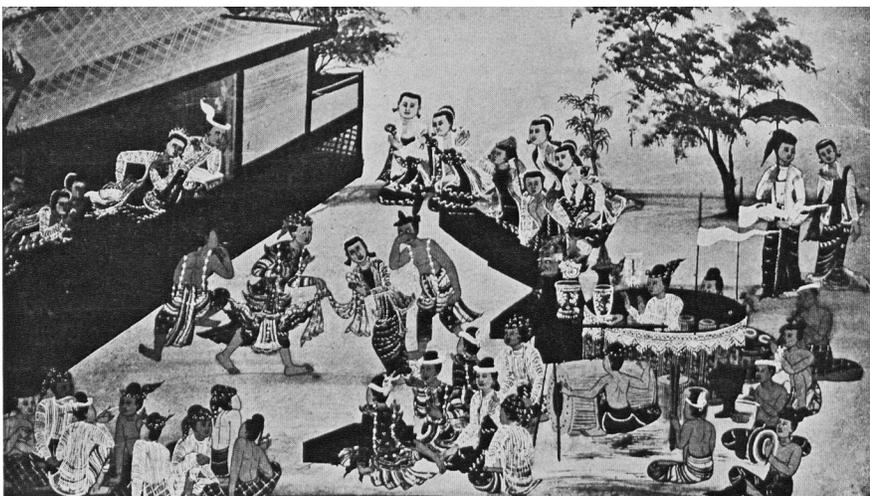
Having been here in a strange country with no people of our race and religion, the final obsequial rites have not been gone through with respect to the dead, and the High Priest of Burma has been now and then inquiring as to when the coffins will be transmitted there. . . . [W]e and our relations in Burma [for] so long expected that the coffins would some day be sent to Burma.⁴

In her explanation, Supayalat argued that she be permitted to bring the cof-



Above: Mausoleum of King Mengdon Min.⁶

Below: King Thebaw and Queen Supayalat witnessing a *pwe*.





Signs leading to the entrance of the tomb complex, 2019 photograph by Aniket Konkar, used under CC BY-SA 4.

kins to be laid to rest among their ancestors, instead of “some nasty unconsecrated palace.” It was bad enough that the British deposed Thibaw, forced him into exile, and ensured that he never again set eyes on his homeland. Now, in death, they sought to deprive him of his religious and ancestral due.

A few days later, Supayalat’s next message was more urgent: the deputy superintendent of police was there “to break open tomb and coffin by [the Ratnagiri] Collectors orders.” Her intervention was successful temporarily, but it may have been the last time the queen was able to be at her husband’s tomb-side. Soon afterward the police officers stood guard at the makeshift tomb. The collector claimed he had serious concerns that Supayalat or her daughters would secretly remove Thibaw’s remains, hide them among their luggage, and transport them to Burma. He forbid the family to have any access to the coffins, not even under careful

supervision. Preventing illicit theft of the king’s remains was of paramount importance.

The last king of Burma was reentombed alongside junior queen Supayalat on March 19, 1919. At the family’s insistence, the collector did not open the coffins before the ceremony to verify their contents. He did, however, have the police inspect the exterior for any signs of the opening having been tampered with. Only Thibaw’s two youngest daughters were present. Supayalat and her oldest daughter chose not to attend, even though they were still in Ratnagiri. Without influence or recourse, his widow and daughters left for Burma without him.

Thibaw’s descendants have continued to lobby to bring him home. Over the decades they have appealed to military dictators and democratic leaders alike. In particular, autocratic postcolonial leaders perceived members of the

royal family as a threat to their authority. The remains of the last king of Burma could become a potent symbol of resistance by opposition groups, who might try to rally public support around reinstalling monarchical rule. Buddhist nationalists could make further use of the fact that Thibaw’s deposition marked the end of a symbiotic relationship between the state and the Buddhist priesthood. Therefore, in addition to refusing repatriation of his remains, for decades the Burmese state blocked efforts by royal family members to even visit the tomb in Ratnagiri. Finally, in 1993, a small group of Thibaw’s descendants were able to visit Ratnagiri to perform final religious rites. On December 16, 2016—the one hundredth anniversary of Thibaw’s death—descendants, dignitaries, and Buddhist priests gathered in Ratnagiri to honor the last king of Burma.⁵ But they still have not taken him home. 🏠

¹ Sudha Shah, *The King in Exile: The Fall of the Royal Family of Burma* (New Delhi: Harper Collins, 2012).

² *Allen’s Indian Mail and Official Gazette*: 1878, vol. XXXVI (London: Wm H Allen and Co, 1878): 1156; W. S. Desai, “Funeral of King Mindon,” in *Fiftieth Anniversary Publication*, vol. 1 (Rangoon: Burma Research Society, 1961): 27–31.

³ “Correspondence regarding the repatriation to Burma of the family of the late ex-King Thibaw of Burma,” Bombay Proceedings. British Library, India Office Records and Private Papers, IOR/P/10795 [hereafter cited as IOR/P/10795].

⁴ Ex-Queen of Burma to Sir George Ambrose, February 11, 1919, IOR/P/10795.

⁵ Sudha Shah, “The Last King of Burma in Ratnagiri,” *The Hindu Business Line*, December 23, 2016, www.thehindubusinessline.com/blink/know/the-last-king-of-burma-in-ratnagiri/article9440400.ece.

⁶ “Mausoleum of King Mengdon Min,” *Twentieth century impressions of Burma* (1910), Arnold Wright, Southeast Asia Visions: John M. Echols Collection (Cornell University Library), https://seasiavisions.library.cornell.edu/catalog/seapage:362_48.



The Personal *is* Political



by Tamara Loos,
professor of history

Placing Thailand's Revival of Polygyny in Context

“How can I be a *spare* man? How can I?” An exasperated and offended King Mongkut queried Anna Leonowens about a British newspaper’s reference to him as *spare*, a term he (mis)understood as meaning *extra*, rather than the intended meaning of *thin*.¹

In the fictional film *Anna and the King of Siam*, and in real life, Siam’s King Mongkut did indeed scour the foreign press to learn about foreign views of his kingdom. I am less certain about how Thailand’s current monarch, King Vajiralongkorn, values foreign media reporting on his reign.

Within Thailand, authorities severely hamper reportage about the royal family. The police and some members of the civilian population troll social media, particularly posts produced by Thai citizens, for potentially offending content. Twitter, which cannot be easily controlled by Thai authorities, is one of the few remaining media spaces where one can read critical but typically anonymous views about Thai royal and military affairs. Facebook users, who have proved easier to identify, have been prosecuted and jailed for posts deemed defamatory to the royal family, the police, and an ever expanding list of groups and institutions considered representative of the royal-military government. For example, since the 2014 coup, the military regime has charged over

ninety people with sedition, often for their pro-democracy posts on Facebook. Nearly thirty more have been arrested simply for *sharing* posts deemed critical of the military, the monarch, or the government.²

The criminalization of free speech within Thailand and pressure placed on Thais who live abroad (but who have loved ones in-country) to remain silent makes it a moral imperative for scholars and reporters outside Thailand to speak up, with humility and acknowledgment of their protected position. Few, if any, within Thailand can offer critical public commentary without being subject to censorship, “attitude adjustment” in military bases, police surveillance, and harassment, arrest, imprisonment, or ultimately death. Since 2014, more than one hundred people have been arrested on *lèse majesté* charges (insulting a monarch). Some will spend decades in prison if they serve their full sentences. One man, convicted for sending four text messages deemed offensive to the royal family, died in prison after serving less than one year

of an astounding twenty-year sentence.³ Worse, some critics of the monarchy and junta have disappeared.⁴ The latest among them is the fallen Royal Consort, Sineenat Wongvajirapakdi, also known by her nickname Koi.

Despite numerous requests to interview with reporters on this topic, I remained reluctant to weigh in on it. As a historian, I can speak endlessly about the nineteenth century, yet I feel distanced from the finger-on-the pulse present in Thailand and its constantly churning rumor mill. Rumors are the antithesis of the historian's craft, which prefers the solidity of substantiation over slippery speculation.

Nevertheless, King Vajiralongkorn's revival of polygyny *on his birthday* in 2019 with the appointment of a noble consort, followed by the officious broadcasting of her demotion months later, proved catalytic in a couple of ways. For reporters, it was an irresistible story. A quasi-lurid, orientalist fascination lurked beneath the public's brief obsession with the king's placement of a consort alongside his newly married Queen Suthida. For me, a scholar who understands political power as also connected to sex and gender, the king's move evidenced this interconnection in an exceptionally public way. The "hook" of a "harem" grabbed media attention, which sent reporters in search of someone who works on gender. In turn, this gave me an opportunity to place the king's decision to appoint a consort within the frame of normative politics rather than interpret it as peripheral to it.

Taking a single event—the meteoric rise and equally spectacular denouement of his consort Sineenat—out of context made King Vajiralongkorn, and by extension Thailand, seem like a quaint Oriental despot and kingdom to many readers of the foreign press. But placing this event in the context of a series of moves taken by the king since his revered father died in late 2016 reveals the sinister move for what it is: another step toward despotism.

First, King Vajiralongkorn took control over the Crown Property Bureau, worth an estimated US \$30–43 billion, making him one of the richest royals in the world. Second, he quashed the political candidacy of his elder sister, Ubolratana Rajakanya Sirivadhana Varnavadi, calling her attempt to run for prime minister for the opposition party as "highly inappropriate." The king condemned the role of the royal family in politics as unconstitutional, even though he paradoxically has played a more active and direct part in politics than any king since the end of the absolute monarchy in 1932. Third, he revived polygyny—a marital form long dead in Thailand—when he appointed Sineenat Wongvajirapakdi his Royal Noble Consort just a short while after he had married Suthida Tidjai and made her his queen.

Within months, his consort had been demoted and disgraced allegedly for her ambition to replace the queen, for issuing commands in his and the queen's names, and for not conducting herself according to (recently revived) palace customs. No one has seen Sineenat since, and rumors are that she is imprisoned. Other rumors claim she died in prison.

Fourth and perhaps most important, we are witnessing a fundamental change in the relationship between the military and the monarch that does not bode well for democracy and



Left: Thailand's King Vajiralongkorn presiding over a military parade in Saraburi province, Thailand, in January 2020.

Above: Photo posted by Thailand's Bureau of the Royal Household in August 2019 of King Vajiralongkorn and Royal Noble Consort Sineenat Wongvajirapakdi.

civil society in Thailand. The king is interfering in the military (as he has done with the Privy Council) to maneuver those loyal to him into positions of power. A streamlined army loyal to the monarch may end Thailand's coup tradition in favor of a military that supports an absolutist king. No one will be able to counter his power.

All of these moves—economic, political, military, familial—reveal King Vajiralongkorn's ability to exercise unfettered power. He is above the law. The laws that do exist protect him and criminalize freedom of expression. His appointment of a Royal Noble Consort shocked and titillated many foreign observers, but it also offered me and other concerned scholars and reporters the opportunity to highlight the meaning of this event in a larger narrative. As long as Thai scholars and reporters remain muzzled by laws that suppress critical commentary, it is important for scholars outside Thailand to keep the media's attention focused on the military-monarchy coalition behind the otherwise seemingly innocuous "personal" scandals that have characterized the life of prince and now King Vajiralongkorn. 

¹ *Anna and the King of Siam*, directed by John Cromwell (20th Century Fox Film Corporation, 1946), www.scripts.com/script.php?id=anna_and_the_king_of_siam_2910&p=7 (accessed January 7, 2020).

² See Human Rights Watch, Thailand, www.hrw.org/world-report/2019/country-chapters/thailand#3ee2bd (accessed January 27, 2020).

³ "Death of Imprisoned Man Highlights Thailand's Unjust Lese Majeste Law," Freedom House, freedomhouse.org/article/death-imprisoned-man-highlights-thailand-s-unjust-lese-majeste-law (accessed February 4, 2020).

⁴ See, for example, Hannah Ellis-Peterson, "Thai Activists Accused of Insulting Monarchy 'Disappear' in Vietnam," *Guardian*, May 10, 2019, www.theguardian.com/world/2019/may/10/thai-activists-accused-of-insulting-monarchy-disappear-in-vietnam.

TEACHING LAO



Left: Monks performing a ceremony at the gravesite of author's relative in 2016.

Below: One of the author's students enjoying Lao food.



I am excited to teach Lao again. The last time I taught Lao was back at Brigham Young University, where I was an instructor for four years.

Just a little bit about Lao. Its roots stretch back to Sanskrit and Bali from India. As a noncritical language, Lao is overlooked in favor of more popular Asian languages like Mandarin, Vietnamese, and Thai. The language is similar to Thai and Khmer. There are tones and a script writing system. Fortunately, the Lao government simplified the writing by, for example, cutting out silent letters, which is very helpful when teaching first-year students. Lao is a rustic and fun language to learn and speak. There are funny puns, jokes, and play on words. I have many memories growing up as a kid in the United States hearing my mom and her sister crack jokes—Laotians know how to have fun.

The country of Laos is beautiful and has yet to be overrun by tourism; it is still a hidden gem, so you better get your ticket soon. For centuries, Laos had been a monarchy, constantly fighting to survive between large kingdoms in what is today Vietnam, Myanmar, and Thailand. Then, in the late 1800s, France claimed Laos, which was then under the suzerainty of Siam, as one of its Indochinese colonies. In 1954, Laos gained its independence from France, but there was little time for celebration, as the nation got caught up in the global Cold War, specifically the Vietnam conflict. Unknown to many Americans, Laos was the most heavily bombed country during the war. The United States dropped more exploding ordnances on Laos than it did on Europe during World War II. Meanwhile, the country was embroiled in a civil war, pitting US-backed Laotian forces against



by Mike Rattanasengchanh,
SEAP visiting fellow

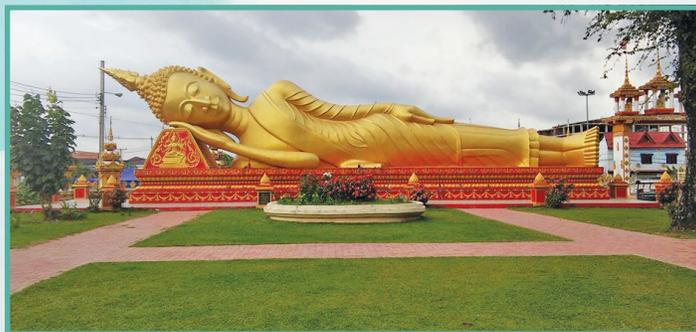
the procommunist Pathet Lao. Then, in 1975, the Communist party came to power. Since then, Laos has been closely linked with China and Vietnam politically and economically, only recently developing and opening ties with the West.

Enough of history, you probably want to know about teaching Lao here at Cornell. With classes held twice a week at the George McT. Kahin Center, we have three students: one undergraduate and two graduate students. Two of them are learning Lao to help with their dissertation research. The undergraduate grew up in the United States and did not speak much Lao, so they are taking the class in order to better communicate with grandparents. Gregory Green, one of the Southeast Asian librarians, is also a part of the class. Green serves as another person with whom the students can practice speaking Lao and is a great source of knowledge about the language and culture. In addition to meeting twice a week, students get together with Green in the library to review what they learned.

With a smaller group, there are a lot of opportunities for one-on-one attention and practice. I try to immerse the students in the language by writing only in the script and speaking Lao the majority of the time. I begin a lesson with a board display, explaining and showing the grammar structure, or a task such as how to bargain or tell about yourself. I have some example sentences and a list of possible vocabulary words that pertain to the grammar principle or topic. From there, students devise their own sentences and share them with the class. We do several rounds of sharing and practicing. My favorite activity is teaching the students how to bargain. I brought in my son's food toys and animals and had the students practice describing items and negotiating price. This is a skill that they will need to learn when they travel to Laos one day. A small setting such as this can be scary in terms of practicing and not wanting to make any mistakes, but we tend to

have fun and not take each other seriously—some traits Laotians exhibit very well.

In addition to normal class lessons, special guests visit the class, and the students have gone to cultural activities in the community. For example, I invited my mom to help the students practice what they learned such as introductions and asking about interests. Since I am a heritage speaker, it was nice for the students to hear a native Laotian instead of my Laotian-American accent. The students may have only understood about half of what my mom said, but I think they enjoyed it; my mom sure did. Then the students visited my parents' home for my mother's retirement party. There were members of the Laotian community and an abundance of homemade Lao food such as sausage, fish, khao pun (thin noodles in coconut fish sauce), chicken, and sticky rice. The students had plenty of opportunities to speak



A reclining Buddha statue in Vientiane, Laos.

Lao. One of the students was brave enough to sit with the older women to join their conversation; even I would not do that, and I speak the language.

For the spring semester, the class will focus more on reading and writing. The students will read stories and essays about a variety of topics, ranging from politics and current events to fairy tales and history. They will practice writing through summaries or analyses of their readings. The hope is that the students will learn new vocabulary and grammar through this type of format. With a Lao Buddhist temple nearby, I want to take the students there for different activities such as offering food to the monks and Lao new year, a three-day celebration in April.

Teaching Lao has been a wonderful experience, and I look forward to more opportunities. It is great to be part of an institution that supports Southeast Asian studies—even languages and countries, like Laos, that are often overlooked. 🇻🇳

You Might Have Missed It

by Jeffrey Petersen,
Southeast Asia Librarian

With hundreds of thousands of resources in the John M. Echols Collection of the Carl A. Kroch Library, it is easy to miss something that might be useful for your research. Enhancing awareness of materials in the collection, including ones we pay good money for, is a constant uphill battle. We want to avoid stories of researchers who pass their time at Cornell but didn't know about such and such a resource that could have helped them. Toward that end, we present here a just a sample of a few databases, bibliographies, and resources people often miss that we would like to get on your radar.



Opium Trade
Vietnam War
Database



Cornell-home-brewed list of articles fine arts in Southeast Asia

The Carl A Kroch Library at Cornell.

CEIC Data Manager insights.ceicdata.com

The CEIC data manager is well known and listed in the main database section under “Business and Management.” Not as well known is that we pay for a more in-depth set of data from Indonesia that allows users to dig much deeper for Indonesia than the regular set allows. Data from other Southeast Asian countries are available in this database as well. CEIC data contains economic, industrial, and financial time-series data for 221 countries in Asia, Europe and Central Asia, Middle East, Africa, and the Americas.

US Intelligence on Asia, 1945–1991 newcatalog.library.cornell.edu/catalog/9923069

Want easy access to declassified US documents on Asia and the Cold War? Check out this database, which gives emphasis to America’s principal antagonists in Asia during the Cold War era: the People’s Republic of China, North Korea, and North Vietnam. Also covered are Japan, Taiwan, Indonesia, Thailand, the Philippines, Malaysia, Singapore, and Australia.

*declassified US
documents on Asia and the Cold War*

PERIND (Periodicals Index)

newcatalog.library.cornell.edu/catalog/10824441

Need articles on Malaysia, Singapore, Brunei, or the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN)? Go here. PERIND indexes 270 core journals and includes some book reviews, review articles, editorials, letters, speeches, lectures, obituaries, legislative notes, and clinical case studies. Since mid-1997, the database also covers book chapters and conference papers, both published and unpublished. Most articles are in English with a small number in Malay.

CIPPA (Computerized Index to Philippine Periodical Articles)

newcatalog.library.cornell.edu/catalog/7761819

Working on the Philippines? Don’t miss this database. CIPPA indexes articles from 340 periodicals on the Philippines. This is a very useful “one-stop shopping” database for doing research on the Philippines.

Bibliography of Performing Arts in the East

asia-perfo-arts.com/

Looking for material on fine arts in Southeast Asia? This regularly updated bibliography compiles materials from Asia and Southeast Asia on theater, dance, puppetry, cinema, plays, masks, and martial arts. There is a special section devoted to the performing arts in Indonesia.

“one-stop shopping” database for doing research on the Philippines

Moran Micropublications

Attention Indonesianists: Moran Micropublications compiles archival materials on various historical topics in Indonesia. Simply type “Moran Micropublications” with quotation marks into the Cornell University Library catalog, and you can see our full list. See, for example, these collections, among others:

“Papers of colonial advisers on politics, culture and religion in the Netherlands Indies, c. 1895–1949”: newcatalog.library.cornell.edu/catalog/6626300

“The vernacular press in the Netherlands Indies, c.1855–1925”: newcatalog.library.cornell.edu/catalog/6181044

Adam Matthew Publications

Similar to Moran Micropublications, Adam Matthew Publications provides access to archival collections and is accessible through the Cornell University Library catalog. Topics that relate to Southeast Asia, among others, include:

Asian Economic History, Series 1, The opium trade and the United Nations Commission on Narcotic Drugs, 1945–1948: newcatalog.library.cornell.edu/catalog/3982700

Asian Economic History, Series 2, Economic development in Brunei, Hong Kong, Malaysia, Singapore, South Korea, and Taiwan, 1950–1980. Contains Public Record Office files from the Foreign Office, Colonial Office, Treasury, Dominions Office, Board of Trade and Cabinet Committees: newcatalog.library.cornell.edu/catalog/4282580

Foreign Office files—United States of America, Series two, Vietnam, 1959–1975. Provides archival material on the Vietnam War from Great Britain: newcatalog.library.cornell.edu/catalog/8301783

ProQuest History Vault: Vietnam War and American Foreign Policy, 1960–1975

proquest.libguides.com/historyvault/vietnam

This database covers US involvement in the region from the early days of the Kennedy administration, through the escalation of the war during the Johnson administration, to the final resolution of the war at the Paris Peace Talks and the evacuation of US troops in 1973. Documents trace the actions and decisions at the highest levels of the US foreign policy apparatus, as well as events on the ground in Vietnam, from the perspective of State Department officials, Associated Press reporters, and members of the US Armed Forces, including the Marines and the Military Assistance Command Vietnam. Collections also highlight all of the most important foreign policy issues facing the United States between 1960 and 1975.

Center for Research Libraries (CRL) and Southeast Asia Microform Project (SEAM)

www.crl.edu

www.crl.edu/programs/seam

People may easily overlook the collections held at CRL, an international consortium of university, college, and independent research libraries, and especially those preserved by SEAM, which was founded in 1970 by North American librarians specializing in Southeast Asian materials. We pay each year for membership in both. Requesting material from SEAM and CRL is easier than ever, as they will often scan it quickly and make it available online.

Southeast Asia Book Chapter Bibliographies

asia.library.cornell.edu/collections/echols/sea-book-chapters

This is a Cornell home-brewed list of articles about Southeast Asia tucked away in edited volumes. It’s a bit of a Frankenstein collection, but in some cases it might be the only way to find a hidden article that is lurking out there.

economic, industrial, and financial time-series data

We hope that there will be some items on this list that may prove to be a discovery. We will have more to relate in the future. As always, if you have questions about using these resources or would like more information on other resources that we have available in the Echols Collection, please contact Jeffrey Petersen, Southeast Asia librarian, at jwp42@cornell.edu and Gregory Gree, Curator of Echols Collection on Southeast Asia, at ghg4@cornell.edu.



*Visit to SUNY Buffalo State College:
Panel on Education in Myanmar and the
Challenges of Diversity, with Rhoda Linton, Dr. Htwe,
Kyaw Thein, Thamora Fishel (left to right).*

EMBRACING DIFFERENCE: *At the Intersection of Teaching and Learning*



by Kathi Colen Peck, postsecondary outreach coordinator

This fall, with support of National Resource Center Title VI funds, SEAP sponsored a five-week visit from Dr. Thet Su Htwe and Myo Thazin Kyaw Thein, two extraordinary women from Myanmar (Burma) who came to Cornell to participate in an educational exchange and share their personal stories. Title VI funds support SEAP, for example, in teaching less commonly taught languages, helping community college and schools of education faculty internationalize their curricula, and simply sowing the seeds of interest in Southeast Asia among students and faculty alike. In collaboration with our partners, Htwe's and Thein's visit was a beautiful example of how SEAP develops interest and draws connection to events here and abroad to better understand the culture, history, and society in places such as Myanmar. This is at the heart of my work as the postsecondary outreach coordinator with Cornell's Southeast Asia Program, South Asia Program, and the Latin American Studies Program.

While here, Htwe, a medical doctor and sexuality educator, and Thein, a self-defense educator with a civil engineering degree, gave nearly twenty presentations at ten institutions (see list below) on topics ranging from breaking stereotypes, to sexuality



and self-defense, to being Muslim in a predominately Buddhist country, and more. Many of these presentations took the form of a classroom lecture, followed by a Q&A in which visitors and participants, in a slight departure from the more academically driven scholarly visits that SEAP usually hosts, shared differences and similarities in life experiences. Overall, it was a stimulating exchange of ideas.

As captured by a Cornell freshman in the First Year Writing seminar, “We need to learn to understand each other’s differences and not direct hate towards a group for reasons that are linked through their ethnic backgrounds. The fact that there are people around the world who have to hide their identity because they do not want to be targeted is inhumane and there must be something done to put a stop to this. I really appreciate the willingness of the presenters to share their stories with us, allowing the class to get a worldly perspective.”

The idea for hosting our Myanmar visitors came last winter (2019) when Thamora Fishel, associate director of SEAP, traveled to Yangon, Myanmar’s largest city, with two Cornell undergraduates for a study abroad program. While there, Thamora connected with Rhoda Linton, longtime feminist activist and Enfield, New York, native, who

had been a mentor to Htwe; from there, Thamora and Rhoda began to hatch a plan.¹

Htwe had recently been featured in an *Aljazeera* news story for her exceptional work as founder of *Strong Flowers Sexuality Education Services*.² As an educator, Htwe confronts taboos and misinformation head on—she works to build bridges among people of all ages and backgrounds in Myanmar. Her *Strong Flowers* is also part of an emerging women’s education and action project, for which Rhoda is an advisor, and includes *Myanmar Women’s Self-Defense Center*, where Thein is a teacher (and black belt in karate). Thamora and Rhoda could easily see how the grassroots work these two women engage in would translate into a rich educational opportunity for students and faculty at Cornell and among our partner institutions, and, in turn, would be a dynamic learning experience for Htwe and Thein.

It is rare for Burmese women working to create positive cultural change to have an opportunity to travel abroad to see how their work fits into a bigger picture, to realize the compelling nature of what they do, and to learn new approaches to their work. Htwe and Thein came to Cornell to share their personal stories on feminism, sexuality, self-defense, the Rohingya, and on

being Muslim in Myanmar. In giving voice to their personal stories and exchanging views with others, Htwe and Thein did indeed learn and grow, while those who attended their talks did as well. As a SUNY Cortland student summarized: “This presentation caught me by surprise. I didn’t think I would feel as emotionally connected to their stories as I was.”

For Htwe and Thein, the visit was full and validating. They were impressed by the way they were welcomed as Muslims, especially given the highly politicized Muslim travel ban in the United States. They were astonished by the lack of awareness on the Rohingya situation but happy their insights were so well received. They attended community events, did weeklong homestays with locals, lived on campus in a dorm with Cornell students, and grappled with finding provisions to meet their halal dietary needs. They attended a *Psychology of Gender* class and connected with the Muslim student body and others at Cornell to experience the electric pulse of campus life.

Having befriended Htwe and Thein, many students reflected on how their eyes were opened by this experience. As a ninth grader from Trumansburg’s C.O. Dickerson High School said: “I’ve always been taught by my parents to be accepting of all people, no matter what



Far Left to Right:

The Femtastics!, a student group from Charles O. Dickerson High School host Htwe and Thein for brunch.

Dr. Thet Su Htwe.

Thein and Htwe speak at SUNY Cortland's Sandwich Seminar: Being Muslim & Female in Myanmar.

race, gender, or ethnicity. And that's all good and easy to say, and you're walking around thinking 'yeah, I don't really care who you are or what you look like.' But then, when I did meet a Muslim for the first time, I realized I did actually care. I cared about their story, their experience, and their incredible accomplishments. I realize now that not caring is the wrong way to go, because our differences are important, they make us who we are. I think it might be more about caring to try and recognize ourselves in others, and accepting that we can be different and still get along."

Commenting on her visit to the high school in Trumansburg, Htwe remarked: "I loved being with the teens, where I could share my own experiences and some of the ways I currently work with teens in Myanmar; that they could learn and change their mindset based on our discussion was powerful, satisfying." For Thein, "I saw so many students who were so open-minded. And I was surprised by two things: how much they knew about Islam and Muslims, and how accepting the school and fellow students are to the LGBTQ students. It amazes me—people in my country deserve better when it comes to accepting people of different religions, ethnicities, and sexual orientation."

In the end, nearly one thousand participants observed, listened to, talked

with, ate with, and celebrated the impact and enthusiasm of these two remarkable women. Htwe and Thein so generously opened the intimate window into their lives in Myanmar. Not only did they learn that what they're doing in Myanmar is interesting and important to students, faculty, and the

broader community in our region, but the actual exchange emerged as one of the most valuable lessons of the visit. They went home all the more committed to their work, with more awareness of their own experiences in a global context, and carrying new connections to so many here in the United States.

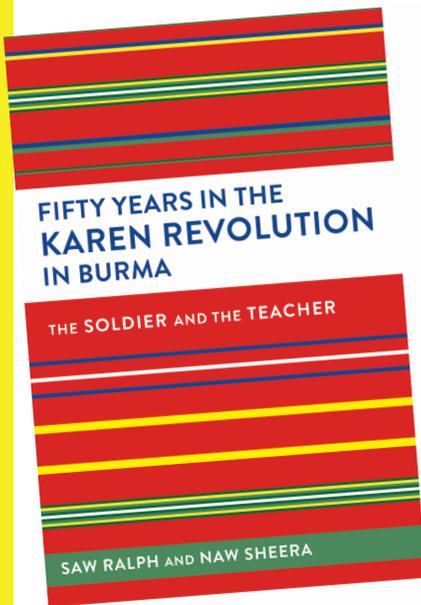
A note of deep and sincere thanks to Rhoda Linton, without whom this exchange would not have been possible, and to our many cosponsors and partnering institutions:

1. Binghamton University: Institute for Genocide and Mass Atrocity Prevention; Kaschak Institute for Social Justice for Women and Girls; Anthropology of Sex and Sexuality course
2. Buffalo State College: Honor's Program
3. Monroe Community College, Rochester, New York
4. Onondaga Community College, Syracuse, New York
5. SUNY Cortland: President's Office, Women's, Gender, and Sexuality Studies
6. Syracuse University: South Asia Center; Honors Program; Gender and Women's Studies Program
7. Tompkins Cortland Community College, Dryden, New York
8. Cornell University: History, Global Islam course
9. Cornell University: Comparative Muslim Studies Program
10. Cornell University: First-Year Writing Seminars
11. Cornell University: Flora Rose House and Alice Cook House
12. Cornell University: Master of Public Health Program

¹ See Nisa Burns, "18 Days in Myanmar," *Southeast Asia Program Bulletin* (Fall 2019), 9–13.

² Victoria Milko, "The Muslim Woman Breaking Barriers in Sex Education in Myanmar," *Aljazeera*, November 21, 2018, www.aljazeera.com/news/2018/11/muslim-woman-lifting-veil-sex-education-myanmar-181121083020267.html.

by Stephanie Olinga-Shannon,
editor of *Fifty Years in
the Karen Revolution in Burma*



The Soldier and the Teacher

In 2013, the niece of a retired guerrilla general from Myanmar, Saw Ralph Hodgson, asked me if I could help collate her uncle's memoirs. She told me her uncle left his wealthy Anglo-Karen family, fiancée, and a promising engineering career in 1949, at the age of nineteen, to join the Karen revolution the day it began.¹ Over five decades, he rose through the ranks to become the chief military strategist for the Karen National Liberation Army (KNLA), the armed faction of the political organization, Karen National Union (KNU). He had survived much of the world's longest civil war and had participated in some of the key events of the revolution. Intrigued, I met with the niece, Saw Ralph, and his wife, Naw Sheera, now both in their eighties, at their home in a working class suburb of Perth, Australia. As we would come to do countless times, we sat in their living room, and he began to tell me about his life.

Despite being married for thirty-five years, Saw Ralph's and Naw Sheera's stories didn't intersect until old age, when they settled in Australia. Their memoirs tell two different stories of five decades in the same conflict. Hearing Naw Sheera's incredible stories, we agreed to collate her memoirs as well.

A quiet and observant man, Saw Ralph participated in some of the key events of the KNLA's history. He experienced

the KNLA's transformation into a guerrilla army; stayed behind when Hunter Thahmwe, leader of the KNU, surrendered in 1960; and interviewed the Burmese students who came to the jungle to take up arms following the violent crackdown on prodemocracy protests in 1988. He also investigated the Democratic Karen Buddhist Army's fatal break away from the KNLA that resulted in the Burmese army's conquest of the KNLA's stronghold at Manerplaw in 1995. At sixty-five years of age, Saw Ralph felt he was slowing the other soldiers down and decided to retire. But he left with a heavy heart, because they had not achieved the federalist state they wanted. Karen people are still persecuted by the Burmese army.

Naw Sheera came from a different background than her husband. She grew up in a remote Karen village and survived infancy, the Japanese occupation, and Burmese army attacks, while others around her did not. A devout Christian, she became a teacher and missionary. After she married Saw Ralph in 1961, she gave up her profession and raised four children in the jungle, largely on her own. She relied on the survival skills she had learned as a child to grow food, build shelter, and raise livestock. She was captured once and birthed a child following a Burmese army attack. In the 1980s, she served as general

secretary when the Karen Women's Organization was revived.² Together with her friends, they organized Karen women to join and shared what was then groundbreaking information about domestic violence and human trafficking. She fled Manerplaw as it fell and spent the next few years in refugee camps before she, Saw Ralph, and their family joined relatives in Australia.

For three years, I visited their home once a week. We would sit in their living room, and over cups of tea they told me their life stories. Saw Ralph and I made an unlikely pair—he, an elderly guerrilla general from Burma, and me, a young woman born and raised in Australia. Saw Ralph speaks formal, old-fashioned English he learned as a child. He insists on using the name Burma rather than Myanmar. Like some other Karens, he does not regard Myanmar as the legitimate name for the country. Naw Sheera speaks four languages, none of which I speak, so a family friend had to interpret for her. At times both of us felt frustrated that we couldn't speak directly.

At first, though their memories were sharp, Saw Ralph and Naw Sheera struggled to describe their emotions during key events. Saw Ralph once told me that Karen people were "taught to hold water in their mouths," meaning not to freely share information. This could be frustrating at times, but as we got to know and trust each other,

they began to express their emotions and open up to me—and to each other. Through the writing process, they had to confront their own actions and discuss traumatic events that they had not discussed since those events had happened, such as the death of their first child. This was very difficult for both of them, and Naw Sheera would never tell me about her eight younger brothers who died in infancy.

The project also had positive impacts. In 2014, I interviewed Saw Ralph's sisters in Yangon. They had not seen him since he left the family in 1949. Edna, his older sister, had always blamed herself for his leaving, because she thought she had encouraged him to support the Karen cause. I told her

what Saw Ralph had told me, that he chose to join the revolution to find adventure and she was not responsible. After our meeting, at age eighty-seven, Edna left Burma to meet Saw Ralph in Thailand for a few days. Not long after seeing her brother, she died peacefully, having finally let go of her guilt.

As we collated the book, Burma was undergoing intense political and economic changes. Saw Ralph and I had many conversations about how he saw the political and economic changes and peace talks unfolding in Myanmar. He was adamant that the reforms were just another Burmese military tactic to entice the ethnic armies to surrender, as they had done throughout the preceding decades.

Over the six years it took to write and publish their memoirs, I became close to Saw Ralph, Naw Sheera, and their family. I came to know them better than I knew my own grandparents. I joined them for birthday celebrations and events like Karen Martyrs' Day. Naw Sheera went fishing, her favorite pastime, with my husband in the Swan River, and my mother joined them for church services. I accompanied them as they shopped for groceries and attended medical appointments. I came to see how they navigated old age and life in Australia. I remember thinking, if only the people around them in this suburban corner of Australia knew the lives they had lived—what they had done and how they survived. *ℓ*



KNU Chairman Saw Mutu Sae Poe, Naw Sheera Hodgson and Saw Ralph Hodgson, Chang Mai, 2019.

¹ The Karen people are a large ethnic, yet heterogeneous, minority in Myanmar. In 1948, Myanmar, then Burma, gained its independence from Britain. The Karen revolution, begun in 1949 when the Karen National Union declared war on the Burmese government, is considered one of the world's "longest running civil wars." According to the Human Rights Watch World Report 2020, "Myanmar: Events of 2019": "The government of Myanmar in 2019 continued to defy international calls to seriously investigate human rights violations against ethnic minorities in Shan, Kachin, Karen, and Rakhine States. A United Nations-mandated Fact-Finding Mission found sufficient evidence to call for the investigation of senior military officials for crimes against humanity and genocide." www.hrw.org/world-report/2020/country-chapters/myanmar-burma (accessed February 23, 2020).

² The Karen Women's Organization is a leading indigenous women's organization that serves women, girls, children, and other vulnerable people. It was established in 1949 and revived in 1985.

Fifty Years in the Karen Revolution in Burma

The Soldier and the Teacher

Saw RALPH AND Naw SHEERA

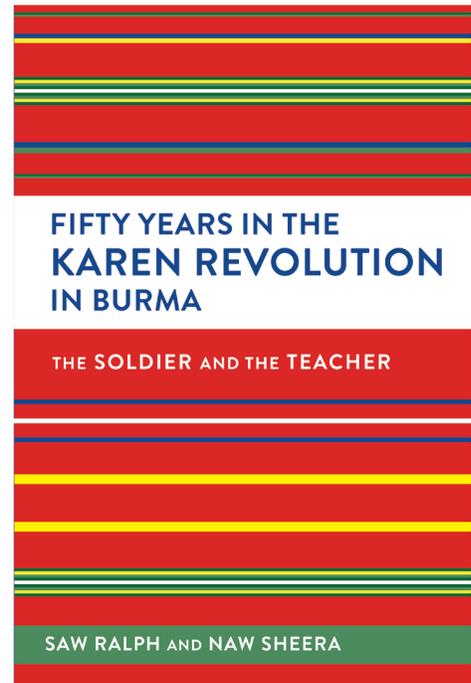
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Fifty Years in the Karen Revolution in Burma is about commitment to an ideal, individual survival and the universality of the human experience. A memoir of two tenacious souls, it sheds light on why Burma/Myanmar's decades-long pursuit for a peaceful and democratic future has been elusive. Simply put, the aspirations of Burma's ethnic nationalities for self-determination within a genuine federal union runs counter to the idea of a unitary state orchestrated and run by the dominant majority Burmans, or Bamar.

This seemingly intractable dilemma of opposing visions for Burma is personified in the story of Saw Ralph and Naw Sheera, two prominent ethnic Karen leaders who lived—and eventually left—"the Longest War," leaving the reader with insights on the cultural, social, and political challenges facing other non-Burman ethnic nationalities.

Fifty Years in the Karen Revolution in Burma is also about the ordinariness and universality of the challenges increasingly faced by diaspora communities around the world today. Saw Ralph and Naw Sheera's day to day lives—how they fell in love, married, had children—while trying to survive in a precarious war zone—and how they had to adapt to their new lives as refugees and immigrants in Australia will resound with many.

Saw Ralph retired as Brigadier General of the Karen National Liberation Army (KNLA), the military branch of the Karen National Union. **Naw Sheera** is a school teacher and former leader in the Karen Women's Organization (KWO).



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ON CAMPUS AND BEYOND

Southeast of Now: Directions in Contemporary and Modern Art in Asia is a peer-reviewed scholarly journal, launched in 2017 and published twice yearly in print and online by NUS Press at the National University of Singapore. Thanks to generous grants from the Chen Chong Swee Asian Arts Programme at Yale-NUS College, Singapore, and also the Foundation for Arts Initiatives, Paris, the journal's online editions are now freely available via Open Access, online at Project MUSE. The journal is edited by a collective of early-career researchers, all of whom are either from or based in Southeast Asia, and it is overseen by an international advisory board consisting of eminent scholars.

The volume 4, number 1 (March 2020) issue of *Southeast of Now* features a special roundtable titled "Teaching the History of Modern and Contemporary Art of Southeast Asia." For this roundtable on pedagogy, the editorial collective of *Southeast of Now* invited contributors to write a short text about the experience of teaching the history of modern and contemporary Southeast Asian art. The editors suggested that contributors consider the challenges and rewards of teaching and reflect on methodological and/or other issues specific to this field. The format, style, and tone of the text was left open for each individual author to decide.

Contributions to the roundtable relate to the teaching of both undergraduate and postgraduate students, as well as the supervision of postgraduate research. *Southeast of Now* has invited teachers of the history of "art"; that is, art in an expanded sense, encompassing not only visual art, but also cinema and video, theater and performance, architecture and urbanism, design and related fields. Several Cornell University alumni and staff have contributed to the roundtable, whereas the majority of contributors are based in Southeast Asia. Contributors are Yin Ker (Nanyang Technological University), Thanavi Chotpradit (Silpakorn University), Stanley J. O'Connor (Cornell University), Simon Soon (University of Malaya), Sarena Abdullah (Universiti Sains Malaysia), Roger



Nelson (National Gallery Singapore), Patrick F. Campos (University of the Philippines), Nora A. Taylor (School of the Art Institute of Chicago), Muliyadi Mahamood (Universiti Teknologi MARA), Lawrence Chua (Syracuse University), John N. Miksic (National University of Singapore), John Clark (University of Sydney), Jeffrey Say (LASALLE College of the Arts), Imran bin Tajudeen (National University of Singapore), Eksuda Singhalampong (Silpakorn University), Chaitanya Sambrani (Australian National University), Basilio Esteban S. Villaruz (University of the Philippines), and Astri Wright (University of Victoria).

Alongside the roundtable on teaching, this issue of *Southeast of Now* also includes articles and responses by Sarena Abdullah, Anna Koshcheeva (currently a graduate student at Cornell), Elly Kent, Kaja M. McGowan (another Cornellian), Grace Samboh, and Philippa Lovatt. It also includes announcements, including about the journal's Emerging Writers Fellowship, which provides a grant and mentorship for emerging writers who are citizens or permanent residents of any country in Southeast Asia.

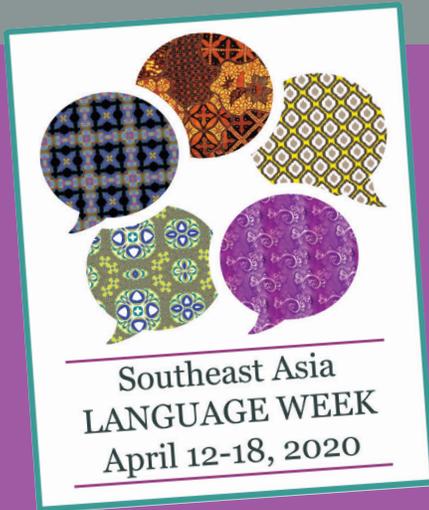
For more information about the journal, please visit www.southeastofnow.com, and for editorial inquiries, please contact southeastofnow@gmail.com. 📧

NEWS
ANNOUNCEMENTS

AVA WHITE will be working with SEAP to expand undergraduate programming and support other existing programs. She recently graduated from John Hopkins University with a Master of Arts in international economics and Southeast Asian studies, and a focus on the politics of Myanmar.

UPCOMING EVENTS

FOR THE FULL LISTING OF THE FALL
2020 WEEKLY GATTY LECTURES,
visit <https://seap.einaudi.cornell.edu>



SOUTHEAST ASIA LANGUAGE WEEK April 12-18, 2020

This year's Southeast Asia Language Week (April 12-18) will feature a week of events and activities embracing Southeast Asian culture and promoting language study. Find out how you can get involved in SEAP and study one of our six Southeast Asian languages in the undergraduate or graduate section of the SEAP website: <https://seap.einaudi.cornell.edu>.

GLOBAL CHALLENGES TO DEMOCRACY CONFERENCE

May 1-2, 2020

Friday, 9am-5pm

Saturday, 9am-1pm

Location: Africana Studies
& Research Center

A generation of social scientists was groomed to study what came to be known as the "third wave" of democratization—a

political wave that began in Southern Europe in the mid-1970s, jumped across the Atlantic to Latin America by the end of the decade, and eventually swept across much of Eastern Europe, East Asia, and Africa by the early 1990s. Latin America, Europe, Asia, and Africa have all experienced the rise of leaders, movements, and parties—of diverse nationalist and populist persuasions—that operate within democratic institutions while flaunting their norms and conventions. The conference will examine three central dimensions of these challenges from a cross-regional comparative and historical perspective: (1) the socio-economic inequalities, cultural conflicts, and representational failures that spawn or empower authoritarian challengers; (2) the institutional features and political strategies that allow autocrats to capture and subvert regime institutions; and (3) the relative effectiveness of the strategies employed by their democratic rivals and societal actors to activate and defend regime-level checks and balances.

Panels of top scholars working on challenges to democracy in Africa, Europe, Latin America, and Southeast Asia will be on the final program.



WORKSHOP FOR TEACHERS

June 29-30, 2020

Location: Stocking Hall, Room 148

Hunger Around the World: Teaching Food Security at Home and Abroad

During this cross-curriculum workshop, educators will engage in activities that focus on integrating world area knowledge through the context of global hunger, food instability, and food justice movements. Teachers will learn how to explore students' knowledge about food security in their own communities and relate this knowledge to learn about communities around the world. Our goal is to encourage students to have a greater understanding of the different regions and cultures of the world and to think critically about social, political, and environmental issues using food security as a jumping off point. Because of the nature of this theme, the 2020 ISSI will be suitable for elementary, middle, and high school teachers from a variety of disciplinary backgrounds.

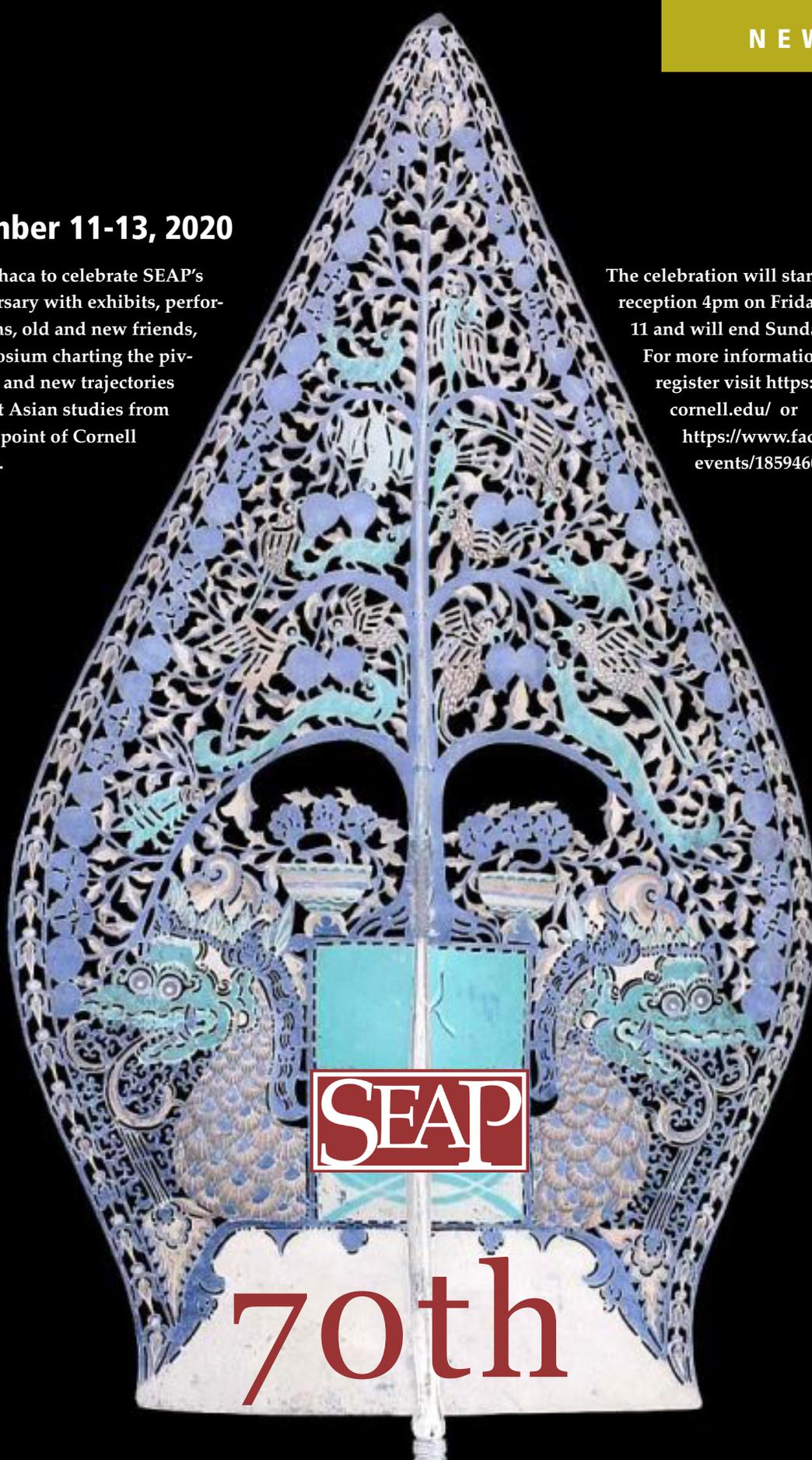


INTERNATIONAL STUDIES SUMMER INSTITUTE: ISSI

September 11-13, 2020

Join us in Ithaca to celebrate SEAP's 70th anniversary with exhibits, performances, films, old and new friends, and a symposium charting the pivotal periods and new trajectories in Southeast Asian studies from the vantage point of Cornell and beyond.

The celebration will start with a reception 4pm on Friday, September 11 and will end Sunday afternoon. For more information and to register visit <https://seap.einaudi.cornell.edu/> or <https://www.facebook.com/events/185946092701336/>



September 11-13, 2020

NEW VISITING FELLOWS



by Sally Lee,
SEAP graduate assistant for
educational outreach

40th Anniversary of Cornell University's Hubert H. Humphrey Fellowship Program



HUMPHREY FELLOW:

Hlaing Hlaing Htoon from Myanmar Assistant Lecturer, Mawlamyine University

Hlaing Hlaing Htoon is an assistant lecturer in the Marine Science Department at Mawlamyine University, Mon State, Myanmar. She received her Bachelor of Science, Master of Research, and doctoral degrees with a marine science specialization from Mawlamyine University. She also received a Master of Science in marine science from Myeik University in Myanmar. Apart from her teaching and research duties, Htoon spends her spare time in community development and social activities, focusing on statesmanship and entrepreneurship for local development. As a 2019–2020 Humphrey Fellow at Cornell University, she is working on a project that allows her to continue to be a representative of her own region in environmental policy, resource management, and climate change.



SALLY LEE: Can you describe briefly what drew you to Cornell as a visiting scholar?

HLAING HLAING HTOON: I came here for curriculum development in marine science. I wanted to learn about climate change and global environmental policy and management. The course topics that I teach include coast management, environment, natural resource management, marine invertebrate, and oceanography.

On Oct. 22–23, 2019, Cornell’s Humphrey Program celebrated its fortieth anniversary on the university’s campus. For forty years, the program has enriched the professional experience of more than four hundred people. Participants from one hundred eleven countries have come to Cornell for a year-long exchange and returned to their home countries with new skills to make profound development changes back home.

The nine participants in this year’s cohort arrived on campus in August from Armenia, Bangladesh, Brazil, Ghana, Indonesia, Myanmar, South Korea, South Sudan, and Turkey. Their professional backgrounds range from agricultural innovation and business development to climate change and rural policy in the Amazon.

Cornell is one of thirteen US universities participating in the Humphrey Fellowship Program, which is supported by the US Department of State Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs and administered nationally by the Institute of International Education in Washington, DC

For five classes, I went to listen to the lecture, not for credit, but just to listen. Professors are great here, and I can download their resources. The discussion style in the classrooms is very useful. The research papers, journals, and classes here encourage students to think critically and creatively. On campus, I also enjoy going to Mann Library and using Canvas [a web-based course management system].

SL: How has being in the Humphrey Fellows Program been for you so far?

HHH: It’s great. The Humphrey Program has a mandatory six-week professional affiliation. There are two types: local and nonlocal [move to other cities]. The projects done depend on each Humphrey Fellow’s individual expertise. I am currently planning my project proposal, planning the curriculum during the six weeks. I will then write the report when I return to my home university in June 2020.

SL: Are there things that particularly strike you about SEAP, Cornell, and Ithaca, and how are they different from your home institution in Burma?

HHH: Education here is open-minded. In my home country, the education system only teaches students to use memorization and “hard learning.” I want to adapt the resources here for my [undergraduate] students in my home university in Burma.

SL: Could you please elaborate on how you plan to adapt the resources in your home university?

HHH: Over the course of ten years, I have taught in two different ways: formal and informal.

Formal is when I teach my students in university. Informal is teaching local people a short-term training course focused on environmental and climate change. Essentially, it is to teach local people the proper knowledge of policy and management of our environment.

SL: How did you develop your research interests in environmental/marine sciences?

HHH: My home university is the only one in Burma that offers marine science. Right now there are only four universities that teach marine science. This was a pragmatic choice, because the school is along a 1,200-mile-long coastline. I

supervised graduate students for their papers. Land-sliding happens every year, so many people die from natural disasters. I want to inform people [in order] to solve this problem.

Specific policy for environmental issues is needed in Burma. The (Burmese) government does not enforce the existing environmental policies and frameworks such as those from the United Nations’s Sustainable Development Goals. I want to get people to protect the environment. Policy is policy. The people who suffer are the ones who are living along the coast.

For example, mango trees were planted by Japan to protect the people along the coast. The community did not cooperate and cut them down. To the people, mango trees are useful for charcoal and firewood, so they are in high demand. Businessmen sell them to make a profit. They don’t know that the mango trees protect them from severe storms.

Tourists leave plastics. Fisherman use dynamite to catch more fish, but this greatly damages the coral reef. Coral reef is a shelter that provides safety. My passion is to teach people the importance of community involvement.



HUMPHREY FELLOW: Olsa Riharsya, Project Supervisor, Ministry of Public Works, Jakarta

Originally from Indonesia, Olsa Riharsya earned a three-year diploma degree in finance from Indonesian State College of Accountancy, Jakarta; a bachelor's degree in economics from Perbanas Institute, Jakarta; and a master's degree in economics and public policy from the University of Queensland, Australia. From 2010 to 2019, she had been a project supervisor at the Ministry of Public Works and Housing, Jakarta. She managed the financial side of foreign loan projects and several multimillion-dollar wastewater treatment projects. As a 2019–20 Humphrey Fellow, Riharsya studies natural resources, environmental policy, and climate change at Cornell University. She aims to become a certified professional project manager and to promote agricultural innovation and environmental awareness in her country.

SALLY LEE: In doing the background research for this interview, I noticed you worked as project supervisor at the Ministry of Public Works. Could you share with me more about yourself?

OLSA RIHARSYA: Yes, of course. My background is in economics. My research interests lie in infrastructure, water systems, and agriculture. I have engaged in several foreign-loan projects during my work. One of my previous projects involved building a community-based sanitation system throughout Indonesia.

SL: Can you describe briefly what drew you to Cornell as a visiting scholar?

OR: I love Cornell because of its location. The nature, the agriculture . . . everywhere is my favorite part. Cornell has a strong agricultural focus. My interests lied in sanitation and clean water, but now they have shifted a bit to agriculture.

SL: Briefly describe your research and why Cornell is a good place for you to conduct your research.

OR: I am building a project on agriculture and waste management. The idea is to integrate manure and urine from livestock or fish (aquaponics), then feed it to plants; hence it will create a zero-waste agricultural system and organic products. The project is in the embryo stage right now. I am in the process of [conducting] research for it, planning it, and then getting it funded, and if it becomes successful, then I hope to scale up.

I want to apply the system in my country, to create job opportunities for the urban people. By having a successful agricultural model, I hope to attract young people to focus on developing the country's agriculture so that we will have food security without having to be dependent on imported products. By making the agriculture sector attractive to millennials, I hope we can contribute to economic growth. For young people, they need to channel their energy into doing something positive. I want to find a way to make agriculture interesting for the youth,



as well as preserve the environment by using what nature provides us and giving back to nature what it can take without harming it, such as not using chemicals on crops and plants. Today, small farms are owned by [few]. People are leaving agriculture because it's not benefiting them. We cannot only rely [on] the government; as a community and free people, we have to make our own good change for our future, side by side with the government. I hope to make it interesting for people to not leave agriculture.

I came here to the US and finally saw examples of the largeness of scale in agriculture; I can see the opportunities. Cornell provided information about other countries. The information provided opened my eyes and exposed me to various experiences and knowledge out there.

SL: Could you elaborate more on what community development means to you?

OR: I think the community needs to be strong and should be independent and be able to solve problems by themselves, so they won't need any loans to help them. Financial independence is important. Strong communities will lead to a strong country.

SL: What/who inspired you to go on this endeavor?

OR: Who inspired me? All the people. I worked for the government; I really care for my country, for the people, and also for the future of my country.

SL: Are there any current events that you think are of particular importance today to your project?

OR: I think we need sustainable development in everything. Have you heard

of Circular Economy? It is how people attempt to manage the resources they usually use to produce something [that will have] zero waste at the end. It is the continual use of resources so that we can sustain our natural resources. Eventually, I hope it could hamper climate change effects. Not very many organizations are applying Circular Economy. Not many people are aware of it; it should be promoted (more). The sanitation sector and how we can sustain our environment—these are topics I hope more people can become more aware of so that everyone can contribute to protecting and maintaining our earth.

The environmental issues are not yet a hot topic in my country; hence they are

less aware of it. For example, there was a flood in Jakarta early this year. We cannot blame nature, but we have to reflect on ourselves: have we protected and maintained our environment, or do we take it for granted? In my opinion, the educated and informed people have to promote and spread this awareness. How to attract people with this issue is also to let them know how they can create money out of it. The “how to” is what I'm looking for.

I hope to create a step-by-step awareness for people around me. All aspects should be incorporated for the health of the people and the environment. This will be a pilot project first. I hope to include all of this as an independent project and be able to scale up.

NEW VISITING FELLOWS



P. Michael Rattanasengchanh was born and raised in Ithaca. His parents were janitors at Cornell University for thirty years, so he has had ties to the school most of his life. Rattanasengchanh just completed his doctorate at Ohio University in Athens, where he wrote his dissertation on US-Thai public diplomacy. In it, he examined how both governments used ideas such as modernization, economic development, Buddhism, and the monarchy to win hearts and minds during the Cold War. Rattanasengchanh centered his narrative around the United States Information Agency, the Thai Ministry of Interior, and the monarchy. Here at Cornell University, he will be using the library's resources to turn his dissertation into a manuscript to submit for publication. In addition, he is working on an oral history project about second generation Laotian Americans, specifically looking at how they have navigated the American and Laotian spaces. He hopes to contribute to the literature by also examining how visiting Laos has impacted Laotian Americans and what it means to be a Laotian. In addition to his research, Rattanasengchanh teaches the Lao language at Cornell.



Mesrob Vartavarian is a visiting fellow at SEAP. He earned his bachelor's and master's degrees in history at University of California, Los Angeles. After receiving his doctorate from University of Cambridge, he began his career as a scholar of early colonial South Asia but has since shifted his research focus to modern Southeast Asia, with an emphasis on the Philippines. His interests include colonial state formation, plunder politics, borderland insurgencies by ethnic minorities, postcolonial praetorian regimes, and Cold War-era conflicts across insular and mainland states. His publications have appeared in *Modern Asian Studies*, the *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient*, *South East Asia Research*, *Kyoto Review of Southeast Asia*, and the *IIAS Newsletter*. Vartavarian is currently working on a monograph-length study of the Philippine military after Marcos.

AWARDS

Margaret Jack

PhD candidate, information science

AWARD: 2019–2020 Women in Technology New York Fellowship

This award supports women-identified graduate students at Cornell Tech in New York City who work on issues related to supporting women and underrepresented groups in computer science and related fields. Margaret Jackson's research focuses on the creative use of digital tools in postcolonial and postconflict settings. She applies her academic background in the history of science (BA, Harvard College; Mphil, University of Cambridge) and professional experiences in the technology industry and the international development sector to approach questions of global computing with multiple lenses. She has had ongoing ethnographic and archival research in the arts and technology communities of Phnom Penh, Cambodia, since January 2014, including twenty months of full-time research from June 2017 until January 2019.



Benjamin Mirin

MS candidate, natural resources

AWARD: Graduate Research Fellowship from the National Science Foundation

This fellowship is an award in support of his project "Impact Measurements for a Music-Based Environmental Education Program in the Asian Songbird Trade."

Ben Mirin is a scientist, artist, educator, explorer, and presenter. He travels the world recording animal sounds for research and samples those voices to create music that inspires conservation. Ben is the creator and host of the digital and television series *Wild Beats* on National Geographic Kids and National Geographic Wild, and a National Geographic Explorer. He is also a fellow at the Safina Center and the Explorers Club, an ambassador at the Cornell Laboratory of Ornithology, and the first artist-in-residence at the Bronx Zoo. As a lifelong naturalist and musician, Ben combines his two passions to capture untold stories about nature through sound. His work has been recognized with grants from the National Geographic Society and previous art residencies at the National Centre for Biological Sciences in Bangalore, India, and the Lurie Garden at the Chicago Art Institute.

Mary Kate Long

PhD candidate, Asian studies

AWARDS: Social Science Research Council International Dissertation Research Fellowship; Fulbright-Hays Doctoral Dissertation Research Abroad

Both grants support her project, "Routine Labor and the Remaking of Religion in an Urban Buddhist Nunnery in Myanmar."

Mary Kate Long came to Ithaca from Boston, where she completed two master's degrees—one at Boston University in international relations and religion, and another at Harvard Divinity School that focused on Buddhist narrative analysis and Burmese and Pali language training. Her research is a combination of her master's degrees scholarship, focusing on Buddhist nunneries in Burma. The first half of her research looks at the history of these nunneries through translation and analysis of biographies by and about their female founders. The second half takes a more ethnographic approach, looking at the role of nuns' domestic labor in establishing and maintaining these institutions in Yangon, the largest city in Burma. As a previous Foreign Language and Area Studies fellow, Mary Kate is looking forward to another year of Burmese language training and funding.



Shorna Allred, associate professor,
natural resources

Warren B. Bailey, professor,
finance, Johnson School of
Management

Christine Balance, associate
professor, Asian American studies,
performing and media arts

Randolph Barker, professor
emeritus, agricultural economics

Victoria Beard, professor and
associate dean of research, city
and regional planning

Anne Blackburn, professor,
Asian studies (on leave Fall 2019
and Spring 2020)

Thak Chaloemtiarana, professor,
Asian literature, religion, and
culture; and Asian studies

Abigail C. Cohn, professor,
linguistics and director of the
Southeast Asia Program (on leave
Spring 2020)

Magnus Fiskesjö, associate
professor, anthropology

Chiara Formichi, associate
professor, Asian studies (on leave
Fall 2019 and Spring 2020)

Arnika Fuhrmann, associate
professor, Asian studies (on leave
Spring 2020)

Jenny Goldstein, assistant
professor, development sociology

Greg Green, curator, Echols
Collection on Southeast Asia

Martin F. Hatch, professor
emeritus, music

Ngampit Jagacinski, senior
lecturer, Thai, Asian studies

Yu Yu Khaing, lecturer, Burmese,
Asian studies

Sarosh Kuruvilla, Andrew J.
Nathanson Family professor,
industrial and labor relations
(on leave Fall 2019)

Tamara Lynn Loos, professor,
history

Kaja M. McGowan, associate
professor, art history, archaeology

Christopher J. Miller, senior
lecturer, music

Stanley J. O'Connor, professor
emeritus, art history

Jolanda Pandin, senior lecturer,
Indonesian, Asian studies

Thomas Pepinsky, associate
professor, government

Hannah Phan, senior lecturer,
Khmer, Asian studies

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Vietnamese, Asian studies

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professor, anthropology

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Andrew Willford, professor,
anthropology

Lindy Williams, professor,
development sociology

John U. Wolff, professor
emeritus, linguistics and Asian
studies

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JOHNSON MUSEUM ACQUISITION HIGHLIGHT



Vietnam, Tran dynasty

Bowl with a molded decoration of birds and floral scrolls

late 13th or early 14th century

Glazed stoneware

Collection of the Herbert F. Johnson Museum of Art, Cornell University

Acquired through the generosity of Judith Stoikov, Class of 1963

Image courtesy of the Johnson Museum

SOUTHEAST ASIA PROGRAM

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